# The Messiah of Shiraz

# Iran Studies

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VOLUME 3

# The Messiah of Shiraz

## Studies in Early and Middle Babism

*By*

Denis Martin MacEoin

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*Cover illustration*: The shrine of the Báb in Haifa, Israel, seen through a gate. Since 2008, the shrine with the gardens and buildings around it was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Photograph by Marco Abrar.

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ORIGINAL DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my parents, David and Isobel, for their help and encouragement over so many years and their patience with what must have seemed at many times an incomprehensible field of study; and to my mother-in-law, Nancy, and my late father-in-law, Sydney, for their unfailing kindness and help.

DEDICATION OF PUBLISHED EDITION

To my darling wife of thirty-one years (and counting), Beth—the Dido Twite of her generation!

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FOREWORD

# FROM SHAYKHISM TO BABISM: A STUDY IN CHARISMATIC RENEWAL IN SHIʿI ISLAM

Ph.D. Dissertation by Denis Martin MacEoin
King's College, Cambridge

The present study seeks to explore a neglected but important development in the history of Iranian Shiʿism in the period immediately preceding the beginning of full-scale Western economic and political penetration. Shiʿism has, in general, not witnessed the emergence of significant reformers in the modern period, comparable to those of the Sunnī world. Earlier, much attention was focused on Babism and Baha'ism, but these movements are less reformist than heterodox in nature and, in the end, seek to move beyond an Islamic frame of reference altogether. This, however, is paradoxical, in that early Babism and the Shaykhī school from which it emerged both laid considerable stress on orthodoxy and on rigid Islamic practice. It is the purpose of this thesis to demonstrate the place of this paradox within the wider context of Twelver Shiʿism as a whole and to explore the role of authority claims and the interplay of charismatic and legal authority as basic factors in the emergence of the Shaykhi and Bābī movements.

The introduction discusses the relevance of the present study to contemporary events in Iran, notably the religiously-inspired revolution led by Ayatollah Khomeini. The first chapter considers the nature of authority and charisma in Shiʿism following the 'disappearance' of the twelfth Imām, analyzing the role of the religious establishment as a whole and the senior clergy, *mujtahids* and *marājiʿ al-taqlīd* in particular, as well as the place of works of jurisprudence and *ḥadīth* as sources of traditional authority; this chapter also concerns itself with a detailed discussion of developments in Shiʿism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, particularly in respect of the emergence of individual ulama as foci for routinized charisma.

It is followed by chapters on Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī (the founder of the Shaykhi school) and his successor Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī. Chapter Four deals with the main schismatic developments in Shaykhism following

the death of the latter and discusses the circumstances in which Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad Shīrāzī (the Bāb) established his position as the principal claimant to leadership of the school. Chapter Five approaches the question of early Babi doctrine, first by describing and analyzing the earliest writings of the Bāb then by a detailed consideration of his various claims in the early period. In the final chapter, the course of the Babi propaganda among the Shaykhis in Iraq is discussed, with emphasis on controversies centered on the figure of Qurrat al-ʿAyn, a woman who became the leading *ʿālim* of the religion; the Shaykhi reaction to Babism, divisions within the early Babi community, first steps taken by Qurrat al-ʿAyn and her followers towards the abrogation of the Islamic *sharīʿa*, and the Babi rejection of Shaykhism are all discussed.

# PREFACE TO 1979 THESIS

## Sources

In writing the present dissertation, I have drawn on a wide variety of manuscript and printed sources in Persian, Arabic, English, French and, to a lesser extent, other European languages. As regards Shīʿī Islam, general Qajar history, and other background topics, I have relied exclusively on printed materials. For Babism, I have drawn widely on manuscripts located in Cambridge University Library (mostly in the E. G. Browne Collection), the British Library, the Iranian National Bahaʾi Archives in Tehran, the International Bahaʾi Archives in Haifa and a few private collections. I have discussed at length the relevant materials in "A Revised Survey of the Sources for Early Babi Doctrine and History" (see bibliography) and more briefly in this dissertation. [The "Revised Survey" has since been published as *Sources for Early Babi Doctrine and History*—see bibliography.] I have also made use of British consular and diplomatic materials kept in the Public Record Office, London; extensive research on these for the purpose of locating references to Shaykhism and Babism has been carried out over a period of several years by my friend and colleague, Dr. Moojan Momen, to whom I am most grateful for his permission to refer to his Xerox copies and notes. Since large amounts of the main Shaykhi sources have been printed, I have made only limited use of manuscripts for this aspect of my research.

The printed materials for Babism include large numbers of books, many of them secondary, published by the Azalī Bābīs and the Bahaʾis in Iran. Since these books cannot be obtained through the normal channels they are not generally available anywhere but in private hands; thanks to the kindness of my friends over several years, I have been able to build up an almost complete library of these works. Particular mention should be made here of the Azalī editions of several important works of the Bāb and to Mīrzā Asad Allāh Fāḍil-i Māzandarānī's *Tārīkh-i ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq* (volume 3), which contains copious partial and complete quotations from early Babi literature. Even less readily obtainable are copies of facsimile reproductions of manuscripts in the Tehran Bahaʾi archives [Iran National Bahaʾi Archives], distributed to a

very limited group of subscribers some years ago. The European printed materials by Edward Granville Browne, Arthur Comte de Gobineau, A.-L.-M. (Louise Alphonse Daniel) Nicolas and others are generally well known and available in most serious libraries; I have used them widely, but with great caution, since they are often inaccurate and certainly much outdated.

Later Baha'i-produced materials in Persian or English are generally of little value for Babi history or doctrine, but I have made careful use of Shoghi Effendi's edited translation of Nabīl-i Zarandī's *Tārīkh-i Nabīl*[1] (the original text of which has not yet been published in any form) and several recent historical works by Muḥammad-ʿAlī Malik Khusravī (Nūrī), Muḥammad ʿAlī Fayḍī, and Ḥasan Muvaqqar Balyuzi. The main printed materials for Shaykhism may be found adequately catalogued in *Fihrist-i kutub-i Shaykh-i ajall-i awḥad marḥūm Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī* by Abū 'l-Qāsim ibn Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn Khān Kirmānī; this work also contains a detailed list of Shaykhi manuscripts kept in Kirman. The only European sources dealing with early Shaykhism are works by Nicolas and Corbin, but none of these is at all adequate for the purposes of serious research.

## Transliteration and dates

The system of transliteration is, with few modifications, that used by most scholarly publications in this field, and is largely based on that of *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Islam in the Modern World*. Inconsistencies necessarily occur where I am quoting or referring to materials in European languages using different systems. As ever, it is a problem combining both Arabic and Persian words and phrases in one document. For the sake of consistency, I have preferred an Arabic-based system, since it is more sensitive to the letters in both languages, but fully accept that this does not do justice to the pronunciation of Persian words, even where they are straight adaptations of Arabic originals. Those familiar with the eccentric Baha'i system of transliteration may find themselves nonplussed by this essentially academic system. I can only point out that the forms in common use by Baha'is today are inconsistent and

[1] Translated into English as *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabīl's Narrative of the Early Days of the Baha'i Revelation*. Translated and edited by Shoghi Effendi, Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1932.

problematic, and that my system will prove much more accurate for the retranscription of words back to Arabic or Persian. In the case of many names I have used full transliteration only on their first occurrence. Common place-names (Basra, Tehran) are written as they normally appear in atlases.

In the text, reference is made to Western and lunar Muslim dates, while in the bibliography, use is also made of the solar Muslim, Babi/Baha'i (*badīʿ*), and Iranian Shāhanshāhī calendars.

# PREFACE TO THE PUBLISHED EDITION

This must be the strangest of the many books I have published over the years. It is a lightly edited version of my 1979 PhD thesis, written at King's College, Cambridge and completed when I was twenty-nine years old. I'm now closer to sixty, yet re-reading and editing the text for this publication, everything seems as fresh to me now as it did then. In an ideal world, one without other commitments, it deserved a complete re-writing. When I wrote it, not much had been published in European languages about Shiʿism, Shaykhism, or Babism; today, Shiʿism has become a popular academic topic and the subject of whole conferences (let alone daily news reports from Iran and Iraq), but almost no-one but my coeval Abbas Amanat, Todd Lawson and myself has written substantially about the Babis, and no-one has taken Shaykhi studies an inch further. Heavy-handedness on the part of the governing bodies of the Baha'i religion towards academic and intellectual work has made it next to impossible for a younger generation of Baha'i scholars to emerge from that milieu, and interest in the subject from outsiders (besides myself and the Danish scholar Margit Warburg) has never been kindled (though it should not be forgotten that one of the world's leading sociologists of religion, Peter Berger, wrote his own PhD thesis on Baha'ism).

To be honest, I think it unlikely that Babism will ever be more than a peripheral topic for academics in Islam, Shiʿism, or Iranian studies. The only people to remain interested in this almost-forgotten byway of 19th-century Shiʿism are members of the Baha'i faith, and they will seldom find an honest appraisal of Babism particularly attractive.

A full re-write would have been attractive for all sorts of reasons; but my growing commitments in the years following completion of this work proved too great a drain on my energy and time even to contemplate something on that scale. I did, of course, write books, articles and encyclopedia entries on Shaykhism and Babism, all of which add up to a substantial appendix to the present book; most of them are listed in the bibliography. In these, I have looked in detail at Babi historiography and scriptural texts, Babi militancy, ritual, hierarchy, and more, up through the important phase of Middle Babism (roughly 1850 to the 1860s) and beyond. But, as the years passed and I read more, I simply

could not find time to write the longer study that this should have been. That's a shame, but I still hope the present text has enough to offer readers a further insight into the way Babism developed out of orthodox Shiʿism.

Since a majority of those who will read this book will be Baha'is, perhaps it is in order to say a little about where a work of this kind stands in relation to their beliefs and attitudes.

For my own part, I have traveled a long way since writing the thesis. I began it as a committed Baha'i and not long after its completion parted from the religion. That has been unfortunate in that some Baha'is have concluded that academic study in a secular environment and with rationalist methods is inimical to faith. As a secular humanist, I would agree that it is, but many Christians and Jews and a tiny number of Muslims would disagree. For all that, the experience of other Baha'i academics since then has reinforced that earlier conclusion in the minds of many.

This is a pity, since academic pursuits ought to be encouraged in a religious context, particularly in a religion that advocates the independent search after truth and the harmony of science and faith. The debate is no longer mine to a large degree. Within the Baha'i religion itself, controversy over these and related issues rages and takes a high toll. There can be no reason at all why sound academic study of a religion should lead to the loss of faith. Many Baha'i academics successfully combine serious scholarship with belief, just like their counterparts in several other religions. What will be lost is a naïve belief in hagiography, in literal interpretations of texts, in excessive deference to religious authorities. Those are, surely, healthy things to lose, and, indeed, Baha'is themselves regularly counsel followers of other faiths to lose them. There should be no conflict here.

My task in all this has simply been to show how an academic, scientific, and secular study of religion is possible. I have taken my cue from earlier work on religious history by Jewish and Christian scholars, as well as secular-minded academics like myself. Historical truth should not prove destructive of faith. Destruction comes when attempts are made to deny simple facts, to wrap events in a caul of mystery, to challenge what was through an appeal to what should have been. There is nothing in these pages that should disturb a faithful but intelligent Baha'i, but there is much that should challenge them.

As a simple example of how mythologizing can harm both the truth and people's ability to hold to a higher truth, I will mention something that is not in these pages. Elsewhere, I have shown calculations, based

on original histories, that demonstrate beyond a shadow of doubt that the number of Babis killed between 1844 and the early 1850s amounted to scarcely more than 3,000 persons. Even recently, the Baha'i authorities have re-affirmed the accuracy of their claim that an iconic figure—20,000—died. This is to fly in the face of all the evidence, including that of their own sources. No historian of any quality or dignity would venture beyond the figures I have given, and some might reduce them. My figures are based on a count of names and rough figures given for the four main incidents in which Babis died, together with extra figures with much smaller death counts. For there to have been a further 17,000 deaths that are unaccounted for in government, diplomatic, Babi, or Baha'i sources beggars belief. It is simply not likely that as many as 20,000 Babis even existed in Iran between 1844 and 1852, the period of the main incidents. To give some idea of how vast the discrepancy is, we need only note that 20,000 equals the number of British dead during the Battle of the Somme.

No intelligent historiography can continue where such irrational denials of the obvious occur. There is absolutely nothing to stop Baha'is recognizing those 3,000 martyrs, valuing them, or writing about them in a hagiographic fashion. They have a right to do that. What they do not have is a right to falsify or deny explicit evidence. If they ever come up with solid proof that 20,000 died, historians will be the first to welcome the new figure. That is what this is all about: respect for evidence, respect for honest conclusions based on rational considerations, respect for the adventure that scientific and academic research and writing represent.

As far as the present thesis is concerned, a few words are in order, just to make clear a few points that some readers might misunderstand. The personalities, books, doctrines and events discussed in this book have been, over the years, the subject of veneration, hagiography, and propaganda within an intense religious context ranging from vicious polemic to uncritical acceptance. Even names like "The Bāb", "Ṭāhira", or "Baha' Allāh" can trigger off reactions that have their origin in religious belief, making it difficult to engage in rational discourse about the environment in which they lived, the books they wrote, or the things they did and said. But this is an academic work, a book that started life as a PhD dissertation and has only been lightly revised. The methodology it uses, the standards by which it must be judged, and the weighting it gives to documents and persons all belong to the realms of academe and science and do not attempt or wish to be part of any religious debate.

In order to distance this work from the thought processes of true believers, I have deliberately written in a style designed to force a dislocation from the sort of pious veneration that closes the mind and leads to knee-jerk responses. Baha'i readers, if they believe in the harmony of faith and science must respect my approach or dismiss rational processes outright. Whether they do so or not is not my business. As an academic and a non-believer I have no investment in any of the people around whom my narrative is based. The Bāb is just another human being: a genius, a madman, or something in between, it is hard to tell. Shaykh Ahmad al-Aḥsā'ī and Sayyid Kazim Rashtī are simply two Shi'i clerics, one of outstanding philosophical stature, the other a learned defender of his master's name.

Modern Baha'is are not accustomed to see these figures of their founding myth handled without the kid gloves of piety. Unfortunately, the prophetic aura has no place in unbiased historiography. Throughout this book, I have tried to wean pious readers (if there are any) off their diet of romance and mysticism. They are welcome to go back to that diet once they have read, digested, and dealt rationally with my presentation of the facts. But they are not welcome to attack my findings or my presentation on the basis of what their hagiographies tell them. Hagiographies occupy a different mental plane to academic histories, and religious conviction is no substitute for hard fact in a rational context.

To further this process, I have tried to reduce the belief factor as far as possible. For example, I do not use the Baha'i system of transliteration, first because it is a very bad system, and secondly because it predisposes readers to recollect pious versions of persons and events. I call the Babi heroine Ṭāhira mainly by her earlier honorific, Qurrat al-'Ayn, because the former name is too closely associated with myth and legend to allow readers to see her freshly, to understand her, not as the "first suffragette martyr" that she never was, but as a learned and original woman who was, if I am not mistaken, the real driving force behind the Babi movement and its break with Islam. I want readers to see these things as clearly as possible, and not just revert to the cardboard cut-outs on which they have been raised.

In the text, notes and bibliography, I regularly refer to the Bāb as "Shīrāzī" because I want to place him firmly alongside all the Hamadānīs, Iṣfahānīs, Tehranis, and others with whom he lived and to whom he preached his message. I hope that, in doing so, I divest him of his magi-

cal powers and let readers come to him much as history shows us, and not as a figure outside history. It is not for me to say whether he was in reality a mere man or a manifestation of the divine. What I do not have the right to do in a book of this kind is to treat him as anything but a man, for that is all our historical material presents him as. It is the eye of faith that will render him divine if it must: the eye of reason is restricted to this mundane existence.

There are many faults in this book, and I'm sure some reviewers will take the opportunity to take me to task for them. I do ask them to be kind to the faults of youth that are still exposed raw and unhealed in these pages. As a professional writer of many years, who spends some of his days working with undergraduates and postgraduates on the structure, grammar, and style of essays and dissertations, let me apologize for the dire writing found here. The long sentences, the use of jargon, the frequent density of the style are all faults I would seek to correct in my own students, and I see no reason not to plead guilty to the failings of my student self from all those years ago. I have walked softly through these pages, however, making corrections where necessary, and improving matters of style only occasionally. Bear all this in mind as you read, and take pity on the failings of youth that seemed such shining examples of erudition at the time.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the years during which research for the present study was in progress, I became deeply indebted to numerous organizations and individuals for their help, advice, and information. Needless to say, there have been too many for me to list them all here, but it would be unthinkable not to mention here as many as possible and to ask the rest to accept my grateful thanks for their kindness and assistance. To my wife Beth, above all others, must go my abiding thanks for her unfailing support, advice, and encouragement at all stages of this work; in a very real sense, this dissertation would not have been written but for her. Not only has she kept my spirits up even when I have most despaired of finishing, but her help at all stages of the work in reading proofs, suggesting improvements, and polishing my style has been invaluable, and her patience in the midst of recurring chaos and disorder quite unflagging.

I must also express my very deep thanks to my supervisor, Professor Laurence Elwell-Sutton, for so kindly undertaking the supervision of my work at a remove of several hundred miles and for his patient understanding of my aims and methods; to the Northern Ireland Department of Education for their financial support during the first three years of my research; to the trustees of the E. G. Browne Memorial Fund and the Spalding Trusts for research grants relative to my visit to Iran in 1977; to the Universal House of Justice for permitting me to examine materials in the International Bahaʾi Archives in Haifa in 1976; to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahaʾis of Iran for permission to use manuscripts in their archives in Tehran; to Mr. Fuʿād Sānaʾī for his assistance there; to the late Mr. Ḥasan Balyuzi for his advice, encouragement, and generous loan of materials; to Ḥājī ʿAbd al-Riḍā Khān Ibrāhīmī (d. 1979) for his exceptional generosity in providing me with the publications of the Shaykhi community of Kirman and for granting me several interviews; to Mrs. Fakhr-Tāj Dawlatābādī, Mr. Nūrī Naẓarī, and other Azalī Babis in Tehran for supplying me with books and information; to Ḥājī Shaykh ʿAbbūd al-Ṣāliḥī for his information on the Baraghānī family of Qazvīn; to Dr. Moojan Momen for all our discussions over the years and for letting me make use of the fruits of his indefatigable researches in the Public Record Office and elsewhere; to Mr. [now Dr.] Peter Smith for providing ideas and suggestions over many years and for his help with my sociology (the many errors in which remain very much my own); to Mr. [now Professor] Abbas Amanat for invaluable

help during the early stages of my work; to Allen Purvis, my wife, and all the other staff of the manuscript reading room of Cambridge University Library for their kindness and assistance in coping with my many requests; to Mr. Wilfred Lockwood of the Oriental Department of Cambridge University Library for his many recommendations and untiring help in locating elusive materials; to King's College, for providing funds to assist in the preparation of the dissertation; to the Ashraf-Saysānī family of Tehran for their very great kindness and hospitality during my last stay there, and above all, to the memory of ʿAlī Ashraf Saysānī, whose death so soon after my return was a blow to us all.

## Acknowledgements for Published Edition

My thanks to Tony Lee of Kalimat Press for getting this idea of the ground, even if he and the project were scuppered by events out of his control. Moshe Sharon, formerly Professor of Baha'i Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, had the good sense to send me off to Brill. And Trudy Kamperveen at Brill took the idea on board with enthusiasm and prompted me at regular intervals to get the text ready for publication.

Finally, I cannot express too warmly my gratitude to Dr. Stephen Lambden who took time off his own studies in order to process my additional material through a variety of scanning and other procedures that still remain arcane mysteries to me. I had given up all hope of putting these materials in until he came along as a knight in shining armour.

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

## Sources

| | |
|---|---|
| INBA | Iran National Bahaʾi Archives |
| CUL | Cambridge University Library |

## Dates

All dates are Islamic (AH) or Christian (AD), usually in combination (e.g. 1260/1844). The following are exceptions to this rule:

| | |
|---|---|
| B. | *Badīʿ*: the Babi and Bahaʾi calendar |
| Sh. | *Shamsī*: the Islamic solar calendar used in Iran |
| Shsh. | *Shāhanshāhī*: the imperial calendar used in Pahlavī Iran (1975–78) |
| b. | Born |
| d. | Died |
| r. | Ruled |

# GLOSSARY

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| ʿAbbāsid dynasty | The second great caliphal dynasty in Islam. The ʿAbbāsids ruled an empire from Baghdad, from 750 until the death of the last caliph at the hands of the Mongols under Hulagu, following the capture of the capital in 1258. |
| *al-abwāb al-arbaʿa* | The "four gates": the four agents who acted on behalf of the "hidden" twelfth imam during his "lesser occultation" (*al-ghayba al-ṣughrā*), 878–941 |
| *ʿadl* | Justice |
| *aḥādīth* | Plural of *ḥadīth* (Ḥadīth) |
| *akhbār* | Traditions, sayings attributed to Muḥammad and the Imams. The Shiʾite equivalent of the Sunni *aḥādīth*. |
| Akhbārī | A mainly 18th-century school of thought in Iraq and Iran. The Akhbārīs emphasized the role of the Traditions (see *akhbār*) over independent reasoning (*ijtihād*). Opposed to the Uṣūlīs (see below). There are still remnants of Akhbārīs in Iraq, Bahrain, and the Gulf. For details visit www.akhbari.org/homepage.htm |
| *ākhund* | Term for a low-ranking member of the *ʿulamāʾ* |
| *ʿālam* | World, universe |
| *ʿālim* | Religious scholar |
| *ʿālim ʿādil* | A just scholar |
| *ʿallāma* | Very learned member of the ulama; learned in every branch of the Islamic sciences |
| *amr* | A matter, affair, or command |
| *amr Allāh* | The command, affair, or cause of God |
| Āqā | Honorific title, meaning "Sir", 'Mister' |
| *ʿaql* | Reason. The term is used very differently in classical and modern Islam and modern Baha'ism from its Western equivalent. *ʿAql* can never be used to call in question the "truths" of revealed religion. |
| *aqṭāb* | Pl of *quṭb* |

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| *arkān* | Pl. of *rukn* |
| ʿĀshūrāʾ | 10 Muḥarram, commemorated by the Shiʿa as the anniversary of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn. |
| *ʿatabāt* | Collective term for the Shīʿī shrine cities in Iraq (includes Karbala, Najaf, al-Kāẓimiyya, and Samarra) |
| *ʿawālim* | Pl. of *ʿālam* |
| *awṣiyāʾ* | Pl. of *waṣī* |
| *al-ʿawāmm* | The common people, the masses (often used in contrast to *al-ʿulamaʾ*, the learned) |
| *ayatollah* (āyat allāh) | A senior member of the ulama class; a title of 19th-century origin |
| Azalīs, or Azalī Bābīs | Followers of Mīrzā Yaḥyā Nūrī, Ṣubḥ-i Azal, appointed by the Bāb as his successor. |
| adhān | The Muslim call to prayer |
| *bāb* (pl. *abwāb*) | Gate; one of four intermediaries of the Twelfth Imam; title used by Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad Shīrāzī. A chapter in a book |
| Bābī | Follower of the Bāb (2) |
| Babism | Religion based on the teachings of the Bāb, Qurrat al-ʿAyn, and others |
| *bābiyya* | Status of *bāb;* Babism |
| Badīʿ | "New". Term applied to the Bābī and Bahāʾī calendar |
| Bahāʾiyya | Baha'ism. Religion based on the teachings of Mīrzā Ḥusayn ʿAlī Nūrī, Bahāʾ Allāh |
| Bahāʾī | Follower of Bahāʾ Allāh |
| Baqiyyat Allāh | Remnant of God. A title of the Hidden Imam |
| *baraka* | Divine grace/charisma bestowed on an individual. Used in Shiʿism and Sufism. |
| *barzakh* | An interworld, boundary between the mundane and celestial realms |
| bāṭin | Hidden, inward, symbolic: applied to inner meanings or realities; opp. to *ẓāhir* |
| Bektāshiyya | An Ottoman Turkish Sufi order |
| *bidʿa* | Innovation, a belief or practice without any precedent in the time of Muḥammad or the Imams, usually prohibited because it may represent unbelief (*al-bidʿa kufr*, "innovation is unbelief") |

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| Buwayhids (Būyids) | The first Shiʿite dynasty (945–1055) |
| caliph | Ar. *khalīfa*. Religio-political successor of Muḥammad. The first four "righteous" caliphs (Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthmān, and ʿAlī) were followed by two major dynasties (Umayyads in Damascus, then ʿAbbasids in Baghdad); later claimants to the caliphate are found in Egypt and Ottoman Turkey |
| Dajjāl | An apocalyptic figure in Islamic eschatology, probably based on the Christian Antichrist |
| Daylamites | Inhabitants of the region of Daylam in northern Iran |
| *daʿwa* | "Call". The summons to Islam that precedes or replaces holy war; Islamic missionary endeavour, proselytization |
| *dīvān* | (Ar. *dīwān*) An anthology of poems in Persian, or other oriental languages; specifically a series of poems by one author, with rhymes usually running through the alphabet |
| *fanāʾ* | "Extinction". A Sufi term used to denote the passing away of the self in God (*al-fanāʾ fi ʾllāh*) |
| *faqīh* (pl. *fuqahāʾ*) | An expert in religious jurisprudence ( *fiqh*) |
| *farmān/firmān* | Order, decree issued by a ruler |
| *fatwā* | A ruling on a point of religious law, issued by a senior cleric (in Sunnism, a mufti, in Shiʿism a mujtahid) |
| *fiqh* | Islamic jurisprudence, study of Muslim law (cf. *faqīh*) |
| *furūʿ* | In theology and religious jurisprudence—subsidiary principles |
| Ghadīr Khumm | "The Pool of Khumm". A legendary location at which the Prophet is said to have made his son-in-law ʿAlī his successor. |
| *ghālīn* | A Shīʿī term for theological extremists who go beyond what is considered reasonable in what they claim about the Prophet and Imams. The Shaykhīs and Bābīs fall into this category. |
| *ghayba* | Occultation (applied to the physical and spiritual absence of the Twelfth Imam). |

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| *al-ghayba al-kubrā* | The Greater Occultation. The period between the twelfth imam's physical disappearance in 940 and the present. |
| *al-ghayba al-ṣughrā* | The Lesser Occultation. The period between the imam's reputed disappearance in 874 and his move into a supernatural realm in 940. During the lesser occultation, it is said that the imam communicated with his followers through four gates (*abwāb*). |
| *ghulāt* | "Exaggerators". Extreme gnostic groups in Shiʿism |
| *ḥadīth* | A narrative about the Prophet, relating his words and/or deeds. The body of traditions is used as a basis for Islamic law and customary practice. There are six main Sunni collections of this material. |
| *Ḥājj* (Ar.); *Ḥājī* (Pers.) | Title given to a man who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca |
| *ḥajj* | The pilgrimage to Mecca |
| *hijra* | Flight. Westernized as Hegira. Muḥammad's flight from Mecca to Medina in 622, used as the starting date of the Islamic calendar |
| *hujja* | "Proof". |
| *ḥukamāʾ* | sg. *ḥakīm*. Philosophers, used in particular for Shiʿi philosophers of the Safavid period |
| Hurqalyā | A mystical realm where the hidden Imam is believed to reside during his greater occultation |
| *ḥurūf al-ḥayy* | "Letters of the Living", a term applied to the Bāb's first eighteen followers |
| *Ijāza*, pl. *ijāzāt* | A certificate in use among the ulama, permitting a pupil to transmit his master's teaching or testifying to his ability to exercise *ijtihād* |
| *ijmāʿ* | Consensus. A term used in both Sunnism and Shiʿism to signify the agreement of the religious establishment in matters of doctrine and law |
| *ijtihād* | The process of arriving at judgements on points of religious law using reason and the principles of jurisprudence. In theory, *ijtihād* |

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| | has fallen into desuetude among the Sunnis, but is still exercised by Shiʿi ulama of the rank of *mujtahid*. |
| Ijtihādī | Term sometimes used for the Uṣūlī school in Shiʿism. |
| *ʿilm* | "Knowledge", "science" (pl. *ʿulūm*). |
| *īmān* | "Faith". |
| imām | An honorific title applied to eminent doctors of Islam, such as the founders of the orthodox Sunni schools; any of a succession of religious leaders of the Sevener (Ismāʿīlī) or Twelver (Ithnāʾ ʿAsharī) Shiʿites, regarded by their followers as divinely inspired; a leader of congregational prayer in a mosque. |
| *Imām Jumʿa* | The Friday Imam. The leading government appointed religious leader in each city; leader of the prayer in the Friday Mosque (Masjid-i Jāmiʿ). |
| *Imāma* | The imamate. The status of being an imam. |
| *Imāmzāda* | Shrine of a descendant of one of the first eleven of the Twelver Shīʿī Imams. |
| *Ishrāqīyūn* | "Illuminationists". Platonists. A term applied to a school of Shiʿi mystical philosophers during the reign of the Safavids and, to a lesser extent, the present day. |
| Ismāʿīliyya | The Ismāʿīlī sect. A Shiʿi sect of great intellectual significance whose adherents believe that Ismāʿīl, son of the sixth Imam, was the rightful seventh Imam, and who diverge from the more numerous Twelver Shīʿa. Their imamate continues to the present day, running in the line of the Aqa Khans. |
| *isnād* | The chain of transmitters whose names, being attached to a *ḥadīth*, are thought to assure its authenticity |
| Ithnāʾ-ʿAsharī | "Twelvers". The term applied to the main body of Shiʿism. |
| Jābulsā (Jābarsā) and Jābulqā (Jābalqā) | Imaginary cities in the realm of Hurqalyā, where the Hidden Imam is believed to reside |
| *jabr* | A decree of fate, predestination |

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| Jaʿfarī *madhhab* | The Jaʿfarī school of law, i.e. the school of religious law belonging to the Twelver Shīʿa. Named after the sixth imam, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq |
| jihad | Holy war aimed at the conquest of the world for Islam and the conversion or submission of mankind; in Sufism and elsewhere, a "greater" jihad describes the spiritual struggle with the self |
| Kaaba (Kaʿba) | A cube-shaped structure in Mecca dating from the pre-Islamic era, later adopted by Muḥammad as the centre of his cult, the point (*qibla*) to which believers turn in prayer, and the focus of certain rituals forming part of the *ḥajj* pilgrimage |
| *kāfir* | "covering." An unbeliever. Pl. *kuffār*. |
| *kalām* | Speculative theology. |
| Kharijites (Khawārij) | An early Islamic century sect noted for its puritanical and extremists views, which led to the killing of any Muslims deemed to be sinful |
| *khuṭba* | The Friday sermon. |
| *kufr* | "one who covers". Unbelief (see also *kāfir* and *takfīr*) |
| *maʿād* | Resurrection. |
| *madhhab* | A school of religious law or thought; a sect. |
| *madrasa* | "Place of study". A seminary. |
| Mahdī | A term applied to the Muslim Messiah in both Sunnism and Shiʿism; in the latter, it is applied specifically to the twelfth imam, the Imam al-Mahdi. |
| Mamlūk | "Slave". A Turkish dynasty made up of slave conscripts who ruled Egypt from about 1250 to 1517. The two main branches were the Burjī and Baḥrī Mamlūks. |
| *marjaʿ al-taqlīd* (pl. *marājiʿ al-taqlīd*) | "Reference points of imitation". The highest rank within the Shiʿi clerical hierarchy, limited to a tiny handful of *mujtahids*, sometimes to only a single individual. |
| maẓhar | "Place of appearance". Applied to the imams as manifestations of the divine (*maẓāhir ilāhiyya*). In Babism applied to the Bāb and those of his followers who had received the divine afflatus. Pl. *maẓāhir*. |
| miʿrāj | The supposed "ascent" of Muḥammad to heaven, following a night journey (*isrāʿ*) from Mecca to |

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| | Jerusalem or, in earlier interpretations, from Mecca directly to the highest heaven, where he spoke with God. |
| *muʾassis* | Founder of a theological school, sect, etc. |
| *mubāhala* | Mutual execration by calling down God's curse on one's opponents. |
| *mufassir* | A Qurʾān interpreter. See also *tafsīr*. |
| *muftī* | A jurisprudent qualified to make judgements (see *fatwā*) on matters of sharīʿa law. |
| *muḥaddith* | A transmitter of religious traditions (*ḥadīth*). |
| *muḥaqqiq* | Researcher. An occasional honorary title givcn to some ulama. |
| *mujaddid* | "Renewer". A figure, always an *ʿālim*, who appears at the beginning of each Islamic century to revive the faith. Applicable in both Sunni and Shiʿi contexts. |
| *mujtahid* | One who exercises *ijtihād* or reasoning in religious and legal matters. Limited to early legists in Sunnism, the term is used much more widely in Shiʿism, where it applies to a category of ulama who exercise authority in the absence of the hidden Imam or his earthly agents. |
| Mujtahidī | A term sometimes used to designate the Uṣūlī branch of Twelver Shiʿism. (Cf. Ijtihādī.) |
| *muqallid* | "Imitator", follower. A term applied to the mass of Twelver Shiʿis, who are required to obey the rulings of one or another *marjaʿ al-taqlīd* (see above). (Cf. *taqlīd*.) |
| *murawwij* | "Propagator" (of the faith). An honorific title given to the leading cleric of each century (cf. *mujaddid*). |
| *murshid* | Guide. The head of a Sufi order, equivalent to *shaykh* or *pīr*. |
| *mutakallim* | Theologian. |
| *naṣṣ* | The verbal direct appointment of each imam by his predecessor |
| *nāʾib* | "Deputy". A representative of the twelfth Imam. Pl. *nuwwāb*. |
| *al-Nāʾib al-ʿĀmm* | A leading *ʿālim* who acts as a "general" representative of the Imam without specific appointment by the Imam in person. |
| *al-Nāʾib al-Khāṣṣ* | A representative of the Hidden Imam appointed by the Imam himself (such as the four *abwāb*). |

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| Niʿmatu'llāhī | An Iranian Shiʿi Sufi order founded by Shāh Niʿmat Allāh Valī 1330–1431 |
| Nizārīs | A branch of the Ismāʾīlī Shīʿa founded in Iran in the 12th century and better known as the Assassins (from Ḥashshāshīn, hashish users). The Nizārī line of imams represents the main branch currently led by the Āqā Khāns. |
| *nujabāʾ* | "Nobles". A species of Shiʿi saint. Sg. *najīb*. |
| *nuqabāʾ* | "Aristocrats". Another species of Shiʿi saint. sg. *naqīb*. |
| Pasha/Bāshā | Formerly a provincial governor or other high official of the Ottoman Empire, placed after the name when used as a title. |
| Qāʾim/ al-Qāʾim bi 'l-Sayf | "He who will rise up"/ "he who will rise up with the sword": a title of the Hidden Imam in his persona as the Mahdi and world-conquerer. |
| Qājār | Turkomen tribe which gained the Iranian throne in 1795 and reigned until it was replaced by the Pahlavi dynasty in 1925. |
| *qiyāma* | "Rising up". The resurrection. |
| *quṭb* | pl. *aqṭāb*. Axis. A figure in Sufism who is understood to be the perfect human being, around whom all others turn. In Shiʿism, applied to the Imam. |
| *rājʿa* | The "return" (of the dead). |
| *rāwī* | A narrator of traditions. |
| *risāla* | Tract, treatise, letter. Pl. *rasāʾil.* |
| *al-rukn al-rābiʿ* | The Fourth Support: a figure in Shaykhī theology. |
| ṣābiqūn | Precursors. The earliest followers of the Bāb (see *ḥurūf al-ḥayy*). |
| Safavid (Safavī) | Iranian ruling dynasty, 1501–1736. |
| *safīr* | See *sufarāʾ* |
| Ṣāḥib al-Zamān | The Lord of the Age, a title of the hidden Imam as Qāʾim. |
| Sayyid | Ar. Sir, Mister, lord. A descendant of the Prophet. Often as Sīdī, a title given to Sufi saints in North Africa. |
| Shāh | "King". Comes at the end of the personal name. Also used at the beginning of the names of some Sufis and *qawwālī* singers. |

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| *sharīʿa* | The body of religiously-ordained and -sanctioned legislation set down in the books of the four Sunni law schools and the Jaʿfarī school of the Shīʿa |
| Shaykhī | A follower of Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsāʾī, then Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, then the Kerman-based shaykhs of the Ibrāhīmī family, and today the Iraq-based leadership. |
| Shaykh al-Islām | A high-ranking state position awarded to senior clergy under the Ottoman, Safavid, and Qajar dynasties. |
| *silsila* | "Chain". The chain of transmission for sacred traditions. |
| *sufarāʾ* | "Ambassadors"; a term for the agents of the hidden Imam. Sg. *safīr*. |
| Sufism | The varied system of Islamic mysticism characterized by personal devotion and numerous orders or brotherhoods, by liturgical traditions and hierarchies distinct from those of orthodoxy, but by the 19th century embraced by a majority of Muslims in many countries such as Morocco, Egypt, and Turkey. |
| Sunna | The body of traditional Islamic law accepted by most orthodox Muslims as based on the words and acts of Muḥammad. The term is also used to describe actions not strictly Islamic such as female genital mutilation. |
| Sunnism | Ar. *Ahl al-sunna*, People of the Sunna, descriptive of the majority branch of Islam defined by the Ḥanbalī, Ḥanafī, Shāfiʿī, and Mālikī law schools, devotion to the Caliphal principle, and rejection of the premises of Shiʿism. |
| *sūra* | A "chapter" of the Qurʾān, following an arbitrary division during the early period, when scattered passages were supposedly collected into a single volume. |
| *tafsīr* | Exegesis of whole or part of the Qurʾān. |
| *taḥrīf* | The doctrine that the Torah and Gospels have been corrupted by Jewish and Christian religious leaders |
| *takfīr* | Rendering someone/something part of unbelief; a formal declaration that someone is or has become an unbeliever or apostate. |

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| *taqiyya* | Dissimulation of one's religious beliefs. A practice designed in principle in order to protect a believer's self, family, or property from harm. Also used in time of jihad to mislead the enemy. It is often described as a specifically Shiʿī practice, but *taqiyya* is allowed in Sunnism too. |
| *ṭarīqa* (Pers. *ṭarīqat*) | "Path". A Sufi order established by a particular saint, having its own body of mystical teaching, conventual rules, liturgy, and hierarchy. |
| *taʿziyya* | "Condolence". A form of passion play depicting the various stages of the Karbala debacle and the death of the Imam Husayn |
| *ṭālib* | Lit. *ṭālib al-ʿilm*, "a seeker after knowledge". A religious student at a *madrasa*. Pl. *ṭullāb*; Pers. pl. *ṭālibān*. |
| Twelver Shiism | See Ithnāʾ ʿAshariyya. The chief form of Shiʿi Islam. |
| *umma* | The international community of all Muslims, starting with the original body of believers established by Muḥammad at Medina. Sometimes translated as the "nation" of Islam. In fact, the concept of the nation state is wholly alien to the religion. |
| *uṣūl* | Principles, bases. (Sg. *aṣl*.) |
| *uṣūl al-fiqh* | Principles of jurisprudence used for arriving at a judgment in religious law. |
| Uṣūlī | The dominant school of thought in Shiʿa Islam since the 19th century. |
| Wahhābism | A puritanical and radical school of Islam that came to power twice in Saudi Arabia, where it is still the dominant form of the faith. Through Saudi patronage, Wahhabism has extended its influence throughout the Islamic world and sustained modern fundamentalist tendencies and movements. The Wahhābīs are vehemently opposed to both Sufism and Shiʿism. |
| *wakīl* | "Appointed representative", "agent". In pl., a network of Shiʿi activists. Pl. *wukalāʾ*. |

*walī* "Custodian, guardian, defender". The term has a broad legal use, and in Shiʿism is used with reference to the imams. In Sufism, it refers to saints. Pl. *awliyāʾ*.

*walī al-amr* The "guardian of the cause [of God]", a Shiʿi expression used for the twelfth Imam.

*waḥy* Direct revelation from God vouchsafed to a Prophet or, in Shiʾism, the imams as epiphanies of the divine (*maẓāhir ilāhiyya*)—see *maẓhar*.

*waqf* Islamic territory won by conquest. Property or other goods established or given for religious and related purposes (such as schools, hospitals, madrasas, etc.) and deemed inalienable.

*wilāya* The status of guardianship in legal and spiritual terms (see *walī*).

*ẓāhir* "Outward", literal. Opp. to *bāṭin*.

*ziyāra* "Visitation". A pilgrimage made to the shrines of the Imams, imāmzādas, and Sufi saints.

*ziyāratnāma* A prayer to be recited during a *ziyāra*.

*ẓūhūr* Appearance, manifestation. The appearance of the divinity in human form.

EPIGRAPH

An intellectual hatred is the worst.
W. B. Yeats
*A Prayer for My Daughter*

PART ONE

# FROM SHAYKHISM TO BABISM
# A STUDY IN CHARISMATIC RENEWAL IN SHIʿI ISLAM

# INTRODUCTION

Recent events [as of 1979] have vividly demonstrated the continuing power of religion as a force to be reckoned with in the life of the Iranian people. Economic frustrations, social disadvantage, and political oppression may, as always, have been major spurs goading the masses to revolution, but it was in devotion to Shiʿi Islam and enthusiasm for the religious leadership (the learned or *ʿulamāʾ*) who led them that they found a rallying-point and an effective means of channeling their demands for change. More than that, religious feelings of outrage at modernization, moral decline, and loss of religio-national identity, coupled with the fervor produced in the Shiʿi mind by the themes of martyrdom and suffering, proved perhaps the most important elements in driving men and women onto the streets. It is the fundamentally religious character of the Iranian Revolution which has excited the most comment and caused the most mystification abroad.

The role of religion as a catalyst in revolutionary movements is well known,[1] not least in Iran, yet it is surprising how many otherwise perceptive commentators failed, even at the eleventh hour, to appreciate fully how critical a factor traditional Shiʿism might become among the forces of opposition to the Pahlavī regime.[2] Now that the revolution has taken place—however long it may survive in a world its leaders seem little fit to cope with—the eyes of scholars and journalists alike are turned towards Qum and the newly-powerful ranks of the Shiʿi ulama; but it may be much to hope that sharp vision will replace short-sightedness overnight and that those unfamiliar with the dynamics of Shiʿi piety and political messianism will readily grasp the principles and forces involved in this most medieval of all modern revolutions. Doubtless the secular forces present throughout this period of upheaval—those most amenable to study by Western political scientists and commentators—shall be subjected to searching and

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[1] See Guenter Lewy, *Religion and Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press), 1974.

[2] Notice, for example, the scant space devoted to the religious element in the chapter on opposition in Fred Halliday, *Iran: Dictatorship and Development* (Harmondsworth: Penguin), 1979.

competent dissection and analysis, but one may, I think, expect that many will find it more difficult readily to come to terms with the purely religious features of the revolution (insofar as these may be genuinely abstracted from the secular factors).

Guenter Lewy and others[3] have argued cogently against a narrow Marxist or quasi-Marxist interpretation of sectarian and millenarian revolt as "phenomena of an ongoing class struggle in societies within which the class conflict has not yet become conscious,"[4] maintaining that "medieval heresy in all its diversity should be treated as genuine religious dissent rather than purely as a manifestation of the class struggle"[5] and that "in the case of millenarian sentiments and movements, the Marxist thesis is similarly unsupported."[6] Christopher Hill, although himself a Marxist, has similarly stressed the autonomy of religious and intellectual factors in the English revolution. It is doubtless this failure to recognize that religious and ideological factors may be more than a mere superstructure erected on an economically-determined basis that has led Fred Halliday and others to leave them out of their calculations in evaluating the modern history of Iran, whatever the value of a Marxist historical approach in other instances. This is all the more tragic in that Shiʿi Islam presents the historian and the sociologist with one of the more compelling examples of a religio-political symbiosis in which religious elements figure with a degree of autonomy and self-directedness rarely found elsewhere.

This is not to suggest that the role of religion has been ignored in studies of contemporary and pre-contemporary Iran. The work of Algar, Keddie, Lambton, and others shows a perfect grasp of the importance of the religious phenomenon and a keen appreciation of the part it has played since Safavid times in moulding the political and social destiny of the Persian people. As a basis for comprehending the forces behind recent and, doubtless, future, events the studies of the above writers are likely to be unsurpassed for some time to come. In analyzing the nature of relations between church and state on the one hand and the impact of modernization on the religious classes an their response to it on the other, they have identified many of the strands of thought

[3] See Lewy, *Religion and Revolution*, pp. 104–7.
[4] Werner Stark (1910–1985), quoted in ibid., p. 105.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid., pp. 104–105.

and belief out of which Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and his zealots wove their web of rebellion and revolutionary change.

Yet certain areas remain dim or even dark, whatever the light shed by recent happenings, not least of which is the question of the relationship in Shiʿism between charisma and authority and, in particular, the manner in which charismatic renewal takes place within the context of Shiʿism as an orthodox system. Closely linked to this question are others such as the role of the ulama during the period of the Imām's occultation, the continuance of the messianic impulse among the Shiʿi masses, and the means whereby orthodoxy and heterodoxy are distinguished and counterpoised. A careful reading of Khomeini's *Vilāyat-i faqīh* will reveal just how significant these and related factors are for an understanding of the roots of Shiʿi Islam in the modern world.

Recent developments in Iranian Shiʿism, theoretical and actual alike compel us to re-evaluate many earlier developments, both for the clarity they may give to subsequent events and for the opportunity to assess past ideas and movements anew from the perspective of the present. "It has become necessary," writes John Obert Voll, "to reexamine the significance of many movements in the light of recent events. This has become an activity of special import. Geoffrey Barraclough has suggested a reason for this: "Today it is evident that much we have been taught to regard as central is really peripheral and much that is usually brushed aside as peripheral had in it the seeds of the future."[7] An excellent case in point is that of Babism and its antecedents. Almost from its inception the object of curiosity in Europe, the Babi movement drew the interest of contemporary observers as a potential force for religious and social change in Iran and, perhaps, elsewhere in the Islamic world. It was, as it were, the Iranian Revolution of its day. But even by the time of the Comte de Gobineau (whose *Religions et philosophies dans l'Asie centrale*, first published in 1865, popularized the movement throughout Europe), Babism was, in the political sense at least, a spent force. In 1910, Edward Granville Browne, who had devoted a considerable part of his career to the study of Babism, and who, as late as 1893, had expressed the belief that it might "still not improbably prove an important factor in the history of Western Asia,"[8] now conceded that

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[7] John Voll, "The Sudanese Mahdī: Frontier Fundamentalist," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (Cambridge) vol. 10 (1979), p. 145.

[8] Edward Granville Browne, introduction to *The Tārīkh-i-Jadīd, or New History of Mīrzā ʿAlī Muḥammad the Bāb*, by Mīrzā Husain Hamadānī; translated by Edward Granville Browne (Cambridge: The University Press, 1893), p. vii.

"the centre of interest in Persia has shifted from religion to politics."[9] Babism as a revolutionary alternative was no longer even a remote possibility and, whatever relative success it may have had abroad in the form of the Baha'i movement, it has continued to remain far removed from the political and social life of Iran.

As Browne's fascination for Babism faded, so too did that of other scholars: before long, the Babi episode had been relegated to a minor place as a passing convulsion of no long-term importance for the historian. This attitude is expressed succinctly by Algar, who writes that "Babism was ultimately no more than a side issue in the Qajar history."[10] This is certainly true in the obvious sense that the Babi movement was defeated militarily, suppressed, driven underground, and transformed into a quietist religion seeking converts in the West. But recent events suggest that, in many ways, Browne's early enthusiasm for the Babis was not entirely misplaced. In its later development as a heterodox sect, its metamorphosis into the Baha'i religion claiming a new faith independent of Islam, its rejection by the majority of Shi'i Muslims, and its lasting incapacity to become a powerful force in the land of its birth, Babism clearly appears as an aberration unrepresentative of contemporary Shi'ism in Iran. But this obscures the fact that, in its earliest days, Babism was a highly conservative, orthodox, and even reactionary religious movement (albeit extreme in certain respects) which emerged from a milieu of Shi'i pietism developed in the Shaykhi school. Far from being uncharacteristic of the mainstream of Shi'ism, the Babi sect—in its early stages at least—displays for us in exceptionally sharp relief many of the principal features of Shi'i doctrine and practice which lie at the very roots of contemporary religious life and thought in Iran. It is vital to bear in mind that neither Babism nor Shaykhism was a movement of dissent which sought to be consciously heretical over against a "corrupt" established church; both Shaykhis and early Babis saw themselves (as the Shaykhis still do) as pious, devoted, and wholly orthodox Shi'i Muslims. They did not reject but were rejected.

Babism is really the last of the great medieval Islamic movements. It is of unusual importance for us in that it passed through all the major

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[9] Edward Granville Browne, introduction to *Kitāb-i Nuqṭatu'l-Kāf, Being the Earliest History of the Babis*, by Ḥājī Mīrzā Jānī Kāshānī. Edited by Edward Granville Browne (Leiden: E. J. Brill; London: Luzac, 1910), p. xlix.

[10] Hamid Algar, *Religion and State in Iran 1785–1906: The Role of the Ulama in the Qajar Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 151.

phases of its development in the period before Western pressures on Iran became too great to be ignored. Neither Shaykhism nor Babism itself displays the least sign of having been in any sense a reaction against Western encroachment or the growing secularization of Iranian society. A fresh look at both movements, then, may be expected to reveal much that cannot be learnt even from the Tobacco Rebellion or the 1979 revolution, much that was significant in the Persian religious mind on the eve of Western involvement.

Whatever the external economic and political forces which molded it, Babism may be said to represent the last example of an unselfconscious expression of Shiʿi pietism and messianic revolt untainted, as it were, by the context of modernism. As a movement which almost succeeded in overthrowing the Qajar dynasty and establishing a new, theocratic state in its place, and as the only sizeable Shiʿi millenarian movement of the modern period, Babism has for too long been suffered to linger as something peripheral in the history of post-Safavid Iran. It is time for it to be returned to its rightful place as one of the most thought-provoking and controversial movements to arise in the Islamic world in recent centuries. Perhaps the present study will help re-awaken an awareness among those concerned with the study of Shiʿism and Iran of the importance of Babism as an element to be considered in their research.

[While I was writing my thesis in Cambridge, Abbas Amanat was working on his at Oxford. Our finished works have much in common, and today they remain the only full-length studies of Babism, alongside those of Browne. Abbas later published his thesis in book form, as *Resurrection and Renewal*,[11] and this publication will now join it to form an academic basis for future work on the subject. Amanat provides an incisive account of Babism, less as a religious sect than as a political and social movement expressed in religio-magical terms, using prophecy to set a political agenda. This agenda was, in many ways, a reaction to new pressures on the Iranian political and religious establishments that came from European and Russian encroachment on territory and authority. Similar pressures came to squeeze the Iranian economy, as a result of shifts in the balance of trade owing to British control of India and Russian involvement in Central Asia.

[11] Amanat, Abbas. *Resurection and Renewal: The Making of the Babi Movement in Iran, 1844–1850*. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1989.

Amanat's argument seem to me entirely valid, and neither of our theses invalidates the other. Where we differ is in focus alone. I have chosen to concentrate on the ways in which the Shiʿi religious hierarchy changed during this period, giving rise to an extreme expression of values and beliefs inherent in its ennoblement of the clerical classes. The astute reader should read both books together in order to form a fully rounded picture of the role of Babism in its several contexts. If the Babis are to be treated as proto-revolutionaries with clear social and political aims, they should also be seen as some sort of advance movement for modern messianic Islam in general.]

CHAPTER ONE

# THE RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

The pronouncement of a heresy charge (*takfīr*) against Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī from about 1822, and the subsequent rejection of the Shaykhi school—despite vigorous declarations by its various leaders as to its absolute orthodoxy—by the mainstream of Twelver Shiʿism, have tended to obscure the originally close links of Shaykh Aḥmad with the representatives of Shiʿi orthodoxy and the early development of his school as a major element in the resurgent Shiʿism of the early Qajar period. Although the French scholar Henry Corbin went to considerable pains to demonstrate the position of Shaykhism as the latest and, for him, profoundest development of the metaphysical tradition within Iranian Islam,[1] his emphasis on the theosophical elements of the school and its association with what has always been at best a suspect yet tolerated strand in Shiʿi thought has again clouded both the real reasons for al-Aḥsāʾī's "excommunication" and the place of his thought within the orthodox development of Shiʿism in the first years of the Qajar restoration. More seriously, perhaps, Corbin's attempt to portray the Shaykhi school as a consistent and homogeneous movement from the time of al-Aḥsāʾī to that of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Riḍāʾ Khān Ibrāhīmī [died 1979, ed.], the last Kirmānī head of the school, has concealed several important shifts in doctrine and avoided the problem of changing relationships between the Shaykhi community and the main body of Shiʿism, as well as the influence of these fluctuations on the expression of doctrine in the literature of the school.

Not only Shaykh Aḥmad and his successor Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, but also Sayyid ʿAlī-Muḥammad Shīrāzī, the Bāb (1819–1850), in many of his early works, specifically and categorically condemned as unbelievers

[1] See Henry Corbin, *En Islam iranien* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971–2), vol. 4, pp. 205–300; idem, *Terre céleste et corps de resurrection de l'Iran mazdéen à l'Iran shîʾite* (Paris: Buchet/Chastel, 1960), pp. 183–7, 281–401; idem, "L'École Shaykie en Théologie Shîʾite," *Annuaire—École Pratique des Hautes Études, Section—Sciences Religieuses* (Paris) (1960–61), pp. 1–59. In *Terre céleste* (p. 183), Corbin observes of the Shaykhi school "qu'elle marque une revivification puissante de la gnose shîʾite primitive et des enseignements contenus dans les traditions remontant aux saints Imâms."

Ṣūfīs, philosophers (*ḥukamāʾ*), "Platonists" (*ishrāqiyūn*), and others,[2] while all three laid much emphasis on the 'orthodox' nature of their doctrines. As we shall see, the Babis at the inception of the sect were almost as notable for their rigorous orthodoxy and orthopraxy as they were later to become known for their extreme heterodoxy. Later writers, concentrating on the "heretical" elements in Shaykhi and Babi teaching, have lost sight of the powerful bond that existed in both cases with traditional Twelver Shiʿi teaching, and have failed to explore the relationship between the Shaykhi and Babi movements on the one hand and orthodox Shiʿism on the other. The tendency of later writers to ignore or play down the significance of Shaykhism and Babism has likewise helped draw attention away from the fact that both movements were an integral feature of the development of Shiʿism in Iran during the Qajar period, and that the shaping and exposition of Shaykhi and Babi doctrine owed as much to the general conditions of the period as did the molding of what was considered as orthodox thinking. Before attempting to consider Shaykhism and Babism as separate phenomena, therefore, it will be essential first to survey briefly the religious background against which they developed.

Although the main area of investigation for our present purposes will be the developments in Shiʿi thought in Arab Iraq and Iran in the second half of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century, it seems to me both practical and theoretically sound to begin with a discussion of certain earlier, more general developments in Shiʿism. To be specific, I propose to reconsider briefly the religious history of Shiʿism in the period following the "occultation" of the twelfth Imām in 260/872 in terms of charismatic and legal authority and the routinization of charisma. I intend to make such a reappraisal, not in the hope of contributing anything original to the discussion of Weberian

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[2] "He [Shaykh Aḥmad] opposed the Platonists, the Stoics, and the Aristotelians (*ḥukamā-yi ishrāqīyīn wa rawāqīyīn wa mashāʾīn*) on most questions, and insisted on refuting them and demonstrating the falsity of their arguments", (Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, *Dalīl al-mutaḥayyirīn* ([s.l.: s.n.], 1276 [1859]), p. 21; cf. ibid., pp. 39, 50–2.) See also Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ al-ziyāra al-jāmiʿa al-kabīra* (Tehran, 1267 [1850]), part 1, pp. 24, 70; Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, introduction to his translation of the *Ḥayāt al-nafs* by Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī, 2nd ed. (Kirman, 1353 Sh [1974]), pp. 5, 10–11; idem, *Risāla-yi uṣūl al-ʿaqāʾid*, vol. 4, *Iran National Bahaʾi Manuscript Collection* (Tehran: Muʾassasa-yi Millī-yi Maṭbūʿāt-i Amrī, [c. 1977]), pp. 10, 13, 61–2, 63–4, 202; Ḥājj Muḥammad Bāqir Hamadānī, *Kitāb al-Ijtināb* ([s.l.: s.n.], 1308 [1890]), pp. 113–4. For the views of the Bāb on these groups, see various *khuṭub* in Iran National Bahaʾi Archives (INBA) 5006 C, pp. 317–35, 339–40, 354–63.

or post-Weberian theory (for which I am far from qualified), but to provide a focus for certain key ideas which, as will be seen, occupy quite prominently the stage of Shiʿi thought during the period of my main study. The issues of authority, charisma as invested in specific individuals, the "polar motif", the role of *ijtihād* and the development of *fiqh*, millenarian expectation, and the relationships between the Imām, the ulama, and the body of the Shīʿa, are all central to any discussion of the emergence of Shaykhism and Babism.

## Charismatic and Legal Authority in Imāmī Shiʿism

The few writers who have discussed Shiʿism as a charismatic movement have concentrated on the question of the legitimization of the authority of the Imāms (varying in number according to the sect in question),[3] generally contrasting the charismatic nature of that authority with the legal authority of Sunnism or the charismatic nature of the Sunni community. Early Shiʿism is a clear and useful example of extended hereditary charismatic leadership, and there is certainly much value in discussing the Imāms as almost classic "bearers" of Weberian charisma of this type. To restrict ourselves to the period of the Imāms, however, is to avoid dealing with the much more complex set of issues which centre around the vital question of how Shiʿism came to terms with the abrupt loss of a living bearer of absolute charismatic authority on the supposed disappearance of the twelfth Imām, Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan (b. 868). The initial and fairly typical response was the attempted "routinization" of the charisma of the Imām in the persons of four successive individuals: Abū ʿAmr ʿUthmān ibn Saʿīd al-ʿUmarī, his son Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad al-ʿUmarī (d. 305/917), Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ Nawbakhtī (d. 326/937), and Abu 'l-Ḥusayn ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Samarrī (d. 329/ 941). These are the four "gates" (*abwāb*), "representatives" (*nuwwāb*), or "ambassadors" (*sufarāʾ*) who communicated between the Imām and his followers.

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[3] See, for example, Bryan S. Turner, *Weber and Islam: A Critical Study* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), pp. 84–91; W. Montgomery Watt, "The Conception of the Charismatic Community in Islam," *Numen* (Leiden) vol. 7 (1960), pp. 77–90; W. Montgomery Watt, *Truth in the Religion: A Sociological and Psychological Approach* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1963), pp. 115–6, 144–5.

It seems, however, that this attempt may have been less original or systematic than it is represented in retrospect by pious sources: already in the lifetimes of Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (702?–765) and other Imāms, numerous *wukalāʾ* had acted on their behalf in various regions.[4] Now, simultaneous with the four *abwāb*, other *nāʾibs* appeared in Baghdad and elsewhere, some of whom were accorded a degree of recognition, while others were rejected by the community.[5] Muḥammad Javād Mashkūr gives the names of six individuals, including the eminent Ṣūfī martyr al-Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj ( 858–922) and Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Shalmaghānī (ibn Abī ʾl-ʿĀzāqir, d. 933), whom he regards as having been false claimants to the position of *nāʾib*, and who were rejected by the majority of Shiʾis.[6] For reasons that are not clear, the innovation of living representatives was abandoned on the death of the fourth *bāb* in 940, and no attempt was made to revive it.[7]

With the abandonment of the system of direct representation, in which letters allegedly dictated by the Imām were actually written in reply to questions, charisma could no longer be "transmitted" to (or "focused" on) a single individual, and it became an urgent concern for the Shīʿa to discover new ways of legitimizing authority within the community. This legitimization seems to have taken several distinct forms.

1. Since the doctrine of the necessity of the existence of the Imām or proof (*ḥujja*) of God in every age and the impossibility of the earth being without an Imām was intrinsic to the very raison d'être of Shiʿism, it could not be abandoned without doing irreparable damage to much of its essence;[8] it was, moreover, an established article of faith that "he who dies without an Imām, it is as if he has died in the age of ignorance

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[4] Rudolf Strothmann, "Shīʿa," in *Encyclopedia of Islam* (London: Luzac; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1908–1936), p. 353.

[5] Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn al-Muẓaffarī, *Taʾrīkh al-shīʿa* (Najaf, 1352 [1933]), p. 65.

[6] Muḥammad Javād Mashkūr, *Tārīkh-i Shīʿa va firqahā-yi Islām tā qarn-i chahārum* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Ishrāqī, 2535 Sh [1976]), pp. 142–6; cf. Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, edited by Muḥammad Bāqir Bihbūdī (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyya, 1376–92 [1956–72]), vol. 51, pp. 367–81.

[7] The traditional sources maintain that the Imām addressed a last letter to al-Sāmarrī, in which he instructed him to appoint no-one in his place. See Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 51, p. 361.

[8] For traditions relating to this doctrine, see Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfi*, edited by Muḥammad Bāqir al-Bihbūdī and ʿAlī Akbar al-Ghaffārī, translation and commentary by Āyat Allāh Ḥājī Shaykh Muḥammad Bāqir al-Kamraʾī (Tehran: s.n., 1392[1972]), vol. 1, pp. 332–5; Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī, *Faṣl al-khiṭāb*, 2nd ed. (Kirman, 1392 [1972]), pp. 72–4; Muḥammad Khān Kirmānī,

(*man māta wa laysa lahu imām māta mayatan jāhiliyyatan*)."[9] It was, therefore, propounded (much as it had been in earlier Shiʿi sects faced with similar problems) that, although the twelfth Imām was hidden from sight, he remained alive in a state of occultation (*ghayba*) as the Imām and Lord of the present age (*ṣāḥib al-zamān*). Living in an interworld within but obscured from this world, the Imām could exercise his function as the maintainer of the equilibrium of the universe and the object of the active faith of the Shīʿa, with whom he remained in contact through dreams, visions, and experiential awareness of the *mundus archetypus* in which he resided.[10]

The possibility of encountering the Imām in a visionary state and of receiving direct guidance from him has played a major part in Shiʿi piety down to the present day, not only for dreamers and mystics such as those mentioned by Corbin,[11] but for many leading ulama and *fuqahāʾ* of considerably less imaginative bent. In 1302/1885, Ḥusayn Taqī al-Nūrī al-Ṭabarsī (ca. 1838–1902) wrote a work entitled *Jannat al-maʾwā*, containing fifty-nine accounts of encounters with the Imām related of numerous individuals, including men like Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī (1624–1693), al-Ḥasan ibn Yūsuf Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī (ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī, 1250–1325), Muḥammad ibn Makkī al-Shahīd al-Awwal (1333–1380), and, in the modern period, Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī ibn Murtaḍā Baḥr al-ʿUlūm (1742–1797) and Muḥammad Ḥasan ibn Bāqir al-Najafī (1788–1850).[12]

These meetings would take place in men's homes as far afield as Bahrain or Mecca, but most commonly in the Masjid al-Kūfa, the cellar in Sāmarrāʾ (where the Imām was supposed to have disappeared), the Shrine of Imām ʿAlī in Najaf, or the Masjid al-Sahla on the outskirts

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*al-Kitāb al-mubīn*, 2nd ed., [Kirman]: Chāpkhānih-i Saʾādat, 1354 Sh [1975], vol. 1, pp. 199–207.

[9] Recorded in Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī, *Rawḍat al-Kāfī* (Najaf, 1385/1965), p. 129.

[10] On the nature and significance of this interworld, see Corbin, *Terre céleste* passim. For a discussion of visions of the Imām from a later Shaykhi viewpoint, see Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn Khān Kirmānī, "Risāla dar jawāb-i Āqā-yi Niẓām al-Islām Iṣfahānī," in *Majmaʿ al-rasāʾil-i fārsī* (Kirman) vol. 8 (1352 Sh [1973]), pp. 72–103.

[11] See Corbin, *En Islam*, vol. 4, pp. 322–89.

[12] Ḥājī Mīrzā Ḥusayn Nūrī Ṭabarsī, "Jannat al-maʾwā," in Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī, *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. 53, pp. 199–336. On Nūrī see Muḥammad Muḥsin Āghā Buzurg al-Ṭihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt aʿlām al-Shīʿa* (Najaf: al-Matbaʿa al-ʿIlmiyya, 1373–88 [1954–68]), vol. 1, pp. 543–5.

of Kūfa.[13] Side by side, then, with patently other-worldly meetings in the *Jazīrat al-Khadrāʾ* or the cities of *Jābarsā* and *Jābalqā*, we find records of the Imām appearing in locations known and accessible to anyone, some associated with his earthly life, some elsewhere. It was, for example, widely reputed that "whoever shall go to the Masjid al-Sahla on forty Wednesdays shall behold the Mahdī."[14] The Greater Occultation (*al-ghayba al-kubrā*) is, in fact, seen as a natural and uncomplicated extension of the earthly existence of the Imām and his period in the *ghayba al-ṣughrā*, as is indicated by the fact that Nūrī Ṭabarsī's *Jannat al-maʾwā* has several times been published as an appendix to the volume of the *Biḥār al-anwār* dealing with the life and lesser occultation of the twelfth Imām.[15]

Remarkably little of the theoretical authority of the Imām can be said to have dissipated: he was and is alive, not only in the heart of the believer (as, for example, in certain forms of evangelical Christianity)—not merely in a supernatural realm accessible to the saint or mystic, but, potentially at least, in real places, where he has been seen by real persons. At the same time, he *is* in occultation, and it is this fact which strengthens his symbolic function. Charisma, like divine grace (*baraka*), with which it is closely associated (though not identical), would seem to be not so much something possessed by the charismatic individual as conferred on him by others: "people in fact become possessors of *baraka* by being treated as possessors of it."[16]

It is significant that, in his state of occultation, the Imām appears to function less as a figure of charismatic authority (which, in real terms, he could not be) than as a possessor of *baraka*, for in such a state the subjective focusing of the faithful becomes dominant in the charismatic relationship. Disappearance of the charismatic figure may lead to the routinization of his charisma either in hereditary charisma or charisma of office (giving "charismatic latency"), whereby "the conception of personal qualities is . . . undergoing transformation into a conception

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[13] The Hidden Imām is believed to visit this mosque every Thursday. The prophets Abraham, Idrīs, and al-Khiḍr are believed to have lived and prayed there.

[14] Nūrī, "Jannat al-maʾwā," p. 243.

[15] It was first published thus by Ḥājī Muḥammad Ḥasan Iṣfahānī (Kumpānī) in his first edition of the *Biḥār al-anwār* (see Āghā Buzurg al-Ṭihrānī, *al-Dharīʿa ilā taṣānīf al-Shīʿa* (Najaf: Matbaʿa al-Gharri; Tehran: Danishgah 1335–98 [1916–78], 19 vols.), vol. 5, pp. 159–60.

[16] Ernest Gellner, "Concepts and Society," quoted in Bryan S. Turner, *Weber and Islam: A Critical Study*, p. 68.

of a transmissible, though immaterial power which could light on the most ordinary personality and give it authority"[17]—which certainly took place in the case of the Imāms after the death of the Prophet. The further disappearance of the bearer of hereditary charisma would normally be expected to lead either to the evaporation of the group or to a further routinization of the charismatic authority in a more "church-like" organization.[18] While, as we shall see, something like this did occur, the concept of the living presence of the Imām and the belief in his return combined to postpone the process of ecclesiastical routinization.

2. Such a condition could not, however, be considered as indefinite. There would appear to be a tendency to avoid premature routinization of charisma (such avoidance is, for example, a marked feature of Babi and Baha'i history)[19] and one of the most effective means of doing this is to introduce eschatological and chiliastic themes into the charismatic perspective. That the Imām was alive presupposed his return as the messianic liberator of his *shī'a*, as in the earlier case of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya (630–700) and others. A body of traditions now grew up, attributing to Muḥammad and the first eleven Imāms statements to the effect that there would be a total of twelve Imāms and that the twelfth would be the Qā'im and Mahdī.[20] Existing traditions relating to the imminent appearance of the Mahdī seem to have been fused to

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[17] Betty R. Scharf, *The Sociological Study of Religion* (London: Hutchinson, 1970), p. 154.

[18] It is relevant to note here that one of the best examples of such further routinization following the death of the bearer of hereditary, latent charisma is to be found in the Baha'i movement after the demise of Shoghi Effendi, the *walī amr Allāh*, in 1957; the subsequent increase in organizational elements, the introduction of a vastly expanded complex of appointed officials, and the combination of charismatic and legal authority in an elected body have all resulted in a very high degree of routinization and a much more 'church-like' image. See Vernon Elvin Johnson, "An Historical Analysis of Critical Transformations in the Evolution of the Baha'i World Faith," Ph.D. diss., Baylor University (Waco, Texas), 1974. For earlier routinization in the movement, see Peter L. Berger, "From Sect to Church: A Sociological Interpretation of the Baha'i Movement," Ph.D. diss., New School for Social Research (New York City), 1954.

[19] See Berger, "From Sect to Church"; idem, "Motif messianique et processus social dans le Bahaisme," *Archives de Sociologie des Religions* (Paris) vol. 4 (1957), pp. 93–107; Johnson, "An Historical Analysis."

[20] See Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn Āl Kāshif al-Ghiṭā, *Aṣl al-Shī'a wa uṣūluhā*, 9th ed. (Najaf: [s.n.], 1381 [1962]), p. 92; Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Shi'ite Islam*, translated by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (London: Allen and Unwin, 1975), p. 190. A large number of such traditions is cited by the Bāb in his "Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar" (Manuscript in Cambridge University Library, Browne Or. MS. F. 10), pp. 44b, 45b, 46b, 48a, 49a. This question is discussed in detail in Etan Kohlberg, "From Imāmiyya

some extent with later forgeries rationalizing the fact that the Imāms must now be limited to twelve. In this way, the cessation of an earthly Imāmate with the twelfth Imām was justified and linked to what was now his personal eschatological role. In the same way the Ismailis found elaborate ways in which to rationalize the limitation of the Imāms to seven, so the Twelvers found equally elaborate means of demonstrating that the existence of twelve Imāms was, in some sense, part of the natural order of things, a symbol in the microcosm of a macrocosmic reality.[21]

Drawing on existing messianic prophecy relating to the figure of the Mahdī and on later *aḥādīth* attributed in Twelver compilations to the Prophet and first eleven Imāms, Shiʿi scholars elaborated a corpus of traditions, some vague, some highly explicit and many extremely contradictory, relating to the future return (*rajʿa*) of the twelfth Imām before the universal resurrection (*qiyāma*) as the restorer of the faith and the *mujāhidīn* who would lead the final assault against infidelity.[22] Whereas in Sunnism the Mahdī does not appear in most of the *ḥadīth* literature, and is essentially a figure of popular piety, he is for Shiʿism

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to Ithnaʾ-ʿAshariyya," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (London) vol. 39 (1976), pp. 521–34.

[21] See Rashtī. *Risāla-yi uṣūl al-ʿaqāʾid*, pp. 174–5.

[22] On the Mahdī in Sunni and, to a lesser extent, Shiʿi belief, see D. S. Margoliouth, "Mahdī," in James Hastings, ed. *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908–26); D. B. Macdonald, "Al-Mahdī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* first ed. (London: Luzac; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1908–1936); Wilferd Madelung, "Mahdī", *Encyclopedia of Islam*, new ed., (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960–), vol. 5, pp. 1230–38; Robert S. Kramer, "Mahdī", *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, New York, Oxford: OUP, 1995, vol. 3, pp. 18–19; Abdulaziz Sachedina, "Messianism", in ibid, vol. 3, pp. 95–99 On the Shīʿī concept, see A. A. Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism: The Idea of Mahdī in Twelver Shīʿism* (Albany, N.Y., 1981). On the concept in the early period, see Syed Husain M. Jafri, *The Origins and Early Development of Shiʿa Islam*. London; New York: Longman, 1979.

The most popular *Shiʿi* source for traditions on the *rajʿa* of the twelfth Imām is Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 53, pp. 1–144. An excellent systematic compilation of traditions relating to resurrection in general (*maʿād*), *qiyāma*, and *rajʿa* is to be found in Muḥammad Khān Kirmānī, *al-Kitāb al-mubīn*, 2nd ed. ([Kirman]: Chāpkhānih-i Saʾādat, 1354 Sh [1975–6]), vol. 2, pp. 115–57. Succinct accounts of this topic (which is particularly relevant to our later discussion of Shaykhi expectation) may be found in Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī, *Ḥayāt al-nafs*. Trans. Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, 2nd ed. Kirman: Matbaʿat al Saʿādat, 1353 Sh [1974], pp. 91–134 and Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī, *Irshād al-ʾawwām,* 4th ed. (Kirman: Chāpkhānih-i Saʾādat, 1380 [1960]), vol. 3, pp. 338–453. An early Babi compilation of messianic traditions, largely derived from the *ʿAwālim* may be found in an anonymous *risāla* in *Nivishtijāt wa āthār-i aṣḥab-i awwaliyya-yi amr-i aʿlā* (photocopied MS in bound format, Tehran: Muʾassasa-yi Millī-yi Maṭbūʿāt-i Amrī, [1970s]), pp. 1–196.

an integral element of orthodox faith whose return is anticipated in the works of theologians as much as in popular eschatology.

More importantly, where the Mahdī of the Sunnis is merely an unidentified man descended from the Prophet, the Messiah of the Twelver Shīʿa is explicitly identified with the twelfth Imām, now in occultation. It is in this that the *baraka* and authority of the Hidden Imām are extended indefinitely through time up to the moment of his reappearance and final victory. Since the Imām in his role as Qāʾim is as much a figure of charismatic focus as in his earthly or occult states, the postponement of his return acts in some measure as a brake on the routinization of charismatic authority. Inasmuch as the Imām—as one who is preserved (*maʿṣūm*) from sin (*maʿṣiyya*), neglectfulness (*ṣaḥw*), and even forgetfulness (*nisyān*),[23]—is the sole source of infallible guidance and legislative renewal for the Shīʿa, the promise of his advent rules out the assumption of his authority to carry out these functions by the ulama or the community acting through consensus (*ijmāʿ*).[24] The importance of this "messianic motif" for an understanding of the dynamics of Babism has been stressed by Peter L. Berger,[25] and will again be referred to by us in our discussion of the chiliastic current in the Shaykhi community on the death of Rashtī.

3. Meeting with the Imām in sleep or in a visionary state was theoretically possible for anyone, but, in practice, very few could claim such an experience. Pilgrimage (*ziyāra*) could, naturally, still be performed to the shrines of the Imāms and of Imāmzādas, or to places associated with them, and *baraka* thus acquired; but this was clearly no substitute for direct contact with the Imām or his living representative. Similarly, the Imām might, in theory, return tomorrow, but the tendency was to argue that his coming would be delayed until the world had developed and was ready for his parousia.[26] In the meantime, if the community of

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[23] Kirmānī, *al-Kitāb al-mubīn*, vol. 1, pp. 264–7; Muḥammad ʿAlī Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī, *A Shiʾite Creed: A Translation of Risalatu'l-Iʿtiqadat of Muḥammad b. ʿAli Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummi, known as Shaykh Saduq*, trans. Asaf A. A. Fyzee (London: Oxford University Press, 1942; rev. ed. World Organization of Islamic Services: Tehran (Iran), 1982), pp. 99–100.

[24] Compare Macdonald, "Al-Mahdī," p. 113.

[25] Berger, "From Sect to Church"; Berger, "Motif messianique." For a divergent view, see Peter Smith, "Millenarianism in the Babi and Bahaʾi Religions," paper presented at the third Bahaʾi Studies Seminar, Lancaster University, 7–8 April 1979.

[26] An example of this view relevant to the present study may be found in Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī, "Risāla-yi tīr-i shihāb," in *Majmaʿ al-rasāʾil-i fārsī*, vol. 1, pp. 167–81, especially pp. 178–81.

believers was not to be dispersed and a sense of purpose and guidance preserved, other, more immediate bearers of the Imām's charisma had to be found. In the corpus of Imamite *akhbār* which grew up rapidly in the period following the *ghayba*, we find several traditions which speak of the appearance of outstanding scholars and saints who will protect the Shiʿi faith from corruption and act as guides to the truth. In a tradition attributed to Muḥammad, for example, it is said that "in every generation (*khalaf*) of my people, there shall be an upright man (*ʿadl*) who shall cast out from religion the corruption (*taḥrīf*) of the extremists (*al-ghālīn*) the arrogation of the false and the interpretation of the ignorant."[27] Imām ʿAlī is recorded as stating in a sermon that

> I know that…You will not leave your earth without a proof for you to your creatures, whether outward but unobeyed, or fearful and concealed, lest your proof be made vain or your holy ones be led astray after you have guided them.[28]

In a similar tradition, ʿAlī prays to God not to leave the earth without "one who shall arise on behalf of God (*qāʾim li ʾllāh*) with proof."[29] In several traditions attributed to the Imām Jaʿfar, it is stated that:

> God shall not leave the earth without a scholar (*ʿālim*) who will know what has been increased and what has been decreased in the world; should the believers add anything, he shall turn them back from it and, should they neglect anything, he shall increase it for them.[30]

On the basis of traditions such as these and the more creative role now played by them, numbers of individual scholars were able to achieve considerable renown and to exercise a large amount of charismatic authority as the de facto leaders and defenders of the faith. As "inheritors" of the mantle of the Imāms, these individual ulama represent a significant continuation of the "polar motif" (as derived from the concept of a *quṭb* or a series of *aqṭāb* as centers of charismatic or latent charismatic authority in Islam) so characteristic of Shiʿism and so vital a feature of Babi and Bahaʾi doctrine in all its stages.[31]

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[27] In Kirmānī, *al-Kitāb al-mubīn*, vol. 1, p. 434.
[28] Ibid., p. 435.
[29] Kirmānī, *Faṣl al-khiṭāb*, p. 95.
[30] Kirmānī, *al-Kitāb al-mubīn*, vol. 1, p. 95.
[31] On the value of the polar motif in this context, see Peter Smith, "Motif Research: Peter Berger and the Bahaʾi Faith," *Religion* (London) vol. 8, no. 2 (1978), pp. 210–34.

Some individuals, born at appropriate times, acquired the name of Renewer (*mujaddid*) or Promulgator (*murawwij*) of the faith for their century, and it is significant to note that, whereas the *mujaddids* of the first and second centuries were the Imāms Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq and ʿAlī al-Riḍāʾ ibn Mūsā respectively, it was not deemed inappropriate to regard an *ʿālim*, Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī (d. 941?), as the *mujaddid* of the third century and, after him, other leading ulama.[32] The subsequent history of Twelver Shiʿism is particularly marked by the emergence of a series of outstanding scholars, for the most part associated with one or more books on technical religious subjects, such as *fiqh, uṣūl, ḥadīth*, or *kalām*.[33] Whereas the history of Sunnism is closely linked to the fortunes of dynasties and empires, or that of Catholicism much occupied with papal reigns, councils, and the founding of religious orders, Shiʿi history, largely divorced from the mainstream of events in the Islamic world, is an almost unchanging realm peopled by learned men and their books.

As we shall see, however, it was not until the thirteenth/nineteenth century that the role of the individual scholar began to take on in practice something of the charismatic significance with which it had, in theory, been endowed from the time of the lesser occultation. We shall observe how the status of the *mujtahid* develops into that of the widely-recognized *marjaʿ al-taqlīd* and ayatollah, while in Shaykhism the *rukn al-rābiʿ* (fourth pillar) concept comes to offer an original solution to the problem of charismatic authority within terms of the polar motif.

4. The doctrinal theories which have, in the past two centuries, permitted certain individual ulama of exceptional merit or personality to hold almost universal sway over the Shiʿi world were slow in developing. In the meantime, traditions such as those quoted above were generally treated together with others which imbued the body of the ulama as a whole with the authority to transmit the grace of the Imām. In a tradition attributed to the fifth Imām, Muḥammad al-Bāqir ibn ʿAlī Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn (d. 731), it is stated that

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[32] See Mullā Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ al-ʿulamāʾ* (Tehran: Intishārāti ʿIlmiyya-yi Islāmīyya, [n.d.]), p. 204.

[33] For this reason *Shiʿi* ulama are often referred to by titles incorporating the names of their most important works, such as "Ṣāḥib al-Wasāʾil", "Ṣāḥib al-Madārik", "Ṣāḥib Kashf al-Ghiṭāʾ" or even "Kāshif al-Ghiṭāʾ".

> God created a remnant of the people of knowledge who summon [men] from error to guidance, and who endure afflictions with them; they respond to the one who calls to God [i.e., the Imām] and themselves summon [others] unto God with understanding; preserve them, then… for they possess an exalted station. Their sufferings in this world are as a trust: they bring the dead to life through the book of God, and they see amidst blindness by the light of God. How many slain by the devil have they resurrected, and how many an erring wanderer have they guided.[34]

The role of the ulama during the occultation of the Imām is clearly indicated in a tradition attributed to the eleventh Imām, Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī:

> Were it not for those of the ulama who shall remain after the occultation of your Imām calling [men] unto him, producing evidences on his behalf, and striving for his faith with the proofs of God, delivering the weak among the servants of God from the snares and demons of Satan and from the traps of the wicked, there would be no-one who would not abandon the faith of God.[35]

In a variant of one of the traditions quoted in the previous section, the Prophet is recorded as stating that "righteous men (*ʿudūl*) shall bear this religion in every century, who shall cast out from it the interpretation of the false, the corruption of the extremists, and the arrogation of the ignorant, just as bellows remove the dross from the iron."[36]

Shiʿi ulama had already begun to emerge during the period of the Imāms, many of them being their pupils and companions. We may note a number of Shiʿi Qurʾān commentators (*mufassirūn*), transmitters of Ḥadīth (*muḥaddithūn*), jurisprudents (*fuqahāʾ*), and, at a slightly later date, theologians (*mutakallimūn*) who worked in this period.[37] These

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[34] Kirmānī, *al-Kitāb al-mubīn*, vol. 1, pp. 434–435.

[35] Kirmānī, *Faṣl al-khiṭāb*, p. 95.

[36] Kirmānī, *al-Kitāb al-mubīn*, vol. 1, p. 435.

[37] For general lists of early Iranian *Shiʿi* exponents of these disciplines, see Seyyed Hossein Nasr and M. Mutahhari, "The Religious Sciences," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 4, *The Period from the Arab Invasion to the Seljuqs*, ed. R. N. Frye (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 468, 472, 473–74, 478. On early Rāfiʿī scholars, including Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam (d. 807), ʿAlī ibn Maytham al-Tammār and Hishām ibn Sālim al-Jawālīqī, see W. Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973), pp. 157–62. The most comprehensive lists of *Shiʿi* scholars who were companions of the Imāms, listed under each name in turn, can be found in Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl al-Ṭūsī* (Najaf: al-Maktaba wa-al-Maṭbaʿa al-Haydariyya, 1381[1961]) and Abū ʿAmr Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Kashshī, *Kitāb maʿrifa akhbār al-rijāl*, ed. Hājī Shaykh ʿAlī

include Faḍl ibn Shādhān al-Nayshābūrī,[38] ʿAlī al-Maythamī (ʿAlī ibn Ismāʿīl ibn al-Maytham al-Tammār),[39] and Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam (d. ca. 815).[40] It is clear, however, that individuals such as these remained very much in the shadow of the Imāms, who were the infallible sources of guidance in all matters. ʿAbbās Iqbāl writes that "the Imāmiyya differed from other Islamic sects in that they always had recourse to the infallible Imām in matters of *tafsīr*, interpretation of Qurʾānic verses, and the Sunna of the Prophet."[41]

At a period when the role of the Sunni ulama was already paramount in the development of jurisprudence (*fiqh*), mastery of traditions (*ḥadīth*, pl. *aḥādīth*), and dialectical theology (*kalām*), the Shīʿa continued to depend primarily on charismatic guidance for the solution to often complex questions of a rational nature. The presence of a charismatic figure (the Imam) who is prepared to answer queries on any issue invariably inhibits the development of independent scholarship. There may very well be scholars, but they can scarcely branch out from received wisdom when there is still a living source of that wisdom.

During the era of the Imāms we do not see the emergence of a distinct body of Shiʿi ulama, free from the restraints of a living higher authority. *Kalām* in particular was much opposed, but the demands of polemic and apologetics rendered it increasingly necessary; thus, from the time of Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, Shiʿi theologians (*mutakallimūn*) began to make a gradual appearance, borrowing initially from the Muʿtazila, but later diverging strongly from them.[42] It is worth noting that many of the early Shiʿi *mutakallimūn* were "corrected" in their theories by the Imāms or their close companions[43]—clearly, the removal of the Imām or his direct representative was bound to lead to significant developments,

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al-Maḥallātī (Bombay: [s.n.], 1317 [1899]). See also Sayyid Muhsin al-Amīn al-ʿĀmilī, *Aʿyān al-Shīʿa* (Beirut: Maṭbaʿa al-Insāf, 1950–).

[38] See Abū ʾl-ʿAbbās Aḥmad al-Najāshī. *al-Rijāl* (Tehran: Markaz-i Nashr-i Kitāb, [196–?]), pp. 235–6; Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *al-Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir Al Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, 2nd ed. (Najaf: al-Maktaba wa ʾl-Maṭbaʿa al-Haydariyya, 1380 [1960]), pp. 150–1; al-Kashshī, *Maʿrifa akhbār al-rijāl*, pp. 333–7.

[39] ʿAbbās Iqbāl, *Khāndān-i Nawbakhtī*, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Kitabkhāna-yi Tāhurī, 1966), pp. 80–1, and bibliography there.

[40] See Iqbāl, *Khāndān* pp. 79–80, and bibliography there; al-Najāshī, *al-Rijāl*, p. 338; al-Ṭūsī, *al-Fihrist*, pp. 203–5; al-Kashshī, *Maʿrifa akhbār al-rijāl*, pp. 165–81; Watt, *Formative Period*, pp. 186–9; Wilferd Madelung, "Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam," in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960–).

[41] Iqbāl, *Khāndān*, p. 69.

[42] Ibid., pp. 72, 74.

[43] Ibid., p. 74.

but it was not until Naṣīr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī (1201–1274) that Shiʿi *kalām* reached its maturity.

Later Shiʿi ulama were often divided as to how they should regard these early theologians particularly in cases like those of Abū ʿĪsā Muḥammad ibn Hārūn Warrāq (d. 247/861)[44] and Aḥmad ibn Yahyā Rāwandī (d. 245/859),[45] whose true relationship with orthodox Shiʿism remains unclear; by and large, the works of these early writers are not those on which later Shiʿi scholarship came to be founded. Even in cases where retrospective opinion is favorable to earlier writers, it is clear that the supposed sense of continuity may be much less than is thought: "Later Shiʿite writers," says William Montgomery Watt, "commonly refer to men like Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam and his contemporaries as Imāmites, but it is not certain whether they used this name of themselves."[46]

Although Shiʿi scholars had taken advantage of periods of relative tolerance towards the sect, notably under the caliph Maʿmūn (786–833),[47] such intervals were few and their influence limited. The lesser occultation, however, coincided with the beginning of a period of comparative freedom for the Shīʿa in many places, under dynasties such as the Samanids, the Hamdanids, and the Shiʿi Buwayhids, who took Baghdad in 334/945, only five years after the death of the last of the four gates. The coincidence of freedom from charismatic restraint and political oppression gave a necessary impetus to the development of Shiʿi scholarship.

However, in the absence of any fully-fledged, centralized, and stable Twelver state, the religious authority of the ulama remained scattered in the various centers of Shiʿi activity, principally in Qum (which became a major center for religious studies from the time of the Buwayhids),[48] Al-Kūfa, Baṣra, Bahrain, Aleppo, Jabal ʿĀmil, and elsewhere.[49] This meant that scholars preserved a high degree of independence from the demands of functioning within a wholly Shiʿi context within a single

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[44] See ibid., pp. 84–7, and bibliography there.
[45] See ibid., pp. 87–9, and bibliography there.
[46] *Formative Period*, p. 274.
[47] Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *Shiʿite Islam*, p. 63.
[48] Heribert Busse, "Iran under the Būyids" in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 4, *The Period from the Arab Invasion to the Seljuqs*, ed. R. N. Frye (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 288.
[49] On the development of Shiʿism in these regions, see al-Muẓaffarī, *Taʾrīkh al-Shīʿa*, pp. 76–7, 108–10, 139–48, 149–60, 261–4.

state system, and were free of the hierarchical demands of a church-like structure which would be imposed by a centralized body of ulama.

This position was altered radically by the rapid emergence and consolidation of the Ṣafawī state in the early sixteenth century. "It is," writes Hamid Algar, "from the Safavid period onward that one may meaningfully talk about the existence of a body of Shiʿi ulama."[50] This had at least two major consequences: on the one hand, it led to the routinization of the inherited charismatic authority of the ulama in something resembling an ecclesiastical system in the context of a church-state symbiosis: on the other hand, and as the dynasty declined, the very large body of ulama who did not accept positions as state-appointed ecclesiastical functionaries, and who refused to recognize the legitimacy of the Safavid or any other state became highly popular with and influential over the Shiʿi masses, particularly in rural areas.

Contrary to Algar's statement that "no authority in the strict sense of the term resided in the ulama,"[51] it was precisely their ability to claim an inherited charismatic authority on behalf of the Imām and, importantly, over against the secular, illegitimate state, which gave and still gives the ulama so much of their power over the people. Ironically, therefore, the very existence of the Safavid, Qajar, and Pahlavi states did much to enhance the charismatic authority of the ulama, providing them with a political role which was clear throughout the nineteenth century and which is, perhaps, best exemplified in the part played by the clergy in the overthrow of the Pahlavi regime and their dominant role within the Islamic Republic.

It has, indeed, been fundamental to the thinking of Ayatollah Khomeini that the *fuqahāʾ* be seen as the only legitimate sources of political authority in a Shiʿi state, inasmuch as they and they alone are the successors (*jā-nishīnān; awṣīyā*) of the Prophet and the Imāms.[52] As such, they possess the same authority to rule as the latter:

> This notion that the governing powers of the Prophet were greater than those of the Amīr [ʿAlī] or that the governing powers of the Amīr were greater than those of the *faqīh*, is false and mistaken. Undoubtedly, the endowments of the Prophet are greater than those of all the world, and,

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[50] Hamid Algar, *Religion and State in Iran 1785–1906: The Role of the Ulama in the Qajar Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 5.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Rūḥ Allāh Khomeini, *Vilāyat-i faqīh dar khuṣuṣ-i ḥukūmat-i Islāmī* (Tehran: s.n., 1357 Sh./1979), pp. 74–89.

> after him, those of the Amir are greater than all; but abundance of spiritual endowments does not increase powers of government. God has granted the same powers and guardianship (*wilāyat*) which were possessed by the Prophet and the rest of the Imāms . . . to the present government [i.e., that of the ulama], except that no one individual is specified; there is simply the term: "a just scholar (*ʿālim ʿādil*)."[53]

This *wilāya* of the *faqīh* is established by a firm appointment (*naṣṣ*) from the Prophet,[54] and in this way, the need for a "guardian of the cause" (*walī-yi amr*) at all times is taken care of.[55]

5. The function of the ulama as a collective body, like that of individual clerics, as bearers of the charismatic authority of the Imām, lay relatively dormant until the late eighteenth century. In the intervening period, however, they came to inherit in a particular sense the charismatic "aura" of the Shiʿi community as a whole. Watt's somewhat untypical distinction between the "charismatic community" of the Sunnis and the "charismatic leader" of the Shīʿa only really holds true for the very earliest period.[56] From a relatively early date, the view developed that not only the Imāms but their true followers also were specially blessed, guided, and assured of salvation.[57] The charisma of the Shīʿa and its polar motif were particularly focused on the existence within the community of individuals known as "leaders" *nuqabāʾ* and "nobles" *nujabāʾ*.[58] A tradition ascribed to the eleventh Imām al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī al-ʿAskarī ( 845–872) states that "we shall send unto them the best of our *shīʿa*, such as Salmān, al-Miqdād, Abū Dharr, ʿAmmār, and their like in the age following them, in every age until the day of 'resurrection'."[59] This concept came to play an important role in the later version of the Shaykhi doctrine of the *rukn al-rābiʿ*, along with that of the ulama as agents of the grace of the Imām: "the existence of succour (*ghawth*) shall not suffice in this day without the pillars (*al-arkān*), and

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[53] Ibid., p. 64.
[54] Ibid., p. 142.
[55] Ibid., p. 49.
[56] Watt, *Truth in the Religions* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1963), pp. 67–8; cf. pp. 115–6, 144–5, where he limits this distinction to the Kharijites (Khawārij) and the early Shiʿa.
[57] There are numerous *akhbār* on this theme: see, for example, al-Kulaynī, *Rawḍat al-Kāfī*, pp. 68, 128, 180–1, 201, 300–1; Kirmānī, *al-Kitāb al-mubīn*, vol. 1, pp. 234–546.
[58] Kirmānī, *Irshād al-ʿawāmm*, vol. 4, pp. 142–449; Kirmānī, *al-Kitāb al-mubīn*, vol. 1, pp. 437–8.
[59] Kirmānī, *Faṣl al-khiṭāb*, p. 95.

the pillars cannot exist without the *nuqabāʾ* nor the *nuqabāʾ* without the *nujabāʾ* nor the *nujabāʾ* without the ulama."[60]

According to this view, the presence of the Hidden Imām is not sufficient for the needs of men, who require someone visible and tangible to aid them.[61] The ulama act as mediators for knowledge from the Imām to the masses (*al-ʿawāmm*), while the *nujabāʾ* mediate for the ulama and the *nuqabāʾ* for the *nujabāʾ*, setting up a hierarchical chain leading from men to God.[62] Definition of the role and nature of the *nuqabāʾ* and *nujabāʾ* was to form an important part of Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī's (1810–1872) refutation of the Bāb.[63]

6. All of the above are ways in which Twelver Shiʿism to some extent routinized the charisma of the Imāms from the third century. This routinization is, perhaps, most apparent in the creation of a body of ulama from the Safavid period onward and in the related development of a corpus of authoritative Shiʿi literature, showing an increasing measure of formalization and organization. During the lifetime of the Imāms, some four hundred compilations of *akhbār*, entitled *ʿAṣl*, are said to have been drawn up by Shiʿi ulama,[64] but it is clear that the actual presence of an Imām divested these of any real authority.

With the Imām in occultation however, the need to possess authoritative traditions (*akhbār*) became pressing and the "four books"—al-Kulaynī's *al-Kāfī*; Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī Ibn Bābawayh's (918–991) *Man lā yaḥḍuruhu al-faqīh*, and Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī's (995–1067) *Al-Istibṣār fi-mā ʾkhtalafa min al-akhbār* and *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām*—soon came into existence to supply this need. The production of these collections and others such as the *Nahj al-balāgha* of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn Sharīf al-Radī (969–1016) and Ibn Bābawayh's *Madīnat al-ʿilm*, as well as the inclusion in them of numerous *aḥādīth* manufactured to justify in transcendentalized terms the mundane reality of what had become Twelver Shiʿism, was both a powerful means of continuing in theory Imām-centered charismatic

[60] Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī, a*l-Fitra al-salīma*, 3rd ed. (Kirman: Maṭbaʿat al-Saʿāda. [1958]), vol. 3, p. 258.
[61] Kirmānī, *Irshād*, vol. 4, pp. 160–4.
[62] Ibid., pp. 166–75.
[63] Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī, *Izhāq al-Bāṭil* (Kirman: [s.n.], 1392 [1972]), pp. 177–262; Kirmānī, "Risāla-yi tīr-i shihāb," pp. 212–25.
[64] Iqbāl, *Khāndān*, p. 71.

authority and of routinizing, systematizing, and foreclosing the doctrinal and legal options of the Imāmī school.

Other compilations of *akhbār* continued to appear, but it is significant that the fullest, most systematic, and, eventually, the most popular of these—Majlisī's *Biḥār al-anwār*—came into being as an expression of the routinization of religious authority among the ulama during the Safavid period. It is also relevant for our present thesis to note that two of the later heads of the Shaykhi school, Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī and his son Muḥammad Khān Kirmānī (1846–1906), produced what are, in fact, two of the lengthiest, best-organized, and most comprehensive collections of *akhbār*—the *Faṣl al-khitāb* and *Al-kitāb al-mubīn* respectively.

7. The development, reassessment, and systematization of Shiʿi *fiqh* continued much longer than in Sunnism, by reason of the doctrine of continuing *ijtihād*, and is, in theory at least, an unending process. The relationship of *fiqh* to the problem of retaining the authority of the Imām is made clear by Muḥammad Ḥusayn Muẓaffarī: "After them [the four gates] access to him [the Imām] and personal acquisition of guidance from him (*al-akhdh ʿanhu raʾsan*) was terminated; the derivation of laws (*al-aḥkām*) was limited to *ijtihād*."[65] This close relationship between *imāma* and *ijtihād* did not develop immediately, however—whatever retrospective Shiʿi theorizing may suggest. One of the earliest works of Shiʿi *fiqh* is supposed to have been a book written by the second *nāʾib*, Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad al-ʿAmrī, at the dictation of the Hidden Imām[66]—a clear indication of how difficult it was to break away from the influence of the original source of charismatic authority even in the development of a new source of legal authority.

The classic Sunni distinction between *ʿilm*, knowledge of Qurʾānic and *ḥadīth*-based legislation, on the one hand, and *fiqh*, independent rational development of points of law, on the other, existed in a particularly marked form in the case of Shiʿism. The Imāms, in particular Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, had functioned as the sole authorities according to whom Shiʿi law was developed, and for some time Shiʿi *fiqh* consisted largely of compiling the *akhbār* collections referred to above. Al-Kulaynī, Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Mufid (d. 1022), Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (Shaykh al-Tāʾifa, 995–1067), and others studied and wrote

[65] Ibid., p. 65.
[66] Mashkūr, *Tārīkh-i Shīʿa*, p. 139.

extensively, but the first major works on *fiqh* were those produced by Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī, still regarded as the leading authority on *uṣūl*.

Al-Ḥillī was also the first Shiʿi *faqīh* to lay emphasis on the role of independent reasoning (*ijtihād*) as a continuing force for legislative renewal in Shiʿism, although he was not strictly the earliest to mention it.[67] His works have the distinction of being based firmly on independent research and rational discussion, a point which Muḥammad Bāqir Khwānsārī makes in contrasting them with those of the later Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī (1627–1699).[68] Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī and his successors laid, as we shall see, a basis which made it possible for Āqā Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Akmal Bihbahānī (1118–1207/1706–1792), in the middle of the eighteenth century, to establish Uṣūlī *fiqh*, based on a strongly-developed sense of the role of *ijtihād*, as the central bearer of legal authority within Shiʿism.

Karīm Khān Kirmānī notes that "in these days… the knowledge of *fiqh* and the outward form of the *sharīʿa*… has reached a state of perfection" and that "the beginning of the appearance and spread of the *fiqh* and *akhbār* of the Shīʿa was at the end of the eleventh century, that is, one thousand one hundred; now (1268/1851) it is less than two hundred years that these manifest Shiʿi sciences have been spread in the world. The truth of the matter is that the outward stages of the holy law reached perfection in the twelfth century, that is, in one thousand two hundred."[69]

We shall observe in a later chapter the relevance of this theory to Shaykhi concepts of the ages of *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin*, "manifest" and "hidden". Two of Bihbahānī's most outstanding successors in the first half of the nineteenth century—Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥasan al-Najafī (1788–1850) and Shaykh Jaʿfar al-Najafī—produced two of the most important and original works on Shiʿi *fiqh* for some time. The former's

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[67] Mullā Muḥammad Amīn Astarābādī, *Fawāʾid al-madaniyya*, quoted in Muḥammad Bāqir Khwānsārī, *Kitāb rawḍāt al-jannāt fī aḥwāl al-ʿulamāʾ wa ʾl-sādāt*. 3rd ed. ([s.l., s.n.], 1367 [1947]), p. 34; Leonard Binder, "The Proofs of Islam: Religion and Politics in Iran," in *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of Hamilton A. R. Gibb*, ed. George Makdisi (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), p. 124. Under the Ottomans, the *naqīb al-ashrāf* was an official position throughout the empire, whose function was the administration of descendants of the Prophet. For a detailed discussion of this institution in Egypt, see Michael Winter, 'The Ashraf and Naqib al-Asraf', chapter 6 of *Egyptian Society under Ottoman Rule 1517–1798*, London, Routledge, 1992, pp. 185–198.

[68] Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt*, p. 174; Mullā Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ al-ʿulamāʾ*, p. 360.

[69] Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī, "Risāla-yi tīr-i shihāb," p. 175.

*Jawāhir al-kalām* has been compared to the work of Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī in respect of its independent and innovative nature.[70] Similarly, Mullā Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān Tanakābunī (1819–1892) writes of Shaykh Jaʿfar's *Kashf al-ghiṭāʾ* that "no such book detailing the *furūʿ* of the faith in this way had been written until then."[71]

This conjunction of legal authority, as seen in the development of *fiqh* by the nineteenth century, and charismatic latency, as observed in the efflorescence of the role of the *mujtahid* as *marjaʿ al-taqlīd* by the same period, is an important feature of the age we are studying and tells us much of the character of Shiʿism at the time of the development of Shaykhism and Babism.

To summarize, then, we may note that several strands appear to come together in the first half of the nineteenth century. The ulama, first properly developed under the Safavids, found themselves regrouped protected, and increasingly powerful; the position of *mujtahid* had been defined and stressed and, as we shall see, the way was open for the appearance of outstanding figures with unprecedented personal charismatic authority. Legal authority, in the form of *fiqh*, had reached the peak of its development, but its expression was still closely linked to charismatic figures such as Muḥammad Ḥasan ibn Bāqir al-Najafī; messianic expectation was on the increase with the proximity of the Islamic year 1260, one thousand years after the disappearance of the Imām.

By this time, however, it is obvious that there was growing tension between these elements. The authority implicit in the exercise of independent *ijtihād* did not march happily with that contained in the definitive volumes of *fiqh,* nor did the charismatic role of *marājiʿ al-taqlīd* points of imitation and final authorities in religious matters harmonize readily with chiliastic hope in the return of the Imām. However, this tension did clearly represent a major development of the third and fifth themes discussed above: the existence of outstanding ulama in every age, and the continued presence of *nuqabāʾ* and *nujabāʾ* in the community. The extreme veneration accorded the most outstanding ulama conflicted to some extent with the charismatic role of the religious scholars as a

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[70] Muḥammad Javād Mughniyya, *Maʿa ʿulamāʾ al-Najaf* (Beirut: al-Makataba al-Ahlāya, 1962), p. 81.

[71] Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ al-ʿulamāʾ*, p. 198.

single body, and also with the more diffuse concept of *nuqabāʾ* and *nujabāʾ* within the charismatic Shiʿi religious establishment.

This last tension is particularly marked, as we shall note, in the contradiction between the visible role of the leaders of Shaykhism, on the one hand and the doctrine of the "fourth support" as referring to the ulama or to the *nuqabāʾ* and *nujabāʾ*, on the other. It is also apparent in the variety of claims to charismatic polar authority within Babism, put forward not only by the Báb, but by large numbers of his followers, particularly in the period after 1850, creating what Berger calls a "charismatic field."[72] The early nineteenth century can, then, be described as a period for Shiʿism in which several related issues came to a head at once, and in which potential charismatic tensions which had remained unresolved from the time of the lesser occultation came to the surface and shrilly demanded attention.

## The Eighteenth Century Reformation

Of particular importance for this development was the Shiʿi "reformation" which took place at the shrines in Iraq at about the time Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī arrived there from Bahrain in the 1790s. What amounted to a revolution in Shiʿi thinking was being fostered there by several outstanding ulama with many of whom al-Aḥsāʾī came to be associated. This revolution, or reformation, coinciding with the restoration of a central Shiʿi government in Iran under the Qajar dynasty, was to set the tone for all subsequent developments in Twelver Shiʿism, not only at the *ʿatabāt* (the Shiʿi shrines at Karbala, Najaf, Kāẓimiyya, and Samarra), but even more in Iran itself. The questions raised in the course of this reappraisal and reconstitution of Shiʿi theology were all, as we shall see, of considerable relevance to the claims put forward by the Báb and his early disciples and explain in large measure the general rejection of Babism by the main body of Shiʿi Islam. The picture painted of Shiʿism in this period in many Babi and Bahaʾi histories, as decadent, imitative, and static,[73] while not lacking altogether in validity, is only

[72] Berger, "From Sect to Church," pp. 161–2.

[73] See Aḥmad Sohrab, *Al-risāla al-tisʿ ʿashariyya*. (Cairo: Maṭbaʿa al-Saʿāda, 1338 [1919]), p. 9; Mīrzā Ḥusayn Hamadānī, *The Tārīkh-i-Jadīd*, preface, pp. 180, 185, 321–2; Zarandī, *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabīl's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahaʾi Revelation*, trans. and ed. Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahaʾi Publishing Committee, 1932), pp. 1–2.

partial, and fails to take into account the major developments we have mentioned. Both Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī and Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī are portrayed in these accounts as far removed from the mainstream of events in the period, and the question of their relations with other ulama is either ignored or treated negatively.

The collapse of the Safavid dynasty in 1722 precipitated a major crisis in Twelver Shiʿism. For some two hundred years, Shiʿi ulama had been consolidating the position of their branch of Islam as the national religion of Iran, had been educating the population as a whole in the fundamentals of Shiʿi belief, and had been attempting to come to terms with the problems of co-existence between a religious hierarchy in theory obedient only to the Hidden Imām on the one hand, and a state ruled by a monarch claiming descent from the seventh Imām and a large measure of divine right to rule on the other.[74] But from 1722 until many years after the Qajar restoration at the end of the eighteenth century, the political confusion of Iran was to render doubtful the continued existence of a Shiʿi state in that country. During the interregnum, however, significant developments occurred in Iraq which determined the nature of relations between the future Qajar state and the ulama.[75]

After the overthrow of the Safavids, many of the ulama, fearing for their lives or their religious freedom under the Sunni Afghans and later under Nādir Shāh (1688–1747),[76] had fled to India and Arab Iraq. The

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[74] For discussions of relations between church and state in the Safavid period, see Algar, *Religion and State*, pp. 27–30; Nikki R. Keddie, "The Roots of the Ulama's Power in Modern Iran," in Nikki R. Keddie ed., *Scholars, Saints and Ṣūfīs: Religious Institutions in the Middle East since 1500* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), pp. 217–22; Michel M. Mazzaoui, *The Origins of the Safawids: Shiʿism, Sufism, and the Ghulāt* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1972), passim; Helmut Braun, "Iran under the Safavids and in the 18th Century," in Berthold Spuler, *The Muslim World: A Historical Survey*, part 3, *The Last Great Muslim Empires*, trans. F. R. C. Bagley (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969); Ann K. S. Lambton, "Quis Custodiet Custodes: Some Reflections on the Persian Theory of Government, part II," *Studia Islamica* (Paris) vol. 6 (1956), pp. 131–42; Said Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam: Religion, Political Order and Societal Change in Shi'ite Iran from the Beginning to 1890* (Publications of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies), Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

[75] For a detailed discussion of relations between the state and the ulama in the Qājār period, see Algar, *Religion and State*; R. Gleave, ed., *Religion and Society in Qajar Iran* (London: Routledge/Curzon: 2005).

[76] On his accession, Nādir Shāh had the Shaykh al-Islām of Isfahan strangled in his presence. He also confiscated *waqf* properties, restricted the functioning of the *sharīʿa* legal system and had many ulama put to death when they attempted to organize risings against him in several regions. On Nādir Shāh generally, see Laurence Lockhart,

region around Baghdad where the *ʿatabāt* were situated was in many respects, ideal as a refuge for such individuals. A sizeable Persian Shiʿi population had long existed there especially in Karbala, while the shrines in general attracted Shiʿi pilgrims from many regions. Najaf in particular became a focus on which scholars from Iran and elsewhere converged, its more Arab character being considerably changed and its importance as a center of learning becoming greatly increased as a result.[77] Not only was Arab Iraq situated beyond the vicissitudes convulsing Iran at this period, but, with the appointment of Ḥasan Pāshā (ruled 1704–1723) as governor of Baghdad in 1704, an epoch of virtual independence for the region, under a succession of "Mamlūk" rulers, had begun.[78]

It has been common to speak of the period between the fall of the Safavids and the restoration under Āqā Muḥammad Shāh, the first Qajar ruler (r. 1796–1797), as virtually devoid of religious scholars of any real ability. Sayyid Muḥammad Hāshimī Kirmānī remarks that

> From the later years of the Safavid period, scholarship in Iran was extremely limited, as were the circles of theological study; during the period of Nādir Shāh and the Zands, the situation continued to decline. Several factors, the most important of which was the prevailing instability, contributed greatly to this deficit of learning. It would appear that this situation was also prevalent in neighboring countries at this time, as much as in Iran itself. In 1156 [1743], Nādir Shāh brought together in Iraq the *mujtahids* and *muftis* of Iran, the Caucasus, Turkistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, and India. A very large gathering was assembled, but, from the remarks made there, one can see how superficial and banal their scholarship had become. Moreover, their names have all come down to us, and we do not observe a single outstanding scholar among them.[79]

According to Abbas Iqbal, "the most famous of the Imāmī ulama during this interregnum period" were Ismāʿīl ibn Muḥammad Māzandarānī (Khwājūʾī) (d. 1173/1759), Mullā Muḥammad Rafīʿ Gīlānī, Shaykh Yūsuf ibn Aḥmad al-Baḥrānī (1106–86/1694–5–1772–3) the author of the *Ḥadāʾiq* and *al-Kashkūl*), and Muḥammad Bīdābādī Iṣfahānī

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*Nadir Shah: A Critical Study based mainly on Contemporary Sources* (London: Luzac, 1938).

[77] Āl Maḥbūba, Shaykh Jaʿfar ibn Bāqir, *Māḍī al-Najaf wa hāḍiruhā*, 2nd ed. (Najaf: [s.n.], 1378 [1958]), p. 380.

[78] See Stephen Longrigg, *Four Centuries of Modern Iraq* (Beirut: Librarie du Liban, 1968), pp. 123 ff.

[79] Sayyid Muḥammad Hāshimī Kirmānī, "Tāʾifa-yi Shaykhiyya," *Majalla-yi mardum-shināsī* (Tehran) vol. 2 (1337 Sh [1958]), p. 247.

(d. 11971782).[80] This statement is reproduced almost exactly by Algar, who adds that only Shaykh Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī "produced a work that attained any fame—*al-Kashkūl*."[81] In these few words, Iqbal and Algar sum up the religious activities of the period of the interregnum and proceed to a discussion of the achievements of Āqā Bihbahānī.

It seems to me that neither Hāshimī Kirmānī nor Iqbāl offers an adequate explanation nor a satisfactory picture of the period preceding the early Qajar reformation. The period in question is overshadowed at one end by the figure of Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī (d. 1111/1699),[82] the author of the voluminous *Biḥār al-anwār*, a prodigious collection of *akhbār*, and the most influential of the late Safavid divines dominating the court of Shah Ḥusayn I (1668–1726); and at the other by that of Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Bihbahānī (d. 1206/1791–2), regarded as the Renewer or *mujaddid* of the thirteenth Islamic century [19th century]. Khwānsārī, for example, speaks of "the period of the absence of the ulama (*zamān fiṭrat al-ʿulamāʾ*)" between Majlisī and Bihbahānī.[83]

It is easy to forget, however, that the influence of Majlisī, of several of his immediate predecessors, and some of the more eminent ulama among his contemporaries persisted well after the fall of the Safavids, and that the achievements of Bihbahānī had their roots in developments over the previous century or more. Among those predecessors we may number men such as Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Hurr al-ʿĀmilī (1624–1693),[84] Muḥammad ibn Murtadā Fayd al-Kāshānī

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[80] "Ḥujjat al-Islām Hājj Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir Shaftī," *Yādgār* (Tehran) vol. 5, no. 10 (1327 Sh [1948]), p. 28.

[81] Algar, *Religion and State*, pp. 33–4. For details concerning the four men named by Iqbāl and Algar, see the following:

1. On Mullā Ismāʾīl Khwājūī: Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 31–3; Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī Kashmīrī, *Nujūm al-samāʾ* (Lucknow, 1303 [1885]), pp. 268–9.
2. On Mullā Muḥammad Rafīʿ Gīlānī: Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 232–3.
3. On Muḥammad Bīdābādī: Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 614–615; Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, p. 320; Muḥammad Maʿsūm Shīrāzī (Maʿsūm ʿAlī Shāh), *Ṭarāʾiq al-ḥaqāʾiq* (Tehran: Kitābkhāna-yi Bārānī, [1960–66]), vol. 3, pp. 214–5; al- Ṭihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, p. 15.
4. On Shaykh Yūsuf ibn Aḥmad Bahrānī: Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 741–3; Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 279–83; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 271–4.

[82] On Majlisī, see Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 119–124; Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 160–6; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 204–28.

[83] Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt,* p. 331.

[84] The author of the *Wasāʾil al Shīʿa* and *Amal al-Āmil*. See Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 616–9; Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 157–60; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 289–93; al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Ḥusaynī, introduction to Shaykh Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Amal*

(Muḥammad Ḥasan Mūsavī Kāshānī) (1598–1680),[85] Qādī Saʾīd Qummī (1639–1691),[86] and Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad Khwānsārī (1607–1686?).[87] Majlisī's contemporaries included Niʿmat Allāh ibn ʿAbd Allāh Jazāʾirī (1640–1701).[88]

Even if the general standard of the ulama was necessarily poor, there are several individuals, apart from those mentioned by Iqbāl, who held positions of some eminence in this period. The most outstanding of these was Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan Fādil al-Hindī (1651–1724), the author of the *Kashf al-lithām*.[89] Others included Sayyid Ṣadr al-Dīn ibn Muḥammad Bāqir Raḍāwī Qummī (d. 1803);[90] a son of Niʿmat Allāh ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Jazāʾirī (1640–1701), Nūr al-Dīn ibn Niʿmat Allāh al-Jazāʾirī (1677–1745), who had studied under al-Ḥasan Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī;[91] a son of Nūr al-Dīn al-Jazāʾirī, Sayyid ʿAbd Allāh Shūstarī (1702–1759);[92] Sayyid Murtaḍā ibn Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabāʾī (d. 1793), the father of Muḥammad Mahdī ibn Murtaḍā Baḥr al-ʿUlūm (1742–1797);[93] Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Bihbahānī, the father and teacher of Āqā Bihbahānī;[94] Shaykh Abū Ṣālih Muḥammad Mahdī Fatūnī al-ʿĀmilī,[95] and Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī Darūqī al-Najafī,[96] both teachers of Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, Shaykh Jaʿfar al-Najafī and many others; and Shaykh Muḥammad Bāqir Hizārjarībī Najafī (d. 1790), a teacher of Baḥr

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*al-Āmil* (Baghdad: Maktabat al-Andalus, 1965–66), vol. 1, pp. 8–52. A large number of his works are listed in Iʿjāz Ḥusayn al-Naysāburī Kantūrī, *Kashf al-ḥujūb wa 'l astār ʿan asmāʾ al kutub wal asfār*, ed. M. Hidayat Husain (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1912); see also al-Ḥusayni, introduction to al-ʿĀmilī, *Amal al-Āmil*, pp. 27–33. The latter provides a list of the main pupils and *rāwīyūn* of al-ʿĀmilī (pp. 15–18).

[85] The author of *Kitāb al-Wāfī*, etc. See Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 516–23; Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 9–25; Tanakābunī, pp. 322–33; ʿAlī Aṣghar Ḥalabī, *Tārikh-i falāsifa-yi īrānī* (Tehran: [s.n.], 1972), pp. 745–51.

[86] Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 301–2; Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, vol. 4, book 5, chapter 3.

[87] Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 194–6; Tanakābunī, p. 265; Ḥalabī, *Tārīkh-i falāsifa*, pp. 752–3.

[88] See Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 728–30; Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 167–72; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 436–53; E. G. Browne gives a summary of his autobiography in his *Literary History of Persia* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1924), vol. 4, pp. 360–7.

[89] See Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt,* pp. 621–3; Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 211–2; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 312–3.

[90] See Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 331–2; he is there described as "one of the great investigators (*muḥaqqiqīn*) of the period…between Majlisī and Bihbahānī."

[91] Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 238–42.

[92] See Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 365–6; Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 251–8.

[93] Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 302–3.

[94] See brief accounts in biographies of his son.

[95] Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 294–5; brief account in biography of Baḥr al-ʿUlūm in Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, p. 649.

[96] Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 276–7.

al-ʿUlūm, Shaykh Jaʿfar al-Najafī and Abū 'l-Qāsim Qummī.[97] Men such as these, some in Iran and others at the *ʿatabāt*,[98] if not themselves ulama of the first grade, nevertheless set the stage for the entrance of figures such as Āqā Bihbahānī, Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, Shaykh Jaʿfar al-Najafī, Sayyid ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabāʾī ʿAlī Iṣfahānī (1748–1815), Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Kalbāsī (1831–1897) and Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī. The strength of the continuing tradition of Shiʿi scholarship over the interregnum is clearly demonstrated in the fact that most of the ulama from whom Shaykh Aḥmad received licences to teach (*ijāzāt*) had studied under Yūsuf ibn Aḥmad al-Baḥrānī[99]—a fact which also shows the degree of al-Aḥsāʾī's indebtedness to that tradition.

Three major factors contributed to the development of Shiʿi thought in the interregnum, the problems raised being resolved finally by Āqā Bihbahānī and his contemporaries. These factors were: the challenge presented by the religious policies of Nādir Shāh, the reinterpretation of the role of the ulama in the absence of a Shiʿi state (and during the continued occultation of the Imām), and the struggle for supremacy between the Akhbārī and Uṣūlī schools of thought.

The most serious threat posed to the continuation of Shiʿism in Iran by Nādir Shāh—apart from his direct physical and economic attacks on the ulama class[100]—was his aim to unite the Shiʿi sect to Sunnism through the ingenious expedient of so modifying Shiʿism as to have it regarded as a fifth "Jaʿfarī" *madhhab* within the Sunni structure. As we shall see when we come to consider the question in more detail later, the most disturbing aspect of this proposal as far as the Shiʿi ulama were concerned was the implication that, by placing Shiʿism side by side with the four existing Sunni law schools, it would have to share with them a much more limited role for *ijtihād*,[101] with the Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq the

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[97] Al-Ṭihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, pp. 174–5; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 196.

[98] It is not entrely true to say, as does Algar, that "the few ulama whose names attained any prominence resided there [the *ʿatabāt*]", Algar, *Religion and State*, p. 30. Of the four ulama referred to by Algar himself as eminent, only one—Yūsuf Bahrānī—lived at the *ʿatabāt* (and only for a limited time), the other three residing in Isfahan and Mashhad.

[99] Namely, Āqā Mīrzā Muḥammad Mahdī Shahristānī, Shaykh Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad al-Darāzī al-Baḥrānī, Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Ḥasan al-Bahrānī al-Damastānī, and Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī Ṭabāṭabāʾī Baḥr al-ʿUlūm. Details of these men may be found in this and the next chapter.

[100] See note 76 above.

[101] The idea that the *bāb al-ijtihād* was permanently closed by he start of the 10th century is a myth developed by Western scholars and modern Muslims alike. On this,

Shiʿi equivalent of the founders of the fourth Sunni schools of law. Not only would this have denied to the Imāms after Jaʿfar their traditional role as sources of continued divine guidance, thereby removing the central feature of Twelver Shiʿism, but it would have all but dispensed with the role of the Shiʿi *mujtahid* as a source of legislative renewal (in theory, at least) during the occultation of the Imām.[102] This latter possibility was a particularly disturbing threat at this point.

The question of the relationship between the religious establishment and the political power in Shiʿi theory and practice has attracted much attention and been discussed at length elsewhere;[103] there is no need to do more here than summarize the situation insofar as it affected the ulama following the collapse of the Safavid dynasty. For centuries before the establishment of the Safavid state, *Ithnāʾ-ʿasharī* Shiʿism had persisted as a minority sect for which all secular authority—Umayyad, Abbasid, or otherwise—was illegitimate. This very sense of illegitimacy lay at the root of Shiʿi belief, and led it inevitably to a sense of the illegitimacy of any state whatever.[104] "In contrast with the Sunni ulama," writes Keddie, "who had to work out their doctrine under the rule of a government that claimed political sovereignty, the Shiʿis lacked political protectors, which for centuries weakened their real power, but also enabled them in theory to deny the sovereign claims of any state."[105]

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see Wael B. Hallaq, "On the Origins of the Controversy about the Existence of Mujtahids and the Gate of Ijtihad", *Studia Islamica* 63 (1986): 129–141; idem "Was the Gate of Ijtihad Closed?", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 16 (1984): 3–41; idem "Ijtihād", in John Esposito (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Islam in the Modern World* 4 vols., New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, vol. 2, pp. 178–81. "There exists no evidence of such a closure either in the tenth century or thereafter, and there certainly was no consensus on it. To the contrary, evidence shows that the practice of *ijtihād* continued throughout the centuries, although on a smaller scale than before because of the stability the legal system had attained" (ibid., p. 180).

[102] On the absence of genuine renewal or reformism among the *Shiʿi* ulama by reason of their attachment to precedent, see William G. Millward, "Aspects of Modernism in Shīʾa Islam," *Studia Islamica* (Paris), vol. 37 (1977), pp. 112–3.

[103] See Algar, *Religion and State*, passim and in particular, pp. 21–5; Joseph Eliash, "The Ithnāʿasharī-Shiʿi Juristic Theory of Political and Legal Authority," *Studia Islamica* (Paris), vol. 29 (1969), pp. 17–30; Lambton, "Quis Custodiet Custodes"; Keddie, "The Roots of the Ulama's Power in Modern Iran"; and Gianroberto Scarcia, "A Proposito del Problema della Sovranità preso gli Imāmiti," *Annali del Instituto Orientale Universitario di Napoli* (Naples), vol. 7 (1957), pp. 95–126.

[104] Since this was written, a convincing argument for the acceptance of a Shiʿi state has been made by Arjomand in *The Shadow of God*.

[105] Keddie, "The Roots of the Ulama's Power," p. 216.

The peculiar manner in which the Safavid regime was created had meant that, when a religious hierarchy finally developed, it had to come to terms with an existing secular state which had brought it into being, which sought to foster it (albeit it in an inferior role to the secular hierarchy), and which claimed a legitimacy based in part on religious considerations. The early Safavid ulama seem to have been content to accept the role forced on them by a state which held in its hands effective power over both secular and religious affairs. Initially, it would seem, the fact that a Shiʿi monarch sat on the throne precluded any question of illegitimacy in the rule of the state. The doctrinal theory which denied legitimacy to secular rulers had been developed originally against the Sunni 'usurpers' of the caliphate, and it was some time before the ulama began openly to infer from that theory that the rule of a Shiʿi monarch must equally involve the usurpation of the function of the Imām as the divinely-appointed head of the Islamic *umma*.[106] As the power of the Safavid state declined, however, that of the ulama increased, and, towards the end of the seventeenth century, it was being claimed openly that not only was the rule of the shah illegal, but that, in the absence of the Imām, true authority lay with the *mujtahids* as his representatives.[107]

Although the collapse of Safavid rule and the ensuing anarchy caused much harm to the ulama, this was little more than a physical and economic setback. Sequestered in the comparative safety of the *ʿatabāt,* or in various enclaves in an Iran conspicuously deprived of effective centralized government, the ulama could well regard themselves as the remaining representatives of the vanished Shiʿi state, and could now give free rein to speculation on the role of the *mujtahid* class, whether in the perpetual absence of a Twelver Shiʿi state, or in whatever new order came to fill the vacuum left by the disappearance of the Safavids.

## The Akhbari-Usuli Split

The resulting debate took the form of a final clash between the Akhbari and Usuli (or Mujtahidī) schools of thought, and culminated in the victory of the latter party on the eve of the Qajar restoration.

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[106] Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *Shiʿite Islam*, pp. 39–50, 173–84.

[107] On this see, Jean Chardin, *Voyages du chevalier Chardin, en Perse, et autres lieux de l'Orient* (Amsterdam: chez Jean Louis de Lorne, 1711), vol. 2, pp. 207–8, 208, 337.

Since this debate and its consequences have a considerable bearing on the interpretation of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī's role among the early Qajar ulama, it will be worthwhile to touch on the major aspects of the controversy.

The origins of the debate are somewhat obscure. Later Shiʿi writers normally regard the Akhbaris as innovators first appearing in the 17th century with the emergence of Muḥammad Amīn ibn Muḥammad Sharif Astarābādī (d. 1623). It is probable, however, that the appearance of an Akhbari school at this date is more a reflection of the growing power of the *mujtahids* and the early development of what came to be identified as the Usuli position. The doctrine of the role of the *mujtahid* as the interpreter of the will of the Imām "is apparently a late one that has no basis in early Twelver theory,"[108] and it seems likely that the Akhbari party was less innovatory than conservative, the true respective positions of the two schools becoming distorted after the victory of the Usulis.

That the Akhbaris represented a purer and more primitive line of thought within Shiʿism clearly seems to have been the belief of Mullā Muḥammad Amīn Astarābādī, regarded as "the first to open the door of reviling against the *mujtahids*"[109] and as "the leader of the sect of Akhbaris."[110] A Persian work of his, the *Dānish-nāma-yi shāhī*,[111] seeks to demonstrate that the Ijtihādī (Usuli) school was an innovation which had not existed before the time of Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī.[112] "Up to the latter period of the lesser occultation, people followed the Akhbari school."[113] Muḥammad Amīn saw his own role as that of restoring the Akhbari teachings to their former position of dominance within Shiʿism.

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[108] Keddie, "The Roots of the Ulama's Power in Modern Iran," p. 216.

[109] Yūsuf ibn Aḥmad al-Baḥrānī, *Luʾluʾatay al-Baḥrayn* (Bombay: [s.n., n.d.]), p. 122.

[110] Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, p. 41; cf. Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, p. 169, where he is described as the founder (*muʾassis*) of the school. On Muḥammad Amīn, see ibid., pp. 33–9; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 321–2; Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 41–2; al-Bahrānī, *Luʾluʾatay al-Baḥrayn*, pp. 122–3.

[111] Kantūrī, *Kashf al-ḥujūb*, p. 210; al-Ṭihrānī, *al-Dharīʿa*, vol. 8, p. 46.

[112] Thiqat al-Islaām Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī (d. 329/940) is the compiler of the important Shiʿi *ḥādith* collection *al-Kāfī*, and is regarded as the *mujaddid* of the fourth century. See Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 524–7; Sayyid Nūr Allāh ibn Sharīf Shūshtarī, *Majālis al-muʾminīn* (Tehran: [s.n.], 1852), pp. 185–186; Ḥusayn ʿAlī Maḥfūẓ, *Sīra Abī Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb ibn Isḥāq al-Kulaynī al-Rāzī* (Tehran: Maṭbaʿat al-Ḥaydarī, 1955), with bibliography.

[113] See Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, p. 33.

He himself had studied initially under two of the leading Shiʿi scholars of his day, Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-ʿĀmilī (1539–1600)[114] the author of an important work entitled the *Madārik al-aḥkām*,[115] and Shaykh Jamāl al-Dīn Abū Manṣūr Ḥasan al-ʿĀmilī) (1551–1602),[116] the author of the *Maʿālim al-dīn wa-malādh al-mujtahidīn*[117] and a son of Shaykh Zayn al-Dīn ibn ʿAlī al-Shahīd al-Thānī (1506–1558). He later lived in Mecca and Medina, and studied during this period under Mullā Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī Astarābādī (d. 1028/1619).[118] It was this man who encouraged Muḥammad Amīn to 'revive' the Akhbari school. The latter writes in his *Dānish-nāma*: "After he [Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī] had instructed me in all the traditions, he indicated that I should revive the school of the Akhbaris and should remove the doubts that were opposed to that school. 'I have intended to do this,' he said, 'but God has decreed that your pen take up this subject.'"[119] Muḥammad Amīn undertook the composition of his most important work, *al-Fawāʾid al-madaniyya fī raddi man qāla bi 'l-ijtihād*,[120] as a direct attack on the theory of independent reasoning then current in Shiʿi thought. He himself states that the work was well received,[121] a fact confirmed by Muḥammad Taqī ibn Maqṣūd ʿAlī Majlisī (1594–1659), the father of Muḥammad Bāqir in his *Lavāmiʿ-i ṣāḥib-qirānī*,[122] when he writes:

> About thirty years ago, the erudite scholar Mullā Muḥammad Amīn Astarābādī busied himself with comparing and studying the traditions of the blessed Imāms, turned his attention to the condemnation of decisions reached by speculation and analogy (*ārāʾ wa maqāyis*), and understood the path of the companions of the Imāms. He wrote the *Fawāʾid-i madaniyya* [sic] and sent it to this country. Most of the people of Najaf and the *ʿatabāt* approved of his thinking (*ṭarīqat*) and began to refer to

[114] See Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 601–4; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 281–2; Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 4–5; al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Amal al-Āmil*, vol. 1, pp. 167–9.

[115] See Kantūrī, *Kashf al-ḥujūb*, p. 499.

[116] Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 179–80; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 282–5; Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 5–9; al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Amal al-Āmil*, vol. 1, pp. 57–63.

[117] Kantūrī, *Kashf al-ḥujūb*, p. 532.

[118] Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 599–601; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 322; Kantūrī, *Kashf al-ḥujūb*, pp. 138, 171, 324, 488; al-Ṭihrānī, *al-Dharīʿa*, vol. 10, pp. 121, 141.

[119] Astarābādī, *Dānish-nāma-yi shāhī*. Quoted in Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, p. 33.

[120] Kantūrī, *Kashf al-hujūb*, p. 406. The book was completed in 1031[1622] in Mecca.

[121] Astarābādī, *Dānish-nāma-yi shāhī*. Quoted in Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, p. 34.

[122] A Persian commentary on Ibn Bābawayh's *Man lā yaḥḍuruhu 'l-faqīh*. See Kantūrī, *Kashf al-hujūb*, pp. 481–482; al-Tihrānī, *al-Dharīʿa*, vol. 18, pp. 369–70 (under *al-Lawāmiʿ al-qudsiyya*).

> the traditions (*akhbār*) as their sources. In truth, most of what Mullā Muḥammad Amīn has said is true.[123]

In the *Fawāʾīḍ al-madaniyya*, Astarābādī argues that the first individuals to abandon the path followed by the companions of the Imāms and to rely on the art of theological discussion (*kalām*) and the juridical principles (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) based on rational arguments as common among Sunnis (*al-ʿāmma*) were, as far as I know, Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Junayd, who acted on the basis of analogy (*qiyās*) and Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī ibn Abī ʿAqīl al-ʿUmanī the *mutakallim*.[124]

He goes on to say that, when al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022)[125] expressed his views on the worth of these two men to his own pupils, these ideas continued to spread over a long period until the time of the foremost Shiʿi authority on *uṣūl*, al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī,[126] who emphasized them in his writings. Astarābādī brings the development of Usuli thought down to his own time through Muḥammad ibn Makkī al-ʿĀmilī al-Shahīd al-Awwal (731–86/1333–84),[127] Shaykh ʿAlī (presumably ʿAlī ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAlī al-ʿĀmilī, al-Muḥaqqiq al-Thānī (c. 870–940/1465–1533),[128] Zayn al-Dīn ibn ʿAlī al-ʿĀmilī al-Shahīd al-Thānī (d. 966/1558),[129] his son, and the teacher of Astarābādī, Shaykh Jamāl al-Dīn

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[123] Muḥammad Taqī ibn Maqṣūd ʿAlī Majlisī, *Lawāmiʿ-i ṣāḥibqirān*, quoted Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, p. 38.

[124] Astarābādī, *al-Fawāʾīd al-madaniyya*, quoted Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, p. 34. Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī ibn Abī Aqīl is the author of a work on *fiqh* entitled *al-Mutamassik bi-ḥabl āl al-rasūl*. He is described by Baḥr al-ʿUlūm as "the first to elaborate jurisprudence (*awwal man hadhaba ʾl-fiqh*), to theorize, and to open discussion on *uṣūl* and *furūʿ* in the beginning of the greater occultation; after him came the illustrious Shaykh Ibn Junayd," *Fawāʾid al-rijāliyya*, quoted after Khwānsārī. *Rawḍāt*, p. 168. For details see ibid, pp. 168–9. Abū ʿAlī Muḥammad ibn Junayd al-Baghdādī (d. 991) is the author of several works, none of them well known. Khwānsārī describes him as "the first to make progress in *ijtihād* concerning the laws of the *sharīʿa*." (*Rawḍāt*, p. 534.) For details, see ibid., pp. 534–6; and Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 430–1.

[125] Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Hārithī al-Baghdādī; see Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 536–43; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 398–406; Shūshtarī, *Majālis al-muʾmīnīn*, pp. 191–2.

[126] Astarābādī simply writes "'Allāma", al-Ḥillī being the ʿAllāma par excellence (*al-ʿallāma ʿalā ʾl-iṭlāq*). On him, see Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 172–7; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 355–64; Shūshtarī, *Majālis*, pp. 236–8. For his works, see Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Literatur* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1937–43), supp. 2, pp. 206–9.

[127] Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 589–94; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 337–42; Āmilī, *Aʿyān al-Shīʿa*, vol. 1, pp. 181–3.

[128] Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 390–4; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 346–8; Āmilī, *Aʿyān al-Shīʿa*, vol. 1, p. 123. According to Khwānsārī, some Sunnis referred to him as "the originator of the Shiʿi madhhab (*mukhtariʿ madhhab al-shīʿa*)".

[129] Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 287–98; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 248–63; Āmilī, *Aʿyān al-Shīʿa*, vol. 1, pp. 85–91.

Abū Manṣūr al-ʿĀmilī and, finally, his own contemporary Bahāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad al-ʿĀmilī (d. 1030/ 1620), better known Shaykh Bahāʾī.[130]

The fundamentalist nature of Astarābādī's thought is evident from the foregoing. Not only was he opposed to the practice of *ijtihād* as current in his day, but he retrospectively criticized several of the leading figures in Shiʿi theology in the period following the occultation of the Imām.[131] Surprisingly enough, however, Astarābādī's views, as we have seen, were at first well received, and in succeeding years several important scholars adopted, in varying degrees, the ideas he had put forward. Among these were Shaykh Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, one of the "three Muḥammads of the modern period and the author of several important works, including the influential *Waṣāʾil al shīʿa ilā taḥṣīl masāʾil al-sharīʿa* and the *Amal al-āmil*;[132] Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī (1598–1680), another of the "three Muḥammads" of later Shiʿism, a student and son-in-law of Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1641), and one of the most eminent of the Safavid philosophers;[133] Qāḍī Saʿīd Qummī (d. 1103/1691) a philosopher of some note who also achieved recognition as a *faqīh*;[134] Sayyid Nīʿmat Allāh al-Jazāʾirī (1640–1701), the leading contemporary of Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī;[135] and Mīrzā Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Nabī Nīshāpūrī Akhbārī (b. 1178/1765), the last and, perhaps, the most intransigent of the Akhbari controversialists, best known for his involvement with the incident of the "Inspector's head" during the reign of Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh (r. 1797–1834).[136] A number of other important ulama, if not totally committed Akhbaris, tried to

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[130] Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 34, 604–13; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 233–47; Ḥalabī, *Tārīkh-i falāsifa*, pp. 680–96.

[131] Apart from those referred to, he mentions in passing Sayyid Murtaḍā Abū 'l-Qāsim ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn al-Mūsawī ʿAlam al-Hudā (966–1044: see Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 374–9), and his close associate Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (d. 1066), see ibid., pp. 353–63.

[132] The "first three Muḥammads" were Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī, Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī Ibn Bābawayh, and Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, the compilers of the "Four Books". The "later three Muḥammads" were: Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, Muḥammad ibn Murtaḍā Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, and Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī, the compilers of the "Three Books" of the later period (See Browne, *Literary History*, vol. 4, pp. 358–9). On al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, see note 84 above.

[133] Tanakābunī describes him as a "pure Akhbārī" (*Akhbārī ṣarf* ), and gives the titles of several books in which he attacks the *mujtahids*. *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 323. See note 86 above.

[134] See note 86 above.

[135] See note 88 above.

[136] See Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 625–9; Kantūrī, *Kashf al-ḥujūb*, pp. 61, 63, 185, 293, 314, 363, 533, 569, 570, 576; Algar, *Religion and State,* pp. 64–6; Muḥammad ʿAlī Muʿallim Ḥabībābādī, *Makārim al-āthār dar aḥwāl-i rijāl-i dawra-i Qājār* (Isfahan:

walk a medial path between the Usuli and Akhbari positions. These included Shaykh Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī[137] and Shaykh ʿAbd Allāh ibn Nūr al-Dīn al-Jazāʾirī (1701–59).[138]

For a considerable time, the Akhbari teachings enjoyed a respectability and influence later obscured by the victory of the Usulis. There is no space here to enter in into a detailed discussion of what these teachings were: in his *Minyat al-mumārisīn*, Shaykh ʿAbd Allāh ibn Ṣālih al-Samāhijī al-Baḥrānī (d. 1135/1722–3), an Akhbari *ʿālim* of some distinction,[139] 1ists forty points of disagreement between the Akhbari and Usuli schools,[140] a clear indication of how, towards the end of the Safavid era, Astarābādī's comparatively simple objections to the use of *ijtihād* had become elaborated to the point where, instead of two slightly diverging schools of thought co-existing peacefully within the body of Twelver Shiʿism, the Akhbari and Usuli positions had become mutually antagonistic on a large number of issues, many of them very unimportant, even factitious—a pattern which was to be repeated in the Shaykhi-Bālāsārī dispute.

For our present purposes, it will suffice to note a few more important elements in the Akhbari-Usuli debate which have a bearing on the developments with which we are primarily concerned. The *Minyat al-mumārisīn* mentions the following areas of disagreement of interest to us:

1. The Usulis accept *ijtihād*, the exercise of independent reasoning, but the Akhbaris accept only what is related by the Imāms; 2. The Usulis have four sources of authority, namely the Qurʾān, Sunna, consensus and reason, whereas the Akhbaris accept only the first two of these, some even rejecting all but the first; 3. The Usulis divide mankind into two groups, *muqallid* (an imitator) and *mujtahid* (one empowered to use independent reasoning), while the Akhbaris hold that all are imitators

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Nafāʾis-i Makhṭūṭāt, 1957–74), vol. 3, pp. 925–44. Muʿallim Ḥābībābādī considers him to have been one of the most learned and capable ulama in a long time (p. 929).

[137] See note 90 above. Kashmīrī, *Nujūm al-samāʾ*, p. 282, mentions that he was originally an Akhbārī but later avoided the dispute between Akhbārīs and Uṣūlīs, choosing a middle path. The beginning of his *al-Ḥadāʾiq* contains a discussion of the differences between the two schools.

[138] See note 101 above. Kashmīrī, *Nujūm al-samāʾ*, p. 255, mentions his adoption of a middle position between Akhbārīs and Uṣūlīs in *furūʿ*.

[139] For his works see Kantūrī, *Kashf al-ḥujūb*, under ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Hājj Ṣāliḥ al-Samāhijī.

[140] For a summary of twenty-nine of the more important of these, see Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 35–6.

of the Imām; 4. The Usulis only permit *fatwās* (legal rulings) through *ijtihād*, but the Akhbaris permit them if there is a (relevant) tradition from an Imām; 6. The Usulis say that a perfect *mujtahid* (*mujtahid muṭlaq*) is learned in all religious ordinances through the strength of his intellect, whereas the Akhbaris maintain that only the Imām is informed of all religious ordinances; 7. The Usulis forbid imitation of a deceased authority (*marjaʿ*), while the Akhbaris permit it; 8. The Usulis say that the mujtahid must be obeyed as much as the Imām, whereas the Akhbaris reject this.[141]

It is worth noting at this stage that several of the Akhbari doctrines listed here, particularly those relating to the overriding position of the Imāms, bear a significant resemblance to many of the views of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī which formed the basis for the doctrine of the Shaykhi school.

The collapse of Safavid power appears initially to have meant an increase in influence for the Akhbari party, despite the advances made by the Usulis in the late seventeenth century. The reason for this development is probably very simple: the Usuli/*mujtahidī* party had been elaborating its position in the context of a Shiʿi state in which the role of *ijtihād* vis-à-vis the secular powers was progressing satisfactorily, particularly in the reign of Ḥusayn I (1668–1726). The removal of a Shiʿi government created a need to revise the role of *ijtihād*. The Akhbari position, however, needed little or no reappraisal. The existence or absence of a Shiʿi state had small bearing on a system which depended solely on the Qurʾān, *aḥādīth*, or the Imāms for guidance in all affairs, and which accorded to no contemporary authority the right to apply *ijtihād* in either the private or the public sphere. For some time after the Safavid collapse, indeed the Akhbaris clearly offered a more viable system in the absence of a centralized government and a state-fostered religious hierarchy. Until the *mujtahids* found a way to reinterpret and reassert their position, the ulama at the Iraqi shrine cities were dominated by the Akhbari school.[142]

The Usuli revival which led to the final reversal in the position of the two schools was the result of a process which, as we have indicated, went on throughout the interregnum. However, the Usulis owed their

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[141] Quoted in Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 35–6.

[142] Hāshimī Kirmānī, "Ṭāʾifa-yi Shaykhiyya," p. 247; Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, p. 124; Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, p. 304; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 204.

eventual victory to one man above all others: Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Akmal, Vaḥīd-i Bihbahānī, (1118–1207/1706–1792).[143]

Bihbahānī was born in Isfahan, spent his childhood in Bihbahān, and later went to Karbala. He studied at first under his father, Shaykh Muḥammad Akmal,[144] and later with other teachers, including Mullā Ṣadruʾd-Dīn Tūnī,[145] whose daughter he married; Shaykh Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī;[146] and Sayyid Muḥammad Burūjirdī.[147] Through his *ijāzāt* from his father and Mullā Ṣadr al-Dīn Tūnī, Bihbahānī possessed a chain of *riwāya* going back to Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī and, like many other ulama of this period, was himself descended from the Majlisī family[148]—both indications of the continuity which existed between the later Safavid divines and those of the post-Safavid era.

Vaḥīd-i Bihbahānī was, in many ways, the outstanding link between the late Safavid and early Qajar periods. Referring to his pupils, Muḥammad ʿAlī Muʿallim Ḥabībābādī states that "if we did not possess the link of their transmission (*riwāya*) from him; and, if his chain (*silsila*) of transmission and one or two other chains apart from his did not go back to ʿAllāma Majlisī and certain others in the twelfth [Islamic] century, there might have been a break in the chain of transmission of the Shiʿi ulama during that troubled interval (*fiṭrat*)."[149] Bihbahānī's central position in the transmission of authority is abundantly clear from the *ijāzāt* of many modern ulama such as the late Muḥammad Muhsin Āghā Buzurg al-Ṭihrānī (1875–1970), whose *isnād* is as follows: from ʿAllāma Mīrzā Ḥusayn Nūrī (1254–1320/1839–1902), from Murtaḍā ibn Muḥammad Amīn Anṣārī (Shaykh Murtaḍā Ansārī (1214–1281/1800–1865), from Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Mahdī Nirāqī (1771–1828), from

[143] Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, p. 124; Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 303–7; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 198–204; al-Ṭihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, pp. 171–4; Ḥabībābādī, *Makārim al-āthār*, vol. 1, pp. 220–33; ʿAlī Davānī, *Ustād-i kull Āqā Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Akmal maʿrūf bi Vaḥīd-i Bihbīhānī* (Qum: Dār al-ʿIlm, [1337[1958?]).

[144] Muḥammad Akmal had *ijāzāt* from Āqā Jamāl Khwānsārī, Mullā Mīrzā Muḥammad Shīrvānī, Shaykh Jaʿfar Qāḍī, and Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī. Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 199.

[145] Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, p. 244. See there and al-Ṭihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, p. 171.

[146] Ḥabībābādī, *Makārim al-āthār*, vol. 1, pp. 224, 229.

[147] Ibid., pp. 229–30; Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, p. 650.

[148] His father's mother was the daughter of Shaykh Nūr al-Dīn, a son of Mullā Muḥammad Sālih ibn Aḥmad Māzandarānī (d. 1670), whose wife was the daughter of Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī. Nūr al-Dīn was the youngest of Mullā Ṣāliḥ's ten sons.

[149] Ḥabībābādī, *Makārim al-āthār*, vol. 1, p. 231.

Sayyid Mahdī Baḥr al-ʿUlūm (1155–1022/1742–1797), from Bihbahānī, from his father Shaykh Muḥammad Akmal, from ʿAllāma Majlisī.[150]

Going in the opposite direction, we note that many of the eminent ulama of the early thirteenth Islamic century (18th–19th century AD) were numbered among Bihbahānī's pupils. Muḥammad ʿAlī Muʿallim Ḥabībābādī lists no fewer than forty ulama of some note who studied under him.[151] Of those mentioned, the following seem to the present writer to be of most importance: Bihbahānī's son-in-law Āqā Sayyid ʿAlī Ṭabāṭabāʾī Iṣfahānī;[152] his sons Āqā Muḥammad ʿAlī Bihbahānī (d. ca. 1207/1792)[153] and Āqā ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Bihbahānī;[154] Āqā Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī Ṭabāṭabāʾī Baḥr al-ʿUlūm;[155] Shaykh Jaʿfar al-Najafī;[156] Shaykh Asad Allah Dizfūlī Kāẓimaynī;[157] Āqā Sayyid Muḥsin al-Aʿrajī al-Kāẓimaynī;[158] Mīrzā Abū 'l-Qāsim Qummī (Mīrzā-yi Qummī);[159] Mīrzā Muḥammad Mahdī Nirāqī;[160] his son, Ḥājj Mullā Aḥmad Nirāqī;[161]

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[150] Al-Tihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, p. 174.

[151] Ḥabībābādī, *Makārim al-āthār,* vol. 1, pp. 231–3.

[152] See Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 400–2; Muḥammad ʿAlī Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 338–40; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 175–80.

[153] See Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 124–5, 632–3; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 199–204 (these two under his father's biography); Ḥabībābādī, *Makārim al-āthār*, vol. 2, pp. 561–7. It is Aqā Muḥammad ʿAlī, and not his father, as Algar mistakenly notes in *Religion and State*, p. 34 n. 34, who was known as 'Ṣūfī-slayer' (*Ṣūfī-kush*)—see *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 199; cf. *Rawḍāt*, p. 633.

[154] See Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 124–5; Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 336–7; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 199–204 (under his father's biography); Ḥabībābādī, *Makārim al-āthār*, vol. 1, p. 235.

[155] See Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 648–52; Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 313–8; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 168–75; Ḥabībābādī, *Makārim al-āthār*, vol. 2, pp. 414–29 (including the best lists of teachers and pupils).

[156] See Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 152–4; Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 341–2; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 183–98; al-Ṭihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, pp. 248–52; Ḥabībābādī, *Makārim al-āthār*, vol. 3, pp. 852–6.

[157] See Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, p. 28; Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, p. 379; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 196; Ḥabībābādī, *Makārim al-āthār*, vol. 3, pp. 928–81.

[158] See Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, p. 523; Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, p. 344; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 198.

[159] See Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 493–6; Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 340–1; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 180–3; al-Ṭihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, pp. 52–4; Ḥabībābādī, *Makārim al-āthār*, vol. 3, pp. 911–9. His grandson, Ḥājī Mīrzā Mūsā Tabrīzī was converted to Babism by Mullā Muḥammad Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī (1814?-1849)—see Mīrza Asad Allah Fāḍil-i Māzandarānī, *Kitāb-i ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3 (Tehran: [s.n.], 1944), pp. 391–2.

[160] See Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 647–8; Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, p. 319; Ḥabībābādī, *Makārim al-āthār*, vol. 2, pp. 360–4.

[161] See Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 27–8; Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 343–4; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 129–32; Ḥabībābādī, *Makārim al-āthār*, vol. 4, pp. 1235–42.

Mīrzā Yūsuf Mujtahid Tabrizī;[162] Muḥammad Mahdī Kāẓimī (b. 1901), known as Sayyid Mīrzā Muḥammad Mahdī Iṣfahānī, Shahīd-i Rābiʿ);[163] Hājī Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Kalbāsī;[164] and Sayyid ʿAbd Allāh Shubbar al-Kāẓimī.[165]

Lest a false impression be given, it is necessary to stress that the individuals named here and others of Bihbahānī's students do not form a single group of scholars working under one man. They have in common the fact that they all studied, for varying lengths of time, under the most outstanding figure of the period, some like Mīrzā Muḥammad Mahdī Baḥr al-ʿUlūm and Mullā Abd al-Ṣamad Hamadānī,[166] were associated with Bihbahānī for many years, while others attended his classes for only a short time.

Several of the older students of Bihbahānī (such as Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, Sayyid ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabāʾī ʿAlī Iṣfahānī and Muḥammad Mahdī Nirāqī) had studied under Shaykh Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī, and some (Bahr al-'Ulūm, Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī Isfahānī, Abū 'l-Qāsim Qummī, and Shaykh Jaʿfar al-Najafī) under Shaykh Muḥammad Mahdī Fatūnī, and thus themselves had direct links with the late Safavid period.

Younger individuals studied under these men as well as Bihbahānī; thus, for example, Shaykh Asad Allāh Kāẓimaynī was taught by Sayyid ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabāʾī, Shaykh Jaʿfar al-Najafī, Mīrzā Abū 'l-Qāsim Qummī, Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, and Mīrzā Muḥammad Mahdī Shahristānī,[167] while Ḥājī Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Kalbāsī studied under Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, Shaykh Jaʿfar al-Najafī, and Sayyid ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabāʾī.

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[162] See Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, p. 318.

[163] See Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 330–1; Ḥabībābādī, *Makārim al-āthār*, vol. 3, pp. 645–8; ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Aḥmad Amīnī, *Shahīdān-i rāh-i faẓīlat* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Rūzbih, [197–?]), pp. 420–31. He was killed by Nādir Mīrzā Afshār in the course of the siege of Mashhad by Muḥammad Walī Mīrzā in 1802. See Muḥammad Taqī Sipihr, *Nāsikh al-tawārīkh: Salāṭīn-i Qājār*, ed. by Muḥammad Bāqir Bihbūdī (Tehran, 1344 [1965]), vol. 1, pp. 121, 123.

[164] See Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 11–12; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 117–22; al-Ṭihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, pp. 14–15.

[165] See Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 366–7; Ḥabībābādī, *Makārim al-āthār*, vol. 4, pp. 1164–8.

[166] See Ḥabībābādī, *Makārim al-āthār*, vol. 2, pp. 600–3.

[167] See Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 320–1; Amīnī Najafī, *Shahīdān*, pp. 422–7; Ḥabībābādī, *Makārim al-āthār*, vol. 2, pp. 611–4.

At the same time, it was not uncommon for individuals to teach a particular book or subject to one of their contemporaries or even to individuals older than themselves. Thus, for example, Baḥr al-ʿUlūm included among his pupils Shaykh Jaʿfar al-Najafī, Sayyid Muḥsin al-Aʿraji, Āqā Sayyid Muḥammad Shubbar, and Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī, while he himself studied *falsafa* under Mīrzā Muḥammad Mahdī Iṣfahānī. Sayyid ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabāʾī was sent to join the classes of pupils much older than himself.[168]

The centralization of Shiʿi scholarship at the *ʿatabāt* resulted in the weaving of a complex web of master-pupil relationships, in which generations and individuals repeatedly overlapped. Where the Safavid and earlier periods had seen a relative scattering of Shiʿi learning through Iran, Arab Iraq, and the Bahrain and Jabal ʿĀmil regions, the second half of the eighteenth century witnessed a high degree of concentration of scholars in a central location to which students headed in growing numbers, and from which some left as well qualified ulama to teach in Iran, India, and elsewhere. Before proceeding to consider the developments which followed him, let us return for a moment to evaluate the impact of Āqā-yi Bihbahānī himself on the Shiʿi world of his period.

## The Impact of Āqā-yi Bihbahānī

Bihbahānī's great achievement was twofold. On the one hand, he destroyed the influence of the Akhbaris at the *ʿatabāt*: "Before him," writes Mullā Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān Tanakābunī, "the Akhbaris were in ascendancy and were extremely numerous, but he uprooted them."[169] His *Risālat al-ijtihād wa 'l-akhbār* remains the most important and influential treatment of the arguments used to invalidate the Akhbari position and to justify that of the Usulis. On the other hand, he redefined the nature of *ijtihād*, established the role of the *mujtahid*, and laid the basis for a system of *fiqh* which has been in use in Twelver Shiʿism ever since.[170] "He reformed and refashioned the bases of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), writes Muḥammad ʿAlī Muʿallim Ḥabībābādī, "in a fresh and delightful manner and, by reason of his new insights into the areas of

[168] Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 176.
[169] Ibid., p. 204.
[170] Algar, *Religion and State*, p. 34.

debate in the subject, provided a forceful and impressive impetus to its development."[171] As a result of this formidable achievement, Bihbahānī came to be regarded as the *mujaddid* or *murawwij* of the thirteenth/nineteenth century.[172] That this was recognized by his contemporaries is amply testified by Sayyid ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabāʾī in his *ijāza* to Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī, where he refers to Bihbahānī as "the Founder [*muʾassis*] of the nation of the Prince of mankind at the beginning of the thirteenth century."[173]

The reformation inspired by Bihbahānī was fraught with serious consequences for Twelver Shiʿism. Before he launched his offensive against the Akhbaris, relations between them and the Usulis had not resulted in serious animosity, much less in outright condemnation of one side by the other for heresy. By pronouncing a sentence of *takfīr* against the Akhbaris, Bihbahānī set a dangerous precedent which was soon to be used against Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī and his followers. From the time of Bihbahānī, Shiʿi orthodoxy became more sharply defined than ever before, and the threat of *takfīr* came into use as the ultimate weapon against ideas and individuals likely to challenge the orthodox system or its exponents. It is, above all, a token of the routinization into a church form which was taking place in Shiʿism at this time.

During the early Safavid period, heterodox and semi-heterodox groups had been to some extent integrated within the rather amorphous form of Shiʿism promoted by Shah Ismāʾīl I (1487–1524).[174] The situation soon changed with regard to the theological extremists (*ghulāt*) and the Ṣūfīs, but, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the existence of philosopher theologians such as Shaykh Bahaʾi, Mullā Ṣadrā, Mīr Dāmād (Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Dāmād (d. 1040/1631), and Mullā Muḥammad ibn Murtaḍā Muhsin Fayḍ-i Kāshānī (d. 1091/1680) indicated that orthodox Shiʿism could embrace a wide range of views.[175] The

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[171] Ḥabībābādī, *Makārim al-āthār*, vol. 1, p. 222.

[172] Thus Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, p. 124; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 204; Ḥabībābādī, *Makārim al-āthār*, vol. 1, p. 222. Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī was also regarded by some as the *mujaddid* of the thirteenth century. See, for example Sohrab, *Al-risāla al-tisʾ ʿashariyya*, p. 11 n., citing an inscription on the Shaykh's tombstone.

[173] *Ijāza*, quoted in ʿAbd Allāh Aḥsāʾī, *Sharh-i ḥālāt-i Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī* (Bombay: Hājī Muḥammad Ḥasan Ṣaḥib, 1309 [1892]), p. 88.

[174] On the role of the Ṣūfī and extreme *Shiʿi* groups in the early Safavid period, see Mazzaoui, *Origins*; Keddie,"The Roots of the Ulama's Power," pp. 217–9.

[175] On these and other individuals, see Browne, *Literary History*, vol. 4, pp. 427–36; Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, vol. 4, book 5; Ḥalabī, *Tārikh-i falāsifah*, pp. 664–751; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "The School of Iṣfahān," and "Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī (Mullā Ṣadrā)," in

growth in the power of the *mujtahids* in the Safavid epoch culminated in the person of Mullā Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, whose fanaticism was legendary. But even he praised Mullā Muḥammad Amīn Astarābādī in his *Biḥār al-anwār*.[176]

In the period of the interregnum, however, the Usulis grasped an opportunity to develop—given the absence of a central government—the theory of the *mujtahid* as a living source of charismatic authority in the period of *ghayba*. By refusing to recognize this authority, the Akhbaris presented a serious obstacle to the complete domination of the Shiʿi world and mind by the Usuli school or—more precisely—by its representatives; what had been a relatively polite theological disagreement intensified rapidly into a struggle for mastery over the development of post-Safavid Shiʿism in its entirety. It was inevitable that the Usulis would win the struggle. The power vacuum created by the Afghan invasion had brought into existence a psychological need among the Shiʿi population for stability and authority, and this is precisely what the Usuli party offered.

The Usuli victory had many consequences, but one in particular is of considerable importance in helping us understand why the mass of ulama reacted negatively to Shaykhism and Babism. It also helps us grasp the reasons for their very emergence in the first place. This is that *taqlīd* or taking guidance in religious matters, limited by the Akhbaris to the Imāms,[177] was applied by the Usulis to the *mujtahid*. As the *mujtahids* grew in power, so the role of the *marjaʿ al-taqlīd* increased in importance, not only as a source of charismatic authority, along the lines suggested earlier in this chapter, but increasingly as a source of unity for the Shiʿi population.

Some modern authorities have adopted a practice of identifying certain leading ulama between al-Kulaynī and the modern period as outstanding *marājiʿ al-taqlīd*. Thus, for example, ʿAbd al-Hādī Ḥāʾirī, citing a monograph by Āqā Muḥammad Vakīlī Qummī, refers to no less than fifty-eight *mujtahids* between al-Kulaynī and Ayatollah Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī Burūjirdī (1875–1961) as having been "recognized as great

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*A History of Muslim Philosophy*, ed. M. M. Sharif (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1963–66), and bibliographies in these articles; idem, *Islamic Studies: Essays on Law and Society, the Sciences, and Philosophy and Sufism* (Beirut: Librarie du Liban, 1967), chapters 10 and 11; idem, *Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī and His Transcendent Theosophy: Background, Life and Works* (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1978).

[176] Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, p. 42.

[177] See items 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8 of the summary of the *Minyat al-mumārisīn*.

*marājiʿ al-taqlīd*."[178] Ḥusayn Khurāsānī, however, gives the names of only twenty-four *marājiʿ* from al-Kulaynī to (Ayatollah) Sayyid Āqā Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabāʾī Qummī Ḥāʾirī (1282–1366/1865–1947).[179] This would, nevertheless, appear to be a highly innovatory practice which obscures the fact that the concept of *marjaʿiyya* seems only to have been clearly defined from the mid-nineteenth century. There is general agreement, however, that the theory of the role of the *marjaʿ* as, ideally, a single individual universally recognized, was first embodied in the person of Muḥammad Ḥasan ibn Bāqir Najafī (c. 1202–1266/1788–1850), the author of the celebrated work on *fiqh* known as the *Jawāhir al-kalām*.[180]

Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥasan had studied for the most part under students of Bihbahānī, including men such as Shaykh Jaʿfar al-Najafī and his son Shaykh Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar Āl Kāshif al-Ghiṭā (1180–1243/1766–1827), and held an *ijāza* from Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī. Khwānsārī states that

> none has been seen like him to this day in the elaboration of questions, nor have any beheld his like in the division of unusual elements of the law by means of various proofs; no-one has dealt with the classifications of *fiqh* so fully as he, nor has anyone systematized the rules of *uṣūl* as he has nor has any *mujtahid* before him so consolidated the elements of ratiocination. How might it be otherwise when he has written a book on the *fiqh* of this school from beginning to end, known as the *Jawāhir al-aḥkām* [sic].[181]

He goes on to say that "the leadership of the Shiʿis, both Arabs and Persians in this age, fell to him."[182] A measure of the influence enjoyed

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[178] See Abdul-Hadi Hairi, *Shiʿism and Constitutionalism in Iran: A Study of the Role Played by the Persian Residents of Iraq in Iranian Politics* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977), pp. 62–3, citing a "mimeographed research" entitled "Tashkīlāt-i madhab-i shīʿa," by Āqā Muḥammad Vakīlī Qummī.

[179] Ḥusayn Khurāsānī, *Maktab-i tashayyuʿ dar sayr-i tārīkh* (Tehran: Muḥammadi, 1962), pp. 194–6.

[180] *Pace* Algar, who bestows this accolade on Shaykh Murtaḍā Ansārī (*Religion and State*, p. 163). On Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥasan, see Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 181–2; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 103–6; al-Ṭihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, pp. 310–4; Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān Iʿtimād al-Saltana, *Kitāb al-maʿāthir wa ʾl-āthār* (Tehran: Dār al-Ṭabaʿa-yi Khaṣṣa-yi Dawlatī, 1306 [1888]), pp. 135–6; Muḥammad Riḍāʾ Muẓaffar, introduction to *Jawāhir al-kalām fī sharḥ sharāʾiʿ al-Islām* by Muḥammad Ḥasan ibn Bāqir al-Najafī, 6th and 7th eds. (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya, 1392–1401[1972–81]); Mughniyya, *Maʿa ʿulamāʾ al-Najaf*, pp. 81–5.

[181] Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, p. 181.

[182] Ibid.; p. 182; cf. al-Ṭihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, p. 311.

by Shaykh Jaʿfar al-Najafī is to be found in the fact that, when Sayyid ʿAlī-Muḥammad Shīrāzī declared himself *bāb* in 1260/1844, one of his first acts was to send a letter pressing his claims to the Shaykh,[183] while also dispatching letters to Tehran for Muḥammad Shāh, (r. 1838–1848) and Hājī Mīrzā Āqāsī, the prime minister.[184]

It was, however, a pupil of Shaykh Jaʿfar, Shaykh Murtaḍā Anṣārī, who carried the role of *mujtahid* to its highest point. Having succeeded al-Najafī at the *ʿatabāt*,[185] Anṣārī was acknowledged as *marjaʿ* not only in Iraq and Iran, but in Turkey, Arabia, and India, thus becoming the first to be universally recognized throughout virtually the entire Shiʿi world.[186] Of particular significance in the present context is the statement of Iʿtimād al-Salṭana Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān (d. 1896) that Anṣārī was "the first general vicegerent *Nāʾib al-ʿĀmm*) of the Imām.[187] The Bāb's claim was, in the first instance, held by some to be that of 'special vicegerent' (*Nāʾib al-Khāṣṣ*).[188]

The sense of unity thus achieved was ruptured for a short time by various claims to leadership on the death of Anṣārī, but was continued in the end by Mīrzā Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥasan ibn Maḥmūd Shīrāzī (1230–1312/1815–1895), the Mīrzā-yi Shīrāzī who issued a *fatwā* against the Tobacco Regie in 1892.[189] In many respects, the impor-

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[183] Zarandī, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 90–1; Shaykh Kāẓim Samandar, *Tārīkh-i Samandar wa mulḥaqāt*, edited by Mahdī Samandarī (Tehran: Muʾassasa-yi Millī-yi Maṭbūʿāt-i Amrī, 131 B. [1974]), p. 347.

[184] ʿAlī Qulī Mīrzā Iʿtiḍād al-Salṭana, "Al-mutanabbīyūn," (section on the Bāb) in his *Fitna-yi Bāb*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Navāʾī (Tehran: [s.n.] 1351 [1972]), p. 35; Sipihr, *Nāsikh al-Tawārīkh*, vol. 3, p. 235.

[185] Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 106; al-Tihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, p. 313. "Some time before his death, he [Muḥammad Ḥasan] made him [Ansārī] his appointed sucessor (*khalīfa manṣūs*) and particular vicegerent (*nāʾib makhṣūṣ*)", Iʿtimād al-Salṭana, *Al-maʾāthir wa ʾl-āthār*, p. 136.

[186] Compare Algar, *Religion and State*, p. 163. On Anṣārī, see Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 106–7; Iʿtimād al-Salṭana, *Al-maʿāthir wa ʾl-āthār*, pp. 131–7; Muḥammad Mahdī al-Kāẓimī, *Aḥsan al-wadīʿa* (Baghdad: Maṭbaʿat al-Najāḥ, 1928–29), vol. 1, pp. 147–50; Murtaẓā Anṣārī, *Zindigānī va shakhsiyyat-i Shaykh Anṣārī* (Tehran: Chapkhāna-yi Ittiḥād, [1960]); Ḥabībābādī, *Makārim al-āthār*, vol. 2, pp. 487–517; Mahdī Bāmdād, *Sharḥ-i ḥāl-i rijāl-i Īrān* (Tehran: Kitābfurūshī-yi Zuvvar, [1968–1972]), vol. 6, pp. 260–1; Mughniyya. *Maʿa ʿulamāʾ al-Najaf*, pp. 87–90.

[187] Iʿtimād al-Salṭana, *Al-maʿāthir wa ʾl-āthār*, p. 136.

[188] Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 59.

[189] On Mīrzā-yi Shīrāzī, see Kāẓimī, *Aḥsan al-wadīʿa*, vol. 1, pp. 159–62; Iʿtimād al-Salṭana, *Al-maʿāthir wa ʾl-āthār*, pp. 137–8; al-Ṭihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 1, pp. 436–41; ʿAlī Wāʾiz-i Khīyābānī al-Tabrīzī, *Kitāb-i ulamaʾ-i muʿāṣirīn* (Tabriz: Matbaʿa-yi Islāmiyya, 1366 [1947]), pp. 46–50. Dawlatābādī describes his struggle to succeed to leadership of the Shiʿi world on Anṣārī's death, vol. 1, pp. 25–7. Al-Ṭihrānī describes him

tance of Mīrzā-yi Shīrāzī exceeded that of Anṣārī, to whose position he had succeeded. He is described by his pupil Ḥasan ibn Hādī Ṣadr (1856–1935) in his *Takmilat Amal al-āmil* as "the leader of Islam, the *nāʾib* of the Imām, the renewer [*mujaddid*] of the divine laws [at the beginning of the fourteenth (late 19th) century]. The leadership of the Jaʿfari sect through the world was centered in [him] towards the end of his life."[190] Iʿtimād al-Salṭana, writing in Shīrāzī's lifetime, states that "today he is the most learned of the *mujtahids* in the eyes of the people of discernment."[191]

The lack of any real, hierarchically-organized ecclesiastical system meant that the situation after Shīrāzī became somewhat unclear, with little agreement as to which precise individuals might be regarded as worthy of holding the position of sole *marjaʿ*. Hairi states that 'if at a given time there existed several equally qualified *mujtahids*, some might be able to gain recognition as the sole *marjaʿ*',[192] and gives the example of Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm Nāʾīnī Najafī (1277–1355/1860–1936), Ayatollah ʿAbd al-Karīm ibn Muḥammad Jaʿfar Ḥāʾirī-Yazdī (1276–1355/1859–1937), and Abu 'l-Ḥasan Mūsawī al-Isbahānī (known as Sayyid Abu 'l-Ḥasan Iṣfahānī, 1284–1365/1867–1946), in the period before the death of the first two. Nevertheless, a succession of individual scholars did appear who fostered the role of *marjaʿ* on an absolute or partial basis and kept alive the possibility of a source of charismatic authority in the Shiʿi world.[193] Ayatollah Burūjirdī, who died in 1961, was particularly successful in establishing his position

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as "the greatest and the most famous of the ulama of his age, and the most important *marjaʿ* of the Shiʿis in the other lands of Islam in his time," *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 1, p. 436; cf. p. 438. He studied under Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥasan Najafī and Anṣārī.

It is not widely known that he was a relative of the Bāb, being a paternal cousin of his father. A Bahaʾi writer Muḥammad-ʿAlī Fayḍī, has provided circumstantial evidence that he was, in private, a follower of the Bāb. *Khāndān-i-Afnān ṣadra-yi Raḥmān* (Tehran: Muʾassasa-yi Millī-yi Maṭbūʿāt-i Amrī, 127 B. [1971]), pp. 13–17; cf. Hasan M. Balyuzi, *The Báb: The Herald of the Day of Days* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1974), p. 33.

[190] Al-Ṭihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 1, p. 440.

[191] Iʿtimād al-Salṭana, *Al-maʿāthir wa 'l-āthār*, pp. 137–8.

[192] Hāʾirī, *Shiʿism and Constitutionalism*, p. 64.

[193] We may note the following as particularly important in this context: Shaykh Muḥammad Kāẓim Khurāsānī (d. 1329/1911), Ḥujjat al-Islām Sayyid Muḥammad Kāẓim Ṭabaṭabāʾī Yazdī Najafī (d. 1337/1919), Mīrzā Muḥammad Taqī Hāʾirī Shīrāzī (d. 1338/1920), Shaykh Fatḥ Allāh Sharīʿat-i Iṣfahānī (d. 1338/1920), Ḥājj Sayyid Abū 'l-Ḥasan Iṣfahānī (d. 1365/1946), Ḥājj Āqā Ḥusayn Qummī (d. 1366/1946), and Shayhk Muḥammad Kāẓim Shīrāzī (d. 1367/1947), and Ḥājj Āqā Ḥusayn Burūjirdī (d. 1380/1961).

as sole *marjaʿ*, although even here there were those who tended to see him as head of the body of ulama in an organizational rather than ideal charismatic sense.[194] During this period, the title *ayatollah* came to be used widely of *mujtahids* who had acquired the standing of *marjaʿ*, and, in more recent times, there has been a tendency to institutionalize the title, particularly in the form "*Āyat Allāh al-ʿUẓmā*", used of the most outstanding *mujtahid*. Thus, Burūjirdī was recognized as Āyat Allāh al-ʿUẓmā in his lifetime,[195] as was Ayatollah Khomeini after the revolution. Even Sunnis have spoken of Khomeini as the *mujaddid* of the fifteenth Islamic century. This is all the more intriguing when we consider that he achieved his present position more by virtue of his political success and charismatic appeal than by any outstanding abilities as an *ʿālim*—in some ways a reversal of the trend towards clerical routinization by the irruption of latent charisma.

The implications of this development as a means of extending or projecting the charisma of the Imām into individual figures of supreme or near supreme authority are clear. The *marjaʿ* or Ayatollah is the living deputy of the Imām in an active and distinct sense. Thus, Mahmoud Shehabi writes that

> The order was received that during the long absence the ignorant are to be guided by the orders and the religious ideas of the leaders—called public deputies (i.e. *nāʾib-i ʿamm*), or deputies not specifically appointed (i.e. as opposed to the *nāʾib-i khāṣṣ*)—who know jurisprudence, can protect their religion, and are thus able to save the people from sins, corruption, and earthly desires. Such public deputies who have a thorough knowledge from the proper sources are, during the long absence, like an Imam and following them is comparable to following an Imam. Since Shīʾa depends [sic] upon the one who is the most learned and accepts him as the public deputy, in every epoch the person who is the most learned and pious is regarded as the public deputy and the people follow his ideas and his decisions concerning religious affairs.[196]

This link with the Imām is vividly illustrated by Ḥājī Mīrzā Yaḥyā Dawlatābādī, when he points out that one of the factors inducing Mīrzā yi Shīrāzī to live in Samarra was the existence there of the cellar in which the twelfth Imām was said to have entered occultation, a

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[194] Binder, "The Proofs of Islam," p. 132.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Mahmoud Shehabi, "Shīʿa," in *Islam: The Straight Path: Islam Interpreted by Muslims*, edited by Kenneth W. Morgan (New York: Ronald Press, 1958), p. 202.

fact which increased the stature of the *nāʾib* of the Imām living there.[197] According to Leonard Binder, "Burūjirdī's supporters came close to representing him as the sole spokesman for the Hidden Imām."[198] Some of Khomeini's followers have, in fact, gone as far as to speak of him openly and in print as the *nāʾib* of the Imām[199] while his arrival in Iran in the early days of the revolution had what can only be described as messianic overtones. The significance of the role of the *rukn-i rābiʿ* in Shaykhism, or of the *bāb* in early Babism becomes much clearer in the context of a growing demand for a single source of charismatic authority in Shiʿism from the time of Bihbahānī onwards. In the case of Babism, however, we shall see that the charisma was original rather than latent.

In this regard, it is important to understand that the emergence of Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥasan Najafī as supreme *marjaʿ al-taqlīd* was itself the result of a development in which several individuals of importance figured. We have indicated above how many of the leading ulama of the early nineteenth century studied under Bihbahānī and one another, creating a complex network of masters and pupils. Out of this group there emerged a number of ulama who were, in a sense, prototypes of Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥasan Najafī and his successors, on the one hand, and of the wealthy, influential ulama of the later Qajar period (such as Mullā ʿAlī Kanī, Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī Iṣfahānī Āqā Najafī (d. 1914), and Hājī Āqā Muḥsin ʿIrāqī) on the other.

Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī Ṭabāṭabāʾī Baḥr al-ʿUlūm was widely regarded in Bihbahānī's lifetime as possessing influence at the *ʿatabāt* second only to that of the latter, and was certainly the leading *ʿālim* in the brief period between Bihbahānī's death and his own. This 'Ocean of the Sciences' was born in 1155/1742 in Karbala, where he studied initially under his father, Sayyid Murtaḍā Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, later receiving instruction from Shaykh Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī (d. 1772?). He then went to Najaf, where, he studied under Shaykh Muḥammad Mahdī Fatūnī, Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī Darūqī al-Najafī, and several other ulama. Following this, he returned to Karbala to study under Bihbahānī. Among his pupils were Shaykh Jaʿfar al-Najafī, Sayyid Javād al-Āmilī,

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[197] Yaḥyā Dawlatābādī, *Tārīkh-i muʿāsir yā ḥayāt-i Yaḥyā* (Tehran: Kitābfurūshī-yi Ibn Sīnā, 1328–1336 [1949–1957]), vol. 1, p. 27.

[198] Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 132.

[199] See for example, cyclostyled letter produced by Gurūh-i Badr of students in Shīrāz University, "Rizhīm dar andīsha-yi tuṭiʾaʾī dīgar," Shīrāz, 1979.

Mullā Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Mahdī Narāqī Kāshānī (d. 1245/1829), Hājī Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Kalbāsī, Shaykh ʿAbd ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Baḥrānī, and Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī, to whom he gave an *ijāza.* His writings are comparatively few, including the *Hāshiyyat al-wāfiyya* on *uṣūl*, the *Durrat al-manẓūma* on *fiqh*, and the *Fawāʾid al-Uṣūliyya*.[200]

Shaykh Jaʿfar al-Najafī, whose polemics against Mīrzā Muḥammad Akhbārī in the time of Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh put a seal on Bihbahānī's victory over the Akhbari movement, exercised great influence, not only at the ʿ*atabāt* but in Iran itself, where he commanded the obedience of the Shah. According to Tanakābunī, Shaykh Jaʿfar al-Najafī,

> permitted Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh to ascend the throne (*idhn dar salṭanat dād*), and appointed him as his deputy (*nāʾib*), but on certain conditions: that he appoint a *muʾadhdhin* to each of the regiments of the army and an *Imām Jumʿa* for the army as a whole, who should deliver a sermon once a week and give instructions on [religious] questions.[201]

Despite his well-known love for food and sex, he had a reputation as a sternly religious man, attending rigorously to his devotions, and it was his example which inspired Mullā Muḥammad Taqī Baraghānī Qazvīnī (d. 1847) to apply himself to his prayers during the night, even in winter.[202] Apart from Bihbahānī, Shaykh Jaʿfar studied under Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, Shaykh Muḥammad Mahdī Fatūnī, and Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī Darūqī al-Najafī (themselves teachers of Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, as noted earlier). An Arab, whose Persian was not very fluent, his influence in Iran—where he traveled almost every year—prefigures in many respects that exercised by Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī, who was, in fact, one of his pupils. In particular, his influence in Isfahan and Qazvīn shows a striking resemblance to that achieved a short time later by al-Aḥsāʾī in those same places, and, with the notable exception of Muḥammad Taqī Baraghānī, exercised over many of the same people. We have referred earlier to the importance of Shaykh Jaʿfar's work on *fiqh*, the *Kashf al-ghiṭāʾ*, as an example of the conjunction of charismatic and legal authority in the work of certain individual scholars. He was, in the words of Khwānsārī, "obeyed by both Arabs and Persians,"[203] and became, as he himself writes, "the Shaykh of all the Shaykhs of the

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[200] On Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, see note 155 above.
[201] Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 191.
[202] Ibid., pp. 193–4.
[203] Khwānsārī, *Rawdāt*, p. 151.

Muslims."[204] Āghā Buzurg al-Ṭihrānī describes him as "the favored leader of the Shiʿis, and their greatest *marjaʿ* in his day."[205] Some even regarded him as the *nāʾib* of the Imām,[206] a point of some significance in the present context.

Among the most important contemporaries of al-Najafī, we may note Hājī Mīrzā Abu 'l-Qāsim Qummī (1734?–1816) (Mīrzā-yi Qummī) and Sayyid ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabāʾī. Qummī studied under Bihbahānī, Shaftī, Fatūnī, and others, and eventually came to live and teach in Qum, where he did much to raise the standard of religious studies. His important work on *fiqh, al-Qawānīn al-muḥkama*, is one of the most important contributions to the study of *uṣūl*, to the extent that Khwānsārī claims "it has abrogated all the books of *uṣūl*"[207]—yet another example of the way in which Shiʿi *fiqh* was perceived as developing in this period.

Another Ṭabāṭabāʾī, Sayyid ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad (1748–1815)[208] is the author of another famous work on *fiqh*, the *Riyāḍ al-masāʾil fī bayān al-aḥkām bi 'l-dalāʾil*, noted for its contribution to *furūʿ*. Born in Kāẓimiyya, he was descended from Mullā Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī, the father of Mullā Muḥammad Bāqir, while his own father had married a sister of Āqā Bihbahānī; he himself later married one of Bihbahānī's daughters. His early studies were carried out under the direction of Bihbahānī's eldest son, Āqā Muḥammad ʿAlī Bihbahānī, but he later studied under the *murawwij* himself. He too taught a number of important ulama, including Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī, Hājī Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Kalbāsī, Hājī Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir Shaftī, Muḥammad Taqī Baraghānī and his brother, Hājī Mullā Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Baraghānī (d. ca. 1853), (the father of the Babi leader Qurrat al-ʿAyn (1817–1852), about whom much will be said in succeeding pages.

Sayyid ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad provides us with an excellent example of an increasingly common phenomenon in the period under review: the *ʿālim* with close links not only by means of *ijāza* but also through physical descent and marriage with other ulama of significance. From the late

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[204] Quoted in ibid.
[205] Al-Ṭihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, pp. 248–9.
[206] Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 197. On Shaykh Jaʿfar, see note 156 above.
[207] Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, p. 493. On Mīrzā-yi Qummī, see note 159 above.
[208] See note 153 above. His elder son was the Āqā Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabāʾī who led the jihad against Russia in 1826, and his younger son, Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī, became—as we shall see—the leading opponent of Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī.

Safavid period on, we can observe how religious authority passed not only from teacher to pupil but from father to son as well; descendants of Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī and Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, of Nīʿmat Allāh ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Jazāʾirī, Āqā Bihbahānī, Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, Shaykh Jaʾfar al-Najafī, and Sayyid ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad Ṭabātabāʾī himself came to occupy positions of importance in the religious hierarchy.

Not only was the power of the individual mujtahids increasing, but the influence of certain clerical families was growing. Intermarriage between the members of these families strengthened this power to a degree that made entry into the highest echelons of the ulama class increasingly difficult for someone outside the circles of this power structure (although, as Bill has noted, the religious classes have provided a path into the middle sector of society for young men of humble birth up to the modern period).[209] By way of contrast, as we shall note, Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī was neither descended from a clerical family nor related to one by marriage. None of his descendants aspired to rank within the religious hierarchy, although many of his students rose to eminence.

Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, similarly, came from an important family of *sayyids* who had no connection with the ulama, and, although some of them were scholars, none of his descendants (with the limited exception of his son Sayyid Aḥmad) held a notable position within the Shiʿi hierarchy. Ḥājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī, Rashtī's successor as head of the Shaykhi school, was the only *ʿālim* in a family closely related to the ruling Qajar house, but it is significant to note that he succeeded in establishing his own small dynasty of scholars in Kirman, as did his rival, Mullā Muḥammad Māmaqānī Ḥujjat al-Islām (d. 1269/1852), in Tabriz. Although Sayyid ʿAlī-Muḥammad-i-Shīrāzī was related through his father to Mīrzā-yi Shīrāzī and Sayyid Javād Shīrāzī (an important Imām Jumʿa of Kirman), his family was primarily composed of wholesale merchants (*tujjār*). Much the same is true of several (but by no means all) of the Bāb's disciples, including Mullā Muḥammad Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī (1814?–1849) and Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī Bārfurūshī (d. 1849).

A student of Shaykh Jaʿfar al-Najafī, Bihbahānī, Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, Sayyid ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabāʾī, and Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī, Hājī Muḥammad Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad Ḥasan Kalbāsī (1766–1845)

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[209] James Alban Bill, *The Politics of Iran* (Columbus, Ohio: Merrill, 1972), p. 28.

seems to have been one of the earliest *mujtahids* to achieve recognition as a *marjaʿ* beyond a restricted area, being acknowledged as such for the whole of Iran, Arabia, and India[210]—although his recognition cannot be said to have been universal in those regions. Khwānsārī describes him as "the source of sciences, wisdom, and writings, the center of the circle of noble scholars, the axis around which the *sharīʿa* revolved in this age, and the support of the Shiʿa and their distinguished and mighty shaykh."[211] Descendants of Kalbāsī are numbered among the leading ulama of the later period in Isfahan and Iraq. His contemporary and associate in Isfahan, Mullā Muḥammad Bāqir Shaftī (Rashtī), Ḥujjāt al-Islām (1761–l844) had studied under Bihbahānī, Sayyid ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabāʾī Bahr al-ʿUlūm, Shaykh Jaʿfar al-Najafī, Sayyid Muḥsin al-Aʿraji, and Abu 'l-Qāsim Qummī. He is described by Algar as "the first example of the wealthy, assertive mujtahid, whose power—judicial, economic, and political—exceeds that of the secular government, which functions, indeed, only with his consent and subject to his ultimate control."[212] Shaftī's influence did not end, however, in the financial or political spheres; he acquired a considerable reputation as a scholar, attracting pupils from several countries,[213] and became, in the words of an English observer, "renowned for his sanctity from Kerbelah to the Ganges, and considered the most shining luminary of the Sheeah faith."[214] The importance of his position towards the time of his death is indicated by the fact that Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī singled him out as the one individual whose approval of the Shaykhi position would secure for it considerable protection from the attacks of other ulama, and sought to influence him by sending Mullā Muḥammad Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī to Isfahan, in order to win his allegiance.[215]

Had it not been for the pronouncement against him of *takfīr* in about 1822, Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī might well have been the first Shiʿi *ālim* to achieve universal *marjaʿīyya*. Despite the *takfīr* and the continuing

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[210] Abu 'l-Qāsim ibn Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn (Khān Kirmānī), *Fihrist-i kutub-i Shaykh-i ajall-i awḥad marḥum Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī va sāʾir mashāyikh-i ʿiẓam va Khulāṣa-yi sharh-i aḥvāl-i īshān*, 3rd ed. (Kirman: Chapkhāna-yi Saʿādat, [1974?]), p. 149.

[211] Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, p. 11. On Kalbāsī, see note 164 above.

[212] Algar, *Religion and State*, p. 60.

[213] Iqbāl, "Ḥujjat al-Islām," pp. 39–40.

[214] Charles Stuart, *Journal of a Residence in Northern Persia and the Adjacent Provinces of Turkey* (London: R. Bentley, 1854), p. 246.

[215] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 19–24. On Shaftī, see Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 125–7; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 135–68; al-Ṭihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, pp. 192–6; and Iqbāl, "Ḥujjat al-Islām."

prejudice against Shaykhism in orthodox circles, later writers have almost universally accorded him the highest praise, and there is no doubt that, in his own lifetime he was one of the most powerful and respected ulama living in Iran. Although strongly favored by Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh, and, from 1814, lavishly patronized by Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā in Kirmanshah, he succeeded in avoiding any imputation of having sold out to the secular powers, and was regarded as both pious and brilliant. No study of the development of charismatic authority in Shiʿism during this period would be complete without detailed reference to al-Aḥsāʾī, not least because of the manner in which the Shaykhi school after him and, from 1844, the Babi movement interpreted and expressed the nature and function of such authority and of the "gnostic motif". Having provided some idea of the intellectual milieu of Twelver Shiʿism at the time of his arrival in Iraq from Arabia, let us now discuss at greater length the career of al-Aḥsāʾī himself.

CHAPTER TWO

# SHAYKH AḤMAD AL-AḤSAʾĪ

## Birth, Childhood, and Youth

Viewed in the light of his later fame as one of the leading Shiʿi ulama of his day, the circumstances of al-Aḥsāʾī's birth were most inauspicious. The individuality of his contribution to Shiʿi thought in the early years of the nineteenth century may, in some ways, be attributed to his formative years. Unfortunately, our sources reveal comparatively little about this period, and we must depend on circumstantial evidence in attempting to trace the main influences on his thought and outlook, cast as they are in an original and at times eccentric form.

According to his own testimony, al-Aḥsāʾī was born in the month of Rajab 1166/May 1753.[1] His birthplace was a small Shiʿi village called al-Maṭayrafī, situated in the oasis of al-Aḥsāʾ (or al-Ḥasāʾ) near the east coast of the Arabian Peninsula,[2] where his family had lived for several generations. The first of his ancestors to settle there had been Shaykh Dāghir, his great-great-great-grandfather, who had become estranged from his father Ramaḍān and gone to live in the village. The dispute was almost certainly about religion: Dāghir was the first of al-Aḥsāʾī's ancestors to embrace Shiʿism, at about the time local tradition speaks of the conversion of several Arab tribes, about four hundred years ago.[3]

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[1] Aḥmad ibn Zayn al-Dīn al-Aḥsāʾī, "Risāla," in *Sīra Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī*, by Ḥusayn ʿAlī Maḥfūẓ (Baghdad: Matbaʿat al-Maʿārif, 1957), p. 9; Abu ʾl-Qāsim Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 133. See also ʿAbd Allāh al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, p. 5. Alternative dates are given in Edward Granville Browne, "The Sheykhīs and Their Doctrine Concerning the 'Fourth Support'," in *A Traveller's Narrative Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Bāb*, [by ʿAbbās Effendi], trans. and ed. Edward Granville Browne (Cambridge: The University Press, 1891), vol. 2, p. 235; Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 18; Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt* p. 26; Shaykh ʿAlī al-Aḥsāʾī, quoted in ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Qāmūs-i Īqān* (Tehran: Muʾassasa-yi Millī-yi Maṭbūʾāt-i Amrī, 128 B. [1972]), vol. 4, p. 1604.

[2] On al-Aḥsāʾ, see F. S. Vidal, *The Oasis of al-Hasa.* ([New York?]: Arabian Oil Co., Local Govt. Relations, Arabian Research Division, 1955); J. G. Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman and Central Arabia*. (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, India, 1908–15), vol. 2A, pp. 642–79.

[3] Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, vol. 2A, pp. 207–8.

Before that, the Shaykh's forebears had been nomadic Sunnis.[4] None of our sources provides details as to the occupation of Shaykh Aḥmad's father or other relatives, but it is reasonable to assume that none of them were ulama. It is possible, however, that his family was of some influence in the area, since they belonged to the dominant Mahāshir clan, of the ruling Banū Khālid.[5]

Despite the religious diversity of al-Aḥsāʾ, which, in the eighteenth century, included Jews and Sabaeans as well as Shiʿis and Sunnis,[6] the principal religious orientation of the region was Shiʿi. When the Safavid dynasty in Iran found itself compelled to look abroad for Shiʿi scholars to instruct the Iranian population in Twelver doctrine, they went to Jabal ʿĀmil in Lebanon and to Bahrain.[7] Men such as Sayyid Zayn al-Dīn ʿAlī ibn Sulaymān al-Baḥrānī Umm al-Ḥadīth (d. 1064/1653),[8] Hāshim ibn Sulaymān al-Baḥrānī (d. 1109/1695), the author of the *Ghāyat al-marām*,[9] Shaykh Sulaymān ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Muḥaqqiq al-Baḥrānī (d. 1120/1708–9),[10] and Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Khaṭṭī al-Baḥrānī (d. 1120/ 1708–9)[11] are among the numerous ulama from Bahrain who achieved distinction in orthodox Shiʿi circles in the Safavid period.

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[4] ʿAbd Allāh al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt-i*, pp. 4–5; Mahfūẓ, *Sīra*, p. 9; Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 132.

[5] On the Mahāshir, see Harry St. John Philby, *Saudi Arabia* (London: Benn, 1955), p. 25. See also Carsten Niebuhr, *Description de l'Arabie*, translated by F. L. Mourier (Amsterdam: S. J. Baalde, 1774), p. 294.

[6] Niebuhr speaks of both Jews and Sabaeans in the region in the mid-eighteenth century (*Description*, p. 293). Lorimer remarks that, after the Turkish occupation of al-Aḥsāʾ in the 1870s, there were few Jews left, and speaks of the Sabaeans as no longer in existence there (*Gazeteer*, vol. 2A, p. 645).

[7] Browne, *Literary History*, vol. 4, p. 360. A comprehsive account of *Shiʿi* divines from Bahrain is to be found in the lengthy *ijāza* from Shaykh Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī, published under the title of *Luʾluʾatayi 'l-Baḥrayn*, referred to in the last chapter. An unpublished biographical dictionary of ulama from al-Aḥsāʾ, Qaṭīf, and Bahrain is the *Anwār al-Baḥrayn* of Shaykh ʿAlī ibn Ḥasan al-Baladī al-Baḥrānī (1857–1921)—see al-Tihrānī, *al-Dharīʿa*, vol. 2, p. 420. Al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī's *Amal al-Āmil* is also useful. [Since this was written, Andrew Newman has argued that the story of a clerical migration to Iran is a myth. See Andrew J. Newman, "The Myth of the Clerical Migration to Safawid Iran: Arab Shiite Opposition to 'Ali al-Karaki and Safawid Shiism," *Die Welt des Islams*, 33:1 (1993), 66–112.]

[8] See Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 56–7; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 277–8. He is described as the first to develop the science of *ḥadīth* in Bahrain.

[9] See Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 736–7; Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 154–6; al-ʿĀmilī, *Amal al-Āmil*, vol. 2, p. 341; Kantūrī, *Kashf*, index under "Hāshim al-maʿrūf bi 'l-ʿAllāma".

[10] See Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 330–5; Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 185–8; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 275–7.

[11] See Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 24–5; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 278–9.

Side by side with the development of Shiʿi orthodoxy in the region, however, there appears to have been a recurrent tendency to favour more heterodox systems. One of the most eminent Ishrāqī thinkers, Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī Ibn Abī Jumhūr al-Aḥsāʾī (d. ca. 1473), was a native of the region. Mullā Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān Tanakābunī has claimed that Shaykh Aḥmad obtained the library of Ibn Abī Jumhūr and that the books in it proved a major influence on his mind as a young man.[12] Whether or not this is true—and it seems highly unlikely—al-Aḥsāʾī certainly acquired considerable familiarity with Ishrāqī literature at some point.

Of possibly greater significance in the Shaykh's development may have been residual Qarmaṭī influence in the area. As is well known, the Qarmaṭī sect founded a state in al-Aḥsāʾ under Abū Saʿīd al-Jannābī (d. 300/ 913) in 899. Although the military power of the Qarāmaṭī declined by the eleventh century, the state in al-Aḥsāʾī remained in existence, its internal affairs being run by a representative council of descendants of the Prophet (*sādāt*) which "seems to have maintained local autonomy down to the xviiith century."[13] There is also evidence of fresh Qarmaṭī influence from Yemen in eighteenth century Aḥsāʾ.

In the 1760s, one of the most important of the Ismaili (Sulaymani-Mustaʿli) tribes in Yemen, the Banū Yām, came under the control of the Makramī family, by whom it has been ruled down to the present day.[14] The first Makramī *sheikh*—whose name appears to have been Ḥasan ibn Hibbat Allāh[15]—was made governor of Najrān by the Imām of Sanaa, but soon achieved independence, extending his influence by 1763 over other Ismaili tribes in Saʿfān, Ḥarāz, Manākha, and Ṭayba.[16] In 1764, several members of the Banū ʿAjmān who had been defeated by the Wahhabis at Hadba Qidhla, fled to Najrān and persuaded the tribes there to join in a counter-attack on the Wahhabis. Ḥasan ibn Hibbat Allāh led his forces to Wadī Ḥanīfa and defeated a Wahhabi force under ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (1766–1803).[17] Although Ḥasan eventually left after negotiations, it seems that, at this time, he entered al-Aḥsāʾ for a

[12] Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 35.
[13] Louis Massignon, "Karmatians," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (London: Luzac; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1908–1936), p. 768.
[14] Adolf Grohmann, "Yām," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (London: Luzac; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1908–1936), p. 1154.
[15] Thus Philby, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 57.
[16] Niebuhr, *Description de l'Arabie*, p. 236; Grohmann, "Yām," p. 1154.
[17] Philby, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 57.

period.[18] Louis Massignon (1883–1962) maintains that the Makramīs attempted to revive Qarmatism while in al-Aḥsāʾ, and that Qarāmaṭī still exist there in the form of what he calls "neo-Ismailis".[19]

The possibility of an Ismaili revival in the region at that time is highly suggestive, and may not impossibly lead to fresh conclusions as to the sources of much of al-Aḥsāʾī's thought. Certain intriguing parallels exist between elements in his later teaching and Qarmaṭī/Ismaili doctrine. The Qarmaṭī view that the Imamate is not a hereditary function but one which may be conferred through a form of divine illumination, making the new Imām the "substituted" son of his predecessor, may well have influenced the Shaykhi theory of succession (up to Muḥammad Khān Kirmānī [d. 1906]) and even played a part in the transition from Shaykhism to Babism.

The concept of the world as a series of phenomena being repeated in cycles, like a drama replaying itself, which is found in Qarmaṭī and Ḥurūfī doctrine, offers a parallel to the Babi view of successive manifestations (*ẓuhūrāt*), in which the chief actors of the divine drama return to the stage in each epoch, while the use of *jafr* equivalents for the letters of the alphabet is a recurring feature of Qarmaṭī, mainline Ismaili, Ḥurūfi, and Babi thought. Significant also is the appearance in both Shaykhi and Babi literature of technical terms common to extreme Shiʿi sects like the Qarmatiyya, and it is not impossible that much of the curious Arabic terminology adopted by Shaykh Aḥmad had such an origin. We shall observe in our final chapters a number of further points of resemblance between Shaykhi/Babi and Ismaili doctrine.

Until further evidence becomes available, however, it would be unwise to fall back too readily on Qarmaṭī/Ismaili influence in the direct sense as an explanation for the development of al-Aḥsāʾī's thought along lines somewhat different to those of the majority of Twelver Shiʿi ulama at the shrine cities or in Iran during this period. It is, nevertheless, clear that, in respect of orthodox Shiʿism, al-Aḥsāʾ in the eighteenth century was not a place where a young man of scholarly bent could readily find instruction beyond the rudimentary level. There were, of course, ulama in the region. Shaykh ʿAbd Allāh al-Aḥsāʾī speaks of "those learned in externals (*ulamā-yi ẓāhirī*) in al-Aḥsā'"at the time of Shaykh Aḥmad's

[18] Niebuhr, *Description*, p. 237.

[19] Louis Massignon, "Esquisse d'une bibliographie Qarmate," in *A Volume of Oriental Studies Presented to Edward G. Browne*, ed. Thomas Walker Arnold and Reynold Alleyne Nicholson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), p. 338.

first departure for Iraq.[20] The same source indicates that many of the ulama in the area were Sunnis, most of whom were also Sufis.[21] Several Shiʿi ulama of the period are referred to by Shaykh Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī in his *Luʾluʾatay al-Baḥrayn*, composed in 1182/1768. Many of Shaykh Aḥmad's own letters are addressed to ulama in al-Aḥsāʾ and al-Qaṭīf, particularly the latter region. As we shall see later, two of al-Aḥsāʾī's *ijāzāt* were obtained from ulama resident in Bahrain, while Rashtī speaks of scholars there and in al-Qaṭīf and al-Aḥsāʾ who were among the admirers of Shaykh Aḥmad.[22] Much of Rashtī's own correspondence, like that of al-Aḥsāʾī, was in reply to questions from clerics in that region, but it was not there that the more capable and influential scholars resided.

With the movement of large numbers of Iranian ulama *to* the *ʿatabāt* following the Afghan invasion, and the subsequent revival of Shiʿi learning at the holy cities in the latter half of the eighteenth century, the better scholars had largely been drawn away from peripheral centres such as Bahrain. Although Wahhabis did not conquer al-Aḥsāʾ until the 1790s, their progress elsewhere in the Arabian Peninsula and occasional clashes with the Banū Khālid appear to have caused lively distress to the Shiʿi ulama in the Bahrain region. Sayyid Muḥammad Hāshimī Kirmānī has suggested that Shaykh Aḥmad left al-Aḥsāʾ in the wake of a general exodus of Arab ulama (presumably Shiʿi) who went to Iran to escape the Wahhabis.[23] Many of these clerics settled in Fārs and Kirman, and were later among the admirers of al-Aḥsāʾī in those parts. This exodus of Shiʿi ulama during the period of the Shaykh's early life may have been a factor in his own decision to leave his home for a brief time when he was twenty.

There are indications that Aḥsāʾ in that period was regarded as little more than a provincial backwater, lacking proper facilities for anything but the most elementary intellectual pursuits. Baḥr al-ʿUlūm expressed surprise that someone as learned as Shaykh Aḥmad should be a native of "a region which is empty of knowledge and wisdom, and whose

[20] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, p. 22. It must not necessarily be assumed that this is a reference to *fuqahāʾ*; more likely, it refers to Ṣūfī-orientated ulama in the tradition of Ibn al-ʿArabī (1165–1240, for whom al-Aḥsāʾī had an abiding animosity); cf. Hāshimī Kirmānī, "Ṭāʾifa-yi Shaykhiyya," p. 246.

[21] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, p. 22.

[22] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 27.

[23] Hāshimī Kirmānī, "Ṭāʾifa-yi Shaykhiyya", p. 248; this article gives the names of several of these emigrés.

inhabitants are desert-dwellers and country-folk, the furthest extent of whose learning consists in how to perform the daily prayers."[24] Al-Ahsaʾi himself often remarked that the people of his village were worldly and given to what he regarded as idle pleasures, that they knew nothing of the laws of Islam, and that he could find no-one there to teach him beyond the elementary stages.[25]

Outside the main towns of al-Hufūf and al-Mubarraz education in al-Aḥsāʾ was, it appears, largely confined to instruction by individual *sheikhs* or teachers (*muʿallims*), few of whom can have been well-educated themselves. Young Aḥmad, having completed the traditional "reading" of the Qurʾān by the age of five,[26] was not, it seems, intended for tuition beyond this stage. Fortunately, a young cousin was receiving training in grammar and other elementary subjects at a nearby village, and Aḥmad was able to persuade his father to let him join him there.[27] Between this time and the period of his early studies at the *ʿatabāt* when he was twenty, we possess no further information as to his education.

Somewhat problematic is the statement made in a number of sources, that al-Aḥsāʾī was for a time a disciple (*murīd*) of Sayyid Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad Nayrīzī (d. 1173/1760), the thirty-second *quṭb* of the Dhahabī Sufi order, one of the very few Shiʿi *ṭarīqas* in existence.[28] Mīrzā Shafīʿ Thiqat al-Islām Tabrizī, a Shaykhi who had studied under al-Aḥsāʾī, refers to this in his *Mirʾāt al-kutub*. He quotes the *Qawāʾim al-anwār*, a work by Mīrzā Abu 'l-Qāsim Shīrāzī (d. 1286/A.D. 1869) the fourth successor to Sayyid Quṭb al-Dīn as head of the Dhahabīs.[29] Here, Mīrzā Abu 'l-Qāsim states that Quṭb al-Dīn lived for a time in Najaf, where he taught Ibn al-ʿArabī's *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*. Among

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[24] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, p. 24.

[25] Ibid., pp. 7, 22; Maḥfūẓ, *Sīra*, p. 11; Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 134.

[26] Maḥfūẓ, *Sīra*, p. 10; Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 133.

[27] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, pp. 8–11; Maḥfūẓ, *Sīra*, pp. 11–13; Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, pp. 134–6.

[28] For details concerning this Order, see Iḥsān Allāh ʿAlī Istakhrī, "Taṣawwuf-i Dhahabiyya", *Majalla-yi Mardum-shināsī* (Tehran) vol. 2, (1337 Sh [1958]), pp. 8–15; Mīrzā Abū 'l-Ḥasan Ḥāfiz al-Kutub Muʾāwin al-Fuqarā, "Mukhtaṣarī dar sharḥ-i ḥāl-i ḥaḍrat-i Waḥīd al-Awliyāʾ wa asāmī-yi aqṭāb-i silsila-yi mubāraka-yi Dhahabiyya wa shuʿūbāt-i ān," *Majalla-yi mardum-shināsī* (Tehran) vol. 2, 1337 Sh [1958], pp. 74–83. On Sayyid Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad Nayrīzī, see Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh, *Ṭarāʾiq*, vol. 3, pp. 216–9. See also R. Gramlich, *Shiitischen Derwischorden Persiens*, 1, p. 38, note 7 (and p. 17 on Quṭb al-Dīn).

[29] He was known as Mīrzā Bābā and bore the *takhalluṣ* of Rāz-i Shīrāzī (see Muʿāwin al-Fuqarāʾ, "Mukhtaṣarī," p. 76).

those who studied under him, it is claimed, were Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī Murtaḍā Ṭabāṭabāʾī Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, Shaykh Jaʿfar al-Najafī, and Mullā Miḥrāb Jīlānī.[30] He goes on to say that, when Quṭb al-Dīn was in al-Aḥsāʾ, Shaykh Aḥmad studied under him.

Thiqat al-Islām then quotes from the *Risāla tāmm al-ḥikma* of Abu 'l-Qāsim's son, Sayyid Muḥammad Majd al-Ashrāf.[31] According to this source, Quṭb al-Dīn sent Mullā Mihrāb Gīlānī to Isfahan and Persian Iraq, instructed Baḥr al-ʿUlūm and Shaykh Jaʿfar to remain at the *ʿatabāt,* and sent al-Aḥsāʾī to Iran.[32] Majd al-Ashrāf is quoted to the same effect by Muḥammad Masʾūm Shīrāzī Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh (b. 1853) in his *Ṭarāʾiq al-ḥaqāʾiq*; here it is added that Quṭb al-Dīn also sent Āqā Muḥammad Hāshim Shīrāzī (d. 1199/1785) to Fārs.[33] Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh also refers to Quṭb al-Dīn as having taught Shaykh Aḥmad while in al-Aḥsāʾ.[34]

Convincing as all this may appear, it does not sustain critical attention. Sayyid Quṭb al-Dīn was a contemporary of the last Safavid monarch, Ḥusayn I (1668–1726), and had studied under Shaykh ʿAlī Naqī Istihbanātī.[35] He died in 1173/1759, when al-Aḥsāʾī was only about seven years old.[36] With the exception of Āqā Muḥammad Hāshim Shīrāzī, there seems to be no independent evidence linking any of the persons mentioned above with Sayyid Quṭb al-Dīn or, indeed, with Sufism at all. The only conclusion to be drawn is that the account of Quṭb al-Dīn's dealings with men such as Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, al-Najafī, and al-Aḥsāʾī—three of the most influential ulama of their day—was for no other reason than to gain a certain respectability for Sufism at a time when orthodox Shiʿi attacks on some Ṣūfī orders had become

[30] On Mullā Miḥrāb, see Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh, *Tarāʾiq*, vol. 3, p. 255.

[31] His full name was Āqā Mīrzā Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Majd al-Ashrāf (d. 1331/1913); he succeeded his father as *quṭb* of the order (see Muʿāwin al-Fuqarāʾ, "Mukhtaṣarī," p. 76). The *Tāmm al-ḥikma* was an introduction to his father's *Kitāb-i sharāʾit al-ṭariqa* (see Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh, *Tarāʾiq*, vol. 3, p. 339).

[32] The passages from Thiqat al-Islām referred to are quoted by Murtaẓā Mudarrisī Chahārdihī, *Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī* (Tehran: [s.n.]; 1955), p. 110.

[33] Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh, *Ṭarāʾiq*, vol. 3, p. 339. Āqā Muḥammad Hāshim Shīrāzī became Sayyid Quṭb al-Dīn's successor as head of the order (Muʿāwin al-Fuqarāʾ, "Mukhtaṣarī," p. 76).

[34] Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh, *Ṭarāʾiq*, vol. 3, p. 217.

[35] Ibid., p. 216.

[36] Chahārdihī, *Aḥsāʾī*, p. 110; Hāshimī Kirmānī, "Ṭāʾifa-yi Shaykhiyya," p. 251.

extremely fierce, following a Niʿmatullāhī revival in the latter half of the eighteenth century.[37]

Shaykhi sources, including two autobiographical *risālas* by al-Aḥsāʾī himself, lay stress on a number of visionary experiences as central to his development during this early period. Showing a marked predilection for seclusion and introspection—a feature also characteristic of the childhoods of Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī and Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad Shīrāzī[38]—al-Aḥsāʾī was given to morbid reflection on the transience of the world.[39] He was really one of Lawrence's Arabs, ascetic and craving the solitary wastes. An impressionable mind joined with favourable circumstances and a lack of facilities for formal intellectual training urged him towards a life of reflection and self-abnegation,[40] culminating, at an unspecified point, in a series of dreams or visions.

These visions were to have a lasting effect on the mind of the young Shaykh, and came to play a central role in his intellectual and spiritual development. Their significance, both in terms of the formation of his

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[37] Reaction to this revival, which began with the propaganda of Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh in Shīrāz during the reign of Karīm Khān Zand (d. 1779), was energetic. Maʿṣūm ʿAlī and his disciple Fayḍ ʿAlī Shāh were severely persecuted. Another Niʿmat Allāhī *darwīsh*, Mushtāq ʿAlī Shāh, was put to death in 1790 in Kirman, and Nūr ʿAlī Shāh, a son of Fayḍ ʿAlī Shāh, appears to have been poisoned by agents of Muḥammad ʿAlī Bihbahānī in 1215/1800. For details of these and related events, see Algar, *Religion and State*, pp. 38–40; Sir John Malcolm, *The History of Persia from the Early Period to the Present Time* (London: J. Murray, 1815), vol. 2, pp. 417–22; Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn Shīrvānī, *Bustān al-siyāha* (Tehran: Kitābkhāna-yi Sanāʾī, [1895?]), pp. 77–84; Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh, *Ṭarāʾiq*, vol. 3, pp. 170–94. Al-Aḥsāʾī was far from favorably inclined towards Sufism, as we have noted.

[38] On Rashtī's childhood, see an account by Ḥājī Mīrzā ʿAlī Aṣghar (a classmate of his) in Mullā Jaʿfar Qazvīnī, "Tārīkh-i Mullā Jaʿfar Qazvīnī," in Samandar, *Tārīkh,* p. 455. Like al-Aḥsāʾī, Rashtī disliked games, and would look after the books of the other children while they played. On the Bāb's childhood, see ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Āvāra, *Al-kawākib al-durriyya fī maʾāthir al-Bahāʾiyya* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿa al-Saʿāda, 1342 [1924]), pp. 31–2. A contemporary of the Bāb, Sayyid Muḥammad Ṣaḥḥāf Shīrāzī, is quoted to the effect that the Bāb did not join in the games of his classmates, but would be found in prayer in a secluded place. We may also note the ascetic childhood and youth of Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī, the founder of the Ḥurūfī sect, who also experienced dreams of the Imāms before embarking on his religious mission (see Alessandro Bausani, "Ḥurūfiyya," in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (London: Luzac; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960–), vol. 3, p. 600).

[39] See, for example, Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, pp. 5–7; Maḥfūẓ, *Sīra*, pp. 9–10; Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 134.

[40] Tanakābunī states that al-Aḥsāʾī practised ascetisim greatly during the early part of his life (*Qiṣaṣ*, p. 37), and mentions that Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī (under whom he studied for a short time) told him that Shaykh Aḥmad had performed forty *chillas* of *riyāḍāt* (ibid.). Rashtī himself states that al-Aḥsāʾī only practised severe asceticism for a two-year period following his initial vision of the Imām Ḥasan (Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 12).

thought and the light in which he was regarded by his contemporaries and by later Shaykhis, is very great. They are particularly important in terms of the charismatic relationship between the Shaykh and the Imāms on the one hand, and between him and his own followers on the other. In general, these visions seem to have been experienced by him in sleep and to have taken the form, typical to Shiʿite piety, of meetings with various Imāms and, on a number of occasions, the Prophet.

The first of these experiences was a dream of a young man, seemingly aged about twenty-five and carrying a book, who came to sit near the Shaykh. He turned to him, read a verse of the Qurʾān, and proceeded to comment on it.[41] Shaykh Aḥmad was so impressed by the words he heard from this young man that he resolved to abandon the study of grammar and other exoteric subjects. In his account of this incident, he states that he had met many shaykhs yet never heard any speak words such as those in the dream: in itself an indication that he had, by the time of this initial visionary experience, been studying for a while.

A succession of such visions followed, in the course of which the Shaykh believed that he met various Imāms and the Prophet and was taught verses by the Imām Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī, the purpose of which was to enable him to call on the Imāms whenever he required an answer to any problem—a significant factor in his development as a source of charismatic authority.[42] Such visions, he writes, were experienced by him most days and nights, which may indicate some level of mental imbalance.[43] On two occasions, once with the Imām Ḥasan and once with Muḥammad, he claimed to have undergone what appears to have been a form of initiatory experience, involving the drinking of saliva from the mouth of the Imām or Prophet.[44] Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī speaks of the initiatory meeting with lmam Ḥasan as the first of the

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[41] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, pp. 11–12; Maḥfūẓ, *Sīra*, p. 13; Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 136.

[42] See Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, pp. 12–21; Maḥfūẓ, *Sīra*, pp. 14–22, 23–4; Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, pp. 136–42, 143–44; Rashtī, *Dalīl*, pp. 11–12; Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ al-zīyāra*, pt. 1, p. 115.

[43] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, p. 17; Maḥfūz, *Sīra,* p. 17; Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 139.

[44] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, pp. 18–19; Maḥfūẓ, *Sīra*, pp. 17–18; Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, pp. 139–40. These initiatory dreams of al-Aḥsāʾī are closely paralleled by a visionary experience in which the Bāb dreamt he drank the blood from the severed head of the Imām Ḥusayn (see ʿAlī Muḥammad Shīrāzī, the Bāb, *Ṣaḥīfa-yi ʿadliyya* [{Tehran?: s.n., n.d.}], p. 14; Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 253), and by a dream similarly involving the ingestion of the saliva of the Prophet by Mullā Muḥammad Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī (see Muḥammad ʿAlī Malik Khusravī, *Tārīkh-i Shuhadā-yi Amr* (Tehran: Muʾassasa-yi Millī-yi Maṭbūʿāt-i Amrī, 130 B. [1974]), vol. 1, p. 21).

Shaykh's visions,[45] followed by a two-year period during which he did not associate with people and scarcely ate or drank, until he was near death. At this point, the meeting with Muḥammad took place, and the effect of imbibing the saliva of the Prophet was to quiet his excessive religious ardour.[46]

Leaving aside the question of their authenticity, there is no doubt that the subjective impact of these visions on the Shaykh was tremendous. The intensity of his reaction can well be gauged by the behaviour just referred to. He now believed himself to be in direct contact with the Prophet and the Imāms and to have them as his source of guidance on all subjects. In a significant vision, presumably towards the end of this period, he believed himself to have encountered the tenth Imām, ʿAlī al-Hādī. Having complained to the Imām about the condition of the people among whom he lived, he was instructed to leave them and busy himself with his own affairs. The Imām is then recorded as giving him several sheets of paper, saying 'this is the *ijāza* from us twelve [i.e., the twelve Imāms]'. When al-Aḥsāʾī looked at these papers, he saw that each page contained an *ijāza* from one of the twelve Imāms.[47]

It is this belief that his knowledge was directly granted him by the Prophet and the Imāms (the latter in particular) that distinguishes Shaykh Aḥmad from contemporary religious leaders. Speaking of al-Aḥsāʾī's knowledge of various sciences, Rashtī states that 'these sciences came to that distinguished one in true and veracious dreams from the Imāms of guidance."[48] The role of the Imāms as spiritual guides has always been emphasized in Shiʿism, but al-Aḥsāʾī seems to have taken this concept to an extreme degree. In his *Sharḥ al-fawāʾid*, written in 1233/1818, some eight years before his death, he writes:

> The ulama derive their knowledge (*taḥqīqāt ʿulūmihim*) one from the other, but I have never followed in their way. I have derived what I know from the Imāms of guidance, and error cannot find its way into my words, since all that I confirm in my books is from them and they are preserved (*maʿṣūm*) from sin and ignorance and error. Whosoever

[45] Al-Aḥsāʾī himself indicates that it was extremely early, saying it took place *fī awwal infitāḥ bāb al-ruʾyā* (Maḥfūẓ, *Sīra*, p. 17; Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 139).
[46] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, pp. 11–12.
[47] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, p. 20; Maḥfūz, *Sīra*, p. 20; Kirmānī, *Fihristī*, pp. 141–2.
[48] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 11.

> derives [his knowledge] from them shall not err, inasmuch as he is following them.[49]

Elsewhere, he writes:

> When anything was hidden from me, I would see its explanation, even if only in summary. And whenever any explanation was given to me in sleep (*al-ṭayf*), after I awoke the question would appear clear to me along with the proofs related to it, in such a way that nothing concerning it would be hidden from me. Even if all men were to gather together, they would be unable to achieve anything resembling that; but I would be cognizant of all the proofs of the matter [in question]. And, if a thousand criticisms were levelled against me, the defence against them and the answers would be shown to me without any effort on my part. Moreover, I found that all traditions were in agreement with what I had seen in sleep, for what I saw in my dreams I saw directly, and no error could enter into it…I say nothing unless by virtue of a proof which is derived from them [the Imāms].[50]

In one place, he describes these dreams as *ilhām*, a species of revelation generally generally reserved for the Imāms themselves, although inferior to the *waḥy* given to prophets.[51] More usually, he speaks of *kashf* or *mukāshafa*, the 'unveiling' of inner meanings by means of these visions.[52] This last concept was given sufficient prominence to give rise to the use of the term *kashfīyya* as a name for the school which grew up around him. Rashtī, referring to the use of this term, gives the concept of *kashf* a somewhat general application, but there seems little doubt that the name was applied to the school by reason of a more technical application of the word.[53] It is worth recalling, in this context, the experience of Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī (740–804/1339–1401) the founder of the Ḥurūfī sect, who, at the age of forty, heard a disembodied voice announcing

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[49] Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Zayn al-Dīn al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ al-fawāʾid* ([Tehran?: Muḥammad Shafīq], 1272 [1856]), p. 4.

[50] Maḥfūẓ, *Sīra*, pp. 19–20; Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 141.

[51] *Kuntu fī tilka ʾl-ḥāl dāʾiman arī manāmāt wa hiya ilhāmāt*; cf. Maḥfūẓ, *Sīra*, p. 19; p. 141; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 37.

[52] Ibid., p. 35.

[53] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 9. On the distinction between various modes of revelation and cognition, such as *waḥy, ilhām*, and *kashf*, and their relationship to the concepts of *risāla*, *nubuwwa*, and *wilāya*, see Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, vol. 1, pp. 235–51, vol. 3, pp. 171–5; idem, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique* (Paris : Gallimard, 1964), pp. 79–92. Some inimical sources have tried to argue that al-Aḥsāʾī laid claim to *waḥy*, but this appears to be based more on biased misreadings of passages in his works than on any straightforward remarks to that effect by him (see Hamadānī, *Kitāb al-Ijtināb*, pp. 396–7).

that "others attain faith by imitation and learning, whereas he attains it by an inner and clear revelation (*kashf wa ʿiyān*)."[54]

It would, however, be misleading to suggest that the Shaykh's reliance on these visions caused him to dispense with formal learning altogether. When Shaykh ʿAbd Allāh al-Aḥsāʾī writes that his father abandoned 'exoteric studies',[55] the implication seems to be simply that he gave up the study of grammar, philology, rhetoric, and similar pursuits and devoted himself to the study of the Qurʾān and *aḥādīth*, as well as the 'Divine Philosophy' (*ḥikma ilāhiyya*) of the Isfahan school. This would seem to be confirmed by Rashtī, who writes that

> he did not receive these sciences and inner teachings so much in sleep, but rather, when he awoke, he discovered manifest proofs and evidences from the book of God and from the path of the explanations and instructions of the Imāms of guidance.[56]

This statement bears great similarity to that of al-Aḥsāʾī, quoted above, in which he says "I found that all traditions were in agreement with what I had seen in sleep."

By 1186/1772,[57] therefore, when he was twenty, al-Aḥsāʾī had reached a point in his intellectual and spiritual development where he stood in serious need of instruction and inspiration which local teachers could not give him. Whether aware of the theological developments taking place there or not, it was in the *ʿatabāt* that the young Shaykh decided to look for such guidance.

## The Intermediary Years

Shaykh Aḥmad's first sojourn in Iraq was of insufficient duration to allow him to benefit greatly from the opportunities for study available among the ulama of the shrine cities. Not long after his arrival, plague broke but in Iraq. Beginning in March 1773 at Baghdad, where it had been carried by a caravan from Erzerum, the epidemic spread rapidly

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[54] Bausani, "Ḥurūfiyya," p. 600.
[55] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, p. 12.
[56] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 12.
[57] Both Shaykh ʿAbd Allāh al-Aḥsāʾī and Sayyid Hādī Hindī give the year 1176/ 1762, but this clashes with the most reliable date for al-Ahsaʾi's birth (see al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, p. 22; *Tanbīh al-Ghāfilīn*, cited in Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 161). The correction to 1186/1772 seems the simplest solution.

as far as Basra. It continued at Baghdad until mid-May and at Basra until September, with heavy fatalities throughout the country.[58] As a result, large numbers of the population dispersed, and Shaykh Aḥmad joined the exodus, returning to al-Aḥsāʾ.[59] Judging from his later attitude to urban life and his obvious reluctance to return to the *ʿatabāt* after the passing of the plague, we may suppose that the Shaykh had found conditions there uncongenial. As a young and comparatively untrained student from the provinces, he may have found it difficult to benefit fully from classes designed for those with a better general grounding in theological studies. He may, in modern idiom, have experienced a form of culture shock. Whatever the cause, the fact is that he chose to remain for a long time in relative seclusion in al-Aḥsāʾ, rather than return to what was then the centre of theological activity in Shiʿism. Had it not been for the Wahhabi advance on Bahrain, it is probable that he would never have sought to leave the region again.

After his return to al-Aḥsāʾ, the Shaykh married his first wife, Maryam bint Khamīs Āl ʿAṣīr, a girl related to him from the village of Qarayn, where he had studied as a child.[60] He was to marry a total of eight wives over the years, from whom he had altogether twenty children.[61] It is never made clear exactly how he provided for his growing family during this period, but there are clear indications that he became well known in the region as a religious authority. Shaykh ʿAbd Allāh al-Aḥsāʾī states that, even before his journey to Iraq, people had begun to ask him to pray on their behalf, and we may suppose that a measure of financial return was given for this. During the period after his return, he became famous and was regarded as a *marjaʿ* for the people of the region, but how far his fame actually reached, it is impossible to tell.[62]

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[58] Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, vol. 1B, p. 1241; cf. Longrigg, *Modern Iraq*, p. 188.

[59] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, p. 25.

[60] Ibid.

[61] For a list of al-Aḥsāʾī's wives and children, see ibid., pp. 55–7. Abū 'l-Qāsim Khān has stated that he was not aware of any living descendants of Shaykh Aḥmad, although he does mention some Arabs without learning whom he met in Mashhad, and who claimed to be descended from one of his daughters. (*Fihrist*, p. 172). Khwānsārī mentions two sons, Shaykh Muḥammad and Shaykh ʿAlī, and maintains that the former rejected his father's teachings (*Rawḍāt*, p. 26). According to Kashmīrī (1844–1891), Shaykh ʿAlī was his father's successor in Kirmanshah, *Nujūm*, p. 367; cf. Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 38).

[62] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, p. 25.

One result of his increased association with the people around him was the cessation of his visions.[63] Possibly as a result, he seems to have devoted himself to a wide programme of studies, although here again we have little information as to the books he read or the teachers under whom he worked. Rashtī, however, makes it clear that he acquired some competence in a wide variety of subjects, listing some thirty sciences, including astronomy, arithmetic, astrology, alchemy, medicine, *kalām*, and *fiqh*, and several crafts, including weaving and metal-working, in all of which he claims the Shaykh was well-versed.[64] Although a knowledge of many of these subjects may have been acquired later in life, we must assume that his studies were, for the most part, carried out during the twenty years or so he now spent in Aḥsāʾ and Bahrain.[65] Tanakābunī has noted that, when he came to Iran, the shaykh claimed to be *aʾlam* and learned in every science.[66]

That al-Aḥsāʾī was well read and felt himself competent to write on a wide variety of topics (and was asked by others to write on them) is apparent from many of his writings. Apart from the generally learned content of these, and their wealth of quotation from books of tradition, the Qurʾān, and other works, several are specific commentaries on books by other scholars. These include his commentaries on the *Mashāʾir* and the *ʿArshiyya* of Mullā Ṣadrā,[67] on the *Risāla-yi ʿilmiyya* and other writings of Muḥammad ibn Murtaḍā Fayḍ al-Kāshānī (1598–1680),[68] on the last portion of the *Kashf al-ghiṭāʾ* of Shaykh Jaʿfar al-Najafī,[69] on

[63] Ibid.

[64] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, pp. 13–6.

[65] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, p. 26.

[66] Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 36. This tendency to polymathism is particularly marked in the cases of Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī and his son Ḥājj Muḥammad Khān, later heads of the Shaykhi school (see the topics on which they wrote, listed in Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, pp. 9–10, 360). On the significance of the polymathism with respect to the derivation of knowledge from the Imāms, see ibid., p. 58; Aḥmad Bahmanyār (1883–1955), quoted Chahārdihī, *Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī*, p. 227).

[67] See Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, pp. 228, 241. The *Sharḥ al-Mashāʿir* (1234/1818) exists in manuscript; the *Sharḥ al-ʿArshiyya*, written in 1236/1820 was printed in Tabriz in 1278/1861.

[68] See Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, pp. 228, 221. The *Sharḥ al-Risāla al-ʿilmīyya* (1230/1815) was printed in the compilation of writings by al-Aḥsāʾī, *Jawāmiʿ al-kalim*, (Tabriz: Muḥammad Taqī Nakhjavānī, 1273–1276/1856–1860), vol. 1, pt. 2, pp. 166–200; *al-Risāla al-Baḥrāniyya* (1211/1797), which deals with various statements of Fayḍ, can be found in ibid. pp. 217–9.

[69] Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 249. Entitled *Risāla dhū raʾsayn*, this treatise was printed in *Jawāmiʿ al-kalim*, vol. 1, pt. 3, pp. 87–108.

the *Tabṣirat al-mutaʿallimīn fī aḥkām al-dīn* of ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī,[70] and on the philosophical poetry of Shaykh ʿAli ibn Abd Allāh ibn Fāris.[71] That a large proportion, if not the bulk, of his reading was done before he finally left al-Aḥsāʾ is indicated by his earliest *ijāza*, given him by Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Ḥasan al-Baḥrānī al-Damastānī[72] on 1 Muḥarram 1205/10 September 1790.[73] This *ijāza* indicates that he had become proficient in the basic religious sciences and had studied several major works of Shiʿi theology; it permits him to

> Transmit from me all that our ulama have written on the Arabic sciences, on literature, grammar, *uṣūl, fiqh*, and *akhbār*, in particular the Four Books around which we circle in this age… as well as the *Tafṣīl Wasāʾil al shīʿa* [by al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī], the *Hidāyat al-umma* [also by al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī], and the *Biḥār al-anwār* [by Majlisī].[74]

Although the bulk of al-Aḥsāʾī's writings date from the later period in Iraq and Iran, he undoubtedly composed several works during his years in al-Aḥsāʾ. Rashtī states that, before leaving there, he wrote *risālāt* and books which became well known,[75] although he does not supply the titles or indicate the contents of these. Shaykh ʿAbd Allāh al-Aḥsāʾī refers to his father's first meeting with Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, stating that the latter asked al-Aḥsāʾī for an example of something he had written, whereupon he was shown some pages of a commentary on the *Tabṣira* of Jaʿfar ibn Ḥasan, Muḥaqqiq al-Ḥillī (1205–1277).[76] As we have noted, there is in existence an incomplete commentary by al-Aḥsāʾī entitled *Ṣirāṭ al-yaqīn*, which corresponds to this description, and we may presume it to be the same work as that referred to.[77] The same source also speaks of an early *risāla* on *qadr* composed about the time al-Aḥsāʾī met Baḥr al-ʾUlūm.[78] This may well be the *Risāla al-qadriyya,* composed at the request of Shaykh ʿAbd Allāh ibn Dandan in explanation of statements

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[70] Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 249. This treatise entitled *Sirāṭ al-yaqīn*, was printed in *Jawāmiʿ al-kalim*, vol. 1, pt. 3, pp. 1–84.

[71] Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 252. Dated 1207/1792; printed in *Jawāmiʿ al-kalim*, vol. 1, pt. 2, pp. 210–4.

[72] On whom, see al-Ṭihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, pp. 80–1.

[73] The full text of the *ijāza* is given in al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, pp. 81–4.

[74] Quoted in ibid., p. 82.

[75] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 57.

[76] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, p. 23.

[77] See note 70 above.

[78] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, p. 23.

by Sayyid Sharīf (al-Jurjānī?).[79] Several other works of the Shaykh's are actually dated to this period or that immediately after.[80]

After some time, according to Shaykh ʿAbd Allāh, al-Aḥsāʾī brought his family to Bahrain, where they lived for four years. The same source goes on to say that they remained there until Rajab 1212/December 1798, when the Shaykh's mother-in-law died, whereupon he moved to Iraq, later bringing his family from Bahrain.[81] There is, however, a serious difficulty involved in Shaykh ʿAbd Allāh's dating: Shaykh Aḥmad's *ijāzas* from Āqā Mīrzā Muḥammad Mahdī Shahristānī (resident in Karbala) and Baḥr al-ʿUlūm (resident in Najaf) are both dated 1209/1794.[82] We should also remember that the final Wahhabi invasion of al-Aḥsāʾ occurred in 1795, and that it is the appearance of the Wahhabis which is adduced by Rashtī as the reason for al-Aḥsāʾī's departure for the *ʿatabāt*.[83] The date given for the death of Shaykh Aḥmad's mother-in-law may well be correct, but it seems to be misleading in the context of his departure from Bahrain. A possible explanation is that his family did not leave Bahrain until her death.

It is, in fact, possible that al-Aḥsāʾī left Bahrain well before 1795. In 1788, the Wahhabis under Sulaymān ibn ʿUfaysan had attacked al-Aḥsāʾ and put the people to the sword. In 1789, the head of the Saʿūdī family, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, himself led a second attack on the province, killing three hundred people in Fudhūl, defeating the Banū Khālid Sheikh Duwayhis, and installing Zayd ibn ʿArʿar as the new sheikh. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz attacked al-Aḥsāʾ again in 1792 and defeated Barrak ibn ʿAbd al-Muḥsin, who had deposed Zayd. Eventually ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz was invited by the population of the province to receive their submission; parties were sent out to destroy Shiʿi tombs and shrines, and steps were taken to instruct the inhabitants in the tenets of Wahhabism. The populace of al-Ḥufūf rebelled but, in 1793, Abd al-ʿAzīz returned, captured Shuqayq, laid siege to Qarayn and al-Maṭayrafī, and carried out widespread plunder throughout al-Aḥsāʾ.[84] Shaykh Aḥmad may well have realized the danger by the early 1780s and gone to Iraq by the early 1790s, but not

[79] Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 243; printed in al-Aḥsāʾī, *Jawāmiʿ al-kalim*, vol. 2, pp. 141–50.
[80] These are items 18, 24, 38, 59, 63, 92, and 97 in Kirmānī, *Fihrist*.
[81] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, p. 26.
[82] Ibid., pp. 84–6; 89–93.
[83] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 13.
[84] Philby, *Saudi Arabia*, pp. 77–82.

before September 1790, the date of his *ijāza* from Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Ḥasan al-Baḥrānī.

## The Years in Iraq

Babi and Bahaʾi writers have tended to regard al-Aḥsāʾī's departure for Iraq—and, ultimately, Iran—in the early years of the thirteenth century Hegira as a decision motivated by a sense of divine mission to purify the decadence of Islam and to prepare men for the appearance of the Hidden Imām in the person of the Bāb.[85] The final reckoning on the validity or otherwise of such a view must, in the end, rest on criteria which fall outside our present sphere of competence. Nevertheless, it seems to me worth stating that such an approach involves a large degree of retrospective interpretation and that it cannot be supported by known external evidence. None of the Shaykh's own writings, as far as I am aware, refers to such a mission, nor do Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī or other Shaykhi writers regard his journey to Iraq in this light. Rashtī, as have observed, refers specifically to the Wahhabi invasion as the direct cause of al-Aḥsāʾī's departure from Arabia. It is not unlikely, however, that the Wahhabi threat acted merely as the final stimulus to a growing urge to visit the *ʿatabāt* once more.

In the last chapter, we saw that what amounted to a revolution in Twelver Shiʿi thought was taking place among the Iranian and Arab ulama living at the shrines in Iraq. It is probable that al-Aḥsāʾī, by now more confident of his own ability to participate in such developments, was no longer satisfied with a second-hand knowledge of the questions being debated. It is unlikely, however that he seriously considered playing a leading role in the discussions: his love for seclusion and his evident distaste for remaining in any one place for very long strongly suggest that he was a man on whom greatness was thrust much against his own wishes.

It would seem that Āqā Bihbahānī was either already dead or in virtual retirement by the time al-Aḥsāʾī arrived in Iraq. But, if he did not study under the *murawwij* himself, Shaykh Aḥmad certainly did attend the classes of several of his pupils. As we have mentioned, before his departure from Bahrain, he had obtained an *ijāza* from Shaykh

[85] See for example Kāshānī, *Nuqtat al-Kāf*, pp. 99–100; Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 1–2.

Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Baḥrānī al-Damastānī, a pupil of Shaykh Yūsuf Baḥrānī and his brother Shaykh ʿAbd ʿAlī.[86] He now began to seek *ijāzāt* from several of the contemporaries and pupils of Bihbahānī. The most outstanding of these was Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī Ṭabāṭabāʾī Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, whose influence on and contribution to Shiʿi studies in this period have been discussed briefly in the last chapter. We have referred above to how al-Aḥsāʾī presented Baḥr al-ʿUlūm with part of his commentary on al-Ḥillī's *Tabṣira* and with his *risāla* on *qadr*. It is claimed by Shaykh ʿAbd Allāh that, on seeing the former work, Baḥr al-ʿUlūm said to the Shaykh, "it would be more appropriate for you to give an *ijāza* to me."[87] The same source speaks of the veneration accorded al-Aḥsāʾī by Baḥr al-ʾUlūm, and the content and phrasing of the latter's *ijāza* to him seem to corroborate this.[88] At about the same time, the Shaykh obtained *ijāzāt* from two other pupils of Bihbahānī—Shaykh Jaʿfar ibn Khiḍr al-Najafī Kāshif al-Ghiṭāʾ and Sayyid ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabāʾī, to both of whom we have referred in the last chapter as being among the most important ulama of their period.[89]

In 1209/1794, the same year that he received his *ijāza* from Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, al-Aḥsāʾī obtained another from Āqā Mīrzā Muḥammad Mahdī ibn Abī 'l-Qāsim al-Mūsawī al-Shahristānī (d. 1215/1800). Born in Shahristān in Khurāsān, Mīrzā Muḥammad Mahdī had moved to Karbala, where he had studied under Shaykh Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī and others; he achieved a certain degree of renown in Anatolia, India, and Iran. A work entitled *al-Maṣābīḥ* on *fiqh* is listed by Iʿjāz Ḥusayn al-Nīsābūrī Kantūrī as belonging to him, but otherwise he does not seem to have written anything of note.[90]

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[86] The full text is given in Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, pp. 81–4.

[87] Ibid., p. 23; cf. Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 162. Compare the wording in Shaykh Aḥmad's *ijāza* from Shaykh Ḥusayn Āl ʿAṣfūr (ʿAbd Allāh Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, p. 69).

[88] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, p. 24. For the text of the *ijāza*, which was of general application, (*ʿāmma*), see ibid., pp. 89–93. It is quoted in part in Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 25.

[89] The text of Shaykh Jaʿfar's *ijāza* is given in al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, pp. 93–6, and is quoted in part in Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 26. Sayyid ʿAlī's *ijāza* is given in al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, pp. 87–8, and qoted in part in Rashtī, *Dalīl*, pp. 26–7.

[90] Kantūrī, *Kashf*, p. 523. Kantūrī gives 1240/1824 + as the date of his death, but I prefer to rely here on Kashmīrī, who quotes Āqā Muḥammad Bihbahānī's *Miʾrāt al-aḥwāl* in reference to events in Karbala in 1215; Ḥābībābādī gives 1216/1801 (Ḥābībābādī, *Makārim al-āthār*, vol. 2, p. 611). For details of Mīrzā Muḥammad Mahdī Shahristānī, see previous chapter, note 173. For the text of his *ijāza* to al-Aḥsāʾī, see ʿAbd Allāh al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, pp. 84–6; it is quoted in part Rashtī, *Dalīl*, pp. 25–6.

Some five years later, al-Aḥsāʾī obtained his last *ijāza*. This was given him by Shaykh Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Darāzī al-Baḥrānī (d. 1216/1801). This man was a nephew of Shaykh Yūsuf al-Bahrānī, under whom he studied in his youth. Shaykh Yūsuf's *Luʾluʾatay al-Baḥrayn* being originally written for him and his brother, Shaykh ʿAbd ʿAlī;[91] he later studied under Yūsuf 's brother ʿAbd ʿAlī and is the author of a work entitled *al-Anwār al-lawāmiʿ*.[92] It is of interest to note that al-Aḥsāʾī regarded Shaykh Ḥusayn as the *murawwij* of the twelfth century, as he states in his *Risalā wasāʾil al-hammam al-ulyā*, expressly written for him.[93] Shaykh Aḥmad's *ijāza* from him is dated 2 Jumadi I 1214/2 October 1799, a date which raises the question as to how it came into his possession. Shaykh ʿAbd Allāh does not mention a visit to Bahrain at this point, and the *ijāza* itself states that Shaykh Ḥusayn was blind and in ill health by this date and, therefore, unlikely, to have travelled to Iraq, even to visit the shrines there. Leaving aside the possibility of a faulty transcription of the date by Shaykh ʿAbd Allāh,[94] it could well be that the *ijāza* was brought from Bahrain to Iraq by a relative or friend of al-Aḥsāʾī's.

Abu 'l-Qāsim ibn Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn ibn Karīm (Khān Kirmānī) mentions an *ijāza* to Shaykh Aḥmad from Ḥājī Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Kalbāsī,[95] but this may be a mistake since Kalbāsī was a pupil of al-Aḥsāʾī and had an *ijāza* from him, and not, as far as I know, vice versa. As a further indication of confusion in this area, Āghā Buzurg al-Ṭihrānī remarks that the statement in *Kitāb-i nujūm al-samāʾ* (p. 344) to the effect that one of al-Aḥsāʾī's pupils was Sayyid Muḥsin al-Aʿrajī (d. 1231/1816) is incorrect, and suggests that the Shaykh, in fact, received an *ijāza* from the latter.[96] Such an *ijaza*, however, does not seem to be extant.

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[91] See his *ijāza* to al-Aḥsāʾī, quoted in ʿAbd Allāh al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, p. 70.

[92] Kantūrī, *Kashf*, p. 69. For details of Shaykh Husayn, see al-Ṭihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, pp. 427–9. The text of his *ijāza* to al-Aḥsāʾī is given in ʿAbd Allāh Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, pp. 68–81 and in the volume containing Hamadānī, *al-Ijtināb* (pp. 2–8); it is given in part in Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 26. See also Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, p. 367. The *ijāza* is referred to by al-Aḥsāʾī in his *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, pt. 1, pp. 106–7.

[93] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Jawāmiʿ al-kalim*, vol. 2, p. 42.

[94] 1204/1789, for example, would make good sense within the framework of our chronology. The date in question is written in figures.

[95] Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 150. For references to al-Aḥsāʾī as a teacher of Kalbāsī, see al-Ṭihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, pp. 15, 91.

[96] Al-Ṭihrānī, *Tabaqāt*, vol. 2, p. 91. On Sayyid Muḥsin, see also Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 344–5; Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, p. 523; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 198.

An important question arises here: Why did someone who believed himself to have received *ijāzāt* from the twelve Imāms, who regarded himself as the recipient of direct inspiration from them and the Prophet, who showed scant regard for rank or prestige, and who did not appear to seek any position within the Shiʿi hierarchy in its accepted form, approach scholars such as Baḥr al-ʾUlūm in order to receive *ijāzāt* from them? The answer may be simpler than it appears. Two major factors have combined to give the false impression that al-Aḥsāʾī stood completely outside the mainstream of Twelver Shiʿism. On the one hand, as we have observed, there are the unusual circumstances of his early life, his possible contact with extreme Shiʿi views, his reliance on dreams and visions, and the absence of teachers within the tradition of transmitted authority. On the other hand, there is the excommunication (*takfīr*) pronounced against him towards the end of his life by several—but by no means all—of the ulama in Iran and Iraq, virtually excommunicating him from the body of the faithful and certainly creating a new *madhhab* where there had not really been one.

As we shall see, however, in the intervening period al-Aḥsāʾī did not seek to dissociate himself from the Usuli tradition, even if his relationship with it was not, perhaps, one of total identification. Apart from his close association with leading representatives of that tradition in Karbala, Najaf, Yazd, Isfahan, Mashhad, and elsewhere, there are other indications of the Shaykh's general affinity with the orthodox position. His contempt for Sufism and certain forms of mystical philosophy, in particular the thought of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Murtaḍā Fayḍ Kāshānī, his refusal to collaborate closely with the state, and his rejection of the validity of the *takfīr* (excommunication) which sought to place him and his followers beyond the pale—all these demonstrate al-Aḥsāʾī's close bond with traditional Shiʿism. It is in this context that we should consider the question of his qualifications to teach (*ijāzāt*).

The possession of 'spiritual' *ijāzāt* from the Imāms did not, of itself, invalidate physical *ijāzāt* from recognized *mujtahids*. We have already discussed the role of the ulama as bearers of the charismatic authority of the Imām in his absence. There is no reason to believe that al-Aḥsāʾī had any wish to divorce the inward inspiration he thought himself to have been given by the Imāms from the more conventional guidance to be gained from a teacher who provided a living link with a chain of teachers going back to the Imāms themselves and, in a sense, transmitting their *baraka* or miracle-working grace to men. More particularly, an *ijāza* implied familiarity with the major works of Shiʿi tradition

and law, which we have already identified as one of the main sources of charismatic guidance in the period of occultation. That al-Aḥsāʾī regarded these works as at least complementary to his inner inspiration is amply attested by his *ijāzāt*, which refer specifically to a large number of works which, it is presumed, he had studied in depth.[97]

The relationship between Shaykh Aḥmad's direct visionary experiences of the Prophet and the Imāms on the one hand, and his formal links with the ulama—through reading books, studying and teaching, receiving and granting licences to teach—on the other, is a particularly compelling example of the complex functioning of charisma and authority in Shiʿism. As we have indicated, the charismatic force of Shiʿism did not reside only in visions and direct inspiration, but inhered also in the community, in the ulama, and in the system and books of jurisprudence and traditions. Both routinized and direct forms of charisma could coexist reasonably easily within a single system or, indeed, an individual, and al-Aḥsāʾī clearly saw no inherent contradiction between his receiving 'spiritual' *ijāzāt* from the Imāms and seeking their physical counterparts from various ulama. It was only the pronouncement of *takfīr* towards the end of his life which brought to the surface the hidden tensions which such a network of values contained.

During the period of his stay at the *ʿatabāt* and the next few years spent in Basra and its vicinity, al-Aḥsāʾī wrote a number of works, several of which are dated.[98] Like most of his writings, these generally take the form of *risālāt* written in reply to various individuals, and deal with a variety of topics, from statements of Murtaḍā Fayḍ Kāshānī on the nature of *fanāʾ* (evanescence)[99] to questions relating to *ijmāʿ* (consensus of jurisprudents)[100] and aspects of faith and unbelief.[101]

Having obtained his *ijāzāt*, al-Aḥsāʾī does not seem to have wanted to remain in the shrine centres of the *ʿatabāt*. From now until his death, he continued to move from place to place in Iraq and Iran, sometimes staying for several years in one place—such as Yazd and Kirmanshah—

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[97] See, in particular, the *ijāzāt* from Sayyid ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabāʾī (quoted in al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, pp. 87–8) and Baḥr al-ʿUlūm (quoted ibid., p. 90).

[98] The dated works include items 5, 14, 18, 39, 55, 72, 82, 89, and 100 in Kirmānī, *Fihrist*.

[99] *Al-Risāla al-Baḥrāniyya*: see note 68 above.

[100] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *al-Risāla al-ijmāʿiyya*: Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 246; printed in al-Aḥsaʾi, *Jawāmiʿ al-kalim*, vol. 1, pt. 3, pp. 108–44.

[101] *Risāla* to Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn al-Baḥrānī, a son of Shaykh Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī in Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, pp. 241–2; printed in al-Aḥsāʾī, *Jawāmiʿ al-kalim*, vol. 2, pp. 61–9.

but never content to settle permanently in any one town, even in old age. This peripatetic existence was to prove a major factor in spreading his fame over a very wide area. During the next few years, spurred on, perhaps, by the growing power of the Wahhabis in the al-Jazīra region, he travelled restlessly from Basra to Dhū Raqq, back to Basra, to Ḥabārāt, once more to Basra, then to Tanwiyya, Nashwa, Safāda, and Shaṭṭ al-Kār. In 1221/1806, he set off again for the *ʿatabāt*.[102] The Wahhabi threat was by no means ended, but resistance to their incursions in the al-Jazīra had hardened somewhat and the situation appears to have been much safer by the time of the Shaykh's visit.[103]

It was al-Aḥsāʾī's intention to follow his pilgrimages in the *ʿatabāt* with a further *ziyāra*, this time to Mashhad.[104] Whether he was at this time already considering emigration to Iran, it is hard to tell. Despite somewhat increased security in Iraq, al-Aḥsāʾī continued to be worried by the Wahhabi raids, as is indicated by Shaykh ʿAbd Allāh.[105] Iran, now reasonably secure under the newly-enthroned Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh (1771–1834), had its attractions, not least of which was the re-established Shiʿi state which the Qajar dynasty sought to promote. We shall have to return later to the question of Shaykh Aḥmad's relations with the state in Iran; for the moment, we need only suggest that he may have regarded the protection of the Qajars as an attractive alternative to the unsettled conditions of Iraq or Bahrain. After visits to Najaf, Karbala, and Kazimiyya, he set out with several companions for Mashhad.[106]

## Iran 1221–38/1806–22

Shaykh Aḥmad's first major stop in Iran was Yazd, a town with a continuing reputation for sanctity, where a large number of ulama resided.[107] The religious zeal, at times turning to fanaticism, of the Yazdis—in part a result of the existence of a sizeable Zoroastrian community in and around the town—is well known and, in its more positive aspects, must

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[102] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, pp. 26–8.

[103] For an account of the annual Wahhabi raids between 1803 and 1810 and resistance to them, see Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, vol. 1B, pp. 1077–9.

[104] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, p. 29.

[105] See ibid., p. 34.

[106] Ibid., p. 29; see also Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 13.

[107] Rashtī gives the names of several of these in *Dalīl*, p. 17. Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī names two others in his *Risāla-yi hidāyat al-ṭālibīn*, 2nd ed. (Kirman: Chāpkhānih-i Saʾādat, 1380 [1960]), p. 38.

have created an atmosphere which al-Aḥsāʾī would have found congenial. On his arrival there, he was warmly welcomed by the inhabitants, in particular the ulama, some of whom he may have known personally. Kashmīrī states that, when the shaykh arrived in Yazd, all the ulama honoured him, with the sole exception of Āqā Sayyid Aḥmad Ardakānī Yazdī.[108] According to Shaykh ʿAbd Allāh, Shaykh Jaʿfar al-Najafī was then present in Yazd. Apart from this, two of the ulama mentioned by Rashtī as being in the town at this time had been students of Baḥr al-ʿUlūm not many years previously. One of these men, Sayyid Ḥaydar ibn Sayyid Ḥusayn Mūsawī Yazdī (d. ca. 1260/1844),[109] had been given his *ijāza* by Baḥr al-ʿUlūm in 1209/1794, the same year al-Aḥsāʾī had received his. The other, Mullā Ismāʿīl ibn ʿAbd al-Malik ʿĀqdāʾī Yazdī (d. between 1230/1815 and 1240/1824),[110] was the leading *mujtahid* in Yazd at this time. His student Āqā Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ʿAlī Kirmānshāhī states in his *Mirʾāt al-aḥwāl* that he studied under ʿĀqdāʾī in Najaf in 1210/1795,[111] providing evidence that he too was studying with Baḥr al-ʿUlūm at about the same time as al-Aḥsāʾī. It is not improbable that the latter had at least met these men, a supposition reinforced by their request that he stay in Yazd, which suggests that they were familiar with his abilities. It may well be the case that the shaykh's decision to travel to Yazd in the first place may have been inspired by an invitation from one or both of them.

Agreeing to return to Yazd once his pilgrimage was completed, al-Aḥsāʾī continued to Mashhad. His stay there on this occasion appears to have been brief, and he was soon back in Yazd in accordance with his agreement. It was not his intention to stay there, however, and, after a few days, he attempted to leave, but was prevented from so doing by the populace. It is not difficult to assess the motives of the people of Yazd in wishing the Shaykh to reside there. The presence of powerful ulama in a town provided a form of insurance against oppression from local governors and their agents. Ḥasan ibn Ḥasan Fasāʾī (b. 1821) gives an example of such protection in Fārs during the governor-generalship

[108] Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, p. 418.

[109] See ibid., pp. 345–6, 418 (a separate entry); al-Ṭihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, p. 449.

[110] He is the author of *al-Ḥusn wa 'l-qabḥ* (See al-Ṭihrānī, *al-Dharīʿa*, vol. 7, pp. 18–9) and *Ḥaqāʾiq al-uṣūl*. For details, see Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 417–8; al-Ṭihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, p. 142; Ḥābībābādī, *Makārim al-āthār*, vol. 3, pp. 892–3.

[111] Quoted in al-Ṭihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, p. 142; this seems to disprove Ḥabībābādī's statement that, in 1208/1793, he travelled to Mashhad and returned from there to Yazd, where he remained (Ḥābībābādī, *Makārim al-āthār*, vol. 3, p. 892).

of Prince Farīdūn Mīrzā Farmān Farmā (1810–1854). The governor-general had entrusted the administration of the entire province to Mīrzā Aḥmad Khān Tabrizī, who eventually gained a reputation for favouritism towards Azerbaijani refugees in the area and injustice towards local inhabitants leading in the end to the serious riots and political upheavals in Shīrāz which began in 1839. Fasāʾī points out, however, that "as long as the *mujtahid* Ḥājī Mīrzā Ibrāhīm was alive, Mīrzā Aḥmad Khān did not oppress the populace, out of respect for him."[112]

In the case of al-Aḥsāʾī's residence in Yazd, his own increasing fame and the veneration in which he came to be held by Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh made his continued sojourn there a matter of considerable importance for the local population. From al-Aḥsāʾī's point of view, however, the possibility of becoming embroiled in political affairs was extremely distasteful, and we shall see later how it proved a significant factor in his decision not to accept the shah's offer to reside at the capital.

Since the Shaykh only arrived in Iran in 1221/1806, his fame must have spread through the country at a remarkable rate, for the Shah began corresponding with him no later than 1223/1808, and possibly somewhat earlier. This rapid growth in his reputation suggests that manuscripts of some of his *rasāʾil* must by now have been circulating in Iran. In addition, a number of his works can be assigned to the period of his first stay in Yazd, several of which indicate the beginnings of what was to develop into a wide correspondence with various ulama and others throughout the country.[113]

As we have indicated, the Shaykh's fame soon reached the ears of Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh, then in about the tenth year of his reign. It is possible that the specific source of the Shah's information about al-Aḥsāʾī was

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[112] Ḥasan Fasāʾī, *Tārīkh-i Fārsnāmah-i Nāṣirī* ([Tehran]: Intishārāt-i Kitābkhānah-i Nisāʾī, 1312–14 [1895–97]), vol. 1, p. 296. Other examples are the direct intervention by the Shaykh al-Islām of Shīrāz during the early years of the reign of Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh, in which he forced the governor, Muḥammad Nabī Khān, to lower the price of bread and succeeded in having him dismissed (see Sir William Ouseley, *Travells in Various Countries of the East; More Particularly Persia, etc.* (London: Rodwell and Martin, 1819–23), vol. 2, pp. 209–10); the expulsion of the governor of Kāshān by Mullā Aḥmad Narāqī, and his forcing Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh to appoint a new incumbent in his stead (see Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 130); and the role of Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī in protecting large numbers of citizens during the 1843 siege of Karbala (see next chapter). See also Algar, *Religion and State*, pp. 52–3; A. K. S. Lambton, "Persian Society under the Qajars", *Journal of the Royal Central Asiatic Society* (London) vol. 48 (1961), p. 135; Malcolm, *History of Persia*, vol. 2, p. 304.

[113] Dated works from this period include items 2, 6, 45, and 65 in Kirmānī, *Fihrist*.

Prince Ibrāhīm Khān Qājār Quyūnlū, Ẓahīr al-Dawla (d. 1825), a cousin of the monarch and the governor of Kirman and Baluchistan. Ibrāhīm Khān became a fervent admirer of the Shaykh; his own son, Ḥājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī, succeeded Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī as head of the Shaykhi school, while the subsequent leadership of the main school passed to his descendants. Niʿmat Allāh Raẓavī Sharīf notes that Ibrāhīm Khān corresponded with al-Aḥsāʾī and visited him in Yazd.[114] That it was through the mediation of Ibrāhīm Khān that the name of Shaykh Aḥmad reached the ears of the king is explicitly stated by Sayyid Muḥammad Hāshimī Kirmānī,[115] and it seems likely that this was the case.

Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh soon addressed several letters to the Shaykh, expressing a desire to see him in person.[116] The motives underlying this wish on the Shah's part to pay such close attention to an Arab *ʿālim* newly arrived in a remote corner of Iran are not, I think, hard to discern. First of all, there was Fatḥ ʿAlī's personal religiosity, which led him to evince a deep-seated veneration for the ulama, even to the point of submitting to their judgement in certain matters. There was also his desire to emphasize the Shiʿi character of the new regime, as evidenced by the large number of religious endowments made by him in Qum, Shīrāz, Mashhad, and the *ʿatabāt*, and in his patronage of several outstanding ulama, such as Mīrzā-yi Qummī, Shaykh Jaʿfar al-Najafī, Sayyid Murtaḍā ibn Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabāʾī, and Mullā Aḥmad Narāqī.[117]

The reverence, almost subservience, which Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh bore towards the ulama is evident from the wording of one of his letters to al-Aḥsāʾī, as quoted by Āqā Sayyid Ḥusayn Yazdī in *al-Kashkūl*. In this letter, the Shah, after addressing the Shaykh with the customary hyperboles, writes: "We desire to meet you as the one fasting desires the new moon, as the thirsty longs for pure waters, as the husband is eager for his wife, and the destitute for wealth…" He then invites him to set out immediately for Tehran so that he may benefit from his presence and obtain illumination from him.[118] Despite the courteous tone of this letter—the Arabic original of which would not, of course have been

[114] Niʿmat Allāh Raḍavī, *Tadhkirat al-wafāʾ* (Bombay: [s.n.], 1895), pp. 5–6.
[115] Hāshimī Kirmānī, "Ṭāʾifa-yi Shaykhiyya," p. 252.
[116] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, pp. 30–1.
[117] For a detailed discussion of Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh's relations with the religious sector, see Algar, *Religion and State*, pp. 45–72.
[118] Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh to al-Aḥsāʾī, quoted in Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 166.

penned by the shah himself—the "invitation" to come to the capital is, in reality, nothing but a veiled command. At this stage, however, pressure to go to Tehran was not sufficiently great to compel compliance, and al-Aḥsāʾī made various excuses for his inability to leave Yazd.[119]

At that same time, he did reply to certain questions put to him by the Shah; his answers are contained in the *Risāla al-khāqāniyya*, dated early Ramadan 1223/late October 1808.[120] It is of interest to compare the somewhat superficial questions put by the Shah at this time with the two he put to al-Aḥsāʾī some ten years later, after the latter's return to Kirmanshah in 1234/1818, and which the Shaykh answered in his *Risāla al-sulṭāniyya*.[121] These two questions, which deal with the distinction between the Imām and the stations of *nubuwwa* and *wilāya*, indicate a growing knowledge of religious matters on the shah's part, and suggest that his interest in theology, if not profound, was at least serious.

The receipt of the *Risāla al-khāqāniyya* seems to have whetted the Shah's appetite and made him even more eager to have al-Aḥsāʾī come to Tehran; a letter was soon sent expressing this wish in particularly strong terms. This letter was brought to Yazd by one of the members of the court, Mīrzā Muḥammad Nadīm,[122] and, according to Rashtī, the Shah's instructions were communicated to al-Aḥsāʾī through the governor of Yazd.[123] Shaykh ʿAbd Allāh gives a synopsis of this letter, in which the shah declares that it is his own duty to visit the Shaykh but that, for various reasons, it is not in his power to do so, and that he asks pardon for this. He goes on to say that, if he should have to make a personal visit to Yazd, he should have to bring with him at least ten thousand soldiers; since Yazd is a valley without much cultivation, the arrival of so many troops would result in famine for the inhabitants. The shah ends by expressing his humility towards Shaykh Aḥmad, and politely asks him to visit him as soon as he receives this letter—

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[119] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, p. 31.

[120] Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, pp. 240–1; printed in al- Aḥsāʾī, in *Jawāmiʿ al-kalim*, vol. 1, pt. 1, pp. 120–9.

[121] Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 241; printed in al-Aḥsāʾī, *Jawāmiʿ al-kalim*, vol. 2, pt. 1, pp. 245–9. What appear to be this and the previous *risāla* are referred to by the single title *Khāqānīyya* by ʿAbd Allāh al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, pp. 59, 60; cf. Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, p. 371.

[122] Sulṭān Aḥmad Mīrzā ʿAḍud al-Dawla, *Tārīkh-i ʿAḍudī*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Navāʾī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Bābak, 2535 Shsh [1976]), p. 128. On Mīrzā Muḥammad Nadīm, see notes by Navāʾī in ibid., pp. 269–70.

[123] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 1.

"otherwise I shall have no choice but to come to Yazd (*dār al-ʿibāda*)."[124] The thinly-veiled threat is obvious: the effects of *ṣādirāt*—irregular and arbitrary levies imposed on towns or provinces on such occasions as a royal visit—were too well known to require elaboration.[125] The letter was, in effect, an ultimatum.

Faced with the choice of either becoming involved with the court or bringing famine to Yazd, al-Aḥsāʾī determined to quit Iran altogether. He decided to leave for Shīrāz, planning to take that route back to Basra, but, when the people of Yazd heard of this, they prevented his departure. The threat of a royal visit was serious enough, but, on the other hand, if the Shah thought they had encouraged him to go in fear of that threat, there was the more serious risk of their incurring royal displeasure and being punished. It was, in any case, the winter season and travel would be difficult.[126]

The problem remained as to how to reply to the Shah. A meeting of the leading citizens was held, but they could think of no solution. Al-Ahsaʾi pointed, out that, if he were to excuse himself from going, the shah would come and cause great distress in the region, but, if, on the other hand, he were to promise to go, he would be prevented by the cold from actually travelling to the capital. By this point, the Yazdis seem to have been seriously alarmed about the possible consequences of a continual refusal on the part of the Shaykh to go to Tehran, and sufficient pressure was at last applied to make him relent and agree to go. It was arranged that Mīrzā ʿAlī Riḍā,[127] a *mujtahid*, would accompany him to the capital and ensure that he suffered no discomfort on the way.[128] It is probable that Mīrzā ʿAlī Riḍā's real function was to make sure that the Shaykh did not attempt to take another route back to Iraq.

Shaykh Aḥmad and his companion proceeded directly to Tehran, arriving around November 1808.[129] He had frequent meetings with the

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[124] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, pp. 31–2.

[125] On *ṣādirāt*, see George Nathaniel Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question* (London: Longmans, Green, 1892), vol. 2, pp. 477–8; James Justinian Morier, *A Journey through Persia, Armenia and Asia Minor to Constantinople in the Years 1808 and 1809* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1812), p. 237.

[126] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, p. 32.

[127] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 17.

[128] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, pp. 32–3; Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 18; ʿAḍud al-Dawla, *Tārīkh-i ʿAḍudī*, p. 128.

[129] The exact dating of al-Aḥsāʾī's visit is difficult, since none of our sources give precise details. However, the *Risāla al-khāqāniyya*, presumably written from Yazd, is dated early Ramaḍān 1223/late October 1808; a letter dated 19 Ṣafar 1224/5 April 1809

Shah while there and wrote several *rasāʾil* in reply to various questions put by him.[130] Rashtī notes that the Shaykh was visited by all the ulama and religious students then living in the capital;[131] they were probably as much attracted by his standing in the eyes of the king, however, as by his reputation as a cleric. As a result of their association, the shah's admiration for the Shaykh increased; the latter, however, felt he had fulfilled his obligation to the king, quickly wearied of Tehran, and decided to leave. Continuing Wahhabi attacks in the neighbourhood of Basra were a constant cause of concern to him since most of his wives and children were still resident there. The shah, however, tried to prevent his departure and eventually managed to persuade him to stay in Iran, arguing that he could not openly make his knowledge known in Iraq (presumably because it was a Sunni-governed province).[132] Having succeeded in this, Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh began to apply pressure on the Shaykh to live in the capital, offering to put a house at his disposal there.[133] This offer was tactfully but forcefully refused.

Fatḥ ʿAlī had probably intended from the beginning to ask al-Aḥsāʾī to stay in Tehran. The invitation accorded with his general policy of encouraging ulama to live in the new capital.[134] Men such as Ḥājī Mullā Muḥammad Jaʿfar Astarābādī,[135]—later the author of a polemic against al-Aḥsāʾī—Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥasan Qazvīnī Shīrāzī,[136] Mullā

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is recorded as having been written in Yazd (Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 287). Further evidence is provided by the date of the arrival of Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā's envoy in Basra, at the begining of Dhū ʾl-Qaʿda 1223/mid-December 1808. The reference to the journey as occurring in winter also helps us pinpoint the approximate date of his arrival. It is unclear whether the *fāʾida* of al-Aḥsāʾī's dated 20 Ramadān 1223/9 November 1808 was written in Yazd or Tehran (ibid., p. 229).

[130] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, p. 33.

[131] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 18; Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī states that, among those that visited al-Aḥsāʾī in Tehran was Mīrzā Muḥammad Akhbari (*Risāla-yi hidāyat al-ṭālibīn*, p. 39).

[132] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, pp. 34–5.

[133] Ibid., p. 35; cf. ʿAḍud al-Dawla, *Tārīkh-i ʿAḍudī*, pp. 128.

[134] On this policy, see Algar, *Religion and State*, pp. 51–2.

[135] On whom, see Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 154–5; Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 414–5; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 100–1; Hābībābādī, *Makārim*, vol. 1, pp. 83–92. On his attack on al-Aḥsāʾī, entitled *Ḥayāt al-arwāḥ*, completed in 1240/1824, see al-Ṭihrānī, *al-Dharīʾa*, vol. 7, pp. 115–6. A refutation of this work, entitled *Sharḥ Ḥayāt al-arwāḥ*, was written in 1252/1837 by Mullā Muḥammad Ḥasan Gawhar Qarācha-dāghī, a leading pupil of al-Aḥsāʾī and Rashtī (see ibid., vol. 13, p. 215; see also vol. 5, p. 174).

[136] See Algar, *Religion and State*, p. 51; al-Ṭihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, pp. 354–5; vol. 3, pp. 340–5; Ḥabībābādī, *Makārim*, vol. 4, pp. 1099–1102. His great-nephew, Mīrzā Muḥammad Ibrāhīm, was a follower of Mullā Ḥasan Gawhar, referred to in the last note (al-Ṭihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 1, p. 4; vol. 3, p. 343).

Muḥammad ʿAlī Māzandarānī Jangalī,[137] and others were invited to come to Tehran in an attempt to raise the prestige of the city and of the dynasty which had made it its capital, as well as to encourage the development of a centre of religious authority close to and allied with the seat of government—distinct from the *ʿatabāt*, which were outside the borders of Iran. Fatḥ ʿAlī's policy was destined to failure. The *ʿatabāt* retained their influence, increasing in importance through the nineteenth century and, in Iran itself, Isfahan, Mashhad, and, in particular, Qum remained the centres of religious studies. Although the number of ulama resident in the capital greatly increased in the reign of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh (1831–1896),[138] not even men such as Mullā ʿAlī Kanī, Shaykh Faḍl Allāh Nūrī (d. 1909), Sayyid ʿAbd Allāh Bihbahānī, and Āqā Sayyid Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabāʾī were able to make Tehran a religious capital such as Isfahan had been under the Safavids.

Shaykh Aḥmad's reason for not staying in Tehran, as explained to Fatḥ ʿAlī, is of great interest in helping us understand how the ulama in this period regarded the secular authority of the Qajars. We may assume that the version of this reply given by Shaykh Abd Allah is tolerably accurate, in view of the fact that it agrees in substance with that given in the *Tārīkh-i ʿAḍudī*. The Shaykh argued that, were he to remain at the capital, it would mean the end of the Shah's power (*salṭanat*). When asked why this would be the case, al-Aḥsāʾī inquired of the Shah whether he (al-Aḥsāʾī) should live in honour or disgrace. When Fatḥ ʿAlī replied that he should live in the greatest honour, the Shaykh said

> In my opinion, kings and governors execute their orders and their laws through tyranny. Since the masses regard me as someone whose word is to be obeyed, they would turn to me in all matters and would seek refuge with me. Now, it is incumbent on me to defend the people of Islam and to fulfil their needs. Were I to seek intercession for them from the king, one of two things would occur: either he would accept [my intercession], thereby suspending the operation of his authority, or he would refuse it, thus causing me to be humiliated and disgraced.[139]

This argument did not fail to impress the shah, who could not have been unaware of the counter-threat it contained. We have already

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[137] Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 31–2.

[138] Iʿtimād al-Salṭana lists a large number of these in his *Maʾāthir*, pp. 135–86.

[139] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, pp. 35–6; cf. ʿAḍud al-Dawla, *Tārīkh-i ʿĀḍudī*, p. 128; Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 18.

noted how it lay in the power of certain ulama to force the hand of the Shah in cases of injustice and oppression. Perhaps more than any particular incident of the period, al-Aḥsāʾī's warning to Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh prefigures the later expression of clerical opposition to the throne during the Tobacco Regie, in the Constitutional movement, and even in the 1979 revolution.[140] Fatḥ ʿAlī immediately offered al-Aḥsāʾī freedom of choice in his place of residence, but the latter chose, curiously enough, to return to Yazd.

It is, I think, worth noting the role played by this visit in the later hagiographic Bahaʾi version of the incident, as originated by Zarandī.[141] For this writer and others after him, such as William Sears and H. M. Balyuzi, the visit is fraught with overtones of messianic expectation. Al-Aḥsāʾī, far from being reluctant to travel there, sets out for the capital because he perceives "the first glimmerings that heralded the dawn of the promised Dispensation from the direction of Nūr, to the north of Tehran."[142] He leaves the city with the greatest reluctance, wishing to spend the rest of his life there.[143] In order to give full force to this interpretation of the event, Zarandī makes the visit coincide with the birth of Bahāʾ Allāh (Mīrzā Ḥusayn ʿAlī Nūrī, 1817–1892), which occurred in Tehran on 2 Muharram 1223/12 November 1817, a date which is simply impossible. Other contradictions occur, such as Zarandī's statement that al-Aḥsāʾī was accompanied on the journey by Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī and that he left Tehran directly for Kirmanshah. The whole effect is one of tendentiousness of the most extreme kind, making this version of the incident—which has acquired an important place in Bahaʾi historical myth—of considerable interest as an example of how a controversial religious figure may be adopted and transmogrified into a character of messianic import by a later movement with which he may have only the most tenuous connection.

Although al-Aḥsāʾī did not go to Kirmanshah at this point, he did become acquainted with Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā Dawlatshāh (1788–

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[140] On these and other cases of clerical opposition to the state, see Algar, *Religion and State*, chapters 12, 13, and 14; Hamid Algar, "The Oppositional Role of the Ulama in Twentieth-Century Iran," in *Scholars, Saints and Ṣūfīs: Religious Institutions in the Middle East since 1500*, edited by Nikki R. Keddie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972); Nikki R. Keddie, *Religion and Rebellion in Iran: The Tobacco Protest of 1891–1892* (London: Frank Cass, 1966).

[141] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 5–13.

[142] Ibid., p. 12.

[143] Ibid., p. 13.

1822), who was later to be his patron there for several years. Since the prince was at that time already governor-general of Arabistan, Ḥawīza, and their dependencies,[144] he offered to send one of his agents from Arabistan to Basra in order to bring the Shaykh's family to Yazd. The prince wrote a *farmān* to the governor of Basra, Ibrāhīm Āqā, asking him to give his agent the necessary authority to carry this out on his arrival—an interesting example of the influence of this young prince within the borders of Iraq.[145] Al-Ahsaʾi himself returned to Yazd not later than 19 Ṣafar 1224/5 April 1809, as is clear from a letter written there and bearing this date.[146]

Al-Ahsaʾi spent the next five years in Yazd,[147] with the exception of at least two pilgrimages to Mashhad in 1226/1811[148] and 1229/1814.[149] It is stated by a number of sources that he produced the bulk of his writings during this period,[150] most of these being, it seems, replies to the numerous letters which now began to arrive from ulama in many places. However, on the evidence of those letters which are dated, it would seem that fewer were written in this period than during the Shaykh's later stay in Kirmanshah—although it would be unwise at this stage to regard this as a wholly reliable means of assessing the distribution of his writings from different periods.

It is, in any case, clear that the dissemination of the Shaykh's writings during his stay in Yazd gained him an increasingly large following there and in Fārs, Khurāsān, and Isfahan.[151] His visits to Mashhad brought him into contact with numerous ulama, and the high estimation in which he was held by the scholars resident there must, in its turn, have spread by means of the pilgrims with whom they spoke.[152] Al-Ahsaʾi's

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[144] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, p. 36. Riḍāʾ Qulī Khān Hidāyat states that he was made governor of Khuzestan, Lorestan, the Bakhtiari region, and Kirmanshah in 1222/1807, when he was nineteen (Riḍāʾ Qulī Khān Hidāyat, *Tārīkh-i Rawḍat al-ṣafā-yi Nāṣirī*, ed. Muḥammad ibn Khwāndshāh Mīrkhwānd [(Tehran?): Markaz-i Khayyām Pīrūz, (1339 Sh./1959–60?)], p. 602).

[145] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, p. 36.

[146] Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 287.

[147] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 19.

[148] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, p. 38.

[149] Ibid., pp. 40–4. Abuʾl-Qāsim Khān states that the Shaykh made numerous visits to Mashhad in this period (*Fihrist*, p. 167.

[150] Hāshimī Kirmānī, "Ṭāʾifa-yi Shaykhiyya," p. 252; Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 5.

[151] Hāshimī Kirmānī, "Ṭāʾifa-yi Shaykhiyya," p. 252.

[152] Rashtī mentions several of the ulama who were resident in Mashhad at the time of al-Aḥsāʾī's visits (Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 20. Kirmānī names two others (*Hidāyat al-ṭālibīn*, p. 40).

ideas seem to have made their way to a very wide audience, as is suggested by Rashtī, when he speaks, significantly, of how some of the topics dealt with by the Shaykh—topics which were not at first clear to anyone outside his circle, (*ghayr-i ahlish*)—became current among the masses, ʿand day by day people became eager and enthusiastic about those topics and remained awestruck when they heard them mentioned."[153]

This situation appears to have led to some misunderstanding, for the Shaykh himself at one point gave instructions for someone to preach from the pulpit on the orthodoxy of his views on the relationship between outward and inward beliefs (*ẓāhir wa bāṭin*).[154] Although the details of this incident are unclear, it is likely that we have here the beginnings of what was to develop into serious opposition to the views of al-Aḥsāʾī, leading in the end to the *takfīr* pronounced against him in his final years.

A few days after his return from a pilgrimage to Mashhad in 1229/1814, despite an earlier intention to stay in Yazd,[155] Shaykh Aḥmad determined to visit the *ʿatabāt*, travelling via Shūstar. Rashtī states that the reason for his departure from Yazd was a dream of the Imām ʿAlī inviting him to perform a pilgrimage to al-Kufa.[156] Karīm Khān Kirmānī, however, gives a more cogent reason in stating that the Shaykh was distressed by the behaviour of some notables in Yazd, who did not appreciate his importance and were lax in showing respect.[157] A more important reason—and very possibly the cause of al-Aḥsāʾī's displeasure with the above notables—may well have been an invitation from Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā to go to Kirmanshah.

Shaykh ʿAbd Allāh describes his father's arrival in Kirmanshah as unpremeditated and unexpected, and states that the prince's invitation to stay was spontaneous—but this does not seem to be consistent with the reality of the situation. Al-Ahsaʾi cannot have been unaware of the implications of his going to Kirmanshah, the seat of the most powerful and ambitious prince in the kingdom. Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā, for his part, is unlikely to have relied on chance to bring such an important religious figure—and one, as we have seen, already indebted to him—to his capital. The willingness of the Shaykh to stay in Kirmanshah and the

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[153] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 19.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, p. 44.
[156] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 20.
[157] Kirmānī, *Hidāyat al-ṭālibīn*, p. 41.

subsequent length of his sojourn there also suggest a previous decision to accept a formal invitation from the prince. Further evidence that this was the case is provided by Muḥammad ʿAlī Kashmīrī, who states that the prince gave Shaykh Aḥmad the sum of one thousand *tomans* for his travelling expenses to the city.[158]

Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh's policy of inviting important religious personages to live in Tehran was emulated by many of the royal princes in the hope of raising the prestige of their provincial capitals.[159] Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā made a particular point of increasing the importance of Kirmanshah. Sir Robert Kerr Porter remarks of the city that

> The population amounts to about 15,000 families, some few of which are Christians and Jews; the views of its governor inclining him to draw into his city, and to disperse through the whole range of his government, those sorts of persons most likely to increase his revenues, and to spread, his general influence.[160]

The invitation to Shaykh Aḥmad fitted in well with the prince's general aims, but it is less easy to understand the motives of the former in accepting. Al-Ahsaʾi, whatever his stated reservations about close identification with secular authority, was not actually averse to associating with representatives of the state, as is attested by his cordial relations, not only with Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh and Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā, but also with Prince Maḥmud Mīrzā, Muʿizz al-Mulk (1799–1853), with whom he corresponded,[161] Prince Mīrzā ʿAbd Allāh Khān, Amīn al-Dawla, with whom he stayed in Isfahan,[162] Prince Ibrāhīm Khān, Ẓahīr al-Dawla (d. 1825), and possibly even ʿAbbās Mīrzā (1789–1833), who is described as one of his admirers.[163] At the same time, the close attachment of

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[158] Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, p. 367, based on the *Rawḍāt al-bahiyya* of Sayyid Shafīʿ al-Mūsawī.

[159] See Algar, *Religion and State*, p. 45.

[160] Sir Robert Kerr Porter, *Travels in Georgia, Persia, Armenia, Ancient Babylonia, &c., during the years 1817, 1818, 1819, and 1820* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1821–22), vol. 2, pp. 201–2. On Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā (1203–37/1789–1821), the eldest son of Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh, see ibid., pp. 202–4; Navāʾī, notes to ʿAḍud al-Dawla, *Tārīkh-i ʿAḍudī*, pp. 218–9; Mahdī Bāmdād, *Rijāl*, vol. 3, pp. 430–1.

[161] The Shaykh wrote at least two letters in reply to intelligent questions from this prince: see Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, pp. 236–7. The first of these is printed in al-Aḥsāʾī, *Jawāmiʿ*, vol. 1, pt. 2, pp. 200–7. On Mahmūd Mīrzā, the fourteenth son of Fatḥ ʿAlī, see Navāʾī, notes to ʿAḍud al-Dawla, *Tārīkh-i ʿAḍudī*, pp. 227–8; Bāmdād, *Rijāl*, vol. 4, pp. 51–3.

[162] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, p. 50. On ʿAbd Allāh Khān, twice Ṣadr-i Aʿẓam, see Fasāʾī, *Fārsnāma*, vol. 1, pp. 269–71, 274; ʿAḍud al-Dawla, *Tārīkh-i ʿAḍudī*, pp. 60–5, 99–102; Navāʾī, notes to ibid., p. 236; Bāmdād, *Rijāl*, vol. 2, pp. 278–81.

[163] Hāshimī Kirmānī, "Ṭāʾifa-yi Shaykhiyya," p. 247.

Ibrāhīm Khān cannot have been without its attendant problems in the form of sycophants on the one hand and political rivals on the other. The later difficulties in Kirman which followed on the death of Ibrāhīm Khān, and the more serious religio-political disturbances on the death of Karīm Khān Zand (d. 1750) indicate how problematic such relations could become.[164]

Despite an attempt to prevent his departure by the governor of Yazd, Shaykh Aḥmad succeeded in leaving for Kirmanshah, travelling by way of Isfahan, where he stayed for forty days.[165] During this period, he associated with the leading ulama of the city and their pupils, and was requested to stay there permanently.[166] Citing the dream which had spurred him to travel to the *ʿatabāt*, al-Aḥsāʾī made his excuses and prepared to leave; at this point, a deputation from Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā arrived to bring him to Kirmanshah, and, in compliance with the prince's request, he set off from Isfahan.[167] The very fact that the prince knew he would be there is itself highly suggestive of a prior arrangement.

News of his impending arrival reached Kirmanshah, and the prince and townspeople went out about two stages to welcome him. Following the *istiqbāl*, tents were pitched at Chāh Kalān outside the city.[168] At this point, whether for the first time—as is claimed, but seems unlikely—or as a reiteration, Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā invited al-Aḥsāʾī to stay in his capital, adducing as his reasons "the good pleasure of God; the nearness of your excellency; and my distinction among others and exaltation among them."[169] No doubt the true order of motivation was exactly the reverse. The Shaykh argued that he had left Yazd out of a longing to visit the *ʿatabāt*, but the prince immediately agreed to pay the expenses for an annual pilgrimage to the shrines. Shaykh ʿAbd Allāh states that he also offered to accompany the Shaykh there every year, but it is highly unlikely, in view of the prince's relations with the government in Baghdad, that this was intended seriously.[170]

Exactly how many of the Shaykh's expenses were, in the end, undertaken by Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā is very hard to determine. Tanakābunī

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[164] See Chahārdihī, *Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī*, pp. 246–64.
[165] Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 167.
[166] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, pp. 31–2.
[167] Ibid., p. 32.
[168] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, p. 45.
[169] Ibid., p. 46.
[170] Ibid.

states that al-Aḥsāʾī had debts and that the prince asked him to sell him a gate of paradise for one thousand *tomans*, and that the Shaykh did so, writing out a bond for the gate.[171] According to Kashmīrī, as mentioned above, the prince gave al-Aḥsāʾī one thousand *tomans* for the journey from Yazd. The same source states that the prince also paid him a stipend of seven hundred *tomans* per month,[172] although Tanakābunī maintains that this was his annual allowance.[173] It is also worth noting that it has been stated—almost certainly without foundation—that Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh gave al-Aḥsāʾī the enormous sum of one hundred thousand *tomans* with which to pay off his debts.[174] The figure in question is improbably high, but it is not impossible that the king at one time gave a smaller sum to the Shaykh. That the latter may have incurred heavy debts more than once is suggested by Abu ʾl-Qāsim ibn Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn ibn Karīm, who states that he gave away his entire wealth twice in his life; he was, it seems, about to do so again when he saw Fatima in a dream and was dissuaded from such a course.[175] It is not impossible that al-Aḥsāʾī, his commitments growing, may have found himself in debt in Yazd and gone to Kirmanshah expressly to live under a patron with sufficient resources to support him.

Shaykh Aḥmad entered Kirmanshah on 2 Rajab 1229/20 June 1814. His initial stay there lasted over two years: in 1232/1817, he performed what appears to have been his first pilgrimage to Mecca.[176] Returning by way of Najaf and Karbala, the Shaykh decided to stay for a while at the *ʿatabāt*; he remained there for a total of eight months, associating with several important ulama, including ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad Ṭabātabāʾī and Mīrzā-yi Qummī.[177] It seems that some doubts were expressed at about

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[171] Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 36. The same source relates a similar anecdote about Āqā Sayyid Riḍāʾ Ṭabāṭabāʾī, a son of Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, who also had debts and came from Najaf to Kirmanshah (ibid.).

[172] Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, p. 367, based on the *Rawḍāt al-bahiyya* of Murtaḍā Fayḍ-i Kāshānī.

[173] Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 37–8.

[174] Hāshimī Kirmānī, "Ṭāʾifa-yi Shaykhiyya," p. 253. This author argues against the validity of this statement, which he has not seen recorded.

[175] Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 159.

[176] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, pp. 42–7.

[177] Ibid., p. 48. Shaykh ʿAbd Allāh also names Shaykh Jaʿfar al-Najafī as one of those with whom al-Aḥsāʾī associated on this occassion, but it is widely agreed that al-Najafī had died four years previously in 1228/1813. Rashtī gives the names of several ulama with whom the Shaykh associated at the *ʿatabāt* during his pilgrimages in the period of his stay in Kirmanshah from 1814 (Rashtī, *Dalīl*, pp. 22–3). Elsewhere, Rashtī states that, on several journeys to the *ʿatabāt*, al-Aḥsāʾī associated with Mīrzā-yi Qummī

this time as to the orthodoxy of the Shaykh's beliefs, since some of his *rasaʾil* were shown to Ṭabāṭabāʾī with the request that he comment on their acceptability. He kept the *rasāʾil* in question for two days and, on the third day, expressed the opinion that their contents were perfectly orthodox.[178] In view of later developments, this expression of approval from a champion of the orthodox Usuli position such as Ṭabāṭabāʾī is highly significant. It seems, incidentally, that it was in this period that al-Aḥsāʾī taught the *Risāla al-ʿilmiyya* of Murtaḍā Fayḍ al-Kāshānī in the Shrine of Ḥusayn in Karbala.[179]

Shaykh Aḥmad returned to Kirmanshah on 4 Muḥarram 1234/3 November 1818.[180] There he stayed, with the possible exception of some visits to the *ʿatabāt*, until one year after the death of Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā in 1237/1821. During the years he spent in Kirmanshah, he added considerably to his output of treatises and commentaries. Several works are dated as having been written during his first stay of over two years. The most important of these is the monumental and central *Sharḥ al-ziyāra al-jāmiʿa al-kabīra* dated 1230/1815.[181] Comprising 34,000 *bayts* in four volumes, this work is probably the most important single source for the Shaykh's doctrines, particularly with regard to the station of the Imāms.

Soon after the completion of this massive work, al-Aḥsāʾī wrote a commentary of over 2,500 bayts on the *Risāla al-ʿilmiyya* of Murtaḍā Fayḍ al-Kāshānī just referred to above.[182] At least one work was written by the Shaykh during his stay in Karbala in 1233/1818; this is a *risāla* written at the request of one of his followers on his own *Sharḥ al-fawāʾid*.[183] On his return to Kirmanshah, he continued this prodigious output. Among the most interesting works produced during this period are: *al-Risāla al-sulṭānīyya*, written in reply to two questions from Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh, less than one month after his return to the city;[184] the

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and Shaykh Ḥasan ibn Ḥusayn ʿAlī ʿAsfūr, both of whom showed great admiration for him (ibid., p. 24). He omits to mention here another man with whom al-Aḥsāʾī probably associated during his earlier journeys to the *ʿatabat*—Sayyid Muḥsin al-Aʿrajī (d. 1231/1816), from whom he may have received an *ijāza*.

[178] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, pp. 23–4.

[179] Ibid., p. 23; Kirmānī, *Hidāyat al-ṭālibīn*, p. 48. The Shaykh's commentary on the *Risāla al-ʿilmīyya* is referred to above in note 68 this chapter.

[180] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, p. 48.

[181] Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 226. See al-Ṭihrānī, *al-Dharīʿa*, vol. 13, p. 305.

[182] See note 68 above, this chapter. Other works written in this period include items 3, 36, 57, and 129 in Kirmānī, *Fihrist*.

[183] Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 227; see bibliography.

[184] See note 121 above, this chapter.

lengthy and important *Sharḥ al-Mashāʾir*, written in 1234/1818 for a certain Mullā Mashhad;[185] the even lengthier and more influential *Sharḥ al-ʿArshiyya*, written in 1236/1821.[186] As well as major works such as these, the Shaykh continued to pen numerous, often lengthy, replies to questions from ulama and laymen in a variety of places.[187]

In 1237/1821, war broke out between the Ottoman Empire and Iran.[188] Although most of the fighting was under the command of ʿAbbās Mīrzā, who achieved several important successes on the Kurdish frontier, Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā also set out with a large force to attack Baghdad. Having come within a short distance of his objective, he died on 26 Ṣafar 1237/22 November 1821.[189] His son, Prince Muḥammad Ḥusayn Mīrzā, Hishmat al-Dawla (d. 1845), was appointed governor of Kirmanshah in his father's place.[190] The removal of Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā was, however, a severe blow to the region, and conditions began to dec1ine seriously, being aggravated by a heavy flood which destroyed a quarter of Kirmanshah about this time.[191] Al-Aḥsāʾī remained in the city for a further year,[192] but, in 1238/1822, plague entered Iran from China and India, bringing widespread infection and a high mortality rate.[193] The Shaykh decided to leave Kirmanshah, but not, apparently, to escape the plague (unless he thought to avoid it by heading where it had been), since he set off towards Mashhad, travelling by way of Qum and Qazvīn.

## The Period of *Takfīr* 1238–41/1822–6

Although there is no direct evidence, it would seem that it was at this time that al-Aḥsāʾī stayed for a short time in Qazvīn and had the serious disagreement with Mullā Muḥammad Taqī Baraghānī (d. 1847)

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[185] Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 228; see bibliography.
[186] Ibid., p. 241; see bibliography.
[187] Among these are items 40, 41, 85, and 109 in Kirmānī, *Fihrist*.
[188] Muḥammad Jaʿfar Khūrmūjī, *Tārīkh-i Qājār: Ḥaqāʾiq al-akhbār-i Nāṣirī*, edited by Ḥusayn Khadīv Jām (Tehran: Kitābfurūshī-yi Zavvār, 1344 [1965]), p. 16. The war ended with signing of the Treaty of Erzurum in 1238/1823 (see Hidāyat, *Tārīkh-i Rawḍāt al-Ṣafā-yi Nāṣirī*, vol. 9, pp. 616–7, 625–9).
[189] Ibid., vol. 9, p. 602.
[190] Ibid., p. 603.
[191] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, p. 48.
[192] Shaykh ʿAbdu'llah says two years (ibid., p. 49).
[193] Fasāʾī, *Fārsnāma*, vol. 1, pp. 268–9.

which led to the pronouncement of *takfīr* against him. Muḥammad Taqī was the oldest of three brothers originally from Baraghān near Tehran. Descended from a family of ulama which dated back to the Buwayhid period, he was born about 1173/1760.[194] He first studied in Qazvīn, then in Qum, where he attended some classes given by Mīrzā-yi Qummī; disliking these, he went to Isfahan, where he studied *ḥikma* and *kalām*, and then to the *ʿatabāt*, where he was taught by Āqā Sayyid ʿAlī Ṭabāṭabāʾī, Shaykh Jaʿfar al-Najafī, and Muḥammad ʿAlī Ṭabāṭabāʾī. When the last-named came to Iran in 1242/1826 to lead the second *jihad* against Russia, he visited Qazvīn, where he gave an *ijāza* to Muḥammad Taqī Baraghānī; both Taqī and his brother Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Baraghānī (d. ca. 1853) were among the ulama who went on the *jihad*. He later spent some time in Tehran, but, following a disagreement with Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh, returned to Qazvīn, where he eventually became Imām Jumʿa, achieving particular recognition as one of the best preachers of his day. He composed a number of works, of which the best known are the *Kitāb manhaj al-ijtihād* (in twenty-four volumes) and the *Majālis al-muttaqīn*, attaining some fame as a writer on the sufferings of the Imāms. Iʿtimād al-Salṭana writes that he and his two brothers were "among the great ulama of the Qajar state."[195]

In later years, Muḥammad Taqī won considerable notoriety as the leading opponent of the Shaykhi school in Iran; as a result of this opposition and his subsequent stand against Babism, he was murdered on 15 Dhu 'l-Qaʿda 1263/25 October 1847, apparently by three men, one a Shaykhi, one a Babi, and one a Shaykhi with strong Babi leanings.[196] The circumstances of his assassination earned for him the title of Shahīd-i Thālith, the Third Martyr.[197]

A reasonably detailed account of al-Aḥsāʾī's visit to Qazvīn and his dispute with Baraghānī is given by Tanakābunī, a pupil and supporter

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[194] Mīrzā Asad Allāh Fāḍil-I Māzandarānī, *Tārikh-i-ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 309.

[195] Āvāra, *al-Kawākib al-durriyya*, p. 144.

[196] For varying accounts of this incident see Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 276–8 (who attributes the murder to a single Shaykhi); Ḥājī Muḥammad Muʿīn al-Salṭana Tabrīzī, *Tārīkh-i amr*, digital facsimile (Lansing, Mich.: H-Bahai, 2000), Internet document, pp. 242–5; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 57; Samandar, *Tārīkh-i Samandar*, p. 356.

[197] On Mullā Muḥammad Taqī, see the lengthy biography (with numerous digressions) in Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 19–66; Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 407–11; Kāẓimī, *Aḥsan al-wadīʿa*, vol. 1, pp. 30–5; al-Ṭihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, pp. 226–8 ; Iʿtimād al-Salṭana, *al-Maʾāthir*, p. 144; Bāmdād, *Rijāl*, vol. 1, pp. 203–4; Anṣārī, *Zindigānī*, pp. 192–3; Amīnī Najafī, *Shahīdān-i rāh-i faḍīlat*, pp. 476–9. The date of Muḥammad Taqī's murder is given only in an anonymous account of it appended to a rare early edition of his Majālis al mutaqqīn (n.p., 1280/1863–64), a copy of which is in the possession of the present author.

of the latter. During his stay, Shaykh Aḥmad was a guest of the then Imām Jumʿa, Mullā ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Qazvīnī (d. 1847), apparently because the latter sent ahead an invitation to Hamadān[198] and not improbably because he already had a special interest in the Shaykh's views.[199] Murtaẓā Mudarrisī Chahārdihī has suggested, not, perhaps, without some justice, that Baraghānī, believing himself to be the most learned of the Shiʿi ulama, felt slighted that al-Aḥsāʾī had not chosen to be his guest during his visit.[200] That this may have been the case seems confirmed by Baraghānī's own son, Shaykh Jaʿfar Qazvīnī (d. 1888), the only one of his children to become a Shaykhi.[201]

Baraghānī seems to have been an ambitious man,[202] and this apparent slight by someone as important as al-Aḥsāʾī was not calculated to further his interests. He was, moreover, a man ever ready to enter into disagreements with other ulama, and had crossed swords on more than one occasion with several important scholars, including Mīrzā-yi Qummī, Āqā Sayyid ʿAlī Ṭabāṭabāʾī, Mullā ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Qazvīnī, Mullā Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Mahdī Narāqī Kāshānī, and Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī Jangalī.[203] At one time, as we have noted, he even had a serious disagreement wth the shah himself, as a result of which he left Tehran.[204]

It is important to realize that it was with such a strongly-opinionated man as this that al-Aḥsāʾī's *takfīr* originated. Until his disagreement with Baraghānī, there had been little question of the Shaykh's orthodoxy and, even if some individuals had rejected his views and one or two openly disputed them, only the most tentative suggestions had been

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[198] Chahārdihī, *Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī*, p. 37.

[199] Although ʿAbd al-Wahhāb never seems to have been regarded as a Shaykhi, his attitude towards the school, as well as to Babism, was basically favourable. On the death of Rashtī, he was the only *ʿālim* in Qazvīn to organize a memorial gathering (Qazvīnī, "Tārīkh-i Mullā Jaʿfar Qazvīnī," p. 469). His two sons Mīrzā Muḥammad-ʿAlī and Mīrzā Hādī, were both Shaykhis and later became Babis, being included in the small group of earliest disciples, the *ḥurūf al-ḥayy*. (Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 80–1; Samandar, *Tārīkh-i Samandar*, p. 85.

[200] Chahārdihī, *Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī*, p. 37.

[201] Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 156. Shaykh Jaʿfar (d. 1306/1888) lived in Karbala, but later went to Kirman, where he associated with Muḥammad Khān, Karīm Khān's son and successor. Muḥammad Khān relates traditions from Shaykh Jaʿfar in his *Kitāb al-mubīn*, and Karīm Khān's *Taqwīm al-lisān* (printed 1272/1855) was written at his request (Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 396).

[202] On the method used to displace Hājī Sayyid Muḥammad Taqī, the former *Imām-Jumʿa*, see Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 29.

[203] See ibid., pp. 19–20, 22, 22–3, 31, 31–2.

[204] Ibid., p. 22.

made that they might be heretical.[205] Had Baraghānī not pronounced the sentence of *takfīr* and made assiduous efforts to circulate it in Iran and at the *ʿatabāt*, it is probable that Shaykhism as a distinct school might never have come into existence and that later interpretations of al-Aḥsāʾī's thought would have taken a different direction more in harmony with the mainstream of contemporary Shiʿi thinking. Had that happened, it is highly improbable that the Shaykh's theories would have been able to function as a matrix for the speculations of the Bāb and his followers.

Tanakābunī describes in detail the incidents which led to Baraghānī's condemnation of al-Aḥsāʾī. At the beginning of his stay in Qazvīn, the Shaykh went to the Masjid-i Jumʿa, where he performed *ṣalāt* along with Mullā ʿAbd al-Wahhāb and the other ulama of the city, except for Baraghānī.[206] One day, he went to visit Muḥammad Taqī, probably in order to placate his feelings after his imagined snub. A heated discussion soon began on the topic of resurrection (*maʿād*), centered on al-Aḥsāʾī's view that man has four bodies (two *jasad* and two *jism*) and that, of the two *jasad*, only that composed of the elements of the interworld of *Hurqalyā* would survive physical death as a vehicle for the resurrection of the two *jism*. Baraghānī, in common with the most orthodox ulama, simply maintained that resurrection would take place in an earthly, elemental body.

Confirmation that the topic round which this disagreement revolved was that of resurrection is to be found in a letter from al-Aḥsāʾī to Mullā ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Qazvīnī, in which he states that "Shaykh Shaqī [i.e., Taqī][207] had discovered references in one of his books to man's two bodies (*jasadayn*), one of which will return in the resurrection and the other of which will not."

"Satan," writes al-Aḥsāʾī, "inspired Shaqī and he declared 'this is unbelief (*kufr*) and he [al-Aḥsāʾī] is an unbeliever (*kāfir*), and Ākhūnd Mullā ʿAbd al-Wahhāb has prayed behind an unbeliever'."[208] Later that day,

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[205] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, pp. 19, 23–4, 37; Hāshimī Kirmānī, "Ṭāʾifa-yi Shaykhiyya," p. 247.

[206] Qazvīnī, "Tārīkh-i Mullā Jaʿfar Qazvīnī," p. 448.

[207] Whereas Taqī means "pious", *shaqī* means "wretched, a wretch, a villain, a criminal" etc.

[208] Quoted in Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, pp. 157–8. Abū 'l-Qāsim Khān maintains that al-Aḥsāʾī and Baraghānī agreed on the fact of physical resuurection, but disagreed as to its manner (ibid., p. 152). This is largely true, in that al-Aḥsāʾī did not—as some sources have suggested—speak in terms of a spiritual resurrection. Babi and Bahaʾi allegorizing is a later development.

when Shaykh Aḥmad went to the Masjid-i Jumʿa, only ʿAbd al-Wahhāb accompanied him. Baraghānī seems to have issued his *fatwā* of *takfīr* almost immediately, and soon had it spread throughout Qazvīn and even printed in the Dār al-Ṭabʿa there,[209] making of it, quite possibly, the first *fatwā* of its kind printed in Iran or anywhere.

An attempt was made to save the situation by the governor of Qazvīn, Prince ʿAlī Naqī Mīrzā, Nawwāb-i Amīn al-Mulk, Rukn al-Dawla (b. 1793), a son of Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh.[210] Tanakābunī says he acted to heal the breach because it would give a bad reputation to the town and, significantly, because it would displease the shah. Rukn al-Dawla invited the ulama to dine with him one night and, while they were there, reprimanded Baraghānī for his behaviour, stating that al-Aḥsāʾī was the most important of the ulama of the Arabs and Persians, and should be treated with honour. But Baraghānī refused to retract his accusation.[211] Such interference in a purely theological matter by a local governor is possibly unique in the history of the period and throws an interesting light on the relations of the state and the religious institution in the early Qajar era.

Although Rukn al-Dawla's intercession failed to mollify Baraghānī, it does seem to have been instrumental in easing the situation somewhat with regard to other ulama. According to Shaykh Jaʿfar Qazvīnī (b. 1806?), who was present at the time, the governor persuaded al-Aḥsāʾī to stay a further ten days in Qazvīn. The Shaykh stayed at Darb Kūshk near the town and continued to lead the prayers either there or in the Masjid-i Jumʿa. On one occasion, the prince came with five thousand notables, ulama, merchants, tradesmen, and others to attend prayers outside the city.[212]

According to Tanakābunī, the reasons for the declaration of *takfīr* were three: the Shaykh's views on resurrection (*maʿād*), on the ascension of the Prophet (*miʿrāj*), and on the nature of the Imāms.[213] As the *takfīr* was taken up by several other ulama, the charges made came to include further points. Rashtī mentions some of these in his *Dalīl al-mutaḥayyirīn*: it was claimed that al-Aḥsāʾī had said that all the ulama from al-Shaykh al-Mufid (d. 413/1022) to his own contemporaries were

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[209] Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 43.
[210] See Bāmdād, *Rijāl*, vol. 2, pp. 496–8.
[211] Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 43.
[212] Qazvīnī, "Tārīkh-i Mullā Jaʿfar Qazvīnī," pp. 449–50.
[213] Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 44–8.

in error and that the Mujtahidī (Uṣūlī) school was false; that he regarded ʿAlī as the Creator; that he held all Qurʾānic phrases referring to God as really being references to ʿAlī; that he spoke of God as uninformed of particulars and maintained that He had two forms of knowledge, one old (*qadīm*) and one new (*ḥadīth*); and that he did not believe the Imām Ḥusayn to have been killed.[214] Rashtī refers to these charges (some of which are merely the stock-in-trade of the heresiologists) as 'absurdities' and cites a sermon attributed to the Shaykh in which they are severally refuted. After the death of al-Aḥsāʾī, however, an even greater number of heretical and quasi-heretical views were attributed to him.[215] Muḥammad Ḥusayn Shahristānī's *Taryāq-i fārūq* contains no fewer than forty points of disagreement, many of them extremely factitious.

The validity or otherwise of some or all of these charges is, however, irrelevant. Without the *takfīr* it is likely that al-Aḥsāʾī would have continued to be regarded as no more heterodox than Mullā Ṣadrā or others among the 'philosopher-theologians' of the Safavid period.[216] Tanakābunī maintains that the underlying reason behind the *takfīr* was that al-Aḥsāʾī tried to combine law (*sharʿ*) with mystical philosophy (*ḥikma*) and to harmonize rational (*maʿqūl*) ideas with those derived

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[214] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 40. Rashtī also mentions the denial of physical resurrection and the physical ascension of Muḥammad. He likewise states that the four main points of disagreement with al-Aḥsāʾī concerned: *miʿrāj, maʿād, ʿilm* (the divine kowledge), and the belief in the Imāms as the cause of creation (ibid., pp. 57–8).

[215] Since it has proved impossible to include within this dissertation even a brief discussion of Shaykhi doctrine, reference may be made to the following sources for further information. On the divine knowledge, see al-Aḥsāʾī, *Jawāmiʿ al-kalim*, vol. 1, pt. 2, pp. 227–9, pt. 3 (a) pp. 1–8; vol. 2, pp. 69–75, 282, 285–7. On *maʾād*, see ibid., vol. 1, pt. 1, pp. 14–111, 122–4, pt. 2, pp. 68–114, 136, pt. 3 (a), pp. 8–10; vol. 2, pp. 46–8, 114–66 (question 41), 280–2; al-Aḥsāʾī. *Ḥayāt al-nafs*, pp. 91–127; al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, pt. 4, pp. 8–10. On *miʿrāj*, see al-Aḥsāʾī, *Jawāmiʿ al-kalim*, vol. 1, pt. 1, pp. 137–9, pt. 2, pp. 114–66 (question 26). On the nature of the Imāms, see ibid., vol. 1, pt. 2, pp. 233–4; vol. 2, pp. 80–2; Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, passim. These main points and numerous others are dealt with by Muḥammad Ḥusayn Shahristānī in his polemical *Taryāq-i fārūq*, quoted and commented, in Hamadānī, *Kitāb al-ijtināb*; Hamadānī's "al-Naʿl al-ḥāḍira," in *Kitāb al-ijtināb*, ibid., refuting a polemic entitled *Dār al-salām*, is also useful. A convenient summary of al-Aḥsāʾī's beliefs, with questions, is given in Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Qāmūs-i Īqān*, vol. 4, pp. 1615–39. Some important passages have been translated and annotated by Corbin in *Terre Célèste*, pp. 281–337. See also Denis MacEoin, "Shaikh Aḥmad ibn Zayn al-Dīn Aḥsāʾī", *Encyclopaedia Iranica* 1:7 (1984), pp. 674–79; idem, 'Shaykhi Cosmology', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 6:3 (1993), pp. 326–8.

[216] On the ability of the Shiʿi ulama to assimilate a wide range of ideological diversity within the framework of the Twelver belief system, see Binder, "The Proofs of Islam," pp. 134–5.

from tradition (*manqūl*);[217] but, as Hāshimī Kirmānī has observed, it was really the *takfīr* which prevented his being regarded as a Fayḍ Kāshānī or a Mullā Ṣadrā,[218] whose achievement was precisely that of combining *ḥikma* with orthodox religious views.

Had Baraghānī alone pronounced *takfīr*, it is unlikely that it would have had much effect outside Qazvīn and, thanks to the intervention of Rukn Dawla, probably very little even there. Baraghānī's stature as an *ʿālim* was not sufficiently great for him to expect his *fatwā* to be widely respected without his winning the support of other, more eminent ulama. He, therefore, wrote letters to scholars at the *ʿatabāt*, informing them that he had pronounced the *takfīr*;[219] a number of them joined him in the attack on al-Aḥsāʾī. Several individuals went to Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī Ṭabāṭabāʾī (d. 1249/1833), a son of Āqā Sayyid ʿAli, and presented him with certain passages from the works of Shaykh Aḥmad which they claimed to be heretical.[220] Although his brother, Āqā Sayyid Muḥammad, the leader of the jihad against Russia in 1826, was more eminent, Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī was highly respected, to the extent that he was able to show open defiance towards Muḥammad Shah (1808–1848) during his last visit to Tehran.[221] Under Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī's leadership, a meeting was held, at which a large number of ulama attended to draw up a *fatwā* announcing al-Aḥsāʾī's *takfīr*. According to Rashtī, no sooner had they begun to write the *takfīr* than an earthquake occurred and the meeting dispersed.[222]

Tanakābunī gives a list of those ulama who pronounced *takfīr* against the Shaykh: Mullā Muḥammad Taqī Baraghānī, Āqā Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī Ṭabāṭabāʾī, Mullā Muḥammad Jaʿfar Astarābādī (known as Sharīʿatmadār) (d. 1263/1847),[223] Mullā Āqā Darbandī (d. 1286/1869),[224]

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[217] Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 42.
[218] Hāshimī Kirmānī, "Tāʾifa-yi Shaykhiyya," p. 350.
[219] Chahārdihī, *Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī*, p. 38.
[220] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, pp. 37–8.
[221] For details of Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī, see Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 124–5; Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 366–7; Kāẓimī, *Aḥsan al-wadīʿa*, vol. 1, pp. 13–15.
[222] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 39. The meeting referred to by Tanakābunī (*Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 43–4), that was called by Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī after al-Ahsaʾi's death and attended by Mullā Muḥammad Sharīf al-ʿUlamāʾ Māzandarānī), Ḥājī Mullā Muḥammad Jaʿfar Astarābādī, and Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, appears to have been a second meeting, probably identical with that described in Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 59 (and see next chapter below).
[223] See note 135 above, this chapter.
[224] Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 107–112; Kāẓimī, *Aḥsan al-wadīʿa* vol. 1, pp. 59–63; Iʿtimād al-Salṭana, *al-Maʾāthir*, p. 139; al-Ṭihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, pp. 152–3.

Mullā Muḥammad Sharīf (Sharīf al-ʿUlamāʾ Māzandarānī) (d. 1246/1831),[225] Āqā Sayyid Ibrāhīm Qazvīnī Karbalāʾī (d. 1246/1830),[226] Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn Qazvīnī (d. 1254/1838),[227] and Muḥammad Ḥasan ibn Bāqir al-Najafī.[228] Rashtī, however, states that the true originators of the *takfīr* were only three individuals, one in Karbala and two in Najaf; Baraghānī he does not mention at all.[229]

According to al-Aḥsāʾī, large sums of money were spent to ensure that the *takfīr* would obtain as wide a currency and acceptance as possible.[230] His opponents went so far as to send the fourth part of his *Sharḥ al-ziyāra al-jāmiʿa al-kabīra*, containing passages offensive to Sunni sensibilities, to the governor of Baghdad, who had recently put to death the uncle of Shaykh Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar al-Najafī for less serious remarks.[231] That such a foolhardy act could even have been contemplated is a telling measure of the lengths to which the Shaykh's opponents were prepared to go in order to discredit him. Chahārdihī maintains that the ulama of Karbala and Najaf became "more audacious" after the *takfīr* of al-Aḥsāʾī and started to excommunicate anyone who began to gain leadership and of whom they were afraid.[232]

The condemnation of al-Aḥsāʾī and the forcible creation of Shaykhism as a separate *madhhab* from the main body of Shiʿism seems to have been necessary in the absence of a target to take the place of the Akhbari school. By attacking the Shaykhis, it was possible for the Usulis to define further their own position, and very soon the Shaykhi/Bālāsarī division came to replace that between Usuli and Akhbari,[233] to

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[225] Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 112–7; Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 375–6; Hābībābādī, *Makārim al-āthār*, vol. 4, pp. 1269–72; Anṣārī, *Zindigānī*, pp. 148–50. Sharīf al-ʿUlamāʾ was one the teachers of Shaykh Murtaḍā al-Anṣārī.

[226] See Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 4–19; al-Kulaynī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 12–13; Hābībābādī, *Makārim*, vol. 2, pp. 518–26; al-Ṭihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, pp –0–11; Anṣārī, *Zindigānī*, p. 49 n.

[227] Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 37–80; al-Ṭihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, pp. 390–1. He was himself a bitter opponent of Sharīf al-ʿUlamāʾ (see Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 160).

[228] Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p 44. As mentioned previously, Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥasan had an *ijāza* from al-Aḥsāʾī. Hamadānī disputes the claim that he prounced *takfīr* against him (Hamadānī, *Kitāb al-Ijtināb*, p. 106).

[229] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 80.

[230] Al-Ahsaʾi to Mullā ʿAbd al-Wahhāb-i-Qazvīnī, quoted in Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 157.

[231] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, pp. 45–8; cf. al-Kulaynī, *Rawḍāt*, p. 26. The governor of Baghdad at this period was Dāʾūd Pāshā.

[232] Chahārdihī, *Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī,* p. 44.

[233] See ibid., p. 38. On the term Bālāsarī, see D. MacEoin, "Bālāsarī", *Encyclopaedia Iranica* 3:6 (1988), pp. 583–85; Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 84–5; A.-L.-M. Nicolas,

be replaced in its turn by the Shiʿi/Babi and Shiʿi/ Bahaʾi divisions of later years—each stage representing a sharper and fuller division than the one before.

At the same time, it must be remembered that, as Corbin has pointed out, the pronouncement of *takfīr* did not represent a declaration of excommunication from the body of an established church, but was, rather, the personal initiative of Baraghānī in the first instance.[234] It is as important to note the names of those leading ulama who did not pronounce *takfīr* as it is to mention those who did. Men such as Mullā Muḥammad Bāqir Shaftī, Mullā ʿAlī ibn Jamshīd Nūrī, Ḥājī Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Kalbāsī, Āqā Sayyid Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabāʾī and others were hesitant to condemn the Shaykh, and either continued to admire him openly or adopted a neutral stance in the matter.[235]

It was some time, however, before the *takfīr* became widely known, and al-Aḥsāʾī left Qazvīn with considerable honour, accompanied by an entourage of some seventy people.[236] Travelling by way of Tehran, he visited Shāhrūd, Ṭūs, and Mashhad, where he stayed for twenty-eight days before leaving for Yazd via Turbat-i Haydariyyeh and Ṭabas.[237] Throughout this journey, al-Aḥsāʾī was treated with great respect by local governors, and was even given an escort of one hundred horsemen and two hundred infantry to accompany him from Ṭabas to Yazd.[238] After three months there, he set off for Isfahan, where he was welcomed by the ulama and nobles of the city and made the guest of ʿAbd Allāh Khān, Amīn al-Dawla, as mentioned earlier. Although he planned to leave after only a short stay, he was prevailed upon to extend his visit over the coming month of Ramadan, since his performing the fast there would bring *baraka* to the city and its inhabitants. He agreed to stay and sent his "unnecessary baggage and his wives" to Kirmanshah with Shaykh ʿAbd Allāh, who then returned to Isfahan. Large crowds came to visit him there, and, on one occasion, the number of people

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*Essai sur le Chéikhisme*, vol. 1, *Cheïkh Ahmed Lahçahi* (Paris : P. Geuthner, 1910), preface, pp. 5–6. Rashtī notes that one cannot really compare the Shaykhi-Bālāsarī with the Akhbari-Usuli division because the latter did not result in the declaration of *takfir*. (Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 8).

[234] Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, vol. 4, p. 225.

[235] Rashtī gives a list of the ulama at the *ʿatabāt* and in Isfahan who opposed Sayyid Mahdī in his *takfir*. Rashtī, *Dalīl*, pp. 79–80.

[236] Mullā Jaʿfar Qazvīnī, *Tārīkh*, p. 450.

[237] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, p. 49.

[238] Ibid., p. 50.

performing *ṣalāt* behind him reached sixteen thousand.[239] It is likely that on this occasion, as on that of his previous visit to Isfahan, al-Aḥsāʾī led the prayers in the Masjid-i Shāh.[240]

Shaykh Aḥmad had numerous admirers in Isfahan, among whom were several of the leading ulama of the day. Most notable among them were Ḥājī Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Kalbāsī and Ḥājī Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir Shaftī, to both of whom we have referred in the previous chapter. When al-Aḥsāʾī was in Isfahan, Kalbāsī suspended his classes, cancelled his Friday prayers, and prayed behind the Shaykh.[241] Although Shaftī was later perturbed by the *takfīr*, he hesitated to condemn al-Aḥsāʾī himself, and it has been claimed that, towards the end of his life, he was convinced of the falsity of the charges levelled against his teachings.[242]

Other admirers in Isfahan included Mullā ʿAlī ibn Jamshīd Nūrī (d. 1246/1830),[243] who also suspended his classes when al-Aḥsāʾī was in the city, and Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī Isfahānī (d. 1248/1832),[244] a pupil of Baḥr al-ʿUlūm and a son-in-law and pupil of Shaykh Jaʿfar ibn Khiḍr al-Najafī.[245] Even if none of these men were "Shaykhis" in what became the strict sense, and may in some cases have held doubts about the Shaykh's beliefs after the *takfīr*, none of them lent his support to the attack launched against him. Kalbāsī, who had an *ijāza* from al-Aḥsāʾī, was so unimpressed by the *takfīr* that, on the Shaykh's death, he held a three-day memorial meeting attended by large numbers, including men of rank in the city.[246] That men such as Kalbāsī and Shaftī refused to condemn the Shaykh was a major factor in restricting the effectiveness of the *takfīr*.

On 12 Shawwāl 1238/22 June 1823, al-Aḥsāʾī left Isfahan for Kirmanshah, where he stayed for another year; he then went to Karbala having left his wives (and, presumably, the rest of his unnecessary baggage) in

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[239] Ibid.
[240] Ibid., p. 51.
[241] See Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 170.
[242] Ibid., p. 149. Tanakābunī says that al-Ahsaʾi was a guest of Kalbāsī and prayed in his mosque, the Masjid-i Ḥakīm, while in Isfahan. (*Qiṣaṣ*, p. 35).
[243] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 19–24.
[244] See al-Kulaynī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 402–3; Hābībābādī, *Makārim,* vol. 4, p. 1264–7; Chahārdihī, *Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī*, p. 54 (where it is suggested that Nuri later regretted having taught the views of al-Aḥsāʾī; cf. Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 35).
[245] See Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 117; Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, p. 380; al-Ṭihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, pp. 215–7; Anṣārī, *Zindigānī*, pp. 18–9 n.
[246] Al-Kulaynī. *Rawḍāt*, p. 26.

Kirmanshah.[247] It was after he had been in Karbala for a short time that serious opposition began, led by Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī Ṭabāṭabāʾī.[248] According to Rashtī, someone compiled a book containing heretical ideas of *mulḥids*, *zindīqs*, Ṣūfīs, Trinitarians, and so on, attributing them to Shaykh Aḥmad, and reading them to a large gathering assembled for the purpose.[249] We have mentioned above the deliberate attempt to incite the governor of Baghdad, Dāʾūd Pāshā, against the Shaykh. The latter seems to have recognized the serious danger he was in and decided to travel to Mecca, leaving Sayyid Rashtī behind in Karbala as his leading pupil and, in some sense, his successor.[250] Accompanied by several companions, he went first to Baghdad, from where he set out for Syria.[251] On the way he grew ill and, two or three stages from Medina, at Hadiyya, died on 21 Dhū ʾl-Qaʿda 1241/27 June 1826, aged seventy-five.[252] His grave is in Medina.[253]

[247] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, p. 51. Al-Ahsaʾi remained active during this period in Karbala. Two of his works are dated 1239/1823 (see Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, items 7 and 43).
[248] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, pp. 37–8.
[249] Ibid., p. 39.
[250] Ibid., p. 48.
[251] Al-Aḥsāʾī, Chapter Three *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, p. 53.
[252] Ibid., p. 54; Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 48.
[253] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ-i ḥālāt*, p. 54.

CHAPTER THREE

# SAYYID KĀẒIM RASHTĪ

We do not, unfortunately, possess any very detailed accounts of the life of Sayyid Kāẓim similar to Shaykh ʿAbd Allāh al-Aḥsaʾi's life of his father. Two manuscript biographies written by pupils of the Sayyid—the *Nūr al-anwār*, written for Prince Āṣif Mīrzā by Mīrzā ʿAlī Naqī Qummī Hindī, and the *Tanbīh al-ghāfilīn*, by Āqā Sayyid Hādī Hindī[1]—are known to be in existence.[2] Unfortunately, despite efforts to trace these for the present author during a visit to Kirman in 1977, the Shaykhi community there has been unable to discover their current location. There is, however, a summary of their contents by Ḥājj Sayyid Javād Qarashī Hindī, a descendant of Mīrzā ʿAlī Naqī and a nephew of Āqā Sayyid Hādī; this has been printed by Abu'l-Qāsim ibn Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn ibn Karīm in his *Fihrist*.[3] Brief accounts of Rashtī may also be found in Tanakābūnī's *Qiṣaṣ al-ʿulamāʾ*, Khwānsārī's *Kitāb rawḍāt al-jannāt*, Ḥabībābādī's *Makārim al-āthār*, Kirmānī's *Hidāyat al-ṭālibīn*, and elsewhere.

The date of Sayyid Kāẓim's birth is open to dispute. According to different sources, he was born in Rasht in 1198/1784,[4] 1205/1791,[5] 1209/1794,[6]

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[1] The "Tanbīh al-ghāfilīn" is based on statements from the author's father, Āqā Sayyid Muḥammad Taqī. (Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 114).

[2] Ibid., pp. 113, 114.

[3] Ibid., pp. 114–23.

[4] Thus Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 45, who states that he died in 1259/1843 "at the ripe age of sixty." This, however, contradicts an earlier statement by the same author (p. 10) to the effect that Rashtī was aged twenty-two in 1231/1815.

[5] Thus Ḥabībābādī, *Makārim*, vol. 1, p. 209, based on a statement in a manuscript copy of the *Tārikh-i Sartip* of Mīrzā ʿAbd al-Razzāq Khān Muhandis Sartīp Baghāyarī. Also Avāra, *Kawākib*, p. 27.

[6] Thus Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, page 10, who states that Rashtī was twenty-two years old in 1231/1815. In contradiction to his statement cited in note 4 above. Nicolas cites a Shaykhi *ʿālim* called Thiqat al-Islām (presumably Mīrzā ʿAlī Thiqat al-Islām Tabrizī, the grandson of Mīrzā Shafiʿ Thiqat al-Islām, who was hanged in Tabriz by the Russians in 1330/1912), who states that Rashtī died at the age of fifty, which would give a birth-date of 1209/1794 (A.-L.-M. Nicolas, *Essai sur le Chéi'khisme*, vol. 2, *Séyyèd Kazem Rechti* (Paris: P. Geuther, 1914), p. 5). Browne cites a statement to the effect that he died in 1259 "ere he had attained his fiftieth year." (Edward Granville Browne, "The Sheykhīs and Their Doctrine Concerning the 'Fourth Support'," in *A Traveller's Narrative*, vol. 2, p. 238).

1212/1797,[7] or 1214/1799,[8] the son of Āqā Sayyid Qāsim ibn Aḥmad. Sayyid Aḥmad was a Ḥusaynī *sayyid*, belonging to an important family in Medina, who had left his native city on the death of his father, Sayyid Ḥabīb, on account of plague, and travelled to Rasht in north-west Iran. Āqā Sayyid Qāsim was born in Rasht and, according to Qarashī, became "one of the great scholars (*fuḍalāʾ*)" of the city.[9] Whatever his literary or other intellectual attainments, however, Sayyid Qāsim was not primarily an *ʿālim*, but a silk merchant by trade,[10] and there seems to be no evidence that the family had any close connections with the ulama in Rasht or elsewhere. As with al-Aḥsāʾī, we may assume that Rashtī's impulse to study the religious sciences may have derived from personal initiative rather than upbringing or parental encouragement, in contrast to the majority of leading ulama in his period and since. Like al-Aḥsāʾī too, the Sayyid seems to have been drawn to a life of retirement and reflection from early childhood, refusing to join in games with other children.[11]

According to a short biography in the E. G. Browne Collection, at the age of twelve Rashtī was living at Ardabīl.[12] While there, states Mullā Jaʿfar Qazvīnī, he engaged in ascetic practices and, like al-Aḥsāʾī, began to have visions, although with none of the intensity or frequency experienced by the latter.[13] Browne's biography states that, while at Ardabīl, he had a dream of one of the ancestors of Shaykh Ṣafi al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Fatḥ Isḥāq (1252–1334), progenitor of the Safavid dynasty, who instructed him to travel to Yazd in order to become a disciple of al-Aḥsāʾī.[14] It seems improbable that the Sayyid should have gone to Yazd at such an early age, and some other sources, in fact, suggest that he first met al-Aḥsāʾī there in his late teens or early twenties. It is more likely that he returned to Rasht at this point—as is stated by Qazvīnī, who says he did so after a dream of al-Aḥsāʾī.[15]

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[7] Thus Ḥājj Sayyid Javād Qarashī, quoted in Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 115.

[8] Thus Nicolas, who states that Rashtī may have been aged fifty-five on his death, on the authority of a Shaykhi *ʿālim* called Shaykh ʿAlī Jawān (Nicolas, *Séyyèd Kazem Rechti*, p. 5).

[9] Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 115.

[10] Avāra, *Kawākib*, p. 26.

[11] Qazvīnī, *Tārīkh,* p. 455.

[12] Browne in "The Sheykhīs", p. 238.

[13] Qazvīnī, *Tārīkh,* p. 455; cf. Kirmānī, *Fihrist,* p. 115.

[14] Browne in "The Sheykhīs", p. 238.

[15] Qazvīnī, *Tārīkh*, p. 456.

Like the Shaykh, he had an early desire to study, and was sent by his father to a local teacher who ran a small *maktab* in the town.[16] When he had completed these "external" studies, he decided to continue to the "higher studies", and expressed a desire to travel for this purpose, probably to the *ʿatabāt* or one of the centres of learning in Iran. His family were opposed to this, however, and prevented him from leaving.[17] This resembles the disapproval felt by the family of the Bāb when he left for the *ʿatabāt*. In both cases, it seems that the transition from merchant to *ʿālim* was considered socially (and probably financially) unacceptable.

According to the standard Shaykhi account, Rashtī dreamt one night of Fāṭima, who revealed to him the existence of Shaykh Aḥmad; on the fourth night after this dream, he had another, in which she told him that the Shaykh was then living in Yazd. He set out, accordingly, in that direction, met al-Aḥsāʾī, and became one of his pupils.[18]

Our sources, already in disagreement over the date of Rashtī's birth, are equally contradictory in respect of his age on meeting al-Aḥsāʾī, although they do seem to be agreed that the meeting took place in Yazd—probably between the Shaykh's return from Tehran in 1224/1809 and his departure for Kirmanshah in 1229/1814. Browne, as noted above, suggests that he travelled to Yazd, shortly after the age of twelve—a date which I have rejected as improbable. Corbin thinks he was aged fifteen, thus arriving in Yazd in 1227/1812.[19] According to Qazvīnī, the Sayyid travelled to Yazd via Qazvīn in the company of an old man of his family some time after the arrival of al-Aḥsāʾī in Iran; the same source quotes an unnamed mulla from Yazd, who recalls how al-Aḥsāʾī went out to meet the Sayyid on his arrival and that the latter was then seventeen or eighteen years old.[20] Zarandī, however, maintains that Rashtī, was aged twenty-two on his arrival in Yazd, although he incorrectly states that this was in 1231/1815, at the time al-Aḥsāʾī was preparing to leave Yazd for Kirmanshah.[21]

Such a confusing welter of dates and ages makes it extremely difficult for us to estimate the nature and extent of Rashtī's development

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[16] Ibid.; Kirmānī, *Fihrist* p. 115.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid., pp. 115–6.
[19] Corbin, "L'École Shaykhie", p. 26.
[20] Qazvīnī, *Tārīkh,* p. 456.
[21] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 10.

prior to meeting al-Aḥsāʾī. There seems little doubt that he showed very considerable precocious talent and began writing at an early age. Zarandī notes that "at the age of eleven, he had committed to memory the whole of the Qurʾān. At the age of fourteen, he had learned by heart a prodigious number of prayers and recognized traditions of Muḥammad."[22] Mullā Jaʿfar Qazvīnī states that on his return to Rasht from Ardabīl, his name reached the ears of Muḥammad Riḍā Mīrzā Iftikhār al-Mulk (1797–1860), who came to visit him, and that, at the age of fifteen, he wrote *rasāʾil* in reply to questions from this prince.[23] How much truth there is in this account, it is hard to determine. Muḥammad Riḍā Mīrzā, the thirteenth son of Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh, was, in fact, about the same age as Rashtī or, if we accept an earlier date of birth for the latter, much younger than him, being born in 1211/1797. He did not became governor of Gīlān until 1234/1819, and it is possible that he lived in Tehran up until then. On the other hand, a *risāla* on *akl wa maʾkūl* addressed to this prince is recorded as having been written at an unspecified date by Rashtī.[24] It is also clear that the prince was deeply interested in religious matters, as witnessed in his devotion to the Niʿmatullāhī Sufi order, in which his personal *murshid* was Ḥājī Muḥammad Jaʿfar Kabūdār Āhangī in Hamadān.[25]

At least three works are known to have been written by Rashtī at a relatively early age, these being the *Risāla maṭāliʿ al-anwār*, written at the age of nineteen in reply to Mullā Muḥammad Rashīd in explanation of some phrases in the *Kalimāt-i maknūna* of Fayḍ al-Kāshānī;[26] the *Masāʾil-i Rashīdiyya,* also written at the age of nineteen, in reply to the same individual, on the differences of capacities (*qābiliyyāt*);[27] and a *tafsīr* of part of the "throne verse" (*āyat al-kursī*: Qurʾān 2:255), written during a *ḥajj* journey undertaken at the age of twenty.[28]

Although the controversy surrounding the date of his birth makes it impossible to determine his exact age at the time of writing, there

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[22] Ibid.

[23] Qazvīnī, *Tārīkh*, p. 456.

[24] Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 314.

[25] On Muḥammad Riḍāʾ Mīrzā, see Navāʾī, notes to ʿAḍud al-Dawla, *Tārīkh-i ʿAḍudī*, pp. 188–9; Bāmdād, *Rijāl*, vol. 3, p. 401. Shams-i Jahān Begum, who was converted to Babism in Hamadān in 1847 by Qurrat al-ʿAyn, was a daughter of Muḥammad Riḍāʾ.

[26] Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 305; this work no longer seems to be extant.

[27] Ibid., pp. 304–5; this also no longer seems to be extant.

[28] Ibid., p. 331; this *tafsīr* has been printed (n.p., n.d.). According to Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 10, it was written when Rashtī was eighteen.

are several dated *rasāʾil* by Rashtī which can be ascribed with reasonable certainty to his twenties or early thirties. Among the more important of these, we may note *al-Risāla al-ṣuʿudiyya wa ʾl-nuzūliyya* (1233/1818);[29] *al-Risāla al-ʿĀmiliyya* (1236/1821);[30] the *Sharḥ Duʿā al-samāt* (1238/1823);[31] an Arabic *risāla* on *sulūk* and *uṣūl* (1238/1823);[32] and the *Risāla asrār al-shahāda* (1238/1823).[33]

In general, we may note that, up to the death of al-Aḥsāʾī in 1241/1826, Rashtī was actively engaged in writing commentaries and replies to questions from a wide variety of individuals.[34] Zarandī states that, within "a few weeks" of his arrival in Yazd, the Sayyid was told to remain in his own house and cease attending his lectures. Those of the Shaykh's disciples who had difficulties in understanding were from then on to be referred to him.[35] While it is highly unlikely that Rashtī should so rapidly have been designated al-Aḥsāʾī's leading disciple, especially if he was only in his teens on his arrival, there is no doubt that after some time, he succeeded in winning the confidence and respect of the Shaykh and was regarded, well before the latter's death, as his deputy and the semi-official expounder of his views. According to Kirmānī, al-Aḥsāʾī's attitude of respect towards Rashtī had already become apparent in Yazd: "Sayyid Kāẓim understands, but no-one else does," he is reported to have said there.[36]

Rashtī's precise position during the lifetime of the Shaykh is not entirely clear, but he does seem to have been entrusted with the task of answering questions on the latter's behalf, a function which does not appear to have been given to any other of his disciples. An excellent example of his role as the Shaykh's deputy is a lengthy *risāla* written in 1235/1820 in reply to twenty-four questions originally asked of al-Aḥsāʾī,

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[29] Ibid., p. 317; printed (n.p., n.d.).
[30] Ibid., pp. 338–40; printed (n.p., n.d.).
[31] Ibid., p. 292; printed (n.p., n.d.).
[32] Ibid., p. 317; the original *risāla* is no longer extant, but a Persian translation was made by Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī Khusrawshāhī in 1242/1827, and printed.
[33] Ibid., p. 332; printed (n.p., n.d.).
[34] Among these, we note items 138, 141, 150, 155, 157, 159, 164, 171, 188, 199, 202, 207, 213, 214, 230, 292, 297, and 302 in Kirmānī, *Fihrist*.
[35] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 10.
[36] Ismāʿīl Bāshā Bābānī, *Hidāyat al-ʿārifīn, asmāʾ al-muʾallifīn wa-āthār al-muṣannifīn* (Istanbul: Wakalat al-Maʿārif, 1951–1955), p. 71. A version in Kirmānī, *Fihrist,* p. 116, reads "my son Kāẓim…"

but referred by him to Rashtī.[37] He also acted as continuator for al-Aḥsāʾī in the case of a *risāla* to a certain Mīrzā Muḥammad ʿAlī.[38]

In this period also, Rashtī began to carry out a task which was to preoccupy him greatly in later years—defence of al-Aḥsāʾī from attacks made on him by hostile ulama. Thus, for example, in 1240/1825, he wrote a detailed reply to an unnamed individual who had attacked the views of the Shaykh on resurrection (*maʿād*) and the divine knowledge.[39] It may also have been before the death of Shaykh Aḥmad, or shortly after it, that Rashtī undertook the translation of some of his works into Persian, namely the *Mukhtaṣar al-Haydariyya*,[40] the *Ḥayāt al-nafs*,[41] and part of the first section of the *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*.[42]

Contrary to the impression given in most of our sources, however, Sayyid Kāẓim does not seem to have remained constantly in al-Aḥsāʾī's company from the time of their meeting in Yazd to the latter's final departure for Arabia. At the age of twenty, possibly some years after his arrival in Yazd, Rashtī made the pilgrimage to Mecca—the only occasion on which he was able to do so, according to Niʿmat Allāh Raẓavī Sharīf.[43] In 1229/1814, he accompanied Shaykh Aḥmad to Kirmanshah,[44] but there is evidence that he did not stay constantly with him there: two letters, one from Rashtī and the other a reply from al-Aḥsāʾī, both apparently written during the latter's stay in Kirmanshah, and possibly during the lifetime of Prince Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā, indicate that the Sayyid spent at least a year, perhaps much longer, in Karbala, with at least one visit to his home town of Rasht.[45]

His absence would appear to have been on the instructions of the Shaykh, seemingly for the purpose of acting as his representative at the *ʿatabāt*: in his reply to Rashtī, who had complained of his separation from his teacher and suggested that he had been rejected by him, Shaykh Aḥmad writes "know that I have placed you in a position of

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[37] Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, pp. 350–2.
[38] See al-Aḥsāʾī, *Jawāmiʿ*, vol. 1, pt. 2, pp. 239–48.
[39] Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 316.
[40] Ibid., p. 323.
[41] Ibid., p. 310; printed (1st ed. Tabriz?, 1276 [1859]; 2nd ed. Kirman, 1353 Sh [1974]. Referring to al-Aḥsāʾī in his introduction to this translation, Rashtī uses the words *atāla ʾllāh baqāhu* which implies that the Shaykh was alive at the time of writing (2nd ed., p. 12).
[42] Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 289.
[43] Niʿmat Allāh Raḍavī, *Tadhkirat al-wafāʾ*, pp. 73–4.
[44] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 20.
[45] Letters quoted in Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, pp. 116–22 n.

rank on my behalf, which is not known to most people, but which I had thought was known to you; I would otherwise have given you what I give everyone else…. I have removed from you the decree of dissimulation (*al-taqiyya*) and have bestowed on you a position on my behalf."[46]

As we have mentioned previously, al-Aḥsāʾī left Kirmanshah in 1238/1822, travelling to Tehran, Mashhad, Yazd, and Isfahan, returning to Kirmanshah for a year towards the end of 1238/1822, and finally leaving for Karbala in 1239/1824. Rashtī does not seem to have accompanied him on any of these journeys. In Ṣafar 1238/October-November 1822, he was staying in the vicinity of Rasht, as is apparent from a letter written in that month from the village of Shīrvān.[47] This journey to Iran may have been an extended one: his commentary on ʿAlī ibn Mūsā Andalūsī's (1214–1285) *Al-qasīda al-bāʾiyya* from the *Shudhūr al-dhahab* was written in the village of Mārān near Hamadān in Shawwāl 1239/June 1824.[48]

It is also clear that, sometime before the death of Shaykh Aḥmad, Rashtī studied under and received *ijāzāt* from a number of ulama, all of whom, like the Shaykh, were themselves pupils of Shaykh Jaʿfar al-Najafī. This is a fact of some importance in assessing the nature of Rashtī's relationship with orthodox Shiʿism. Despite the unusual character of his bond with al-Aḥsāʾī, which was, in some ways, closer to that of a Ṣūfī disciple to his *murshid* than a Shiʿi *ʿālim* to the *mujtahid* granting him *ijāza*, it is clear that Rashtī did not feel himself excluded from the more traditional mode of transmission of authority and learning. In an *ijāza* written for Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥasan Mūsawī Iṣfahānī (d. 1263/1847),[49] and in another written for Āqā Muḥammad Sharīf Kirmānī,[50] Rashtī refers to four individuals from whom he possessed *ijāzāt*. Apart from al-Aḥsāʾī, these were ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muḥammad Riḍā Shubbar (1188–1242/1774–1826), Shaykh Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar al-Najafī (d. 1241/1826), and Mullā ʿAlī Rashtī.

Sayyid ʿAbd Allāh Shubbar and his father, Sayyid Muḥammad Riḍā Shubbar, are mentioned by Rashtī as among the ulama with whom

[46] Ibid., p. 121 n.
[47] Ibid., item 219.
[48] Ibid., p. 294.
[49] Al-Ṭihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, pp. 315–6; *ijāza* cited in Ḥabībābādī, *Makārim*, vol. 1, p. 217; according to al-Ṭihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, p. 315, this *ijāza* has been included by Sayyid Muḥammad ʿAlī Rawḍatī Iṣfahānī in his *Rīyāḍ al-abrār*.
[50] *Ijāza* cited in Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 126.

al-Aḥsāʾī associated while in Kāẓimiyya.[51] Sayyid ʿAbd Allāh had himself studied under several important ulama, including Mīrzā Muḥammad Mahdī Shahristānī, Shaykh Jaʿfar al-Najafī, Āqā Sayyid ʿAlī Ṭabāṭabāʾī, Mīrzā-yi Qummī, Shaykh Asad Allāh al-Kāẓimaynī, and Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī.[52] The author of a number of works, he is perhaps best known for his massive compilation on *fiqh*, the *Jāmiʿ al-maʿārif wa ʾl-aḥkām*, which Muḥammad ʿAlī Muʿallim Ḥabībābādī regards as comparable to Fayḍ-i Kāshānī's *Kitāb al-Wāfī*, al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī's *Tafṣīl waṣāʾil al Shīʿa*, or Majlisī's *Biḥār al-anwār*.[53] It is of interest to note that Sayyid ʿAbd Allāh was also one of the teachers of Mullā Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Baraghānī, the brother of Mullā Muḥammad Taqī.[54] According to Anṣārī, he was known in his day as 'the second Majlisī.[55]

Shaykh Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar was one of the sons of Shaykh Jaʿfar, under whom he studied extensively. His father regarded him highly and is said to have considered him as more capable of *fiqh* than any but al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ḥillī and Muḥammad ibn Makkī al-Shahīd al-Awwal,[56] or, according to another source, as one of "the most learned of men in *fiqh*" along with himself and al-Shahīd al-Awwal.[57] It is related that, on the death of Shaykh Jaʿfar, Mīrzā-yi Qummī declared Shaykh Mūsā to be "the general *marjaʿ* and the proof of God unto you…for he is superior to all others in knowledge".[58] Shaykh Mūsā was one of several eminent ulama who defended al-Aḥsāʾī against the attacks of his opponents at the *ʿatabāt*.[59]

The identity of Mullā ʿAlī Rashtī is not clear; he may have been the Mullā ʿAlī ibn Mīrzā Jān Rashtī for whom Shaykh Aḥmad wrote his lengthy *al-Risāla al*-Rashtī*yya* in 1226/1811.[60] If this is so, it is conceivable that Sayyid Kāẓim studied under him while still living in Rasht and

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[51] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 23.
[52] al-Kulaynī, *Rawḍāt*, p. 367.
[53] Ḥabībābādī, *Makārim*, vol. 4, p. 1186.
[54] Ṭanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 91.
[55] Anṣārī, *Zindigānī*, p. 389 n. On Sayyid ʿAbd Allāh, see al-Kulaynī, *Rawḍāt*, pp. 366–7; Ḥabībābādī, *Makārim*, vol. 4, pp. 1164–8.
[56] al-Kulaynī, *Rawḍāt*, p. 152.
[57] Anṣārī, *Zindigānī*, p. 150.
[58] Ibid., p. 151. Anṣārī's statement that the pupils of Sharīf al-ʿUlamāʾ Māzandarānī left Karbala on his death in 1245/1830, in order to study in Najaf under Shaykh Mūsā is obviously impossible. On Shaykh Mūsā, see ibid., pp. 150–3; Ḥabībābādī, *Makārim*, vol. 4, pp. 1131 ff.
[59] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 76.
[60] Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, pp. 260–2.

that it was on his recommendation that he set out for Yazd to study under al-Aḥsāʾī. In the absence of dated texts of the *ijāza* in question, however, our theories as to the periods when Sayyid Kāẓim studied under them must remain conjectural, although the dates of the deaths of Sayyid ʿAbd Allāh and Shaykh Mūsā do at least provide us with *termini ad quem* for his study under them.

The death of al-Aḥsāʾī in 1241/1826 was an event fraught with serious consequences for Iranian Shiʿism. Despite the *takfir* which, for some four years, had been gaining notoriety throughout the main centres of the Shiʿi world, the Shaykh's position was still essentially that of a respected and influential *mujtahid* and *marjaʿ al-taqlīd* on whom a sizeable body of students (*ṭullāb*, cf. Pers. pl. *ṭālebān*) and ulama pinned their allegiance. It is of the utmost importance that we bear in mind that by no means all of al-Aḥsāʾī pupils became "Shaykhis" in a distinct sense. Many like Mullā ʿAlī Nūrī and Ḥājī Ibrāhīm Kalbāsī, went on in later years as perfectly respectable ulama with no overt connections with the "Shaykhi school".

At the time of al-Aḥsāʾī's death, there was, indeed, no hint of an attempt to set up a separate school within Shiʿism, to create a division based either on doctrinal differences or on conflicting claims to authority. Nevertheless, it is clear that the effective resolution of the Akhbari/Usuli struggle had left something of a vacuum which demanded filling. The status and influence of the increasingly powerful *mujtahid* class as representatives of orthodoxy, could best be tested and demonstrated in a conflict with heterodoxy—as defined by the establishment itself. The Niʿmatullāhī Sufi revival of the late eighteenth century provided a useful focus for such a conflict, but the issues involved were somewhat stale and, despite a number of deaths, matters never really reached very serious dimensions. The division over the affairs of Ahsaʾi's orthodoxy was, however, potentially much more crucial. Although the conflict with Sufism was essentially centred in irreconcilable claims to authority, on behalf of the Ṣūfī shaykh or *pīr* on the one hand and the Shiʿi Imam or his representative on the other, the issue did not on the whole, affect or call into question relations within the Shiʿi hierarchy itself.

Al-Ahsaʾi's death threatened to render the issue entirely academic. Whatever the ensuing debate as to his personal orthodoxy, the more fundamental—if generally unspoken—issue of authority would now have ceased to be relevant. That it did not was entirely due to the unusual manner in which Rashtī was "appointed" the Shaykh's "successor", entailing as it did the creation of an order (*silsila*) or school

(*madhhab*) within the Shiʿi fold. Without such an appointment or its ready acceptance by the vast majority of al-Aḥsāʾī's pupils, it is highly unlikely that "Shaykhism" as a definable entity would have come into being at all or that a matrix would have existed in which Babism might be formed.

When al-Aḥsāʾī left Karbala for Mecca in 1241/1826, Rashtī stayed behind, teaching in his place.[61] His assumption of the role of leader of the Shaykh's disciples at the *ʿatabāt*, does not, however, seem to have been based on a merely tacit recognition of his de facto position there on the latter's death. According to Kirmānī, al-Aḥsāʾī had already appointed him as the future leader of this group, both verbally and in writing.

"Some asked the Shaykh 'If we have no means of access to you, from whom are we to obtain this knowledge?' He replied 'From Sayyid Kāẓim, for he has learnt what he knows orally from me and I have learnt [what I know] orally from the Imāms and they have learnt from God without the mediation of anyone.' And it is known that the Shaykh wrote [this] in his own hand."[62]

This appointment was unusual in a number of ways. Although a leading pupil or eldest son might often inherit the sanctity and position of his teacher or father, it was uncommon for a *marjaʿ al-taqlīd* to designate anyone as *marjaʿ* in his place, particularly at this period. At a later date, something of this kind did occur, significantly in connection with the attempt to restrict *marjaʿīyyat* to a single individual; thus, Shaykh Murtaḍā al-Anṣārī took over the role of *marjaʿ* from Muḥammad Ḥasan al-Najafī during the latter's final illness, in the presence of witnesses,[63] while al-Anṣārī's own successor, Mīrzā-yi Shīrāzī, was clearly singled out for that role in his teacher's life-time.[64] The experiment did not succeed, however, as we have observed in the first chapter, possibly because of a reluctance on the part of each *marjaʿ* to endorse his verbal approval with a written appointment (*naṣṣ*). The unformalized method of acquiring authority by means of growing recognition and popularity seems to fit in more easily with the unstructured system of the Shiʿi

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[61] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 48; Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 116.

[62] Kirmānī, *Hidāyat al-ṭālibīn*, p. 71. For a later Shaykhi attempt to interpret this passage in a manner acceptable to orthodox thought, see Kirmānī, *Risāla dar jawāb-i Āqā-yi Niẓām al-Islām Iṣfahānī*, pp. 49–72.

[63] Al-Ṭihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, p. 313.

[64] Ibid., vol. 1, p. 438.

hierarchy. Since the 1979 Revolution, more overtly political factors have come to dominate.

Not only was Rashtī's appointment unusual, first in occurring well before any comparable development in the main body of Shiʿism (unless we include Mīrzā-yi Qummī's declaration in favour of Shaykh Mūsā al-Najafī) and, secondly, in being written; it was also highly unorthodox in its content. Sayyid Kāẓim was not merely a *mujtahid* receiving authority from another to expound and develop the religious law, but was being identified as the direct recipient of a body of knowledge derived, through al-Aḥsāʾī, from the Imāms and, through them, from God. He was, as Karīm Khān describes him, "a bearer (*ḥāmil*)…for that innate knowledge (*ʿilm-i ladunnī*)."[65] The only useful comparisons are those of the appointment of each Imām by his predecessor, beginning with ʿAli's designation as *waṣī* by Muḥammad; the nomination by the shaykh of a Ṣūfī order of his successor; or the later development of a 'covenant' (*mīthāq/ʿahd*) system in Bahaʾism, whereby ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ was appointed as interpreter (*shāriḥ, mubayyin*) of the sacred writ by his father, and Shoghi Effendi Rabbani as *walī amr Allāh* by his grandfather ʿAbbās Afandī.

Karīm Khān explicitly makes the comparison between al-Aḥsāʾī's appointment of Rashtī and the *naṣṣ* of Muḥammad designating ʿAli or that of each Imām in respect of his successor.[66] Khwānsārī describes Sayyid Kāẓim as al-Aḥsāʾī's "representative" (*al-nāʾib fi 'l-umūr manābuhu*) and the "leader [imam] of his disciples",[67] clearly echoing the notion of a formal appointment of this nature. By virtue of this appointment, Rashtī became "the interpreter (*shāriḥ*) of the knowledge of the Shaykh, the clarifier of the difficulties of his books, and the expounder of his stations."[68] In this respect, the Sayyid was endowed with a function very similar to that of the imam as *qayyim bi 'l-Qurʾān* or, more significantly perhaps, the head of the Ishrāqī order as *qayyim bi 'l-kitāb'*.[69]

The self-effacing tone of his writings makes it difficult for us to determine exactly how Rashtī himself understood his position after the death of the Shaykh. It is also clear that, even as late as 1258/1842, he

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[65] Kirmānī, *Hidāyat al-ṭālibīn*, p. 133. The Bāb, in an early work, states that he is "the bearer of knowledge like Kāẓim" (prayer in INBA 6003.C, p. 188).
[66] Kirmānī, *Hidāyat al-ṭālibīn*, pp. 71–2.
[67] Kulaynī, *Rawḍāt*, p. 26.
[68] Kirmānī, *Hidāyat al-ṭālibīn*, p. 72.
[69] On the latter see Corbin, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*, p. 303.

persisted in denying the charge that he had established a new *madhhab* within Islam,[70] and that he constantly represented himself as simply the expounder and defender of the views and person of his *shaykh*. The meaning of the term "Shaykhiyya", used to refer to what he calls "this sect" (*īn firqa*), is simply "people who are adherents of (*mansūband bar*) this Shaykh".[71] Rashtī's beliefs regarding Shaykh Aḥmad rather than himself are, in fact, probably the best guide to his attitude towards his own role as his successor. Since this is a point to which we shall return in another chapter, I propose to indicate here only very briefly something of Rashtī's understanding of the position of al-Aḥsāʾī within the overall perspective of sacred history.

In an important passage in his *Sharḥ al-qaṣīda al-lāmiyya*[72] Rashtī refers to two ages of the dispensation of Muḥammad: an age of outward observances (*ẓawāhir*) and an age of inward realities (*bawāṭin*). The former age came to an end after twelve centuries and the second then commenced. In every century of the first age, there appeared a promulgator (*murawwij*) of the outward laws; at the commencement of the first century of the second age, the first *murawwij* of the inward truth appeared—Shaykh Aḥmad.[73] Similarly, in a letter written to al-Aḥsāʾī during the latter's stay in Kirmanshah, he describes him as "the one testifying to the *wilāya* of the first *walī* in the first period of the second age."[74] This conception of the role of al-Aḥsāʾī was, clearly, current among the followers of Rashtī, as is apparent from an anonymous *risāla* written sometime after 1261/1845. The author of this document speaks of the beginning of the revelation (of inner truth) in the person of Shaykh Aḥmad at the end of one thousand two hundred

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[70] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 64.

[71] Ibid., p. 11.

[72] Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 293; Chahārdihī, *Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī*, p. 139; ʿAlī Wardī, *Lamaḥāt ijtimāʿiyya min taʾrīkh al-ʿIrāq al-ḥadīth*, vol. 2 (Baghdad: Matabaʿat al-Irshad, 1971), pp. 107–8. This well known work is a commentary on the *qaṣīda* by the Mawsilī poet ʿAbd al-Bāqī ibn Sulaymān [ʿUmarī] Fārūqī (1204–1278/1789–1862), written on the occasion of the donation by Sultan Maḥmūd II (1785–1839) of a piece of the covering from the tomb of the Prophet for the Shrine of Imām Mūsā in al-Kāẓimiyya; the commentary was written on the instructions of ʿAlī Riḍāʾ Pasha. The *qaṣīda* is contained in al-ʿUmarī's *dīwān* on Shiʿi themes entitled *al-Bāqiyyāt al-ṣāliḥāt*; for a list of other commentaries on it, see Ḥabībābādī, *Makārim*, vol. 1, p. 173; on al-ʿUmarī, see ibid. pp. 172–4; Wardī, *Lamaḥāt*, pp. 106–8.

[73] Text quoted from Abū ʾl al-Faḍl Gulpāyagānī, *Kitāb al-farāʾid* (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Hindiyya, 1315 [1897]), pp. 575–7.

[74] Rashtī to al-Aḥsāʾī quoted in Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 116 n.

years, and refers to the Shaykh as the *murawwij* of the first century of the second age and, indeed, of the twelfth century of the first age of inward truth.[75]

We may, then, tentatively suggest that Rashtī regarded himself as empowered by al-Aḥsāʾī to develop and deepen men's understanding of the "inner realities" revealed by him. It may well be that he conceived of himself as, in some sense, the trustee or teacher of a select group of initiates to this higher gnosis promulgated for the first time by al-Aḥsāʾī, somewhat after the fashion of a Sufi shaykh entrusted with the maintenance of *baraka* and *ʿirfān* within the *ṭarīqa* of which he is the head. There seems to be no direct evidence that Rashtī thought of either Shaykh Aḥmad or himself as vice-regents or gates of the Imām, although it is clear that the attribution of just such a station to them by a section of the Sayyid's followers was a significant factor in the inception of Babism. At the most, Rashtī seems to have looked on Shaykh Aḥmad as privy to knowledge of esoteric truth imparted by the Imāms, and himself as, in turn, a direct recipient of the Shaykh's knowledge. He was, in a sense, the silent interpreter (*ṣāmit*) following the speaking *nāṭiq* of inner truth, in the Ismaili fashion.

Rashtī's position appears to have been recognized with little or no hesitation by the vast majority of al-Aḥsāʾī's followers, in contrast to the major schisms which occurred on his own death. There can, of course, be little doubt but that al-Aḥsāʾī's preferential treatment of the Sayyid and his authorization of him to expound his teachings to his other disciples excited a certain degree of resentment among his more ambitious followers, as Zarandī suggests.[76] There also appears to have been a number of other ulama belonging to al-Aḥsāʾī's circle who were regarded or regarded themselves as pre-eminent. Tanakābunī claims that his maternal uncle, Āqā Sayyid Abu 'l-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad Tanakābunī (d. circa 1265/1849) was the leading (*arshad*) pupil of al-Aḥsāʾī, and notes that the latter wrote a commentary on a *risāla* on

[75] "Risālah," in INBA 6003 C, pp. 399, 407.

[76] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 11. Zarandī specifically refers to Mullā Muḥammad Māmaqānī and Mullā ʿAbd al-Khāliq Yazdī, but since the former was later among those who issued the *fatwā* for the death of the Bāb in 1850, and the latter became a renegade from Babism about 1849, it is likely that religious animosity may have played some part in his choice of individuals (cf. his references to Muḥīṭ Kirmānī, Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī, and Mīrzā Ḥasan Gawhar, all opponents of the Bāb—pp. 20, 39–40, 48).

*ʿilm* written by him.[77] In fact, no such commentary by Shaykh Aḥmad is known to me, although there are two *rasā'il* written by him in 1223/1808 and 1224/1809 for a Sayyid Abu 'l-Ḥasan Jīlānī, who may well have been Tanakābunī's uncle.[78] Qazvīnī refers to a former Ishrāqī *ʿālim* named Mullā Aḥmad Mullābāshī, who was at one time regarded as next in rank to al-Aḥsā'ī but who, on reading Rashtī's *Sharḥ al-khutba al-tutunjiyya*, acknowledged the superiority of the latter.[79]

During the period of his leadership of the Shaykhi school, Rashtī appears to have remained for the most part in Karbala, with occasional visits to the other shrine towns of Iraq. Muḥammad Taqī al-Harawī, an important Shaykhi *ʿālim* who later became a Babi for a short period, writes in *al-Durar al-manthūra*—a commentary on the Sayyid's *al-Lawāmiʿ al-Ḥusayniyya*[80]—that he received explanations of the text from Rashtī himself in Karbala, Kazimiyya, Samarra, and Najaf.[81] It is possible that the Sayyid performed an annual *ziyāra* to Najaf on the occasion of the festival of *Ghadīr Khumm*, as he himself suggests in the *Dalīl al-mutaḥayyirīn,*[82] while he is recorded as having travelled to Kazimiyya each year in the month of Dhu 'l-Qaʿda.[83] According to Chahārdihī, however, he never once visited Iran during the entire period of his leadership.[84] In thus adopting a sedentary mode of existence, in sharp contrast to the peripatetic restlessness of al-Aḥsā'ī, Rashtī gave to the amorphous body of the Shaykh's admirers and disciples "a local habitation and a name". By thus providing the formless "school" of Shaykh Aḥmad with a centre and a focus, Sayyid Kāẓim—perhaps quite inadvertently—did much to hasten its crystallization into a body increasingly far removed from the mainstream of orthodox Shiʿism.

Despite his constant efforts to do so, Rashtī failed to reintegrate the Shaykhī school with mainline Shiʿism, and he and his writings remained the target of continued opposition on the part of the ulama up to the

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[77] Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 43. On Sayyid Abū 'l-Ḥasan, see al-Ṭihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, p. 33.

[78] Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 220 (items 1 and 2). Āghā Buzurg al-Ṭihrānī suggests (*Ṭabaqāt,* vol. 2, p. 31) that this Sayyid Abū 'l-Ḥasan Jī1ānī is a distinct individual from Tanakābunī's uncle, but his only knowledge of him seems to be as the recipient of one of these letters.

[79] Qazvīnī, *Tārīkh*, pp. 457–8. On the *Sharḥ* see Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 292.

[80] Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 302.

[81] Cited in al-Ṭihrānī, *al-Dharī'a*, vol. 8, p. 136.

[82] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 67.

[83] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 42.

[84] Chahārdihī, *Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī*, p. 139.

time of his death. However, as we shall see, this stood in direct contrast to the political influence he wielded in the *ʿatabāt* region.

The Sayyid's earliest and most determined opponent was Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī Ṭabāṭabāʾī, a son of Sayyid ʿAlī Ṭabāṭabāʾī and brother of Āqā Sayyid Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabāʾī, (see the last chapter). Although less illustrious than his father or brother and disinclined either to write or to hold classes,[85] Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī possessed some degree of prestige in Karbala by association with them, and, as, we have seen, was probably the first individual there to declare *takfīr* against al-Aḥsāʾī. On the Shaykh's death, he and his supporters at first abandoned their campaign for about two years.[86] They revived it, however, as it gradually became apparent that Rashtī, as the Shaykh's successor, had been able to maintain a sense of identity among his pupils and was continuing to defend and disseminate his views. That the takfir campaign thus ceased for a period indicates how much it was directed against al-Aḥsāʾī as an individual, rather than against a sect or school deemed to have been established by him. Its resumption, in turn, shows that Ṭabāṭabāʾī and others now recognized that, under Sayyid Kāẓim, just such a school was being created. One of their specific attacks on Rashtī was, in fact, that he was attempting to form a *madhhab* separate from and independent of orthodox Shiʿism.[87]

On Friday 1 Rajab 1243/18 January 1828,[88] Rashtī was summoned to a meeting organized by his opponents and held in the house of Mīrzā Muḥammad ʿAlī Shahristānī, a son of Mīrzā Muḥammad Mahdī Shahristānī (one of al-Aḥsāʾī's teachers).[89] The purpose of the meeting—which was attended by "several thousand" people, was to secure Rashtī's admission that, according to the popular meanings attached to the terminology used in them, certain statements of al-Aḥsāʾī constituted heresy (*kufr*). The concept that "the body which is composed of elements shall not be resurrected (*al-jasad al-unṣurī lā yaʿūdu*)"[90] was particularly criticized, and the Sayyid was urged to write a declaration

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[85] Muḥammad ʿAlī Kashmīrī, *Nujūm*, pp. 366, 367.
[86] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 49.
[87] Ibid., p. 63.
[88] Rashtī (ibid. p. 59) writes only "the first of Rajab"; earlier (p. 49), he refers to the lapse of some two years from the death of al-Aḥsāʾī. The first of Rajab 1243 did, in fact, fall on a Friday (Wednesday in Europe).
[89] Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 153. Kirmānī, *Hidāyat al-ṭālibīn*, p. 138, states that the house faced the Shrine of Ḥusayn.
[90] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 59.

to the effect that it was heretical. This he did, but his "admission" of heresy was heavily qualified with statements maintaining that only the outward and popular meaning was objectionable and that, properly understood, none of the words of al-Aḥsāʾī could be deemed contradictory to the Qurʾān, the Traditions, or, indeed, the writings of the great Shiʿi ulama.[91]

Although this meeting soon dispersed, its objective had scarcely been attained. Rashtī's testimony was too much qualified to be of use and could even backfire on his opponents if brought into play by them. Shortly after this first gathering, therefore, a second meeting was held in the courtyard (*ṣaḥn*) of the shrine of ʿAbbās, at which it was determined to expel Rashtī from Karbala.[92] According to Kirmānī, Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī ascended a pulpit and urged those present to take immediate action to put this decree into effect; a large crowd made for the house of Sayyid Kāẓim but, once there, dispersed for no apparent reason.[93] It is quite possible that the civil authorities, fearing the possible consequences of such an expulsion, prevented the mob from carrying out their intention.

Some time after this, Ṭabāṭabāʾī returned to Najaf, where he normally resided.[94] There, he seems to have encountered some degree of opposition from other ulama, who regarded his behaviour towards Rashtī as indefensible and advised him that his criticisms lacked any solid foundation.[95] This defence of Rashtī by ulama not actually belonging to the circle of al-Aḥsāʾī's followers is of considerable importance in showing to what extent the debate on the latter's *takfīr* was essentially a controversy within the context of Shiʿi orthodoxy, rather than the orthodox (Bālāsarī) versus heterodox (Shaykhī) conflict it later became. Whereas, at the later stage of the debate, opposition to Shaykhism implied simple identification with Usuli orthodoxy, at this point its implications were less cut and dried.

The efforts of Ṭabāṭabāʾī and others to make of al-Aḥsāʾī's *takfīr* a cause célèbre may initially have owed much to existing rivalries in the

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[91] On this see al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ al-zīyāra,* pt. 4, pp. 8–10.

[92] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, pp. 60–1. It seems to have been as a result of his writing this statement of having pronounced *takfīr* against al-Aḥsāʾī; a deputation of Shaykhi ulama from there visited him and were reassured that this was not the case (Qazvīnī, *Tārīkh* p. 462).

[93] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 62.

[94] Kirmānī, *Hidāyat al-ṭālibīn*, p. 140.

[95] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 63.

religious institution, themselves possibly fostered by feelings of uncertainty as to the nature of authority—charismatic or otherwise—among the ulama in what was very much a period of transition. Feelings of confusion with respect to authority may have been exacerbated in individual cases by a lack of personal prestige coupled with strong ambition—as in the cases of Baraghānī or Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī. The role of Sayyid Kāẓim as al-Aḥsā'ī's *waṣī* clearly raised the question of authority in a particularly sharp form, even though opposition to him did not centre openly on this issue. As we shall see, a similar problem faced the Shaykhī ulama some twenty years later, when confronted with the rise of Babism as a charismatic movement which threatened to jeopardize even further the Shaykhī position vis-à-vis the religious establishment.

It seems to have been in Dhu 'l-Ḥijja 1243/July 1828,[96] while Rashtī was performing his annual *ziyāra* to Najaf for the *Ghadīr* festival, that a messenger arrived from Shaykh ʿAlī al-Najafī (d. 1254/1838), requesting a meeting.[97] Shaykh ʿAlī was a son of Shaykh Jaʿfar al-Najafī and a brother of Sayyid Kāẓim's supporter Shaykh Mūsā. He was also, like Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī, a man overshadowed by his father and brother. He seems to have originally been a firm supporter of Rashtī,[98] but had at some point clashed with him over a question of property rights, and soon joined the opposition party.[99] Shaykh ʿAlī was in a particularly good position to help further the campaign against Rashtī since, although normally resident in Najaf, he spent three months of every year in Karbala.[100]

Rashtī refused to meet with Shaykh ʿAlī unless an independent arbitrator could be found, whose decision as to the validity of any arguments advanced by either party would be considered binding.[101] When Shaykh ʿAlī refused accept this condition and made it known among the pilgrims in Najaf for the festival that Rashtī had failed to respond to no

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[96] Ibid., pp. 63–4.

[97] I have calculated the dates on the basis of a sermon given by Rashtī on this occasion, in which he states that it is a Friday and also the festival of Ghadīr Khumm (17 Dhū 'l-Ḥijja). The only Ghadīr festival at this period to fall on a Friday was that of 1243.

[98] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 77.

[99] Kirmānī, *Hidāyat al-ṭālibīn*, pp. 141–2.

[100] Anṣārī, *Zindigānī,* p. 153. On Shaykh ʿAlī, see ibid.; Ḥabībābādī, *Makārim*, vol. 4, pp. 1420–1.

[101] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 68.

fewer than nineteen invitations to meet with him, the Sayyid reacted by having a pulpit erected in the courtyard of the shrine of Ali, from which he preached during the afternoon to a large crowd.

The summary of this sermon, which he himself gives in *Dalīl al-mutaḥayyirīn*, is valuable evidence as to the four main points of doctrine then at issue, as well as to the Sayyid's use of subterfuge (*taqiyya*), which becomes a marked feature of Shaykhi writing from this time on.[102] In his sermon, Rashtī stresses the exalted station of the Imāms and Fāṭima, while refuting any claims that they are divine or "partners of God" or that God has transferred (*tafwīḍ kard*) his command to them.[103] In referring to the *miʿrāj* of Muḥammad, he maintains that the Prophet "ascended to heaven with his body (*jism*), his clothes, and his sandals" and goes on to say that "on the day of resurrection, all created things shall be raised up in their visible, tangible, earthly bodies and corporealities (*badanhā wa jasadhā*)".[104] As far as the knowledge of God is concerned, Rashtī holds that "God knows all things collectively before their creation, after their creation, and at the time of their creation."[105] Such a clear refutation of four of the specific charges of heresy levelled against him and Shaykh Aḥmad cannot have failed to make an impression on Rashtī's audience. As a result, in the evening of the same day, a deputation comprising two merchants and one of Shaykh ʿAlī's *ṭullāb* came to repeat the invitation to meet with the Shaykh.[106] Rashtī himself deputed one of his leading followers, Mullā Muḥammad Ḥasan Gawhar, to present Shaykh ʿAlī with what amounted to a challenge to *mubāhala* or mutual cursing before God.[107] Although Shaykh ʿAlī accepted an alternative proposition to write down his objections against specific passages in the works of Sayyid Kāẓim, to have the latter write down a reply to these and to send all of this to an acceptable *ʿālim* for arbitration, he failed, in the end to comply.[108]

In Rabīʿ I 1244/January 1829, Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī began to express objections to a phrase in a *risāla* of Rashtī's on morals, which, loosely interpreted, suggested that the Sayyid was recommending the abandonment of all traditional doctrines and authorities and

[102] Ibid., pp. 69–71.
[103] Ibid., p. 69.
[104] Ibid., p. 70.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid., p. 71.
[107] Ibid., pp. 71–2.
[108] Ibid., p. 73.

attempting to establish a new *madhhab*.[109] Although Rashtī replied to this accusation in a separate treatise,[110] his opponent refused to retract his allegations and continued to pursue a policy of denunciation for the next two years.[111] Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī carried his campaign beyond the *ʿatabāt*, writing letters in condemnation of Rashtī to India and, probably, elsewhere.[112] It seems that, with the support of Shaykh ʿAlī al-Najafī, Ṭabāṭabāʾī was gradually able to bring most of the ulama of Najaf to his side, and that the opposition to Shaykhism gained much ground there.[113]

Rashtī nevertheless continued to make his annual pilgrimage to the town. In Dhu 'l-Hijja 1246/May–June 1831, a total of three gatherings were held in Najaf by Ṭabāṭabāʾī and his followers for the purpose of again confronting Sayyid Kāẓim. The first two meetings were held in the house of Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī's brother, Sayyid Maḥmūd, and the third in the house of Sayyid Muḥammad ʿAlī, the Keeper of the Keys to the shrine of Ḥusayn. Among those present were Shaykh Khalaf (ibn ʿAskar), Mullā Sharīf, and Ḥājī Mullā Jaʿfar Astarābādī.[114] Mullā Muḥammad Ḥamza Sharīʿatmadār Māzandarānī, a Shaykhi *ʿālim* who was present at these meetings and is the only writer to refer to them, does not, unfortunately, make clear what result, if any, they had; but, in view of Rashtī's isolation on each occasion, it is unlikely that anything of value was achieved. Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī died at the Shrine of Shāh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīm (now Ḥaḍrat-i ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm)[115] near Tehran in 1249/1833, leaving the opposition to Rashtī in Najaf in the hands of Shaykh ʿAlī.

In Karbala, Sayyid Ibrahīm ibn Muḥammad Bāqir Qazvīnī (d. 1846) emerged as the Sayyid's chief rival in both religious and political affairs. Possibly as a result of his involvement in the politics of Karbala, Rashtī was made the target for several attempts on his life,[116] as well as petty

[109] Ibid., p. 63.
[110] Ibid.; this treatise does not seem to be extant. See Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 318, item 224.
[111] Ibid., p. 66.
[112] Ibid.; Kirmānī, *Hidāyat al-ṭālibīn*, p. 144.
[113] Ibid., p. 141.
[114] Mullā Muḥammad Ḥamza Sharīʿatmadār Māzandarānī, *Asrār al-shahāda*, quoted in Chahārdihī, *Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī*, pp. 171–3.
[115] ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm was a fourth-generation descendant of the Imam Ḥasan. He is best known as a transmitter of traditions from the four Imams under whom he lived.
[116] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 74.

threats and insults.[117] On one occasion, he was even fired on with a rifle in the courtyard of the Shrine of Ḥusayn.[118] Despite this, he continued to be active in his public defence of the views of Shaykh Aḥmad, preaching to pilgrims and others on festivals, Thursdays, Fridays, and during the month of Ramaḍān.[119] He also encouraged his followers to emulate him in adopting a defensive stance against the orthodox condemnation of Shaykhism, a policy which inevitably widened the range of arguments employed in the doctrinal debate.

On one occasion, for example, he made a general request to the Shaykhi ulama to write polemics in defence of al-Aḥsāʾī;[120] among those who responded was the niece of Mullā Muḥammad Taqī Baraghānī, Fāṭima Khānum, whom Sayyid Kāẓim subsequently named Qurrat al-ʿAyn.[121] More specifically, Rashtī requested one of his leading followers in Karbala, Mullā Muḥammad Ḥasan Gawhar Qarāchadāghī, to take sections from his (Gawhar's) commentary on the *Ḥayāt al-arwāḥ* of Mullā Muḥammad Jaʿfar Astarābādī, dealing with specific attacks on al-Aḥsāʾī, and to compile these into a separate *risāla*.[122] Another of Rashtī's leading supporters in Karbala, Muḥammad Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī Akbar Muḥīṭ Kirmānī, wrote a reply to points raised by Mullā ʿAbd al-ʿAlī Ṭabasī at Rashtī's request.[123]

In thus encouraging the Shaykhi ulama to defend and expound the "doctrine" of the school at a time when the precise nature of that doctrine was still unclear to many, Sayyid Kāẓim undoubtedly prepared the way for the serious disputes which ensued between his leading followers (including Qurrat al-ʿAyn, Mullā Ḥasan Gawhar and Mīrzā Muḥīṭ in particular) on his death. Although real and potential doctrinal divisions were generally subordinated to the authority of Rashtī during his lifetime, the rapidity with which the Shaykhi school disintegrated into warring factions following his removal from the scene indicates how precarious was the situation in the years immediately prior to his death.

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[117] Ibid., pp. 74, 75.
[118] Ibid., p. 75.
[119] Ibid., pp. 77–8.
[120] Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 312.
[121] Ibid.; Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers,* p. 83. The fate of her treatise is unknown.
[122] Al-Ṭihrānī, *al-Dharīʿa*, vol. 5, p. 174; vol. 13, p. 215.
[123] Ibid., vol. 5, p. 208.

Apart from his influence over the immediate circle of his followers from his base in Karbala, the Sayyid carried on a widely flung correspondence with ulama in most of the centers of Shiʿi Islam, including Baghdad,[124] Damascus,[125] Bahrain,[126] Jabal ʿĀmil,[127] al-Aḥsāʾ,[128] Isfahan,[129] Khurasan,[130] and India.[131] His reputation in these places, especially in more distant regions where the *takfīr* of al-Aḥsāʾī had had little impact, seems to have been high, but it was, if anything, even more so in Iraq itself. Despite the *takfīr* and the continuing campaign against him, Rashtī succeeded in establishing for himself a position as one of the leading *mujtahids* of Karbala and, indeed, the entire *ʿatabāt*. Outside of the immediate circle of the Shaykhi school, he and his writings were highly respected by many of the leading ulama of the period, several of whom had already supported al-Aḥsāʾī. These included Shaykh Mūsā al-Najafī,[132] Sayyid ʿAbd Allāh Shubbar,[133] Sayyid ʿAlī Ṭabāṭabāʾī,[134] Ḥājj Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Kalbāsī,[135] and Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir Shaftī,[136] as well as numbers of their relatives and pupils.[137] Rashtī's influence was not, however, confined to the Shiʿi ulama, but extended to individuals such as Shihāb al-Dīn Maḥmūd Abu 'l-Thanāʾ al-Ālūsī, the famous

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[124] Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, item 258.
[125] Ibid., item 179.
[126] Ibid., items 251, 301.
[127] Ibid., items 154, 300.
[128] Ibid., items 261, 262.
[129] Ibid., items 237, 295.
[130] Ibid., item 178.
[131] Ibid., item 303; Tanakābunī, *Qisas al-ulama*, pp. 55–6.
[132] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, pp. 76, 79.
[133] Ibid., p. 79; Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 117.
[134] Ibid., pp. 116–7.
[135] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 80.
[136] Ibid. According to Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 21, Shaftī originally favoured both Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kāẓim but, in later years, adopted a neutral position; about two years before his death, Rashtī sent the future Babi apostle Mullā Muḥammad Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī, to visit Shaftī with the aim of enlisting his support against his opponents at the *ʿatabāt*, in which mission he is said to have been successful (ibid., pp. 19–24). Muḥammad-ʿAlī Fayḍī prints a letter which he claims to have been written by Rashtī to Bushrūʾī, praising him for this (*Ḥaḍrat-i Nuqṭa-yi ūlā* (Tehran: [s.n.], 1352 Sh. [1973]). pp. 52–3); the facsimile facing page 52 is not in the handwriting of Rashtī. For what appears to be a summary of the same letter see al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, "Risāla," in Māzandarānī. *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 503.
[137] The names of these may be found in Rashtī, *Dalīl*, pp. 79–80; Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 117.

Sunni *mufti* of Baghdad,[138] for whom he wrote at least two *risalas*;[139] and ʿAlī Riḍā Pasha, on whose directions he wrote the *Sharḥ al-qasīda*.[140]

Of even greater significance was his relationship with Sulaymān Khān Afshār Qāsimlū (d. 1309/1891), one of the leading officials of the Qajar state. Not only was Sulayman Khān an ardent follower of the Sayyid, who wrote at least one *risāla* in reply to intelligent questions from him,[141] but his son, Riḍāʾ Qulī Khān (who later became a Babi) was married to Rashtī's daughter.[142] In view of Sulaymān's close connection with the court—he was married to Qayṣar Khānum, the thirty-fourth daughter of Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh[143]—the marriage of his son (albeit by another wife) to the daughter of Sayyid Kāẓim was both a token of his own feelings of respect towards the Sayyid and a means of enhancing the latter's prestige in government circles in Iran. Sulaymān Khān later became a follower of Karīm Khān Kirmānī (himself a relative of Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh), with whom he corresponded;[144] he later built two mosques in Tabriz for the Karīm Khānī Shaykhis of the town[145] and left *waqf* monies to pay for the publication of Shaykhi books there. He appears to have met Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad Shīrāzī in Mecca towards the end of 1260/1844,[146] but refused an appeal for assistance written to him by the latter while near Qazvīn en route to prison in Azerbaijan.[147] He is, perhaps best known to historians of Babism as the man appointed by Mīrzā Taqī Khān Amīr-i Kabīr to quell the disturbance at Shaykh Tabarsī in Mazandaran in 1849.[148]

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[138] Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, pp. 118–9. On Ālūsī see Wardī, *Lamaḥāt*, pp. 100–6, 144–51; Muḥammad Zuhrā al-Najjār (?), preface to Mahmūd ibn ʿAbd Allah al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-maʿānī fi tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿaẓīm wa 'l-sabʿ al-mathānī* (Bulaq, Egypt: [s. n.], 1301–10 [1883–92]); Bābānī, *Hidāyat al-ʿārifīn*, vol. 2, pp. 418–9; ʿUmar Riḍāʾ Kahhāla, *Muʿjam al-muʾallifīn* (Damascus: al-Maktaba al-ʿArabiyya, 1957–61), vol. 12, pp. 175–6 (with extensive bibliography). Al-Ālūsī later treated with favour Qurrat al-ʿAyn, who stayed under house arrest in his home in Baghdad in early 1847.

[139] Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, pp. 323, 331 (items 256, 271).

[140] Ibid., p. 293.

[141] Ibid., pp. 311–2.

[142] Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, pp. 74–5.

[143] Bāmdād, *Rijāl*, vol. 2, p. 116 and note 2; ʿAḍud al-Dawla, *Tārīkh-i ʿAḍudī*, pp. 68, 239, 297. Qaysar Khānum's mother was Qamar al-Nisāʾ Khānum, a daughter of Ḥusayn Afshār (Sipihr, *Nāsikh al-Tavārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 163).

[144] Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 74.

[145] Ibid., p. 75.

[146] Ibid.

[147] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 235.

[148] Sipihr, *Nāsikh al-Tavārīkh*, vol. 3, pp. 257–8. For details of Sulaymān Khān, see Bāmdād, *Rijāl*, vol. 2, pp. 116–8; Navāʾī, notes to ʿAḍud al-Dawla, *Tārīkh-i ʿAḍudī*, pp. 239–40.

The Sayyid's political influence, both at the *ʿatabāt* and, less directly, in Iran, appears to have been considerable. According to Chahārdihī, he associated closely with various Qajar princes exiled to the *ʿatabāt* by Muḥammad Shah; as a result, a great many members of the Qajar family became Shaykhis.[149] The princes at the *ʿatabāt* are not identified, but they may well have included the three sons of Prince Muḥammad Ḥusayn ʿAlī Mīrzā Farmān-Farmā (1789–1835), who left Shīrāz on their father's defeat following his abortive attempt to take the throne on the death of Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh, namely: Riḍāʾ Qulī Mīrzā (1806–1862), Tīmūr Mīrzā (ca. 1812–1874), and Najaf Qulī Mīrzā (ca. 1808–before 1862).[150] There is evidence that Rashtī provided funds to Prince ʿAlī Shāh Ẓill al-Sulṭān (1796–1854), a former claimant to the throne of Iran, during his exile in Karbala,[151] and that he associated closely with Hulāgu Mīrzā (d. 1854), the exiled son of Ḥasan ʿAlī Mīrzā Shujāʿ al-Salṭana (1789–1853).[152] He also seems to have been on close terms with a certain Hāshim Khān Niẓām al-Dawla, another Iranian official resident in Karbala,[153] and with Prince Sulaymān Mīrzā, Hishmat al-Mulk (1810–1859?).[154]

In Iran, a core of individuals favorable to him was created at the court, with the notable exceptions of ʿAlī-Qulī Mīrzā Iʿtiḍād al-Salṭana (d. 1880) and Farhād Mīrzā, Muʿtamad al-Dawla (1818–1889).[155] Of the forty-eight children of ʿAbbās Mīrzā (1789–1833), all but a few are said to have been Shaykhis.[156] In Karbala, Rashtī came to be reckoned as one of the two most influential *mujtahids*, the other being his rival Sayyid Ibrāhīm Qazvīnī.[157] According to Chahārdihī, Sayyid Kāẓim was,

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[149] Chahārdihī, *Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī*, p. 138.

[150] See Heribert Busse in *The History of Persia under Qajar Rule* by Ḥasan ibn Ḥasan Fasāʾī, trans. Heribert Busse (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), p. 236, note 19; Bāmdād, *Rijāl*, vol. 5, pp. 47–9, 100–2.

[151] Sohrab, *al-Risāla al-tisʿ ʿashariyya*, pp. 19–20. On Masʿūd ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn, ẓill al-Sulṭān, see Bāmdād, *Rijāl*, vol. 2, pp. 381–4; Navāʾī, notes to ʿAḍud al-Dawla, *Tārīkh-i ʿAḍudī*, pp. 213–8.

[152] Bāmdād, *Rijāl*, vol. 4, pp. 429–30.

[153] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 74.

[154] al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, "Risāla," in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 502. On Sulaymān Mīrzā, the thirty-sixth son of Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh, who was exiled with Ẓill al-Sultān and Imāmwardī Mīrzā, see Bāmdād, *Rijāl*, vol. 5, pp. 114–5.

[155] Chahārdihī, *Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī*, p. 138. On ʿAlī Qulī Mīrzā, see Bāmdād, *Rijāl*, vol. 2, pp. 442–8. He is the author of *al-Mutanabbīyūn*, which largely consists of an inimical history of Babism (published in part as *Fitna-yi Bāb* by Navāʾī. On Farhād Mīrzā, see Bāmdād, *Rijāl*, vol. 3, pp. 86–92.

[156] Chahārdihī, *Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī*, p. 139.

[157] Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, vol. 1B, p. 1350.

for a period of one or two years, in charge of "the money from India" (*pūl-i Hindī*), which may be a reference to either the money sent by the rulers and notables of the Shiʿite Kingdom of Awadh or the *sahm-i imām* sent from the Shiʿa of India—the former being more likely. The well-known Oudh Bequest was not paid until several years later.[158]

Active though he was in the political life of Karbala, Rashtī seems to have been a somewhat reluctant participant in such matters, as is evidenced by a letter written by him to Karīm Khān Kirmānī:

> As regards the matter of the administration of justice (*ḥukm*) and the issue of legal judgements (*qaḍāʾ*), beware, beware! Flee from legal judgements as you would from a lion. Dear friend, as far as is in you, shut fast this door, for these are but wretched people and association with them and involvement with their affairs shall prove a cause of loss to you in this world and the next, unless it be at times in order [to prevent] the eating of unclean meat (*mayta*) or for the preservation of the faith. In such matters, you have no choice—as is the case with this powerless one. I ask the help and assistance and succour of God! Had I regarded it as permissible for me to tell another "Go to Zayd in order to pass judgement," by God, I should not have sat a single day in the court of justice. Indeed, I that must endure the bitterness and trials of justice." Indeed, I that must endure the bitterness and trials of it know what happens. Dear friend, dear companion, dear brother, as far as you are able, abandon this business, whether in religious or worldly matters, save out of necessity, at such times as you yourself think best.[159]

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[158] Chahārdihī, *Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī*, p. 267. The ʿulama of Najaf and Karbala had numerous sources of income. The *sahm-i Imām* or share of the Imam is an obligatory tax of half of the fifth (*khums*) of annual income every Shiʿi has to pay in addition to the alms tax (*zakāt*). This was fully estabslihed as payable to the ʿulama after the Uṣūlī victory. A second source was the *Pūl-i Hind*, 'Indian money' which came from rulers and notables in the Shiʿite kingdom of Awadh (Oudh). A third source became available after 1849. This originated in a loan made by the ruler of Awadh, Ghazī al-Dīn Haydar, to the East India Company in 1825. Subsequent apportionment of interest from this loan resulted in substantial payments to two of the king's wives, and on their deaths in 1849 the Bequest was paid to the ʿulama in the shrine cities. See Meir Litvak, 'A Failed Manipulation: The British, the Oudh Bequest and the Shiʿi Ulama of Najaf and Karbala', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (2000), 27:1, 69–89. Idem, 'Money, Religion and Politics: the Oudh Bequest in Najaf and Karbala', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (2001) 33:1–21; Mimadali (sic), "The Finances Of The Ulama 'Communities Of Najaf And Karbala', 1796–1941" *International Journal For the Study of Modern Islam*, Volume 40, Issue 1, March 2000, pp. 41–66; Juan Cole, 'Indian Money and the Shiʿi Shrine Cities of Iraq 1786–1850', *Middle Eastern Studies* 22 (1986), 461–480.

[159] Razavi, *Tadhkirat al-wafāʾ*, p. 33.

Rivalry between Rashtī and Qazvīnī was for some time an important element in the local politics of Karbala. Since about 1822, the city had been "a self-governing semi-alien republic", effectively independent of the Ottoman authorities in Baghdad.[160] Some three-quarters of the inhabitants were Iranian, and actual control of Karbala was in the hands of a band of from two to three thousand *girāmī*—criminals and fugitives from Iran and Arab Iraq who made a living preying on the local population and pilgrims to the shrines.[161] The *girāmī* were themselves split into at least two factions,[162] the most powerful of which was led by a certain Sayyid Ibrāhīm Zaʿfarānī.[163] Both Rashtī and Qazvīnī had the support of a body of *girāmī*, the former having the allegiance of Zaʿfarānī (who may have been a Shaykhi), the latter relying on a force under a chief named Mīrzā Ṣāliḥ, who was regarded as the most powerful leader next to Zaʿfarānī.[164] Zaʿfarānī's (and, thus, Rashtī's) position was strengthened by the support of Sayyid Wahhāb, the titular governor of the city,[165] and, by 1842, he was in absolute control.[166]

In Shaban 1258/September 1842, a new pasha, Muḥammad Najīb, arrived in Baghdad to replace ʿAlī Riḍāʾ.[167] Unlike his predecessors, Najīb Pāshā was not willing to tolerate the continued independence of Karbala. By the end of Ramadan/October, the failure of the population to send supplies to Baghdad in recognition of the authority of the central government, and their refusal to allow his entry to their city, even as a pilgrim, with more than four or five attendants, determined Najīb to insist on the reception of a military garrison there.[168] When

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[160] Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, vol. 1B, p. 1349; Longrigg, *Four Centuries*, p. 288; ʿAbbās al-ʿAzzāwī, *Taʾrīkh al-ʿIrāq bayna iḥtilālayn* (Baghdad: Maṭbaʿa Baghdad, 1353–76 [1935–56]), vol. 7, pp. 64, 65.

[161] I am grateful to the late Prof. Laurence P. Elwell-Sutton for suggesting that, as Colonel Francis Farrant implies, the original term for these groups was *girāmī*, although it seems to have been corrupted in later accounts to the Turkish *yaramaz* (good-for-nothings), as used by Lorimer and others.

[162] 'Compare the situation in al-Najaf, which was troubled by the two city factions of Shurmurd and Zugūrt until this century': Longrigg, *Four Centuries*, p. 288; al-ʿAzzāwī, *Taʾrīkh al-ʿIrāq*, vol. 8, p. 187.

[163] Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, vol. 1B, p. 1349.

[164] Ibid., pp. 1349, 1350; al-ʿAzzāwī, *Taʾrīkh al-ʿIrāq*, vol. 7, p. 65 (and note 1 where Zaʿfarānī is described as a Shaykhi).

[165] Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, vol. 1B, p. 1350.

[166] Al-ʿAzzāwī, *Taʾrīkh al-ʿIrāq*, vol. 7, p. 65; letter from Najīb Pāshā to the Iranian consul in Baghdad, attached to a dispatch from Sir Justin Sheil (1803–1871), dated 9 March 1843 (FO 60/96).

[167] Al-ʿAzzāwī, *Taʾrīkh al-ʿIrāq*, vol. 7, p. 63.

[168] Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, vol. 1B, p. 1350.

Zaʿfarānī declared that, should the pasha come to Karbala with troops, he would refuse him entry, the latter decided to make his entrance to the city by force if necessary.[169] He proceeded towards Karbala with an army in Dhū ʾl-Qaʿda/December and pitched camp at nearby Musayyab.[170] Negotiations now began with representatives of the population of Karbala, in which Rashtī played a leading role.

While Najīb Pāshā was encamped at Musayyab, he was visited for four days by a deputation from the city, composed of the nominal governor, Sayyid Wahhāb, ʿAlī Shāh Ẓill al-Sulṭān, Sayyid Kāẓim, Sayyid Ḥusaynī, and Sayyid Naṣr Allāh.[171] Before this party returned to Karbala in the hope of persuading the inhabitants to cede to some of the demands of the pasha, the latter requested Rashtī and Ẓill al-Sulṭān to try to persuade the Iranian section of the population to dissociate themselves from the *girāmī* factions; ideally, they were to quit the town or, if this were impossible, to retire to one quarter of it or take refuge in the shrines of Ḥusayn and ʿAbbās.[172] It is likely that, on this same occasion, Najīb assured both Rashtī and Ẓill al-Sulṭān that anyone seeking refuge in their houses would be spared in the event of an attack.[173] The Iranian consul in Baghdad also seems to have written on two occassions to Rashtī, requesting his assistance in persuading the Persian population to evecuate the town, although the Sayyid later maintained that he never received his letters to this effect.[174]

Najīb Pāshā now received reinforcements and, on 19 December, Saʿd Allāh Pāshā, the military commander, arrived before Karbala.[175] During the month that now passed before the assault on the town, Rashtī and Ẓill al-Sulṭān visited Saʿd Allāh in an effort to effect some compromise, but they remained unable to persuade the townspeople to accede to the pasha's demands.[176] In the town, the Shiʿi ulama were urging the people to fight a *jihad* against the Sunni forces of the pasha,[177] while

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[169] Letter from Najīb Pāshā to the Iranian consul in Baghdad, 16 Shawwāl 1238 [18 November 1842], enclosed in a letter of Farrant to Sheil, 2 May 1843 (FO 248/108).

[170] Al-ʿAzzāwī, *Taʾrīkh al-ʿIrāq*, vol. 7, p. 64; Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, vol. 1B, p. 1350.

[171] Report of Farrant to Sir Stratford Canning (1786–1880), 15 May 1843, enclosed in Farrant's letter to Sheil, 20 May 1843 (FO 248/108).

[172] Ibid.

[173] See letter from Najīb Pāshā to either Ẓill al-Sultān or Rashtī, 11 December 1842 (FO 60/97); Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 36; Wardī, *Lamaḥāt*, p. 121.

[174] Farrant to Canning, 15 May 1843.

[175] Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, vol. 1B, p. 1351.

[176] Ibid.; Farrant to Canning, 15 May 1843.

[177] Farrant to Canning, 15 May 1843.

the *girāmī* took steps to prepare the town to repel the coming attack.[178] In contrast, Rashtī—who, in the absence of Qazvīnī in Baghdad, was the leading *mujtahid* in the city—made strenuous efforts to effect a reconciliation and to dissuade the Karbala'is from undertaking what he must have recognized would be a hopeless defence. According to Colonel Francis Farrant (1803–1868)

> The Chief Priest Hajee Seid Kausem did all in his power to prevent hostilities, he preached against their proceedings, he was abused and threatened, they would not listen to him—this I have heard from many people at Kerballa—at this time all were unaimous in defending the place… to the very last he entreated them to listen to the Pacha but without avail, he showed great courage on the occasion, as he had all the chief Geramees and the Mollahs against him.[179]

On 13 January 1843, the forces of Najīb Pāshā stormed Karbala[180] and, as is well known, put to the sword large numbers of the inhabitants and caused widespread destruction.[181] Estimates of the numbers killed vary tremendously,[182] but at least four thousand people are thought to have perished. In the course of the sack, the only places accorded immunity were the shrine of Ḥusayn,[183] the house of Ẓill al-Sulṭān, and the house of Sayyid Kazim Rashtī.[184] It is hard to estimate how many took refuge in Rashtī's house and in the adjoining houses which he appropriated for the occasion,[185] but that the number of refugees was large may be

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[178] Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, vol. 1B, p. 1350.

[179] Farrant to Canning, 15 May 1843.

[180] Ibid.

[181] For general accounts of the sack of Karbala, consult Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, vol. 1B, pp. 1352–8; al-ʿAzzāwī, *Taʾrīkh al-ʿIrāq*, vol. 7, pp. 65–9; Wardī, *Lamaḥāt*, pp. 118–22.

[182] See Algar, *Religion and State*, p. 15, note 67.

[183] Wardī, *Lamaḥāt*, p. 121, noting that Muṣṭafā Pāshā only spared those in the shrine after Hājj Mahdī Kamūna had pleaded with him for their clemency. Those in the Shrine of ʿAbbās tried to bar the doors against the enemy and were mercilessly butchered once they were breached. See also Farrant to Canning, 15 May 1843.

[184] See letter of Mullā ʿAbd al-Azīz (Iranian consul in Baghdad) to Ḥājī Mīrzā Āqāsī, undated (FO 60/95); account by Mullā Āqā-yi Darbandī enclosed in a letter from Sheil to Lord Aberdeen (1784–1860), 1 April 1843 (FO 60/96); letter from Ross to Taylor, 22 January 1843 (FO 60/97): Farrant to Canning, 15 May 1843; Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 36; al-ʿAzzāwī, *Taʾrīkh al-ʿIrāq*, vol. 7, p. 66 (on p. 65, al-Azzāwī misquotes Karīm Khān Kirmānī as stating that the homes of Shaykhis in general were spared).

[185] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 36. Kirmānī states that nearly ten thousand individuals sought sanctuary there (Kirmānī, *Hidāyat al-ṭālibīn*, p. 153), but this seems impossibly high.

surmised from the fact that between sixty and and two hundred people were crushed to death in the melée.[186]

On the day following his capture of Karbala, Najīb Pāshā entered the city and was greeted in the Shrine of Ḥusayn by a party of its surviving notables, including Ḥājj Mahdī Kamūna, the deputy *kalīd-dār* (keeper of the keys) of the shrine, Sayyid Kazim, Mullā ʿAlī al-Khaṣṣī, Shaykh Wādī al-Shaflaḥ, and others.[187] Despite his unpopularity prior to the fighting, Rashtī's offices in securing the safety of so many citizens, and the obvious accuracy of his earlier evaluation of the state of affairs, as well as his reputation as one of the few individuals in the city who had tried to persuade the townspeople not to resist the Baghdad troops, meant that his prestige was now higher than ever. Although he himself died almost exactly one year after the attack, his son Sayyid Aḥmad continued to exercise influence in the city. According to Chahārdihī, he possessed authority in the appointment and dismissal of the Keeper of the Keys of the shrine of Ḥusayn,[188] and was regarded as one of a small number of individuals closely attached to the Ottoman court.[189] The Rashtī family has remained prominent in Karbala since then.[190]

Apart from his personal position, Rashtī's preaching, wide correspondence, and increasing popular classes were instrumental in heightening the prestige and expanding the numbers of the Shaykhi school in both Iraq and Iran. Aleksandr Kazem-Bek (1802–1870) states that "during the life of Sayyid Kāẓim, the doctrine of the Shaykhis spread throughout Persia, so much so that, in the province of Iraq alone, there were more than one hundred thousand *murīds*."[191] Exaggerated as this figure probably is—even if, as seems likely, it is intended to include Arab Iraq—there is no doubt that the number of those who gave some form of allegiance to Shaykhism was considerable. Aside from sizeable groups in larger towns such as Kirmanshah, Tabriz, and (possibly) Kirman, many small towns and villages in Iran, such as Mīlān in Azerbaijan, were, it seems, predominantly Shaykhi.[192]

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[186] Farrant gives sixty-six (letter to Canning, 15 May 1843), Mullā ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz about two hundred (letter to Āqāsī, undated).

[187] Wardī, *Lamaḥāt*, pp. 121–2.

[188] Chahārdihī, *Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī*, p. 266.

[189] Ibid., p. 238.

[190] Al-ʿAzzāwī, *Taʾrīkh al-ʿIrāq*, vol. 7, p. 69.

[191] Aleksandr Kazem-Bek, "Bāb et les Bābis, ou Soulèvement politique et religieux, de 1845 à 1853," *Journal Asiatique* (Paris) vol. 7 (1866), p. 463.

[192] See Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 41.

Had Rashtī not died at a relatively early age or had Sayyid Aḥmad been able to preserve the unity of the school and maintain Karbala as its center, it is more than likely that, with time, Shaykhism would have come to exercise increasing influence on political circles in both Iraq and Iran. Its potential as a religious movement attractive to statesmen such as Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā Dawlatshāh, Ibrāhīm Khān Ẓāhir al-Dawla, and Sulaymān Khān Afshār has already been demonstrated in the case of both al-Aḥsāʾī and Rashtī. In later years, however, no Shaykhi leader commanded the respect or influence of the two *shaykhs*. Nevertheless, it should be noted that, when the Kirmani Shaykhi leader Ḥājī Abu ʾl-Qāsim Khān Ibrāhīmī (1896–1969) died on a pilgrimage to Mashhad in 1969, Mohammad Reza Shah himself defied anti-Shaykhi sentiment in signifying that he be buried with ceremony in the precincts of the shrine and that a large memorial meeting be held in the capital.

For the most part, the school remained an important private religious alternative for many princes and government officials.[193] The most significant example of this is the "conversion" to Shaykhism of Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shāh (1853–1907), who was encouraged to adopt it as his personal faith by his mother, Shawkat al-Dawla (1838–1892), a niece of Karīm Khān Kirmānī.[194] Although the later influence of Shaykhism was largely confined to individuals on a personal basis, in certain areas, such as Tabriz and Kirman, it proved a continuing factor in local politics.

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[193] Among the Qajar notables who were Shaykhis or had contacts with the Shaykhi leadership in Kirman were: Amān Allāh Khān Majd al-Dawla (on whom see Bāmdād, *Rijāl*, vol. 5, pp. 31–2), Ḥamza Mīrzā (d. 1881) (see ibid., vol. 1, pp. 462–8), Tahmāsb Mīrzā Muʾayyid al-Dawla (d. 1879, a son of Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā ; see ibid., vol. 2, pp. 195–200), ʿAbbās Mīrzā, Mulk-Ārā (1839–1897; see ibid., vol. 2, pp. 222–7), ʿAbd al-ʿAlī Khān Adīb al-Mulk (see ibid., vol. 2, p. 270, and compare ibid., vol. 5, p. 10, n. 2), Azīz Khān Mukrī Sardār-i Kull (see ibid., vol. 2, pp. 326–35), Ghulāmshāh Khān (a governor of Kurdistan; see ibid., pp. 228–32), and Muḥammad Valī Mīrzā Muʿin al-Mulk, (1789–1862) (see ibid., vol. 4, pp. 26–33), all of whom corresponded with Karīm Khān Kirmanī; Mīrzā Isḥāq Khān Mufakhkham al-Dawla (see ibid., vol. 1, pp. 167–9), Mīrzā Ḥusayn Khān Muʾtaman al-Sulṭān, Bahrām Mīrzā Muʿizz al-Dawla (1809–1882) (see ibid., vol. 1, pp. 192–5), and Mīrzā Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān Khabīr al-Mulk, all of whom corresponded with Hājj Muḥammad Khān; Asad Allāh Mīrzā (see ibid., vol. 1, pp. 114–5), Mīrzā ʿAbd al-Karīm Khān Mukhābir al-Mulk, and Muḥammad Ḥasan Mīrzā Sartīp (see ibid., vol. 5, pp. 226–7), all of whom corresponded with Hājj Zayn al-ʿAbīdīn Khān.

[194] Dawlatābādī, *Tārīkh-i muʿāṣir*, vol. 1, p. 149; Bāmdād, *Rijāl*, vol. 4, p. 121; Farhād Maḥmūd Muʾtamad, *Mushīr al-Dawla Sipahsālār-i aʿẓam* (Tehran: [s.n.], 1326 [1947]), pp. 189–91. Three treatises by Karīm Khān Kirmānī (*Risāla-yi radd-i Bāb-i murtāb*, *Risāla-yi Sulṭāniyya*, and *Risāla-yi Nāṣiriyya*) were written at the request of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh.

Bāstānī Pārīzī has drawn attention to the fact that, since the governors of Kirman during the later Qajar period were generally princes of the royal house, related to the family of Karīm Khān, they tended to favor the Shaykhi sect in the city, a policy which provoked the resentment of most of the population.[195] In 1905, serious trouble broke out between the Shaykhi and non-Shaykhi sections of the populace, in the course of which deep-rooted political and economic divisions in the city came to the surface.[196] In general, however, Shaykhism never regained the prestige it had acquired under Rashtī's leadership; as we shall see, the emergence of Babism as a radical religio-political movement forced the remaining branches of what was now a divided school to adopt a quietist and non-interventionist position in politics, coupled with the use of *taqiyya* in religious matters.

Following the sack of Karbala, the Shiʿi population of the city was obliged to observe *taqiyya* during the initial period of occupation by the Sunni troops of Najīb Pāshā.[197] According to Kirmānī, the strain of the siege and attack, and the stresses imposed on him during the occupation of Karbala had a crippling effect on Sayyid Kāẓim; his hair grew white and he became physically debilitated.[198] In early Dhū 'l-Qaʿda 1259/late November 1843, according to his custom, Rashtī left Karbala, accompanied by a number of followers, to perform a pilgrimage to Kazimiyya.[199] Returning to Karbala in the early days of Dhū 'l-Ḥijja/late December,[200] in time for the festival of al-ʿArafa on the 9th/31st, he died in the early hours of the evening of 11 Dhū 'l-Hijja/1 January 1844.[201] This date, which is given in Shaykhi sources, seems confirmed by a statement in a letter written by the Bāb from prison to his uncle,

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[195] Introduction to Yahyā Aḥmadī Kirmānī, *Farmāndihān-i Kirmān*, edited by (Muḥammad Ibrāhīm) Bāstānī Pārīzī (Tehran, [s.n.], 1354 Sh [1976]), pp. 20–1.

[196] See Algar, *Religion and State*, pp. 243–4; Gianroberto Scarcia, "Kerman 1905: La 'Guerra' tra Šeihī e Bālāsarī," *Annali del Instituto Universitario di Napoli* (Naples) vol. 13 (1963), pp. 186–203; Nāẓim al-Islām Kirmānī, *Tārīkh-i bīdārī-yi Īrānīyān*, edited by Saʿīdī Sīrjānī (Tehran: Bunyād-i Farhang-i Iran, 1967–70), vol. 1, pp. 69–80; Bāstānī Pārīzī, notes to Aḥmadī Kirmānī, *Farmāndihān*, pp. 190–6 n. An interesting case of a clash in Kirman between two brothers (one a Shaykhi, the other a Bālāsarī) over their father's property is mentioned by Bāstānī Pārīzī in ibid., pp. 140–1n.

[197] Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 154.

[198] Ibid.

[199] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 42. He may also have intended to visit Samarra on this ocassion (Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 120).

[200] Al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalā'ī, "Risāla," in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūru al-ḥaqq*, p. 509.

[201] Ibid.; Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, p. 122. Zarandī says he died on the day of al-ʿArafa, (*Dawn-Breakers*, p. 45).

Hājī Mīrzā Sayyid ʿAlī Shīrāzī (d. 1850), in which he says that Rashtī died "nineteen days before the revelation of the mystery," and that the beginning of this "revelation" was the start of the year 1260.[202] We can, I think, dismiss as fictitious accounts which claim that Rashtī was poisoned in Baghdad by Najīb Pāshā.[203]

[202] Letter quoted in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 223.
[203] See Kirmānī, *Fihrist*, pp. 121–2; Kirmānī, *Hidāyat al-ṭālibīn*, p. 153.

CHAPTER FOUR

# FROM SHAYKHISM TO BABISM

## The Succession to Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī

The death of Rashtī precipitated the first major internal crisis in the Shaykhi school, of which he had been the acknowledged head for some seventeen years. To be more precise, it created a situation in which concealed tensions, disagreements, rivalries and ambitions within the Shaykhi community were brought to the surface. Rashtī did not, for reasons that are unclear, emulate al-Aḥsā'ī in appointing a successor, nor did he leave clear instructions as to the direction of the school after his death. Since he was relatively young when he died, it may simply be that he had not thought it yet necessary to take steps to provide for this eventuality. Without a clear appointment of a successor to the Sayyid, the school rapidly fragmented into several factions, of which the two largest were those grouped around Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad Shīrāzī, the Bāb (1235–66/1819–50) and Ḥājī Mullā Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī (1225–88/1810–71).

These two factions in particular expressed diametrically opposed tendencies inherent in Shaykhism, the first moving away from the outward practice of Islam towards a concentration on the revelation of its inner (*bāṭinī*) features and, ultimately, a new revelation (*ẓuhūr*) following the appearance of the hidden Imam; the second emphasizing the continuing role of the Prophet and the Imams and seeking accommodation with the Shiʿi majority which had formerly excommunicated the founder of the school and his successor. It was inevitable that, once these incompatible interpretations of Shaykhi thought came to be openly expressed, an unrelenting hostility would grow up between the two parties, fiercer if anything than that which previously existed between Shaykhis and Bālāsarīs.

Karīm Khān Kirmānī himself acknowledges that Rashtī had not indicated a successor in direct terms and that, on his 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

[1] Kirmānī, *Izhāq al-bāṭil*, p. 14.

Rashtī's followers is apparent from a number of statements in an Arabic *risāla* written in reply to Karīm Khān's *Izhāq al-bāṭil* by an early Babi of Karbala named al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, who had himself been in the circle of the Sayyid's companions. "Those among the *ṭullāb* who were possessed of discernment," he writes, "were confused as to where they should go and to whom they should cling."[2] He himself, he states at the beginning of the treatise, did not know where to turn during the first four months following Rashtī's death."[3] This confusion appears to have been compounded by the dissemination of various rumors and reports, some of them vaguely messianic in character, others relating to the question of the direction of the school in the period immediately after the death of the Sayyid.

Among these reports were a number in which Rashtī was said to have alluded obliquely to an "affair" or "cause" (*amr*) which would occur or appear after him. According to Kirmānī, his reply to those who asked him about his successor (*al-khalīfa baʿdahu*) had been to say, "God has an affair which he shall bring to maturity (*li ʿllāhi amrun huwa bālighuhu*)."[4] Rashtī's use of the phrase was certainly not accidental, and must have been calculated to evoke specific associations in the minds of his hearers; it was, in fact, the very phrase traditionally ascribed to the fourth *nāʾib* of the hidden Imam, Abu ʾl-Ḥusayn ʿAlī al-Sammarī, when asked on his death-bed concerning the matter of succession.[5]

That Rashtī made use of this phrase in this connection more than once is apparent from a reference in al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī's *Risāla*, where it is recorded that the Sayyid was asked about his successor by Mullā Muḥammad Taqī Harawī,[6] to whom he made this reply, adding, however, the qualification "our cause is not like that of the *abwāb*."[7] The significance of this last statement is not entirely clear: as we shall observe, a section of the Shaykhi community at this period certainly seems to have regarded both al-Aḥsāʾī and Rashtī as "gates" of the Imām, a belief which was instrumental in facilitating the transition to

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[2] Al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, "Risāla," in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 508.
[3] Ibid., p. 502.
[4] Kirmānī, *Izhāq al-bāṭil*, p. 14.
[5] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 51, p. 361; Mashkūr, *Tārīkh-i Shīʾa va firqahā-yi Islām*, p. 142.
[6] Ḥabībābādī, *Makārim al-āthār,* vol. 3, pp. 625–31; al-Ṭihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, pp. 212–5.
[7] Al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, "Risāla," in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq,* p. 508; See also a letter from Qurrat al-ʿAyn to Mullā Javād Vilyānī [Vālīyānī], printed in ibid., p. 493.

Babism. It is possible that Rashtī was thought to have been implying that, whereas the Imam had gone into major occultation on the death of the fourth *bāb*, he might now be preparing to return. That the "affair" or "cause" to which the Sayyid referred was in some way linked to the advent of the Imam or to have been synonymous with that event or the preparations for it, seems clear from his statement: "Are you not content that I should die and the cause of your Imam (*amr imāmikum*) be made manifest?"[8]

Zarandī ascribes a similar remark to the Sayyid, though endowing it with more obviously messianic overtones: "Would you not wish me to die, that the promised One be revealed?"[9] Mullā Jaʿfar Qazvīnī similarly states that he was present when Rashtī said "are you not content that I should go and the truth (*ḥaqq*) be made manifest?"[10] The messianic quality of Rashtī's utterances on this topic is apparent in the following statement attributed to Qurrat al-ʿAyn: "O people! My passing is near, yet you have not understood what I have been saying to you, nor have you comprehended my purpose. 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 the great cause."[11] As we shall see in more detail later, this chiliastic strain played an important role in the development of Babism as an expression of the more extreme charismatic and gnostic tendencies within the school. And it is, of course, more than likely that the messianic themes developed in Babism may have coloured most of the reports we have just quoted.

According to at least two accounts, Rashtī had instructed certain of his followers to stay after his death with Mullā Muḥammad Ḥasan Qarāchadāghī (Mullā Ḥasan Gawhar) for "a little time" (*bi-zamānin qalīl*) until "our affair would appear".[12] Mullā Jaʿfar Qazvīnī writes that someone asked Rashtī to whom his followers should turn after him; he replied that it was permissible to turn to anyone but that "for some days, you should stay about Mullā Ḥasan Gawhar." He later explained that Mullā Ḥasan would be there for forty-five days and then the truth

[8] Al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, "Risāla," in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 508.
[9] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 42.
[10] Qazvīnī, *Tārīkh*, p. 463.
[11] Qurrat al-ʿAyn, "Risāla," in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq* appendix 1, pp. 484–501.
[12] Al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, "Risāla," in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 509.

would be manifested.[13] Although Mullā Ḥasan's position remained at first ambiguous, there is no doubt that many of Rashtī's followers thought it natural to be referred to him.

A former pupil of al-Aḥsāʾī, Mullā Ḥasan was one of the oldest and most highly regarded disciples of the Sayyid, from whom he held an *ijāza*.[14] Several works by him are still extant,[15] and it seems that some of these had received the direct approval of Rashtī.[16] It would not have been surprising if a section of the Shaykhi community in Karbala should have looked on Mullā Ḥasan as a potential successor to Rashtī and, as we shall note, it was not long before he put forward a claim to succession on his own behalf. Initially, however, the question of succession remained in abeyance while news of Rashtī's death made its way to Shaykhi communities outside the *ʿatabāt*.

Al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī states that, following Rashtī's funeral, some of the *ṭullāb* approached Mullā Ḥasan and his close associate, Mīrzā Muḥammad Ḥusayn Muḥīṭ Kirmānī, and asked if they heard anything from the Sayyid concerning the succession. Mullā Ḥasan replied that he had heard nothing, while Mīrzā Muḥīṭ implied that he had, in fact, been told something but that he could not at that time reveal what it was; they should not disperse, he said, but remain in Karbala.

As if in corroboration of Mīrzā Muhīt's advice to await developments, a rumor became current to the effect that Rashtī has said "the affair shall be made manifest one year after me." Currency also seems to have been given to a prophecy, allegedly related by Rashtī himself, which had been made in a dream to one of the members of his household, and in which it was stated that the "affair" would be manifested in another thirty weeks. These thirty weeks, according to al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, would be completed at the beginning of Jumādī I 1260/late May 1844, and it was probably under the influence of this second rumor that numbers of *ṭullāb* waited out the four months of Muḥarram, Ṣafar, Rabīʿ I and Rabīʿ II, thinking that Mīrzā Muḥīṭ might be right in what he said.

It seems, however, that Mīrzā Muḥīṭ said or did something unspecified which caused many to reject him, whereupon they dispersed from

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[13] Qazvīnī, *Tārīkh,* p. 463.

[14] Al-Ṭihrānī, *al-Dharīʿa*, vol. 11, p. 205.

[15] See ibid., vol. 3, pp. 80, 80–1; vol. 11, p. 205; vol. 13, pp. 213, 215; idem, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, p. 341; Ḥabībābādī, *Makārim*, vol. 4, pp. 1136–7, 1137, note.

[16] Al-Ṭihrānī, *al-Dharīʿa*, vol. 13, p. 215.

Karbala,[17] some even before the four-month period had ended. That a substantial number of Shaykhis left Karbala in different directions at about this time is indicated in several sources. We have already referred to Kirmānī's statement to the effect in *Izhāq al-Bāṭil*. This version of events is substantially corroborated by Mīrzā Ḥusayn Khān Dakhīlī, the son of Mullā Ḥusayn Dakhīl, a Shaykhi who had lived in Karbala with Mullā Muḥammad Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī (the first of Shīrāzī's disciples) and who also later became a Babi. Mīrzā Ḥusayn Khān writes: "after the death of the late Sayyid, his companions scattered, and from whomsoever they heard a call, they would go in search of the lord of the affair (*ṣāḥib-i amr*)."[18] Zarandī indicates, however, that, when Mullā Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī returned to Karbala on 1 Muḥarram 1260/January 1844, he met with Mullā Ḥasan Gawhar, Mīrzā Muḥīṭ, "and other well-known figures among the disciples of Sayyid Kāẓim," and that these individuals advanced pretexts for not leaving Karbala.[19]

With the dispersal of many of the *ṭullāb* within about two months of Mullā Ḥusayn's arrival, the main area of events moved, for a time, from Arab Iraq to Iran.

In Iran, the bid for leadership of the Shaykhi community came to be centered in three places: Tabriz, Kirman, and Shīrāz. In Tabriz, two men made simultaneous claims, each of them achieving considerable success in establishing his position as a leader of the Shaykhis in Azerbaijan, but neither succeeded in winning very much of a following outside this region. The first of these was Ḥājj Mīrzā Shafiʿ Thiqat al-Islām (c. 1218–1301/1803–1884) a *mujtahid* who, in 1242/1826, had gone to the *ʿatabāt* to complete his studies under Shaykh Ḥasan al-Najafī, Shaykh ʿAlī al-Najafī, and Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī. Having become a Shaykhi, he returned to Tabriz, where he encouraged students to travel to Karbala in order to study under Rashtī, whom he regarded as the most learned (*aʿlam*) of the Shiʿi ulama. On Rashtī's death, he claimed that succession was restricted to himself but, apart from styling himself "shaykh" of the school, he does not appear to have advanced any major claims on his own behalf, nor to have introduced any radical changes in doctrine.[20] There seems to be no justification for the statement of Iʿtimād

[17] Above two paragraphs, Al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, "Risāla," in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, pp. 508, 510.
[18] From an incomplete manuscript, quoted ibid., p. 55.
[19] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 48.
[20] Bāmdād, *Rijāl*, vol. 5, pp. 116–7; Chahārdihī, *Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī*, p. 39.

al-Salṭana that he claimed *rukniyyat* (the status of being the *rukn* or support, on which see later) for a short time.[21] Mīrzā Shafīʿ appears to have left Tabriz and gone to live in Mecca shortly before the revolt in Tabriz of the Kurdish leader Shaykh ʿUbayd Allāh Naqshbandī, which occurred in 1298/1881.[22] On his death in Mecca in 1301, at the age of eighty-three, he was succeeded in Tabriz by his son, Shaykh Mūsā Thiqat al-Islām (d. 1319/1910).[23]

The second claimant to succession in Tabriz was Mullā Muḥammad Māmaqānī (or Mamaqānī) Ḥujjat al-Islām. It would seem that, for Māmaqānī, succession meant little more than taking Rashtī's place as a *marjaʿ al-taqlīd* for all those who regarded themselves as *muqallid* to him. He played down the charismatic and gnostic aspects of Shaykhism to such a degree that he became a highly respectable figure within the orthodox community in the region, being widely regarded as a *marjaʾ* for government officials, nobles, *tujjār*, and bazaar merchants; these followers built for him the Masjid-i Ḥujjat al-Islām beside the Masjid-i-Jāmiʿ of Tabriz.[24] On his death in 1268/1851 or 1269/1852, he was succeeded by his son, Mīrzā Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ḥujjat al-Islām (d. 1303/1885), also a former student of Rashtī.[25]

Apart from Thiqat al-Islām and Māmaqānī, there were several other notable Shaykhis in Tabriz, the most outstanding of whom were Ḥājī Mullā Mahmūd Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ (d. circa 1272/1856), the tutor of the Crown Prince, Nāṣir al-Dīn Mīrzā; Mīrzā ʿAlī Aṣghar Shaykh al-Islām (d. 1264/1848), his son Mīrzā Abu 'l-Qāsim Shaykh al-Islām, and Mullā ʿAlī Muʿīn al-Islām. Although incidents between Shaykhis and Bālāsarīs took place intermittently in Tabriz, notably riots in

[21] Āvāra, *al-Kawākib*, p. 179.

[22] Ibid.; on the date of ʿUbayd Allāh's rebellion, see Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh, *Ṭarāʾiq*, vol. 3, p. 425.

[23] Bāmdād, *Rijāl*, vol. 5, p. 117. On Mīrzā ʿAlī Thiqat al-Islām, a son of Mūsā and a prominent Constitutionalist, who was hanged by the Russians in 1330/1912, see Chahārdihī, *Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī*, pp. 187–93.

[24] Ibid., p. 176.

[25] Ibid., pp. 177–8; Bāmdād, *Rijāl*, vol. 6, p. 83. Mulla Muḥammad Ḥusayn was succeeded by his brother Mirza Ismāʿīl Ḥujjat al-Islām (d. 1317/1899), a pupil of Mulla Muḥammad Bāqir Uskūʾī (d. 1301/1883)—one of the leading Shaykhis of Karbala and a pupil of Mulla Ḥasan Gawhar—who was in turn succeeded by the son of Mulla Muḥammad Ḥusayn, Mirza Abū 'l-Qāsim Ḥujjat al-Islām (d. 1308/1943), after whom the family seems to have died out (see Chahārdihī, *Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī*, pp. 196–8; Māzandarānī (*Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 9) claims that Mīrzā Ismāʿīl became a Bahaʾi.

1267/1850[26] and 1285/1868,[27] it is clear that the Shaykhi notables and ulama of the city were particularly eager to identify themselves with the main body of Shiʿism and to avoid, as far as possible, all imputations of heterodoxy.

This trend towards orthodoxy was given added impetus by the emergence of Babism as an identifiable and vulnerable target for the concerted attacks of conventual Shiʿis and Shaykhis alike. The fact that, as we shall see, the Bāb himself and all but a few of his principal followers had been students of Rashtī, coupled with the continuing veneration shown by the Babis to him and to al-Aḥsāʾī as, in some sense "precursors" of their movement or as "the two preceding *bābs*", placed the remaining Shaykhis in serious danger of being closely linked with Babism in the minds of the public and the ulama.

At first, this simply meant the continuation of some form of ostracism of Shaykhism by many of the orthodox community but, before long, it began to carry the risk of physical attacks from government and people. In order to offset the unwelcome implications of their mutual origin, certain Shaykhi ulama, particularly in Tabriz, proved eager to take a leading role in the theological, judicial, and even physical assault on the Bāb and his followers.

The trial of the Bāb, held in Tabriz in August 1848, was attended by Nāsir al-Din Mīrzā, leading government officials, religious dignitaries and eminent members of the Shaykhi community, including Mullā Muḥammad Māmaqānī and Mīrzā ʿAlī Aṣghar Shaykh al-Islam; it was directed by Hājī Mullā Mahmūd Niẓam al-ʿUlama.[28] Following the trial, in which the Shaykhi participants took a prominent part, the Bāb was bastinadoed at the home of Mīrzā ʿAlī Aṣghar by the Shaykh

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[26] Chahārdihī, *Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī*, pp. 49–50.

[27] Bāmdād, *Rijāl*, vol. 6, p. 83.

[28] Numerous and conflicting accounts of this important tribunal have been written. For the fullest description and analysis, see Denis MacEoin, "The Trial of the Bab: Shi'ite orthodoxy confronts its mirror image", in Carole Hillenbrand (ed.) *Studies in Honour of Clifford Edmund Bosworth 2 The Sultan's Turret* (Brill, 2000), pp. 272–317, reprinted in this volume.

See also, Sipihr, *Nāsikh al-Tawārīkh*, vol. 3, pp. 125–30; Hidāyat, *Rawḍāt al-Ṣafā*, vol. 10, pp. 423–8 (based on a report by Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ); Edward Granville Browne, "The First Examination of the Bab at Tabriz," in *A Traveller's Narrative*, vol. 2, pp. 277–90; idem, *Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1918), pp. 245–64; Muḥammad Mahdī Khān Tabrizī, *Miftāḥ bāb al-abwāb, yā tārīkh-i Bāb va Bahāʾ*, trans. Ḥasan Farīd Gulpāygānī, 3rd ed. (Tehran: Farāhānī, 1346 [1967]), pp. 137–45; Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 314–20; Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, pp. 9, 10, 14–20; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 56–9.

al-Islam himself.[29] In 1266/1850, when the Bāb was brought to Tabriz for execution, Māmaqānī was among the small number of ulama who signed a *fatwā* for his death.[30] Apart from a book by Mīrzā Muḥammad Taqī Māmaqānī,[31] however, the Shaykhi ulama of Tabriz—unlike their counterparts in Kirman—do not appear to have engaged in much polemical conflict with the Babis. There can be little doubt, nevertheless, that their direct involvement in the condemnation of the Bāb proved a significant factor in helping them ingratiate themselves with the orthodox community, become integrated into it, and, in the end, become wholly re-identified with it.

It was Kirman rather than Tabriz which finally came to be recognized as the new center of Shaykhism, displacing Karbala for the majority of Iranian Shaykhis and for smaller numbers in Iraq and elsewhere. In numerical and historical terms, Babism had by far the greater impact, but it was in its Kirmānī form that Shaykhism was to be preserved—albeit much modified—as a distinct school within Twelver Shiʿism. If, on the one hand, the Shaykhis of Azerbaijan were to stress and deepen the conservative elements in Shaykhi belief and practice, rendering it practically indistinguishable from orthodox Shiʿism, and the Babis, on the other hand, were to exploit the more extreme tendencies of the school, breaking entirely from Islam before the lapse of many years, the development initiated by Karīm Khān Kirmānī was to travel something of a middle road, identifying and reinterpreting certain key themes in the works of al-Aḥsāʾī and Rashtī in an unusual and unorthodox fashion while retaining a strong sense of identity with and loyalty to Twelver Shiʿism as the true expression of Islamic faith and practice.

Ḥājī Mullā Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī was born in Kirman on 18 Muḥarram 1225/23 February 1810.[32] His father, Ibrāhīm Khān Ẓāhir al-Dawla, was a cousin and son-in-law of Fatḥ-ʿAlī Shāh,[33] and, at

[29] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 320.

[30] Ibid., p. 510.

[31] Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 9. The same author (p. 10) also refers to an anti-Bābi tract by Mīrzā Abū ʾl-Qāsim Shaykh al-Islām, entitled *Qalʿ al-Bāb*. This work, however, is actually one of a number of polemics written by Ḥājī Mīrzā Abū ʾl-Qāsim ibn Sayyid Kāẓim Zanjānī (1224–92/1809–75): see Navāʾī, notes in *Fitna-yi Bāb*, p. 156; al-Tihrānī, *al-Dharīʿa*, vol. 4, p. 3; vol. 12, p. 153; vol. 17, pp. 161, 171; idem, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, pp. 61–2.

[32] Raḍavī, *Tadhkirat al-wafāʾ*, p. 7.

[33] He was the son of Mahdī Qulī Khān, a son of Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān, a son of Fatḥ-ʿAlī Khān Qājār; Mahdī Qulī was a brother of Āghā Muḥammad Shah. The latter put his brother to death and gave his widow and child (Ibrāhīm Khān) into the

the beginning of the latter's reign, was appointed governor of Khurāsān, later being transferred to the governorship of Kirman and Baluchistan,[34] a position which he held from 1803 until his death in 1824.[35] Ibrāhīm Khān's relationship with the ruling dynasty was strengthened by his marriage to Humāyūn Sulṭān Khānum-i Khānumān,[36] the eldest daughter of Fatḥ-ʿAli and a sister of Ḥusayn ʿAlī Mīrzā Farmān-Farmā and Ḥasan ʿAlī Mīrzā Shujāʿ al-Salṭana (1789–1853), and, by the marriage of two of his sons to two other daughters of the monarch.[37] In addition, as we shall note, Karīm Khān was later married to a daughter of Muḥammad Qulī Mīrzā Mulk Ārā (1789–1844), the third son of Fatḥ-ʿAli.

In the course of his term as governor of Kirman, Ibrāhīm Khān did much to restore the physical property of the city.[38] A deeply religious man, he showed concern at the absence of *fuqahāʾ* in the region following the sack of Kirman by Agha Muḥammad Shah in 1794, and invited ulama from Arabia, Khurāsān, and Fārs to come and live there. He showed particular favor to Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī, whom he met several times during the latter's residence in Yazd and, as we have noted, it has been suggested that it was through his influence that Fatḥ-ʿAlī Shāh invited the Shaykh to Tehran in 1808.

It appears to have been his father's wish that Karīm Khān be raised a scholar (unlike his other sons, all of whom were given administrative posts throughout Kirman province)[39]—possibly with the intention that he eventually become the *ʿālim* in charge of the Madrasa-yi Ibrāhīmiyya

keeping of his nephew, Bāba Khān (the future Fatḥ-ʿAli Shāh). Ibrahim Khān's mother had three further children by Fatḥ-ʿAli, these being two daughters, Zaynab Khānum and Khadīja Khānum, and a son, Muḥammad Qulī Mīrzā Mulk-Ārā (1789–1844) (see ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Navāʾī, "Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī," *Yādgār* (Tehran) vol. 4/5 (1328 Sh [1949]), pp. 112–3.

[34] Raḍavī, *Tadhkirat al-wafāʾ*, p. 4.

[35] Sipihr, *Nāsikh al-Tavārīkh*, vol. 1, p. 354; Aḥmadī Kirmānī, *Farmāndihān*, pp. 50, 55; Bāstānī Pārīzī, introduction to ibid., p. 12.

[36] She was also known as Nawwāb Mutaʿāliyya and Dawlat Gildī; see Sipihr, *Nāsikh al-Tavārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 155; Navāʾī, notes to ʿAḍud al-Dawla, *Tārīkh-i ʿAḍudī*, p. 316.

[37] Rustam Khān was married to Shāh Gawhar Khānum, the nineteenth daughter of Fatḥ-ʿAlī, and Naṣr Allāh Khān to Tājlī Bigum, his twentieth daughter (see Aḥmadī Kirmānī, *Farmāndihān*, p. 50, note 1; Sipihr, *Nāsikh al-Tavārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 158; Navāʾī notes to ʿAḍud al-Dawla, *Tārīkh-i ʿAḍudī*, p. 319.

[38] Maḥmūd Himmat Kirmānī, *Tārīkh-i mufaṣṣal-i Kirmān*, 3rd ed. (Kirman: Furūshgāh-i Himmat, 1350 [1971]), pp. 252–4.

[39] Bāstānī Pārīzī, notes to Aḥmadī Kirmānī, *Farmāndihān*, p. 53, note.

which he had built in 1232/1817.[40] Karīm was, therefore, provided with tutors as a child and, in adolescence, continued his studies under the general supervision of Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī Nūrī Mullā-bāshī, whose daughter he married.[41] On the death of Ibrāhīm Khān in Tehran in 1240/1825, the inevitable wrangling broke out among his sons, but Karīm is said to have avoided becoming involved in these disagreements and to have continued with his studies and devotions.[42] Shaykhi sources relate that he concentrated on purely religious issues, endeavoring to find the 'Perfect Man' (*insān-i kāmil*). In search of this individual, he associated with a variety of sects and schools of thought but was, in the end directed by a certain Hājī Muḥammad Ismāʿīl Kūhbanānī—a former pupil of al-Aḥsāʾī[43]—to visit Rashtī in Karbala.[44] Despite the efforts of the new governor, Ḥasan ʿAlī Mīrzā, to prevent any of the sons of Ibrāhīm Khān leaving Kirman,[45] Karīm succeeded in making his way to the *ʿatabāt*, where he met and began to study under Sayyid Kāẓim.

This first visit to Karbala took place in about 1828, when Karīm Khān was eighteen, and was extended into a stay of one year. Returning to Kirman, he continued his studies and gave classes to others for a time, before leaving once more for Karbala, this time accompanied by his wife. He now became a close disciple of Rashtī, receiving considerable praise from his teacher and making marked progress under his instruction. It was probably during this period that Rashtī wrote his *ijāza* for him, possibly the only one he ever received.[46] After some time, however, Rashtī instructed him to return to Kirman in order to teach the people there.[47] It is possible that the Sayyid considered Karīm Khān, quite apart from his undoubted intellectual capabilities, as a singularly

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[40] Himmat Kirmānī, *Tārīkh-i mufaṣṣal*, p. 254; Bāstānī Pārīzī, notes to Aḥmadī Kirmānī, *Farmāndihān*, p. 52, note 2; ʿAbd al-Majīd Mūsawī Qarābāghī states that it was expressly built for Karīm Khān, see Muḥammad ʿAlī Jamālzāda, "Shuyūkh-i silsila-yi Shaykhiyya," *Yaghmā* (Tehran) vol. 14, p. 490.

[41] Raḍawī, *Tadhkirat al-wafāʾ*, p. 12.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Bāstānī Pārīzī, *Vādī-yi haft vād*, vol. 1 (Tehran: Anjuman-i Anṣar-i Millī, 2535 [1976]), p. 358.

[44] Raḍavī, *Tadhkirat al-wafāʾ*, pp. 14–15.

[45] Undoubtedly on account of the rebellion of Ibrāhīm Khān's son and immediate successor, ʿAbbās Qulī Khān, against Fatḥ-ʿAlī Shāh (see Aḥmadī Kirmānī, *Farmāndihān*, pp. 55–8).

[46] The text of this *ijāza* has been printed in Raḍavī, *Tadhkirat al-wafāʾ*, pp. 26–8.

[47] Ibid., p. 24.

valuable supporter, in view of his close association with the Qajar family, his wealth, and potential influence in the somewhat remote Kirman region. In sending him thus to a part of Iran which seems to have had few Shaykhis, Rashtī may have hoped to establish a base of religious and political influence with which to offset the damaging effects of the continuing campaign against the school.

Leaving his wife in Kazimiyya, Kirmānī headed for his home via Hamadān. There he undertook what may, in the context of a possible drive towards acquiring political influence, be considered a most significant action—namely, the arrangement of a marriage with his half-cousin, one of the twenty-three daughters of Muḥammad Qulī Mīrzā Mulk Ārā (1789–1844).[48] Since the girl in question was then in Tehran, he headed there for the marriage, afterwards spending some time in the capital, where he improved his standing by associating with Muḥammad Shah, whom he had previously met in Kirman.

It was not long, however, before he set off on the final stage of his journey home, accompanied by his new wife.[49] In Kirman, he continued to correspond with Rashtī, whose regard for him is apparent from numerous letters. Among these is a brief letter in which he writes, speaking of Kirmānī, that "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 Imāms."[50] In another letter, Rashtī speaks of his "spiritual communion" and "mysterious relationships" with Karīm Khān and assures him that he has a place "in the very core" of his heart and shall not be forgotten by him.[51] In yet another instance—and it is a particularly significant one in view of subsequent events—he writes how, in speaking with a certain Ḥājī Muḥammad ʿAlī in Samarra, he referred to Kirmānī (*jināb-i Ḥājī*) as "a tongue uttering the truth, a speaking book," and urged his companion to "ask your questions of him and enquire of him concerning reality, for he shall inform you of matters particular and general, brief and comprehensive, manifest and hidden, save those things which are hidden in the hearts of men."[52] In view of these and similar statements made in his respect by Rashtī, it

[48] Ibid., p. 25. The girl was also descended, through her mother, from Shāhrukh Shāh (1748–1796).
[49] Ibid., pp. 25–6
[50] Quoted in ibid., p. 29.
[51] Quoted in ibid., p. 32.
[52] Quoted in ibid., p. 30.

is scarcely surprising that, on the latter's death, Karīm Khān should have regarded himself as the person most fit to assume the leadership of the school.

Kirmānī must have returned from Karbala in about 1255/1839.[53] It seems to have been shortly after his arrival that he became involved in a dispute concerning the control of his father's *waqf* properties, in particular the Madrasa-yi Ibrāhīmiyya. The origins of this dispute are obscure, but its main outlines can be reasonably well defined. In order to provide for the upkeep of the *madrasa*, Ibrāhīm Khān had made over portions of his estates in Māzandarān and other private lands as *waqf* properties.[54] On his death, these properties, including the *madrasa* itself, were probably placed in the hands of a *mutawallī*, but, when Ḥasan Mullā ʿAlī became governor of Kirman in 1243/1828, he placed all the financial affairs of Ẓāhir al-Dawla's children under his personal supervision and, although he did not directly interfere with the *awqāf*, probably exercised considerable control over them.[55]

By the time of Karīm Khān's return to Kirman following his first visit to Karbala, around 1245/1828, Ḥasan ʿAlī Mīrzā's position in the city seems to have weakened somewhat, and Karīm was able to exercise some degree of freedom in financial matters, giving the supervision of his personal properties to a certain Āqā Sayyid Muḥammad ʿAlī and that of the *madrasa* and the *waqf*[56] properties belonging to it to Mullā ʿAlī, a local *mujtahid*.[57] Already, during his first stay in Karbala, he had offered to make over to Rashtī all the property he had inherited from his father; when this offer was refused, he promised Rashtī the payment of *khums* on his possessions, which proved acceptable.[58]

During his second absence in Iraq, however, matters seem to have fallen very much out of his control or that of his appointees. Fīrūz Mīrzā Nuṣrat al-Dawla (1819–1886) became governor of Kirman in 1253/1837, replacing Ḥasan ʿAlī Maḥallātī (1219/1804–1298/1881), the

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[53] He cannot have arrived before this since, as we shall note, by the time of his arrival, Ḥājī Sayyid Javād Shīrāzī appears to have already established his position in Kirman quite successfully; the latter did not arrive in the city until 1254/1838 (Aḥmadī Kirmānī, *Farmāndihān*, p. 76).

[54] Chahārdihī, *Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī*, p. 259.

[55] Ibid., p. 260.

[56] *Waqf* properties are established for pious purposes, are inalienable, and belong to Islam in perpetuity.

[57] Raḍavī, *Tadhkirat al-wafāʾ*, pp. 22–3.

[58] Ibid., p. 19.

first of the Āghā Khān Ismaili leaders.[59] He seems to have attempted to exercise control over the ulama of the city by means of a policy of divide and rule: a year after his arrival, he expelled from Kirman Ākhūnd Mullā ʿAlī Akbar, a rigorously puritanical divine who insisted upon close observance of the religious law.[60] At the same time, he showed considerable favor towards two *mujtahids*, Mullā ʿAlī Tūnī (known as Aʿmā) and Ḥājī Sayyid Javād Shīrāzī.

Under the patronage of Fīrūz Mīrzā, Sayyid Javād succeeded in replacing Ākhūnd Mullā ʿAlī Akbar as Kirman's *Imām-Jumʿa*, a position which he held until his death in 1287/1870.[61] Sayyid Javād also improved his prestige in the city by marrying one of the daughters of Ibrāhīm Khān.[62] He and Mullā ʿAlī Tūnī became increasingly involved in the affairs of the *madrasa* and the *waqf* of Ẓāhir al-Dawla about the time of Karīm Khān's return to Kirman, and managed to exercise such influence over the *ṭullāb* that the latter was unable to regain control of the *waqf*.[63]

Kirmānī, in retaliation, declared the *waqf* invalid, meaning to inherit it personally as *irth* property, and applied for confirmation of his *fatwā* from Mullā Muḥammad Bāqir Shaftī in Isfahan.[64] Shaftī's concurrence notwithstanding, the *ṭullāb* refused to hand over the *madrasa* until one of Kirmānī's followers succeeded in taking control one night by means of a ruse; on the following day, Shaykhi *ṭullāb* were installed in the *madrasa*, which has remained in their hands since then.[65] It seems that Kirmānī's position was further strengthened by his success in persuading the other children of Ibrāhīm Khān each to make his

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[59] Aḥmadī Kirmānī, *Farmāndihān*, pp. 74–5. On Fīrūz Mīrzā, see Bāmdād, *Rijāl*, vol. 3, pp. 110–4.

[60] Aḥmadī Kirmānī, *Farmāndihān*, p. 75; Aḥmad ʿAlī Khān Vazīrī Kirmānī, *Tārīkh-i Kirmān (Sālāriyya)*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Bāstānī Pārīzī (Tehran: Kitābhā-yi Iran, 1962), p. 387.

[61] Chahārdihī, *Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī*, p. 260; Vazīrī Kirmānī, *Tārīkh-i Kirmān*, p. 389. Bāstānī Pārīzī states that he replaced Shaykh Niʿmat Allāh al-Baḥrānī as Imām-Jumʿa in about 1246/1830 (notes to ibid., p. 486), but he does not appear to have arrived in Kirman until about 1254/1838 (Aḥmadī Kirmānī, *Farmāndihān*, p. 76). On Ḥājī Sayyid Javād, see ibid., pp. 76–7n. He was a cousin of the Bāb's father and, according to Muḥammad-ʿAlī Fayḍī, he was secretly an adherent of the young prophet (Muḥammad-ʿAlī Fayḍī, *Khāndān-i-Afnān ṣadra-yi Raḥmān*, p. 17).

[62] Aḥmadī Kirmānī, *Farmāndihān*, p. 76 n 1.

[63] Chahārdihī, *Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī*, p. 261.

[64] Bāstānī Pārīzī, *Vādī-i haft vād*, p. 362.

[65] Chahārdihī, *Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī*, pp. 261–2.

share of the inheritance into *waqf*.[66] Although he did not manage the *waqf* personally, leaving it instead in the hands of trustees,[67] there is no doubt that much of Karīm Khān's power in Kirman—as, indeed that of his descendants—derived from his ultimate control over much of his father's vast wealth. It is said that he received an annual income from his relatives of from two to three thousand *tomans*, in the form of *khums* and *zakāt*.[68]

On Rashtī's death, Karīm Khān, then aged thirty-four, began to claim for himself the leadership of the Shaykhi community through out Iran and Iraq and, within a short time, was able to draw to himself the majority of Iranian and a number of Arab Shaykhis who had not become Babis. In general, those Shaykhis who became followers of the Bāb only to abandon him at a later stage in the development of his doctrines, tended to turn to Kirmānī as an alternative. By the end of his life, he had so consolidated his position as head of the sect that the succession, after a brief dispute, passed to his second son, Ḥājj Muḥammad Khān Kirmānī (1263–1324/1846–1906), passing from him to his brother Ḥājj Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn Khān Kirmānī (1276–1360/1859–1941), from him to his son Ḥājj Abu'l-Qasīm Khān Ibrāhīmī (1314–89/1896–1969), and from him to the last Kirmani head of the school, Ḥājj ʿAbd al-Riḍāʾ Khān Ibrāhīmī (assassinated 1979).[69] Following Ibrāhīmī's death, the Shaykhi headquarters moved to Basra in Iraq. The current leader is ʿAlī al-Mūsawī, who has a following in Karbala, the Gulf, and Iran.

Our sources do not make entirely clear the details of how Kirmānī established his position as head of the Shaykhi community at Kirman and, before long, in Iran as a whole, but the general outlines of this development can be reconstructed from a careful examination of the

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[66] Ibid., p. 263.

[67] Ibid.; Raḍavī, *Tadhkirat al-wafāʾ*, pp. 87, 88.

[68] Bāstānī Pārīzī in Aḥmadī Kirmānī, *Farmāndihān*, p. 149 n. 2.

[69] For details of these individuals, see the relevant chapters in Kirmānī, *Fihrist*. A temporary split occurred in Kirmānī Shaykhism when Muḥammad Raḥīm Khān Kirmānī, Karīm's eldest son, was passed over in favor of Ḥājī Muḥammad Khān; his followers, known as Raḥīm Khanīs, seem, for the most part, to have rejoined the main group on the death of Muḥammad Khān (Chahārdihī, *Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī*, p. 247). A more serious split took place on Karīm Khān's death, when Hājī Mīrzā Muḥammad Bāqir Hamadānī (1239–1319/1824–1901), the leader of the school (under Karīm Khan) in Hamadān, opposed the succession of Muḥammad Khān on the grounds that he was himself the most learned of the ulama and that the leadership of the school ought not to become hereditary. His followers, known as Bāqīrīs (in distinction to those of Muḥammad Khān), known as Naṭīqīs or Nawāṭiq), predominate in Hamadān, Jandaq, Bīyābānak, Nāʾīn, and Isfahan (Bāmdād, *Rijāl*, vol. 6, pp. 209–11; Chahārdihī, *Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī*, p. 247).

materials currently available. It seems that Sayyid ʿAlī Kirmānī, who acted as amanuensis to Rashtī in Karbala,[70] initiated a belief that he referred, albeit in somewhat cryptic fashion, to Karīm Khān as being the aware of the identity of his successor. In a letter which he is said to have forged in the Sayyid's name, and which may have been written in Rashtī's lifetime, Sayyid ʿAlī quoted the tradition frequently attributed to the Imām Alī, which ends with the words "I am the point beneath the *bā'*"; he then went on to write, apparently in reference to Karīm Khān, that "you are aware of him, and have met with the point of knowledge and have reached the goal."[71] This letter was read to some of the *ṭullāb* and caused a certain amount of tumult; it was, according to al-Karbalā'ī, a factor in encouraging certain *ṭullāb* to leave for Kirman after Rashtī's death. Although Karīm Khān himself does not appear to have been a party to this forgery, al-Karbalā'ī thinks that he may indeed have been informed as to the "bearer" (*ḥamīl*) of knowledge after Sayyid Kāẓim.[72] Sayyid ʿAlī also seems to have been instrumental in fostering similar ideas concerning Karīm Khān in Kirman as well. In a letter to Kirman, apparently written after Rashtī's death, he stated that the Sayyid had said, "a certain person (*fulān*) is informed as to the point of knowledge (*nuqṭat al-ʿilm*), and that person is spiritual…and more worthy [than others] to be followed; it is permissible to gain knowledge from him."[73] According to al-Karbalā'ī, it was to this that Kirmānī referred in his *Izhāq al-bāṭil*, in writing of Rashtī that "he indicated what he indicated,"[74] with reference to the matter of succession.

Karīm Khān was not, however, entirely passive in this matter. After Rashtī's death, he wrote letters to the Shaykhis of Kazimiyya and to Mīrzā Muḥīṭ Kirmānī, Mullā Ḥasan Gawhar and Prince Sulaymān Mirza,[75] claiming to be "the one arising in the cause after him that is hidden from men (*al-qā'im bi 'l-amr ba'da 'l-ghā'ib ʿan al-nās*)."[76] It seems that, at a later stage, following his defection from Babism, Kirmānī employed Mullā Javād Vilyānī as his "herald" (*munād*) both to carry letters from him and to write on his behalf to others.[77] The exact nature of the claims put forward by Kirmānī in these letters is unclear.

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[70] Al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalā'ī, "Risāla," in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 519.
[71] Ibid., p. 518.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid., p. 519.
[74] Ibid. See Kirmānī, *Izhāq al-bāṭil*, p. 14.
[75] See previous chapter, note 147.
[76] Al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalā'ī, "Risāla," in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 517.
[77] See ibid., pp. 520, 527.

Raḍavī maintains that, immediately following the death of Rashtī, the Khān claimed that "one thousand gates of knowledge were opened to me, and within each of those gates another thousand gates lay open."[78] The implication appears to be that, just as Rashtī became the bearer of the knowledge which al-Aḥsā'ī had derived from the Imāms, so Karīm Khān, in his turn, was the recipient of the same supernaturally acquired knowledge. There is also, almost certainly, a conscious reference to a *ḥadīth* in which it is stated that the Prophet "taught" ʿAlī one thousand gates (of knowledge), from each of which another thousand opened.[79]

In general, Kirmānī succeeded in attracting a following by emerging as the chief representative of certain views and tendencies which appealed to a large section of the Shaykhi school, notably the more cautious and conservative section. His prodigious output of works on numerous topics and the comparative simplicity of most of his Persian writings ensured a rapid spread of his fame and a wide popularity. The emergence of Babism proved to be of particular help to him in consolidating his influence with that section of the school to which he made the strongest appeal, because it gave him the opportunity to make clear his position on the important question of the relationship of Shaykhism to Shiʿism as a whole, and to define his attitude towards more extreme Shaykhi views, particularly those being exploited within the context of Babism. While conserving the identity of the school, Kirmānī and his successors strove to drive a wedge between its present and its past and to integrate it as far as possible with the orthodox community, largely by playing down those elements in the original Shaykhi teachings which clashed most forcibly with traditional or contemporary views, and by emphasizing those aspects which asserted their identity with accepted Shiʿi beliefs.

This emphasis can be seen throughout the works of Karīm Khān, such as his well-known *Irshād al-ʿawāmm*, but we may use as a convenient example section seventeen of his *Risāla-yi sī faṣl*, written in 1269/1853.[80] The 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 Shiʿis; whatever the Shiʿis agree upon in respect of the

[78] Raḍavī, *Tadhkirat al-wafā'*, pp. 100–1.
[79] Al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 456.
[80] The section referred to may be found on pages 86–93, and the original question on pp. 11–12.

principles (*uṣūl*) of religion, we confess the same, and whatever they reject, we also reject. We regard the consensus (*ijmāʿ*) of the Shiʿis on the bases and subsidiaries (*furūʿ*) of faith as evident and proven." The rest of the section is a summary of standard Shiʿi beliefs concerning God, the Prophet, and the Imāms, in a manner resembling the more detailed discussion provided by al-Aḥsāʾī in his *Ḥayāt al-nafs* and by Rashtī in his *Risāla-yi uṣūl al-ʿaqāʾid*.

We have noted above how the trend towards orthodoxy among many Shaykhis after the death of Rashtī was given impetus by the emergence of Babism as a definable target for Bālāsarīs and Shaykhis alike. For Kirmānī, the emergence of such a target proved the key to the establishment of his own role as the defender of Shaykhism against the heretical views of the Babi Shaykhis and as the leader of the rapprochement with authority, such a role making him an obvious focus for the less radical element in the school. His attacks on the Bāb, which he carried out from the pulpit and through the writing and dissemination of four extended refutations, had the virtue of being, on the one hand, negative in its uncompromising rejection of Babism as an innovation (*biḍʿa*) essentially unconnected with Shaykhism and, on the other, positive in its consolidation of the orthodox Shiʿi position which he was seeking to adopt for the school and its doctrines. It is worth noting that, in all four refutations, in particular the earliest, *Izhāq al-bāṭil*, considerably more space is devoted to argument in favor of orthodox doctrine than to condemnation of Babi belief.

## Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad Shīrāzī

The main details of the life of the Bāb have been dealt with adequately if, at times, sketchily and hagiographically, in several separate works, to which reference may be made.[81] We need only note here a few basic facts of his early life, both in an attempt to clarify and reinterpret the details, and in order to serve as background to the more general events under discussion. Named ʿAlī Muḥammad,[82] he was born in

[81] The best and most convenient are: Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*; Hamadānī, *Tārīkh-i jadīd*; Fayḍī, *Nuqṭa-i ūlā*; Balyuzi, *The Báb*; A.-L.-M. Nicolas, *Séyyèd Ali Mohammed dit le Bâb: histoire* (Paris: Dujarric, 1905); Browne in *A Traveller's Narrative*, vol. 2, notes C, G, I, L, M, and S; Āvāra, *Kawākib*; and, more recently, Amanat, *Resurrection*.

[82] Shīrāzī, *Kitāb al-fihrist*, manuscript in Iran National Bahaʾi Archives (INBA), 5014C, p. 288; cf. idem, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* manuscript in Cambridge University Library (CUL), Browne Or. MS. F. 11. (dated 1891), f. 43b.

Muḥarram 1235/20 October 1819[83] to a prominent family of Ḥusaynī *sayyids* in Shīrāz.[84] His father, Sayyid Muḥammad Riḍāʾ, was a prosperous wholesale merchant (*tājir*), dealing in cloth from premises in Shīrāz and Bushehr, in conjunction with members of his wife's family.[85] Apart from Ḥājī Mīrzā Muḥammad-Ḥasan Shīrāzī (Mīrzāy-i-Shīrāzī) (1815–1895) and Ḥājī Sayyid Javād Shīrāzī—both paternal cousins of the Bāb's father—the family would seem to have had no members among the ulama, although the Bāb's maternal uncles and some other relatives appear to have been active adherents of the Shaykhi school.[86] The Bāb himself received some six or seven years basic schooling at a local *maktab*,[87] but it is clear that he was destined to join his uncles in running the family business. Although he may have been involved in business pursuits from as early as the age of ten,[88] he did not leave the *maktab* until he was about thirteen and did not take a full part in the family concerns until he reached fifteen.[89] Shortly after this, he moved to Bushehr with his uncle and guardian, Hājī Mīrzā Sayyid ʿAlī, and, after four years trading in partnership there, became independent at the age of nineteen.[90]

The Bāb's own attitude towards commerce, however, was certainly negative, and he seems to have become increasingly preoccupied with religious and intellectual pursuits. In his earliest extant work, a short *risāla* on *sulūk*, he remarks that "a Jewish dog is better than the people of the bazaar, for the latter are they that hesitate on the path"[91]—a telling illustration of his attitude towards the merchant classes at this stage. Perhaps even more significant is a statement in the *Ṣaḥīfa bayna 'l-ḥaramayn*, written in early 1261/1845, to the effect that "the science of *fiqh* is obligatory for all those who wish to engage in commerce; it

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[83] Shīrāzī, *Kitab al-fihrist*, p. 286.

[84] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 72–3; Fayḍī, *Nuqṭa-yi ūlā*, p. 64; Āvāra, *Kawākib*, p. 27. The Bāb himself refers to his lineage in the *Qayyūm al-asmā*, f. 43b.

[85] Shīrāzī, quoted Khan Bahadur Agha Mirza Muḥammad, "Some New Notes on Babism," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (London) (July 1927), p. 446.

[86] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 30.

[87] On the Bāb's schooling and childhood generally, see Balyuzi, *The Báb*, pp. 33–9; Abū 'l-Faḍl Gulpāyagānī and Sayyid Mahdī Gulpāyagānī, *Kashf al-Ghiṭāʾ ʿan ḥiyal al-aʿdāʾ* (Tashkent: [s.n.], [1919?]), pp. 82–4; Avārih, *Kawākib*, pp. 31–2.

[88] Fayḍī, *Nuqṭa-yi ūlā*, p. 82.

[89] Balyuzi, *The Báb*, p. 39.

[90] Fayḍī, *Nuqṭa-yi ūlā*, pp. 85–8. Muʿīn al-Salṭana says he was twenty when he went independent (quoted Balyuzi, *The Báb*, p. 41), but this conflicts with the Bāb's own statement that he left Bushehr at that age.

[91] Shīrāzī, *Risāla-fi 'l-sulūk*, manuscript in INBA 4011.C, pp. 123–127.

is not permissible for anyone who believes in God to carry out trading (*al-tijāra*) without a knowledge of *fiqh*."[92]

The frequent citations of *aḥādīth*, allusions to and quotations from works of Shiʿi scholarship, and detailed discussions of matters relating to points of *fiqh* and *kalām* in works such as the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-baqara, Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar, Risāla furūʿ al-Adliyya* and *Dalāʾil-i sabʿa*, suggest that the Bāb himself acquired considerable familiarity with theological literature about this period.[93] It seems that, while he was in Bushehr, he began to compose works of a devotional and theological character, including sermons (*khuṭub*) and eulogies of the Imāms.[94] In the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, he himself refers to works written by him for other merchants during his days in Bushehr.[95] According to ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Āvāra, some of these works were read by Shaykhis and excited curiosity as to the identity of their author.[96]

Nicolas—who does not, unfortunately, cite his authority for the statement—maintains that the first work penned by the Bāb was a treatise entitled *Risāla-yi fiqhiyya*, composed in Bushehr at the age of nineteen.[97] No manuscript of this work is known to exist, but there

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[92] Shīrāzī, *al-Ṣaḥīfa bayna 'l-ḥaramayn*, (in the hand of Ridvān ʿAlī, 1905) ms. in CUL, Browne Or. MS. F. 7. It is, however, interesting to compare a passage in Shīrāzī, *Bayān-i fārsī* (Tehran: [s.n., n.d.]), 7:6, p. 246, in which he states that the ulama, *ḥukkām, tujjār*, and others should marry within the limits of their own class.

[93] Among the works referred to and quoted by name by the Bāb in various writings, we may note: Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* (Shīrāzī, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar*, ff. 56a, 58b; idem, *Dalāʾil-i sabʿa,* p. 51); Majlisī, *Ḥaqq al-yaqīn* (Shīrāzī, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar*, f. 5a); al-ʿĀmilī, *al-Bayān* (Shīrāzī, *Kitāb al-ṭahāra*, ms. in INBA 5010 C, p. 173); al-Qummī, *Man lā yaḥḍuruhu 'l-faqīh* (ibid., p. 157); al-Ṭūsī, *al-Misbāḥ* (ibid., p. 167; Shīrāzī, *Dalāʾil-i sabʿa*, p. 66); al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ al-Fawāʾid* (Shīrāzī, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar*, ff. 24a, 27b; idem, letter quoted in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 274); Rashtī, *Lawāmiʿ* (Shīrāzī, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar*, f. 24a).

He also quotes numerous *khuṭub* of the Imām ʿAlī, including his *Khuṭbat al-yatīma* (Shīrāzī, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-baqara*, ms. in CUL, Browne Or. MS. F. 8, f. 4a), the *Khuṭba al-ṭuṭunjiyya* (Shīrāzī, *Dalāʾil-i sabʿa*, p. 46), the *Khuṭba yawm al-ghadīr* (ibid., p. 47), the *Khuṭbat al-ijmāʿ* (Shīrāzī, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar*, f. 77b), and the *Khuṭbat al-maḥzūn* (ibid., f. 85b).

It would also appear that the Bāb was familiar with the Bible, as attested by ʿAbbās Mīrzā's physician Dr. William Cormick (1820–1877) who records that he was seen reading a copy while in custody (quoted in Browne, *Materials*, p. 262). His only quotation (as far I am aware) from the Gospels is, however, quite apocryphal (Shīrāzī, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-baqara*, f. 20b). For a full study of Babism and the Bible, see Stephen Lambden, 'Some aspects of Isrāʾīliyyāt and the Emergence of the Bābī-Bahāʾī Interpretation of the Bible', PhD thesis, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 2002.

[94] Fayḍī, *Hadrat-Nuqta-i ūlā*, p. 88.

[95] Shirazi, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, f. 43a.

[96] Āvāra, *Kawākib*, p. 35.

[97] Nicolas, *Séyyèd Ali Mohammed,* pp. 189–90.

are a number of copies extant of a short treatise which appears to have been written in the lifetime of Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī. This is the *risāla* on *sulūk* referred to above. It would seem from a passage near the end of this treatise, in which the Báb refers to "my lord, protector, and teacher, Ḥājī Sayyid Kāẓim al-Rashtī, may God prolong his life," that it was written between 1255/1839, when the Báb visited Karbala for a year, and the death of Rashtī at the beginning of 1844.[98] It seems that the composition and distribution of these early works by the Báb excited some degree of controversy: Ḥājī Sayyid Javād Karbalāʾī, a prominent Shaykhi who had close ties with the Báb's family, is recorded as stating that Hājī Mīrzā Sayyid Muḥammad, one of the Báb's uncles, once approached him with a request to "give some good counsel to my nephew…tell him not to write certain things which can only arouse the jealousy of some people: these people cannot bear to see a young merchant of little schooling show such erudition, they feel envious."[99] The Báb himself indicates in the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* that his relatives treated his activities with considerable disapproval.[100]

In the end, ascetic practice and religious matters gradually came to occupy the Báb's mind to the exclusion of his business affairs, and, in 1255/1839, he closed up his office in Bushehr and headed for Karbala.[101] He remained at the *ʿatabāt* for about one year,[102] during which period he attended the classes of Rashtī, who received him with much attention on several occasions.[103] According to al-Karbalāʾī, the Báb remained at the *ʿatabāt* for eleven months, eight in Karbala and three at other shrines; when in Karbala, he would attend the classes of Rashtī every two or three days.[104] Aḥmad Rūḥī Kirmānī states that he attended the general classes given by Rashtī every day.[105] Balyuzi has argued, in keeping with

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[98] The words "may God prolong his life (*atāla ʻllāh baqāhu*)" appear only in the texts in INBC 4011.C and 6006.C.

[99] Narrative of Mīrzā Ḥabīb Allāh Afnān, quoted in Balyuzi, *The Báb*, p. 40. On Sayyid Javād Karbalāʾī (a grandson of Baḥr al-ʿUlūm), see Gulpāyagānī, *Kashf al-Ghiṭāʾ*, pp. 55–90; Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, pp. 238–44.

[100] Shirazi, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, f. 43b.

[101] The Bab states that he was fifteen when he went to Bushehr, and that he left for Karbala five years later (prayer quoted in Fayḍī, *Ḥaḍrat-Nuqṭa-yi ūlā*, pp. 104–5). Balyuzi gives an interesting account of his departure (*The Báb*, p. 41) but, on the authority of Gulpāyagānī, gives the date as the spring of 1841.

[102] The Báb, prayer quoted in Fayḍī, *Ḥaḍrat-Nuqṭa-yi ūlā*, p. 105.

[103] Sipihr, *Nāsikh al-Tawārikh*, vol. 3, p. 39; Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 26–7.

[104] Al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, "Risāla," in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 529.

[105] Shaykh Aḥmad Rūḥī Kirmānī, *Faṣl al-khiṭāb fī tarjumati aḥwāl al-Bāb*, Cambridge University Library, Browne Or. MS F. 27, f. 3b.

the Babi/Baha'i hagiographical tradition of innate knowledge (*'ilm-i ladunnī*), that "these occasional visits did not and could not make Him a pupil or disciple of Sayyid Kāẓim."[106] While this certainly correct in the sense that the Bāb never completed a full "course" of studies on the basis of which he might have been granted an *ijāza* by Rashtī or another *mujtahid*, it is misleading in terms of his mental attitude towards Sayyid Kāẓim. We have already quoted the *Risāla fi 'l-sulūk*, in which the Bāb refers to Rashtī as "my lord, support, and teacher (*sayyidī wa mu'tamadī wa mu'allimī*)"; in an early prayer, he speaks of himself as having been "one of the companions of Kāẓim, may my spirit be his sacrifice."[107] Similar references may be found in numerous other early letters.[108] It seems that, while in Karbala, the Bāb also studied Arabic literature under Mullā Ṣādiq Khurāsānī (d. 1889), who later became one of his most active converts.[109]

Several sources indicate that, in the course of his stay in Karbala and, particularly, his visits to the classes of Rashtī, the Bāb became acquainted with and attracted a certain amount of attention from a number of Shaykhis, many of whom later became his followers. These included Shaykh Ḥasan Zunūzī,[110] Mullā Ja'far Qazvīnī,[111] Mullā Ṣādiq Khurāsānī,[112] Mullā Muḥammad Ḥusayn Bushrū'ī,[113] Mīrzā Muḥammad-'Alī Nahrī and his brother Mīrzā Hādī (d. 1848),[114] Mullā Aḥmad Mu'allim Ḥisārī,[115] Mīrzā Muḥammad Rawḍa-Khān Yazdī[116] and

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[106] Balyuzi, *The Báb*, p. 42.

[107] Prayer in INBA 6005. C, pp. 5–6.

[108] See Mīrza Asadullah Fāḍil-i Māzandarānī, *Asrār al-āthār* (Tehran: Mu'assasa-yi Millī-yi Maṭbū'āt-i Amrī, 124–9 B. [1968–74]), vol. 4, pp. 369.

[109] Ibid., p. 370.

[110] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 25–30. On Zunūzī, who later transcribed many of the works of the Bāb, see ibid., pp. 25, 30, 212, 245, 249, 307, 593–4; Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūru al-ḥaqq*, pp. 37–8.

[111] Qazvīnī, *Tārīkh*, pp. 463–4. On Mullā Ja'far, see ibid. passim; Samandar, *Tārīkh-i Samandar*, p. 332; Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, pp. 363–5.

[112] Nicolas, *Séyyèd Ali Mohammed,* pp. 191–5. On Mullā Ṣadiq, see Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, pp. 145–53; Samandar, *Tārīkh*, pp. 162–70; Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 100, 145, 184.

[113] Nicolas, *Séyyèd Ali Mohammed*, p. 193.

[114] Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 97. On these two brothers, see ibid, pp. 96–9; 'Abbas Effendi ('Abd al-Bahā') *Tadhkirat al-wafā'*, pp. 269–70, 276.

[115] Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 159. On Mullā Aḥmad, see ibid., pp. 157–60; Samandar, *Tārīkh*, p. 252. He was, as we shall see, later Qurrat al-'Ayn's chief rival in Karbala.

[116] Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 458. On Mirza Muḥammad, see ibid. He was one of the Bāb's *ḥurūf al-ḥayy,* but later travelled travelled to Kirman and became a Shaykhi under Karīm Khān, one of whose relatives he married.

Hājī Sayyid Javād Karbalāʾī (d. 1882)[117] Mīrzā Ḥusayn Khān Dakhīlī, a son of Mullā Ḥusayn Dakhīl Marāghaʾī, states in an unidentified manuscript that his father met the Bāb with Sayyid Kāẓim and that a group of mutual friends used to talk about him before Rashtī's death. This group included Mīrzā Aḥmad Ibdāl Marāghaʾī (d. 1849), Āqā Muḥammad Ḥasan, Āqā Muḥammad-Ḥusayn Marāghaʾī (d. 1850), and Mullā ʿAlī Ardabīlī.[118] That the Bāb met and served Sayyid Kāẓim and was held in respect while in Karbala is also noted by Kirmānī in his first polemic against him, the *Izhāq al-bāṭil*, although he does point out that he himself never met him.[119]

After about one year, in 1256/1840 or, according to another version, in the autumn of 1841,[120] the Bāb ceded to requests from his mother and uncles and returned to Shīrāz. Before long, however, he seems to have grown restless again and planned to go back to Iraq. The family, reluctant for him to leave, intervened once more, arranging a marriage for him on 18 Rajab 1258/25 August 1842, to Khadīja Bagum (1820–1882), a daughter of his mother's paternal uncle, Ḥājī Mīrzā Sayyid ʿAlī.[121] A child named Aḥmad was born in 1295/1843, but died in infancy or, according to one source, was stillborn.[122]

It was several months after this that the Bāb had what appears to have been the first of a number of dreams or visions which convinced him that he had been chosen as the bearer of divine knowledge to succeed Rashtī, and as the gate to the Hidden Imām. In a passage at the beginning of his *tafsīr* on the *Sūrat al-baqara,* he states that, on the night before he began the book (his first major work), he dreamt that the city of Karbala (*al-arḍ al-muqaddaṣa*) rose piecemeal (*dharratan dharratan*) into the air and came to his house (in Shīrāz) to stand before him, whereupon he was informed of the imminent death of Rashtī.[123] The implication is that the Bāb had what he regarded as

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[117] Gulpāyagānī, *Kashf al-ghiṭāʾ*, p. 57. On Sayyid Javād, see note 103 above.

[118] Manuscript cited in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 55. Apart from Mullā Ḥusayn Dakhīl (a poet who lived with Bushrūʾī at one time) and Mīrzā Aḥmad Ibdāl Marāghaʾī (who became one of the *ḥurūf-i-ḥayy*), none of these individuals is well known.

[119] Kirmānī, *Izhāq al-Bāṭil*, pp. 104–5.

[120] Thus Balyuzi, *The Báb*, p. 41.

[121] Fayḍī, *Hadrat-i Nuqṭa-yi ūlā*, p. 158.

[122] Ibid., p. 193; Balyuzi, *The Báb*, p. 46. See also Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 76–7; Shirazi, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, f. 44b. It is more likely that the child was still-born, since he appears to have been born prematurely in Ṣafar 1259/March 1843 (ibid. f. 195a).

[123] This passage generally occurs before the *tafsīr* of the *Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, which precedes that of *al-Baqara* proper, but it can be found in other positions or not at all

a significant dream not long before the death of the Sayyid in Dhū ʾl-Ḥijja 1259/January 1844, possibly in the month of Dhū ʾl-Qaʿda/November–December 1843, as suggested by Māzandarānī.[124] According to a majority of manuscripts consulted by me, this *tafsīr* was completed up to the first *juzʾ* of the Qurʾān (verse 131 of the sura) in Muḥarram 1260/January–February 1844.[125] The second half of the *tafsīr* was completed in the course of 1260/1844 and was among the works in the Bāb's possession when he performed the *ḥajj* in the latter part of that year; it was, however, stolen from him, together with a number of other volumes, between Medina and Jidda.[126]

The extant text of the first half of the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-baqara* reveals very little which might be taken as seriously heterodox, in contrast to the highly unconventional *Qayyūm al-asmā*, begun only a few months afterwards. The abrupt and significant change in style and content between these two works seems to be attributable to a second, more compelling visionary experience which the Bāb underwent about one month before the announcement of his claim to Mullā Muḥammad Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī in May 1844. In his *Kitāb al-fihrist*, written in Bushehr on his return from pilgrimage on 15 Jumādī II 1261/21 June 1845,[127] the Bāb clearly states that "the first day on which the spirit descended into his heart was the middle [i.e., the 15th] of the month of Rabiʿ II."[128] Since it is added that fifteen months had passed since that experience, we can give the date as 15 Rabiʿ II 1260/4 May 1844. It would seem that this "descent of the spirit" was accompanied by a vision similar in many respects to initiatory dreams described by al-Aḥsāʾī and Rashtī, as we have seen earlier; his own dream is described by the Bāb in his *Ṣaḥīfa-yi ʿAdliyya* as follows:

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(as in the Cambridge manuscript, Browne F. 8). The manuscripts used by me for this passage are in INBA 6004.C and 6014.C.

[124] Māzandarānī, *Asrār al-āthār*, vol. 2, p. 62.

[125] Thus mss 6004.C and 6012.C in INBA, and a copy in the Haifa Bahaʾi archives, originally in possession of A.-L.-M. Nicolas. MS 6014.C in INBA bears the date Dhū ʾl-Ḥijja 1260/December 1844–January 1845; this is almost certainly corrupt since there is evidence that the second part of the *tafsīr* must have been completed by that date.

[126] Shirazi, *Khuṭba fī Jidda*, ms. in INBA 5006C, p. 332. The date as given in this manuscript is 1 Ṣafar, but on the basis of other days relating to his pilgrimage, it is clearly incorrect. Ishrāq Khāvarī cites another ms. which clearly gives 11 Ṣafar 1261/19 February 1845 (ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Taqvīm-i tārīkh-i amr* (Tehran: Muʾassasa-yi Millī-yi Maṭbūʿāt-i Amrī, 126 B. [1970]), p. 24).

[127] Thus dated in INBA mss. 4011.C, 6003.C, and 6007.C.

[128] Mss. 6003.C (p. 286) and 4011.C (p. 63).

> Know that the appearance of these verses, prayers, and divine sciences is the result of a dream in which I saw the blessed head of the prince of martyrs [Imām Ḥusayn] severed from his sacred body, alongside the heads of his kindred. I drank seven drops of the blood of that martyred one, out of pure and consummate love. From the grace vouchsafed by the blood of the Imām, my breast was filled with convincing verses and mighty prayers. Praise be unto God for having given me to drink of the blood of him who is His Proof, and made thereof the reality of my heart.[129]

Just as al-Aḥsāʾī and Rashtī had felt themselves confirmed in their roles as, in some sense, mediators of the knowledge of the Prophet and Imāms following dreams, so the Bāb now clearly began to regard himself as the recipient of the divine afflatus, verbally inspired by the grace of the Imām and filled with the Holy Spirit. However, whereas his two predecessors had been members of the *ulama* class and were able to adapt their visionary experiences to their role within the accepted patterns of religious behavior inside the religious hierarchy (within whose confines the *takfīr* controversy remained), the Bāb was to take the step characteristic of uneducated or partially-educated individuals who believe themselves to be granted supernatural revelations but have no recognized position within the formal religious structure of their society—the creation of a role for himself outside the established clerical system, corresponding to an approved charismatic or messianic figure revered in popular belief or expectation.

The Bāb continued to experience dreams or visions until at least Ramaḍān 1260/September–October 1844,[130] and possibly much later, but their significance dwindled somewhat as he came to believe himself to be in a state of perpetual grace and a recipient of direct verbal inspiration from the twelfth Imām or, in due course, God himself.

It seems possible that, even before the death of Rashtī, Shīrāzī (the Bāb) had begun to view himself as his future successor and as the "bearer of the cause" he predicted. Kirmānī maintains that, during the lifetime of Rashtī, the Bāb had been held in some respect, but was

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[129] Shirazi, *Risāla furūʿ al-ʿAdliyya*, p. 14; cf. Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 253; The Bāb to Muḥammad Shah, in Shirazi, *Muntakhabāt-i āyāt az āthār-i ḥaḍrat-i nuqṭa-yi ūlā* (Tehran, 134 B. [1977]), p. 14.

[130] Thus Shirazi, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, ff. 25a, 71a, 120b–121a. The vision described on f. 71a is said to have occurred in Ramaḍān: the section of the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* in which it occurs appears to have been written in the same month (see ff. 65b, 80a), and we may conclude that Ramaḍān 1260 is intended. What may have been a vision of the Hidden Imām is described in Shirazi, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar*, ff. 68b–69a.

even then influenced by certain ideas and events which ultimately led to his later claims.[131] He holds that the Báb had heard of the appearance of a certain Mullá Ṣádiq in Azerbaijan, who had acquired a following of some one thousand two hundred during Rashtí's lifetime, and that he was impressed by him.[132] The Mullá Ṣádiq named here would, in fact, appear to have been Mullá Ṣádiq Urdúbádí, who preached the imminent advent of the Qá'im in the Caucasus in the period before 1844,[133] but there is no evidence in the Báb's own writings that he had either heard of or been influenced, however indirectly, by him.

In a letter written in late 1260 or 1261, Shírází indicates that "following the death of the late Sayyid, there must be such a leader (*sayyid*) among his followers in every age," and makes it clear that he was the individual to whom the Shaykhis were meant to turn.[134] It seems that he received at least two letters from Rashtí, the contents of which he interpreted as an indication of his future position.[135] Ávára states that he saw a letter in the Báb's hand, dated 1259, in which he instructs his uncle to "tell the *ṭullāb* that the cause was not yet reached maturity and the time has not yet come,"[136] which strongly suggests that he was attracting attention as a potential leader at this point. The proximity of the year 1260, exactly one thousand lunar years after the entry of the twelfth Imám into the Lesser Occultation (*al-ghayba al-ṣughrā*), cannot have failed to further encourage his belief in the nearness of a new revelation of inner truth, not, perhaps, unrelated to this eventual return of the Imám.

In a letter written from prison in Azerbaijan to his uncle Ḥájí Mírzá Sayyid ʿAlí, Shírází indicates his belief that the year 1260 witnessed the beginning of a period of revealed *báṭin*, following several centuries of *ẓáhir*:

> From the time of the revelation of the Qurʾán for a period of nineteen times sixty-six years [1254], which is the number of Allāh [i.e., sixty-six in *abjad* reckoning], was the outward reality (*ẓāhir*) of the family of Muḥammad, during which every sixty-six years one letter of the words

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[131] Kirmání, *Izhāq al-bāṭil*, p. 106.
[132] Ibid., cf. p. 175.
[133] See ʿAbd al-Ḥamíd Ishráq Khávarí, *Raḥíq-i makhtúm* (Tehran: Muʾassasa-yi Millí-yi Maṭbúʿát-i Amrí, 130–31 B. [1973–74]), vol. 2, pp. 309–10.
[134] Letter quoted in Mázandarání, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 284.
[135] Letter quoted ibid., p. 286.
[136] Letter quoted Ávára, *Kawākib*, pp. 35–6. Ávára says the letter was written from Bushehr to Shiraz, but the Báb was definitely in Shiraz at this date.

> *bismi ʾllāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm* passed by, while four more years additional to the form of all the letters passed in the time of the perfect Shiʿi, that is Ḥājj Sayyid Kāẓim…It was for this reason that the letters of *bismi ʾllāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm*, which contain all the Qurʾān,[137] were gathered together in his presence. Nineteen days before the beginning of the revelation of the mystery, he joined the supreme concourse; the beginning of the year 1260 was the beginning of the revelation of the mystery.[138]

The stage was clearly set for the arrival of Mullā Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī and other Shaykhis from Karbala from about April to June 1844.

## The *ḥurūf al-ḥayy* or *sābiqūn*

We have observed in the first part of this chapter that, for a period of some four months after the death of Rashtī, the Shaykhi community of Karbala found itself unable to initiate any positive action to determine the mode of succession to its late head. Then, as al-Karbalāʾī states, a break with Mīrzā Muḥīṭ Kirmānī and Mullā Ḥasan Gawhar occurred, and some people began to disperse. This dispersal may well have been initiated—and was certainly led—by a young Iranian Shaykhi *ʿālim* of about thirty-one, Mullā Muḥammad Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī.[139] Born the son of a local merchant in Bushrūya, Khurāsān, in 1229/1814, Bushrūʾī was sent at an early age to Mashhad, where he studied in the Mīrzā Jaʿfar *madrasa*.[140] His principal teacher in Mashhad was Sayyid Muḥammad Qaṣīr Raḍawī Mashhadī (d. 1255/1839),[141] a pupil of Āqā Bihbahānī and the teacher of another leading early Babi, Mullā Muḥammad Ṣādiq Khurāsānī.[142] Bushrūʾī appears to have become a Shaykhi in Mashhad[143]

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[137] There are 19 letters in the phrase. There have been several recent attempts to decode the Qurʾān numerologically on the basis of the number 19.

[138] Shirazi to Ḥājī Mīrzā Sayyid ʿAlī, in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 223; cf. idem, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar*, f. 88b.

[139] On Bushrūʾī, see Denis MacEoin, "Molla Mohammad Hosayn Boshruʾi *Encyclopaedia Iranica* 4:4 (1989), p. 383; idem, "Muḥammad Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*; Bāmdād, *Rijāl*, vol. 1, pp. 379–83; Malik Khusravī, *Tārīkh-i shuhadāʾ*, vol. 1, pp. 19–58; Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, pp. 112–42.

[140] Malik Khusravī, *Tārīkh-i shuhadā*, vol. 1, pp. 19–20.

[141] Al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, "Risāla," in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 521. On Muḥammad Qaṣīr, see Kashmīrī, *Nujūm,* pp. 378–9; Kāẓimī, *Aḥsan al-wadīʿa*, vol. 1, pp. 15–19; Ḥabībābādī, *Makārim al-āthār*, vol. 1, p. 232.

[142] Samandar, *Tārīkh*, p. 162.

[143] Malik Khusravī, *Tārīkh-i shuhadāʾ*, vol. 1, p. 20.

and to have studied afterwards in Tehran[144] and Isfahan[145] before traveling to the *ʿatabāt* to study under Rashtī.[146] In Karbala, where he stayed for nine or eleven years,[147] he gained a reputation as one of the leading pupils of the Sayyid, who entrusted him with the task of answering questions on his behalf.[148] He wrote at least two books during this period, including a *tafsīr* on the *Sūrat al-kawthar*, and seems to have acquired a private following of *ṭullāb* and admirers, among them Mullā Muḥammad Taqī Haravī, Mullā ʿAbd al-Khāliq Yazdī, and Mīrzā Aḥmad Azghandī.[149] There appears to have grown up a conviction among some that Bushrūʾī would be the successor of Rashtī (*al-qāʾim bi ʾl-amr baʿdahu*), a belief which was made public on the latter's death but rejected by Bushrūʾī himself.[150]

As noted previously, about four years before the death of Rashtī, Bushrūʾī was sent on his behalf to Isfahan and Mashhad to discuss the Shaykhi position with Mullā Muḥammad Bāqir Shaftī and Hājī Mīrzā ʿAskar (then *Imām-Jumʿa* of Mashhad).[151] Following his visit to Mashhad, he seems to have returned to Bushrūya for a time; on his way back to the *ʿatabāt*, he heard of Rashtī's death while in Kirmanshah,[152] arriving back in Karbala soon after, on 1 Muḥarram 1260/22 January 1844.[153] On his return, Mullā Ḥusayn, as we have noted above, discussed the situation with Mullā Ḥasan Gawhar, Mīrzā Muḥīṭ Kirmānī, and other leading Shaykhis, but appears to have been dissatisfied with their wait-and-see policy.

On or about 2 Ṣafar/22 February, he retired with his brother, Mīrzā Muḥammad-Ḥasan Bushrūʾī (d. 1849), and nephew, Mīrzā Muḥammad-Bāqir (d. 1849) to the Masjid al-Kūfa, in order to engage

[144] Ibid.
[145] Al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, "Risāla," in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 521.
[146] Conflicting versions are given in ibid. and Malik Khusravī, *Tārīkh-i shuhadāʾ*, vol. 1, p. 20.
[147] Zarandī, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 415–6, gives nine years, Malik Khusravī, *Tārīkh-i shuhadāʾ*, vol. 1, p. 21, eleven.
[148] Al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, "Risāla," in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq,* pp. 521, 522.
[149] Ibid., pp. 521–2.
[150] Ibid., p. 522. See the Bāb, quoted in Khan Bahadur Agha Mirza Muḥammad, "Some New Notes on Babism," p. 448, note.
[151] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 19–24, 416; al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, "Risāla," in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, pp. 522–3.
[152] Qurrat al-ʿAyn to Vilyānī, in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 499.
[153] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 47.

in a retreat (*iʿtikāf*) for the conventional forty-day period (*arbaʿīn*).[154] While there, he was joined by Mullā ʿAlī Basṭāmī (d. 1846) and some six or twelve companions, who began an *iʿtikāf* some days behind the first arrivals.[155]

Zarandī limits the number participating in the *iʿtikāf* to those who were later to become the Bāb's first disciples, the Letters of the Living (*ḥurūf al-ḥayy*) or precursors (*sābiqūn*),[156] thereby giving the misleading impression that a simple division occurred between those who set out in search of a successor to Rashtī—and, by virtue of that act alone, "discovered" the Bāb—and those who were prepared to await developments in Karbala. It seems, however, that larger numbers were involved: Mīrzā Ḥusayn Hamadānī (d. 1881), the author of the *Tārikh-i jadīd*, relates that he was present at the *iʿtikāf* in the mosque in Kufa (presumably a fiction of convenience on his part) and that he saw there, apart from several of those who later became *ḥurūf al-ḥayy*, a Mīrzā ʿAbd al-Hādī, a Mullā Bashīr, and "many other learned and devout men who had retired into seclusion."[157] Māzandarānī mentions Ḥājī Sayyid Khalīl al-Madāʾinī, a tribal leader who had studied under Rashtī, as also present at the *iʿtikāf*.[158] The *Hasht bihisht* maintains that no fewer than forty individuals were involved.[159]

After the celebration of the birth of the Prophet on 12 Rabiʿ I/1 April, Bushrūʾī left Kufa with his brother and cousin and, possibly, several

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[154] Ibid., p. 50; al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, "Risāla," in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 510. The Jāmiʿ al-Kūfa was one of four mosques in which Shiʿi law permitted *iʿtikāf*, according to specific rules (see Jaʿfar ibn al-Ḥasan Muḥaqqiq al-Ḥillī, *Al-Mukhtaṣar al-nāfiʿ fī fiqh al-Imāmiyya* (Tehran: [s.n.], 1387 [1967]), pp. 97–8.

[155] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 50; al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, "Risāla," in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 510.

[156] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 50, 66. Of the *ḥurūf al-ḥayy*, Mullā Muḥammad-ʿAlī Bārfurūshī and Qurrat al-ʿAyn are not included among the *muʿtakkifūn* by Zarandī. There are close parallels between Zarandī's account of the occult manner in which the *ḥurūf al-ḥayy* were "drawn" to the Bāb (see pp. 52, 63, 68, 69–70) and the "search after hidden truth" element recurrent in Ismaili biographical writing (see Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins: The Struggle of the Early Nizari Ismaʾilis against the Islamic World* (The Hague: Mouton, 1955), p. 17 and n. 15). This points up the significance of the gnostic motif in Babism (and its connection with the polar and chiliastic motifs), to which we shall return. This same theme is extremely common in later Bahaʾi biographical and autobiographical materials in both Iranian and Western contexts.

[157] Hamadānī, *Tārīkh-i-Jadīd*, p. 33.

[158] Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 262.

[159] Mīrzā Āqā Khān Kirmānī and Aḥmad Rūḥī, *Hasht bihisht* ([Tehran?: s.n., 1960?]), p. 276.

others, heading for Kirman with the intention of meeting and consulting with Karīm Khān. According to Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī Hashtrūdī's *Abwāb al-hudā*, he was accompanied on his journey by Mullā Yūsuf Ardabīlī (d. 1849), Mullā Jalīl Khūʾī (Urūmī) (d. 1849), Mullā ʿAlī Bushrūʾī, Mīrzā Aḥmad Azghandī, Shaykh Abū Turāb Ashtahārdī, and others.[160] The same source states that Bushrūʾī himself had told the author that, having despaired of Mullā Ḥasan Gawhar, had decided to visit Kirmānī.[161] Aḥmad ibn Abī 'l-Ḥasan Sharīf Shīrāzī records a similar statement by a companion of Bushrūʾī.[162] Aḥmad Rūhī holds that Kirmānī was already "inviting people" to join him, and that Bushrūʾī and his companions sought him out as the possible *bāb* of the Imām.[163] The route taken by Bushrūʾī and his fellow-travellers passed, however, through Bushehr and Shīrāz, where it would seem that they sought out Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad. According to one account, Bushrūʾī told Mīrzā ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Khurāsānī that "since the Seyyid ʿAlī Muḥammad had honoured me with his friendship during a journey which we made together to the Holy Shrines… I at once on reaching Shīrāz sought out his abode."[164] Other sources are agreed that Bushrūʾī had at least seen the Sayyid during the latter's stay in Karbala in 1841, probably shortly before his departure for Isfahan,[165] while Āvāra maintains that he had formed a particular affection for the Bāb at that period.[166]

According to Zarandī, Bushrūʾī arrived in Shīrāz on 4 Jumādā I/22 May, was met by the Bāb on his arrival, and acquainted that evening with the latter's claims.[167] Almost two months, however, seems unnecessarily long for the journey from Karbala to Shīrāz, and we may presume that Bushrūʾī actually arrived some weeks before this. That such was the case seems to be confirmed by Hamadānī, who describes a process of gradual conversion over several meetings culminating in his reading of the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*.[168] Mīrzā Yaḥyā Ṣubḥ-i Azal indicated to

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[160] *Abwāb al-hudā*, ms., quoted Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 117. On Hashtrūdī (d. 1270/1853–4) and this work, see ibid., pp. 73–4.

[161] Ibid.

[162] Quoted in Khan Bahadur Agha, "Some New Notes on Babism," p. 448, note.

[163] Kirmānī, *Faṣl al-khiṭāb*," f. 4a.

[164] Hamadānī, *Tārīkh-i-Jadīd*, p. 34; cf. Kirmānī, *Faṣl al-khiṭāb*, f. 4b.

[165] Nicolas, *Séyyèd Ali Mohammed,* p. 193; Fayḍī, *Ḥaḍrat-Nuqṭa-yi ūlā*, pp. 101–2.

[166] Āvāra, *Kawākib*, p. 39.

[167] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 52–61.

[168] Hamadānī, *Tārīkh-i-Jadīd*, pp. 35–9. It is possible that Bushrūʾī initially decided to stay in Shīrāz in order to receive treatment for a cardiac condition from which he suffered (see ibid, p. 34; Kashani, *Nuqṭat al-Kāf*, p. 106). The Bāb himself states that

E. G. Browne that it was the perusal of the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* which had initially convinced Bushrūʾī of the truth of the Bāb's claims.[169] During this period, Bushrūʾī also read part at least of the Bāb's incomplete *Tafsīr Sūrat al-baqara*[170] and his short commentary on the *Ḥadīth al-jāriyya*.[171] Mullā Jaʿfar Qazvīnī states, on the authority of Mullā Jalīl Urūmī, himself one of the *ḥurūf*, that the Bāb showed various writings to Bushrūʾī while the latter was teaching in the Vakīl mosque; he says that Bushrūʾī would go with his companions every day to visit the Bāb and that, after forty days, the latter openly revealed his claims to them.[172] Whatever the details of this preliminary period, the Bāb did, in the end, announce to Bushrūʾī that he was the successor to Rashtī and, indeed the gateway to the Imam; Bushrūʾī accepted his claims, by reason of which he came to be known as "the first to believe" (*awwal man āmana*), the "gate of the gate" (*bāb al-bāb*), and even the "return of Muḥammad".[173] The date of this "declaration" is given by the Bāb himself with great precision in the *Bayān-i fārsī* as the evening of 5 Jumādā I/22 May, at two hours and eleven minutes after sunset.[174]

Some three weeks before that, on 15 Rabīʿ II/4 May, another group of Shaykhis set off from Karbala for Shīrāz, apparently traveling some of the way by sea, presumably following Bushrūʾī's route via Bushehr.[175] This group consisted of seven individuals "to the number of the days of the week", namely Mullā ʿAlī Basṭāmī, Mullā Jalīl Urūmī, Mīrzā Muḥammad-ʿAlī Qazvīnī (a brother-in-law of Qurrat al-ʿAyn), Mullā Ḥasan-i-Bajastānī, Mullā Aḥmad "Ibdāl" Marāghaʾī, Mullā Mahmūd Khūʾī, and Mullā Muḥammad Miyāmī.[176]

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it was the reading of his writing which convinced Bushrūʾī of the truth of his claims (letter quoted Māzandarānī, *Asrār al-āthār*, vol. 3, p. 103).

[169] Edward Granville Browne, "A Catalogue and Description of 27 Babi Manuscripts," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (London) vol. 24 (1892), p. 499.

[170] Hamadānī, *Tārīkh-i-Jadīd*, pp. 35–6.

[171] Ibid., p. 38. For the *ḥadith*, see al-Kulaynī, *Al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, pp. 495–6.

[172] Qazvīnī, *Tārīkh*, p. 472.

[173] See Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 6; Shirazi, *Dalāʾil-i*, p. 54; idem, *Bayān-i fārsī*, 1:2, p. 6; idem, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, ff. 161b; al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, "Risāla," in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq,* p. 521; Qurrat al-ʿAyn, "Risāla," in ibid., p. 499.

[174] Shirazi, *Bayān-i fārsī*, 2:7, p. 30.

[175] Al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, "Risāla," in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 510.

[176] Ibid.

Zarandī, however, in writing of what must be the same group, omits the last name and adds another seven, bringing the total to thirteen.[177] Arriving at the latest some forty days after the Báb's "declaration",[178] this group of thirteen met the Báb individually and accepted his claims, most probably with the encouragement of Bushrū'ī and his brother and nephew, who had also joined the rank's of the Báb's disciples.[179] Included in this group were Mullā ʿAlī Qazvīnī and his brother Mīrzā Hādī; the former was, as we have noted, a brother-in-law of Fāṭima Khānum Baraghānī, better known as by the titles Qurrat al-ʿAyn (given her by Rashtī) and Jināb-i Táhira (given her by the Báb).[180]

This remarkable woman—a latter-day Juana Inés de la Cruz[181]—had already won a reputation as an outstanding and radical Shaykhi *ʿālima* (female scholar), and was to become a center of much controversy

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[177] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 66, 80–1. The seven additional names are: Mullā Khudā-bakhsh Qūchānī, Sayyid Ḥusayn Yazdī, Mīrzā Muḥammad Rawḍa-Khān Yazdī, Shaykh Saʿīd Hindī, Mullā Bāqir Tabrīzī, Mullā Yūsuf Arbabīlī (d. 1849), and Mirza Hādī Qazvīnī. On these thirteen individuals severally, see Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, pp. 19–22, 47, 49–52, 53–4, 63, 105–8, 169–70, 171, 304–5, 453, 459–61; idem, *Asrār al-āthār*, vol. 3, pp. 97–8, vol. 4, pp. 384–5; Malik Khusravī, *Tārīkh-i shuhadā'*, vol. 2, pp. 2–6, 6–10, 301–4, 204–10, 210–12, 218–9, 225–8, vol. 3, pp. 276–83; Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Qāmūs-i Īqān*, vol. 2, pp. 1126–33, vol. 4, pp. 1877–9; Samandar, *Tārīkh-i Samandar*, pp. 85–6, 153–4, 216–8, 351–2; Balyuzi, *The Báb*, pp. 58–68; Browne note F in *A Traveller's Narrative*, vol. 2, pp. 247–8, 248–9.

[178] Shirazi, *Bayān-i fārsī*, 8:15, p. 300.

[179] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 66–9, 80.

[180] For details on Qurrat al-ʿAyn consult: Malik Khusravī, *Tārīkh-i shuhadā'*, vol. 3, pp. 129–215; Samandar, *Tārīkh-i Samandar*, pp. 72–84, 343–70; Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, pp. 310–69; anon. *Bi-yād-i sadumīn sāl-i shahādat-i nābighi-yi dawrān Qurrat al-ʿAyn* ([Tehran: s.n.], 1368 [1949]); Ḥusām Nuqabā'ī, *Manābiʿ-i Tārīkh-i Amr-i Bahā'i* (Tehran: [s.n.], 133 B. [1976]); Wardī, *Lamaḥāt*, vol. 2, pp. 152–90; Furūgh Arbāb, *Akhtarān-i tābān,* vol. 1 (Tehran: Muʿassasa-yi Millī-yi Maṭbūʿāt-i Amrī, 128 B.[1972]), pp. 26–42; Muḥammad Muṣṭafā al-Baghdādī, "Risāla amriyya," in Sohrab, *Al-risāla al-tis' ʿashariyya*, pp. 102–28; ʿAlī Akbar Dihkhudā, "Ṭāhira", in idem, *Lughat nāma* (Tehran: Chapkhāna-yi Majlis, 1325–52 [1947–74]); Ḥājī Muḥammad Muʿīn al-Salṭana, "Sharḥ-i ḥāl-i Ṭāhira Qurrat al-ʿAyn," appended to *Tarīkh-i-Muʿīn al-Salṭana,* manuscript, INBA; ʿAbbas Effendi, *Tadhkira*, pp. 291–310; Niʿmat Allāh Dhukā'ī Bayḍā'ī, *Tādhkira-yi-shuʿarā-yi qarn-i avval-I Bahā'i* (Tehran: Muʿassasa-yi Millī-yi Maṭbūʿāt-i Amrī, 121–26 B. [1965–70]), vol. 3, pp. 63–133; Gulpāyagānī, *Kashf al-Ghiṭā'*, pp. 92–110.

[181] The famous 17th-century Mexican nun, a scholar, feminist, and love poet who defied the church authorities to argue her own radical ideas, including the need to educate girls. See Mary Christine Morkovsky, "Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz" *A History of Women Philosophers: Modern Women Philosohers, 1600–1900*. Edit. Mary Ellen Waithe. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991. Dartmouth College has an excellent online resource at www.dartmouth.edu/~sorjuana/.

following her acceptance of Babism. Although then in Qazvīn,[182] she was enrolled by the Báb in his group of *ḥurūf al-hayy*, apparently on the recommendation of Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī.[183] It would appear that the latter then corresponded with her concerning the Báb and that, on receipt of his information, she, for her part, accepted his claims: "At the beginning of the cause of this mighty one, I was in Qazvīn and, as soon as I heard of his cause, before reading the blessed *tafsīr* [on the *Sura Yūsuf*, i.e., the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*] or the *Ṣaḥīfa makhzūna*, I believed in him."[184] We shall discuss the subsequent activities of Qurrat al-ʿAyn in a later chapter.

The last member of the group of eighteen individuals known as the *ḥurūf al-ḥayy* was a young Shaykhi *ṭālib* from Mazandaran who had, it seems, also been engaged in *iʿtikāf* at the mosque in Kufa, but had traveled independently to Shīrāz.[185] Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī Bārfurūshī, latter known as *Ḥaḍrat-i Quddūs*, became a close favorite of the Báb, whom he accompanied on the *ḥajj* in the autumn of 1844, and eventually led the Babi uprising in his native province in 1848.[186]

With the arrival of Bārfurūshī in Shīrāz and his acceptance of the Báb's claims, the latter considered the group of his first apostles to be complete.[187] The eighteen *ḥurūf al-ḥayy* (in *abjad* reckoning, *ḥayy* = 18)[188] appear to have constituted with the Báb himself the first "unity" (*wāḥid* = 19) of a series of nineteen unities which would make up a body of three hundred and sixty one individuals—a *kullu shayʾ* (= 361)—the first believers in the *báb* of the Imām.[189] The *ḥurūf al-ḥayy* are themselves regarded as identical with the *sābiqūn* referred to in early works

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[182] Qurrat al-ʿAyn, "Risāla," in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 494. All other sources state that she was then already in Karbala, but her own statement is unequivocal.

[183] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 81–2.

[184] Qurrat al-ʿAyn, "Risāla," in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq,* p. 494.

[185] Hamadānī, *Tārīkh-i-Jadīd*, pp. 35–6; Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 69–72.

[186] On Bārfurūshī, see Denis MacEoin, "Mollā Moḥammad ʿAlī Qoddūs Bārforūshī', *Encyclopaedia Iranica* 3:8 (1988), p. 794; Malik Khusravī, *Tārīkh-i shuhadāʾ*, vol. 1, pp. 58–82; Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, pp. 405–30; Bāmdād, *Rijāl*, vol. 3, pp. 451–5.

[187] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 69. Accurate lists are given in ibid., pp. 80–1 and Gulpāyagānī, *Kashf al-Ghiṭāʾ*, p. 90.

[188] See Shirazi, *Bayān-i fārsī*, 1:2, p. 7; 2:2, p. 20; 5:17, p. 180; 6:13, p. 220.

[189] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 123; Shirazi, *Bayān-i fārsī*, introduction p. 3; idem, *Le Béyan persan*, translated by A.-L.-M. Nicolas (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1911–14), vol. 1, pp. 7–9, footnote; p. 13n. On the relationship of this system on the Babi calendar, see idem, *Bayān-i fārsī*, 5:3, p. 153. A certain similarity to the Ismaili hierarchical system may be noted.

of the Bāb and his followers,[190] both in the literal sense of their having preceded others in the recognition of the Bāb and in the more esoteric sense of their identity with the first group of mankind to respond to God's pre-eternal covenant.[191] This latter group is itself identified in Shiʿi literature with Muḥammad and the Imāms,[192] and it is clear that the Bāb regarded the *ḥurūf al-ḥayy* as the return of the Prophet, the twelve Imāms, the four original *abwāb*, and Fāṭima.[193] As we shall see, both the exclusive position granted the *ḥurūf al-ḥayy* and their identification with the most sacred figures of Shiʿism were to be productive of serious controversy in the early Babi community of Karbala.

[190] See for example Shirazi, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* ff. 37a, 45a, 132a, 134a, 161a, 162a, 182b; idem, *al-Ṣaḥīfa bayna ʾl-ḥaramayn*, p. 16; idem, letter to Mīrzā Ḥasan-i Khurāsānī (d. 1849), in INBA 6003 C., p. 321; Shaykh Sulṭān Karbalāʾī, letter in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, pp. 249–50; Qurrat al-ʿAyn, "Risāla," in ibid., p. 500.

[191] On this use of the term, see Rashtī, *Uṣūl al-ʿaqāʾid*, pp. 57, 58.

[192] See ibid., pp. 90–1; Muḥammad Khān Kirmānī, *al-Kitāb al-mubīn*, 2nd ed. ([Kirman]: Chāpkhāna-yi Saʿādat, 1354 Sh [1975]), vol. 1, pp. 304–5.

[193] Shirazi, *Bayān-i fārsī*, 1:2, pp. 6–7; 1:3–19, pp. 8–10; idem, letter to Ḥājī Mīrzā Sayyid ʿAlī Shīrāzī, quoted in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq,* pp. 223–4; see also Mullā Shaykh ʿAlī Turshīzī, letter quoted in ibid., p. 166.

CHAPTER FIVE

# SOME ASPECTS OF EARLY BĀBI DOCTRINE

## The Early Writings of the Bāb

The *ḥurūf al- ḥayy* were primarily responsible for spreading the claims of the Bāb to their fellow-Shaykhis and, to a lesser extent, other Shiʿis, and we shall have cause to consider their activities in this connection at a later stage. In thus furthering the Bāb's claims, they placed considerable emphasis on the writings which he was now beginning to pen in large numbers.[1]

Of these early writings, by far the most important and influential was the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* or *Aḥsan al-qaṣaṣ*, a lengthy "commentary" on the *Sura Yūsuf* (and often referred to in early Bābi literature simply as "the *tafsīr*").[2] There are, unfortunately, serious problems connected with the dating of this work, which appear at present to be insoluble.

According to Zarandī (1831–1892), the first chapter of the *tafsīr*, entitled "Sūrat al-mulk," was written in the presence of Bushrūʾī on the evening of the Bāb's "declaration", although his account gives a curious impression of an extremely long chapter, which the "Sūrat al-mulk" is not.[3] Mīrzā Ḥusayn Hamadānī, however, implies that Bushrūʾī was shown a complete copy of the *tafsīr*, possibly on the same occasion.[4]

The Bāb himself states in a letter that he completed the writing of the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* in forty days, although he does not make it clear when he began or ended work on it.[5] It is generally reckoned that, on

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[1] For a full account of the Bāb's writings, see Denis MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bābi Doctrine and History*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992.

[2] For details further to those given here, see Edward Granville Browne, "The Bābis of Persia. II. Their Literature and Doctrines," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (London) vol. 21 (1889), pp. 904–9; idem, "Catalogue and Description," pp. 699–701; idem, "Some Remarks on the Bābi Texts Edited by Baron Victor Rosen in Vols. I and VI of the *Collections Scientifiques de l'Institut des Langues Orientales de Saint Petersbourg*," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (London) vol. 24 (1892), pp. 261–8; Viktor Romanovich Rozen, *Les Manuscrits arabes de l'Institut des langues orientales* (Saint Petersburg: Eggers & Comp., 1877), pp. 170–91; Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Qāmūs-i Īqān*, vol. 3, pp. 277–82.

[3] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 61.

[4] Hamadānī, *Tārīkh-i-Jadīd*, p. 39.

[5] Shirazi, letter quoted in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 285.

leaving Shīrāz before the autumn of 1844, both Mullā ʿAlī Basṭāmī and Mullā Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī (d. 1849) carried with them separate copies of this book, which they brought to Iraq and Tehran respectively.[6] That this *tafsīr* was widely distributed in the first year of the Bāb's career is further confirmed by him in the *Bayān-i Fārsī*, where, in reference to his *ḥajj* journey in 1844–5, he states that "in that year the blessed commentary on the *Sūra Yūsuf* reached everyone."[7] It is certainly clear that the book must have been begun in 1260/1844, since the Bāb states in an early passage that he is now twenty-five years old.[8]

Internal evidence, however, suggests that the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* was, in fact, completed much later than the forty-day period mentioned. There are, for example, two references to "this month of Ramadan"[9]—most proBably Ramadan 1260/August–September 1844. Other references include those to a storm at sea,[10] quite possibly one of those suffered by the Bāb on his journey from Bushehr to Jidda between 19 Ramaḍān/2 October and late Dhū 'l-Qaʿda/early December;[11] to what appears to be his first public declaration of his claims at the Kaaba in Mecca;[12] to God's having revealed matters to him in the Kaaba;[13] to his call "from this protected land, the station of Abraham," apparently Mecca;[14] to his having been "raised up" in the Masjid al-Ḥarām (in Mecca);[15] and, finally, to what seems to have been yet another experience in Mecca, in which he says

> when I went to the Kaaba (*al-bayt*), I found the house (*al-sakīna*) raised on square supports before the *bāb*; and, when I sought to perform the cir-

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[6] See ibid., pp. 106, 121, 187.
[7] Shirazi, *Bayān-i fārsī*, 4:18, p. 148.
[8] Idem, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, f. 14a.
[9] Ibid., ff. 65b, 80a.
[10] Ibid., f. 126a.
[11] See Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 130; on the dating of the Bāb's pilgrimage, see his *Khuṭba fī Jidda*, pp. 332–3.
[12] Shirazi, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, f. 137b. The passage reads: *wa idhā kashafnā 'l-ghiṭāʾ ʿan abṣārihim li 'l-bayt al-ḥarām fa-hum qad kānū tawwāfan ḥawla 'l-dhikr ka-annahum nāmū fi 'l-bayt ʿalā ḥadd al-taḥdīd min anfusihim wa lā yanẓurūn ilā 'llāh mawlāhum al-ḥaqq lamḥatan ʿalā al-ḥaqq al-qawī qalīlan*. Compare Ḥājī Mīrzā Ḥabīb Allāh Afnān, quoting Ḥājī Abū 'l-Ḥasan Shīrāzī, in Balyuzi, *The Báb*, pp. 71–2. This may, however, be a reference to the Bāb's declaration and *mubāhala* challenge addressed to Mīrzā Muḥīṭ Kirmānī at the Kaʿaba on 15 Dhū 'l-Ḥijja/26 December, and again on two subsequent occasions (Shirazi, *al-Ṣaḥīfa bayna 'l-ḥaramayn*, pp. 14–15).
[13] Idem, "Qayyūm al-asmāʾ," f. 137b.
[14] Ibid., f. 152a.
[15] Ibid., f. 154b.

> cumambulation around the Kaaba, I found that the duty imposed in truth in the Mother of the Book was seven times.[16]

These references, all of which occur in the later section of the book, make it clear that it was completed during the Bāb's pilgrimage to Mecca, from which he returned to Bushehr on 8 Jumādī I 1261/15 May 1845.[17] Bushrūʾī, Basṭāmī and others of the *ḥurūf al-ḥayy* must have carried only portions of the *tafsīr* with them when they left Shīrāz. It is also not unlikely that, if this hypothesis as to a later date of completion is correct, the Bāb's reference to "forty days" should be taken to mean forty days in all, over a prolonged period, rather than forty consecutive days.

Consisting of one hundred and eleven "suras", corresponding to the number of *āyāt* in the *Sūra Yūsuf*, the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*[18] is really much more than a *tafsīr* in the normal sense of the word. Much more space is taken up with doctrinal reflections of the Bāb than with actual Qurʾānic commentary, and, when a verse is finally commented on, it is usually in an abstruse and allegorical fashion. The style is consciously modeled on that of the Qurʾān—something true of many of the Bāb's earlier writings—this being alluded to in a statement quite early in the book: "We have sent this book down upon our servant by the permission of God, [in a manner] like it [the Qurʾān]"[19] and in later passages.[20]

This apparent similarity to the style of the Qurʾān (which is not, in fact, as consistent as it might at first appear), combined with the form of the book as divided into *sūras* and *āyāt*, and the occurrences of numerous passages closely paralleling the exact wording of the Qurʾān,[21] led to accusations that the Bāb had produced a "falsified" Qurʾān or "forged" his own Qurʾān. Thus, for example, Tanakābunī states that, in the year of his appearance, the Bāb sent his false Qurʾān (*Qurʾān-i jaʿlī*) to Iraq, and that this "Qurʾān" was taken from his messenger by the pasha of Baghdad (Najīb Pāshā).[22] Similarly, Major Henry Rawlinson (1810–1895),

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[16] Ibid., 192b–193a.

[17] Supralinear annotation in Shirazi, *Ṣaḥīfa aʿmāl al-sana*, ms. in INBA 5006C, pp. 262–78, end of first of two untitled prayers between suras 5 and 6.

[18] For a detailed discussion of this work, see Todd Lawson, 'The Qurʾān Commentary of Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad, the Bāb', PhD thesis, McGill University, 1987, available online at: http://bahai-library.com/?file=lawson_quran_commentary_Bāb.

[19] Shirazi, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, f. 7b.

[20] Ibid., ff. 35a, 53b, 65b, 67b, 72b, 141b, 167b, 174b, 196b.

[21] See in particular the passage dealing with legislation on ff. 80a–83b, 168b–173b, 179b, 183b–192a.

[22] Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 186.

the British political agent in Baghdad at the time of Mullā ʿAlī Basṭāmī's arrest and trial, wrote to Stratford Canning that Mullā ʿAlī

> Appeared in Kerbela, bearing a copy of the Koran, which he stated to have been delivered to him, by the forerunner of the Imām Mahdī, to be exhibited in token of his approaching advent. The book proved on examination to have been altered and interpolated in many essential passages, the object being, to prepare the Mohammedan world for the immediate manifestation of the Imām, and to identify the individual to whom the emendations of the text were declared to have been revealed, as his inspired and true precursor.[23]

Rawlinson elsewhere speaks of Basṭāmī's "perverted copy of the Koran."[24] The text of the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* itself, however, indicates that this was a most superficial response and that the theory behind the *tafsīr* was much more complex than mere imitation of the Qurʾān. At the very beginning of the book, it is made clear that the twelfth Imām had sent it (*akhraja*) to his servant (the Bāb, frequently referred to as "the remembrance"—*ah-dhikr*);[25] he has been sent these "explanations" from "the remnant of God (*baqiyyat Allāh*), the exalted one, your Imām."[26] To be more precise, "God has sent down (*anzala*) the verses upon His Proof, the expected one," who has, in his turn, revealed them to his remembrance.[27] In different terminology, the Imām inspires (*awḥā*) the Bāb with what God has inspired him.[28]

The role of the Imām here appears to be very similar to that of the angel Gabriel in the Qurʾānic theory of revelation; thus, for example, he has inspired the Bāb just as God inspired the prophets of the past.[29] The process is not, however, quite that simple, for the bulk of the work seems to be intended as the words of the Imām speaking in the first person, while there are a great many passages in which either God or

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[23] Rawlinson to Canning (FO 248/114), dated 8 January 1845, enclosed in Rawlinson to Sir Justin Sheil (1803–1871), 16 January 1845.

[24] Ibid., Rawlinson to Sheil, 16 January 1845 (FO 248/14).

[25] Shirazi, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, f. 2a.

[26] Ibid., f. 14a.

[27] Ibid., f. 196b; cf. 29b: "We sent down this book from God as a blessing unto our servant."

[28] Ibid., f. 4b; cf. f. 90b: "God has inspired (*awḥā*) his proof (the Imām) upon that mighty word (the Bāb)." On the Imāms as recipients and mediators of *waḥy*, see al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 1, pp. 12–13, 74, 123–4. On the application of term *waḥy* to the Bāb, see Qurrat al-ʿAyn, autograph *risāla* (ms) in possession of an Azalī Bābi in Tehran, pp. 19, 22–3 (Photocopy in the author's possession).

[29] Shirazi, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, f. 109b.

the Bāb is intended as the speaker, and others in which it is not at all clear who is intended. It is, nevertheless, manifest that the book is represented as a new divine revelation of sorts, comparable to the Qurʾān. Thus the Imām is "made known" through "the new verses from God,"[30] while God speaks "in the tongue of this mighty remembrance [i.e., the Bāb]."[31] It is stated that "this is a book from God,"[32] and that "God has sent down (*anzala*) this book,"[33] while the Bāb is summoned to "transmit what has been sent down to you from the bounty of the Merciful."[34] In this respect a comparison is drawn with the Qurʾān which goes beyond mere form: God has "made this book the essence (*sirr*) of the Qurʾān, word for word,"[35] and one "will not find a letter in it other than the letters of the Qurʾān";[36] this book "is the *Furqān* of the past,"[37] and is referred to repeatedly as "this Qurʾān,"[38] "this *Furqān*,"[39] or one of "these two *Furqāns*,"[40] while reference is made to "what God has sent down in His book, the *Furqān*, and in this book."[41] As in the case of the Qurʾān, a challenge is made to men to produce a book like it,[42] for it is held to be inimitable.[43] As such, it is in itself the evidence of the Imām to men.[44] It contains the sum of all previous scriptures,[45] abrogates all books of the past, except those revealed by God,[46] and is the only work which God permits the ulama to teach.[47]

The *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* may be said to combine something of the character of the letters (*ṭawqīʿāt*) "written" by the Hidden Imām through his intermediaries, the four *abwāb*, of the various books reputed to be in the possession of the Imāms—the *muṣḥaf* of Fatima, *al-Ṣaḥīfa, al-Jāmiʿa,*

[30] Ibid., f. 39a.
[31] Ibid., f. 97b.; cf. f. 76a, where the Bāb is described as "the truthful tongue of God."
[32] Ibid., f. 100b.
[33] Ibid., f. 117b.
[34] Ibid., f. 106b.
[35] Ibid., f. 72b; cf. f. 53b.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid., f. 141b.
[38] Ibid., f. 65b.
[39] Ibid., f. 167b.
[40] Ibid., ff. 174b, 196b.
[41] Ibid., f. 65b.
[42] Ibid., ff. 49b, 66b.
[43] Ibid., ff. 14a, 27a.
[44] Ibid., f. 40b.
[45] Ibid., f. 15b.
[46] Ibid., f. 56a.
[47] Ibid., f. 41a.

*al-Jabr*, the "complete Qurʾān", and the previous scriptures[48]—and of the Qurʾān itself.

The tension between the Bāb's specific claims at this period (to be the gate of the Hidden Imām, the remembrance of God and the Imām, and the "seal of the gates" [*khātim al-abwāb*]) and what appears to be a clear impulse in the direction of a claim to prophethood, if not actual divinity forms one of the more interesting features of this book. It is, in any case, one of the lengthiest of works of the Bāb and, leaving aside the extremely diffuse *Kitāb al-asmāʾ*, the most extensive of his Arabic writings. While hardly the easiest of books to understand, being terse, allusive, and at times extremely vague in style, it does provide us with a reasonably detailed picture of the Bāb's thought as it must have impressed itself on his earliest disciples and opponents.

Since there is clearly no space here to adequately summarize the contents of a work of some four hundred pages, much of which is given over to the unsystematic treatment of metaphysical themes, reference to certain of the more interesting topics it contained must suffice.

A theme which recurs throughout the book is that it is an expression of the "true Islam" and that, indeed, salvation exists only in acceptance of the claims of the Bāb, as the representative of the Imām and of God. Thus, at the very beginning of the book, it is stated that "the pure religion (*al-dīn al-khāliṣ*) is this remembrance, secure; whoever desires submission (*al-islām*), let him submit himself to his cause."[49] Similarly, it is said that "this religion is, before God, the essence (*sirr*) of the religion of Muḥammad,"[50] and that whoever disbelieves in the Bāb shall have disbelieved in Muḥammad and his book.[51] The Hidden Imām declares in one passage that "there is no path to me in this day except through this exalted gate,"[52] and it is maintained that "God has completed His proof (*atamma ḥujjatahu*) unto [men] with this book."[53] The gate and representative of the Imām, the Bāb was also, in a sense, the Imām himself

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[48] On these, see al-Kulaynī, *Al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, pp. 438–40, 441–3, 456–62; Kirmānī, *al-Kitāb al-mubīn*, vol. 1, pp. 288–92, 295–6. On the Qurʾān in all its aspects being in the keeping of the Imāms, see al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 1, p. 59. The *Kalimāt-i maknūna* of Bahāʾ Allāh was originally identified with the *ṣaḥīfa* of Fāṭima (see Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Raḥīq-i makhtūm*, vol. 2, p. 84).

[49] Shirazi, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, f. 2a.

[50] Ibid., f. 78a.

[51] Ibid., f. 7b.

[52] Ibid., f. 76b; cf. f. 132b.

[53] Ibid., f. 55b.

"in the worlds of command and creation (*ʿawālim al-amr wa ʿl-khalq*),"[54] and, as such, was entrusted with a mission on behalf of the Imām to all mankind.[55]

He himself constantly addresses the "peoples of the earth,"[56] or of "the East and West,"[57] and calls on his followers to "spread the cause to all lands."[58] Towards the beginning of the *tafsīr*, he summons "the concourse of kings" to take his verses to the Turks and Indians and to lands beyond the East and West.[59] God Himself had assured him of sovereignty over all lands and the peoples in them,[60] had written down for him "the dominion of the earth,"[61] and already ruled the world through him.[62] The Bāb, clearly, did not conceive of his message as limited to Iran, or to the Shiʿi or even the Islamic world, but envisioned a universal role for himself complementary to that of Muḥammad and the Imāms. Since the laws of Muḥammad and the decrees of the Imāms were to remain binding "until the day of resurrection,"[63] there was no question but that the primary means of bringing men to the true faith was to be jihad.[64]

Messianic expectation and exhortation to *jihad* were clearly linked for the Bāb in the role of the Imām as the victorious *mujahid* of the last days: "the victory (*naṣr*) of God and His days are, in the Mother of the Book, near at hand."[65] On the one hand, it is clear that aiding God (*naṣr*—a term widely used in the Qurʾān to mean fighting in the path of God) was seen by the Bāb as a means of anticipating the Day of Judgment and of helping to hasten its advent. He speaks of "the man who has submitted himself (*aslama wajhahu*) to God, and who aids our cause and anticipates the dominion (*dawla*) of God, the Almighty, as drawing near."[66] Elsewhere, he calls on "the peoples of the East and West" to

[54] Ibid., f. 76b.; cf. ff. 89a, 142b.
[55] Ibid., ff. 26a., 46 b.
[56] Ibid., f. 3a., etc.
[57] Ibid., f. 49b. etc.
[58] Ibid., f. 41a.; cf. f. 68b.
[59] Ibid., f. 3a.
[60] Ibid., f. 89b.
[61] Ibid., f. 102a.
[62] Ibid., ff. 26a., 121b.
[63] Ibid., f. 185b.
[64] For a detailed discussion of the Bāb's views on jihad, see Denis MacEoin, "The Bābi Concept of Holy War", *Religion*, 12 (1982): 93–129.
[65] Shirazi, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, f. 41b.
[66] Ibid., f. 74b.

"issue forth from your lands in order to come to the assistance of God (*li-naṣr Allāh*) through the truth for, truly, God's victory (*fatḥ Allāh*) is, in the Mother of the Book, near at hand."[67] More explicitly, the Bāb links the waging of holy war with the necessary preparations for the advent of the Qā'im: "O armies of God!", he writes, "when you wage war with the infidels (*al-mushrikīn*), do not fear their numbers.... Slay those who have joined partners with God, and leave not a single one of the unbelievers (*al-kafirīn*) alive upon the earth, so that the earth and all that are on it may be purified for the Remnant of God (*baqiyyat Allāh*), the expected one [i.e., the twelfth Imām in his persona as the Mahdī]."[68]

On the other hand, the Bāb anticipated jihad as one of the events prophesied in the traditions relating to the appearance of the Qā'im.[69] In a relatively early passage of the *Qayyūm al-aṣmā'*, the Imāms (*ahl al-bayt*) prophesy that they will wage war on behalf of the Bāb: "We shall, God willing, descend on the day of remembrance, upon crimson thrones, and shall slay you, by the permission of God, with our swords, in truth—just as you have disbelieved and turned aside from our mighty word [i.e., the Bāb]."[70] The *Qayyūm al-asmā'* itself was "revealed", it states, "in order that men might believe and assist him [the Bāb] on the day of slaughter (*yawm al-qitāl*)."[71] The Bāb himself was, it seems, awaiting permission from the Imām to "rise up in the cause" when the time came[72]—a possible allusion to his projected visits to Kufa and Karbala, to which we shall refer later.

Regulations concerning the conduct of *jihad* are set out in some detail in the *Qayyūm al-asmā*, principally in *sūras* 96 to 101.[73] For the most part, these consist—like a great many passages of the book (notably those devoted to legislation)—of verbatim or near-verbatim reproductions of existing Qur'ānic passages, or echoes of such passages, with only occasional novel features introduced by the Bāb himself. Apart from these regulations for *jihad*, which are of particular interest for the light they shed on early Bābi history and on the question of militancy in the

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[67] Ibid., f 169b.
[68] Ibid., f. 172b.
[69] For a useful summary of traditions relating to the role of the Qā'im as *mujāhid* in a Shaykhi contest, see al-Aḥsa'i, *Ḥayāt an-nafs*, pp. 116–26.
[70] Shirazi, *Qayyūm al-asmā'*, f. 55a.
[71] Ibid., f. 84b.
[72] Ibid., f. 99 b.
[73] For a discussion of these regulations and of the Bāb's attitude to jihad in general, see MacEoin, "The Bābi Concept of Holy War".

movement, the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* contains passages detailing the basic Islamic laws concerning *ṣalāt*,[74] *ḥajj*,[75] *ṣawm*,[76] *zakāt*,[77] marriage and divorce,[78] manslaughter,[79] foodstuffs,[80] ablutions,[81] inheritance,[82] usury and trade,[83] adultery,[84] theft,[85] *nawāfil*,[86] the *lex talionis*,[87] idols, wine, and gambling,[88] and smoking (which is prohibited).[89] There is no room here to enter into a discussion of the relationship of the Bāb's legal pronouncements here or elsewhere (as in his *Risāla furūʿ al-ʿAdliyya*) and the Islamic law as it appears in standard works of Shiʿi *fiqh*; the most important point to note is the contrast between this early insistence on the observance of Islamic law with the later abrogation of the *sharīʿa* and its replacement by the highly idiosyncratic system of legislation embodied in the Arabic and Persian *Bayāns*.

Aside from the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* and the second part of the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-baqara*, the Bāb penned several shorter works during the year or so between his first claims and his return to Bushehr from the *ḥajj* in May 1845. There has been some confusion as to the identity of the earliest works of the Bāb,[90] but, fortunately, he himself has listed most or all of them in two works, the first entitled *Kitāb al-fihrist*, clearly dated 15 Jumādā II 1261/21 June 1845, and certainly written in Bushehr, and the second proBābly entitled *Risāla-yi dhahabiyya*,[91] which records fourteen works written "from the beginning of the year 1260 to the middle

[74] Shirazi, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* ff. 25b, 81b, 83a, 83b, 183b, 187b, 188a.
[75] Ibid., ff. 74b, 80b, 179b, 185b.
[76] Ibid., ff. 80a, 83b, 186b.
[77] Ibid., ff. 81b, 83a.
[78] Ibid., ff. 81a, 183b, 184a, 190b, 191a.
[79] Ibid., f. 81b.
[80] Ibid., ff. 81b, 82a, 83a, 187a.
[81] Ibid., ff. 82a, 191b.
[82] Ibid., ff. 82b, 189b.
[83] Ibid., f. 183b.
[84] Ibid., f. 185b.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid., ff. 187b, 189a.
[87] Ibid., f. 82a.
[88] Ibid., ff. 80b, 82b, 185a, 187a.
[89] Ibid., f. 80b.
[90] See A.-L.-M. Nicolas, introduction to *Le Livre des sept preuves de la mission du Bâb*, translated by A. L. M. Nicolas (Paris: J. Maisonneuve, 1902), pp. i–ii ; Ṣubḥ-i Azal, quoted in "Writings of the Bāb and Subh-i-Ezel," in Browne (ed.), *A Traveller's Narrative*, vol. 2, pp. 339–40.
[91] For my reasons for naming this work, which appears in the CUL Browne MS F. 28 (item 6) as the *Saḥīfa-yi Raḍawiyya*, see MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bābi Doctrine and History*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992.

of the first month of the year 1262"[92] (i.e., from 1 Muharram 1260/22 January 1844 to 15 Muharram 1262/13 January 1846). The first of these works, although earlier in date, in fact contains a larger number of individual titles than the second. It also has the advantage of giving the actual names of the works cited, whereas the *Risāla-yi dhahabiyya* gives oblique references which require elucidation on the basis of information gleaned elsewhere.[93] We shall restrict ourselves here, therefore, to the list of works given in the *Kitāb al-fihrist*.[94]

Apart from the works already mentioned, the *Kitāb al-fihrist* refers to the *Duʿā-yi ṣaḥīfa, Ṣaḥīfa aʿmāl al-sana, al-Ṣaḥīfa bayna ʾl-ḥaramayn, Tafsīr al-basmala, Kitāb al-rūḥ*, thirty-eight letters to individuals, twelve *khuṭub* delivered or written on the *ḥajj* journey, and replies to forty-one questions. In addition to the above, the Bāb lists here the titles of several works stolen from him by a Bedouin while on pilgrimage. According to his own statement, in a *khuṭba* written in Jidda, this occurred on 11 Ṣafar 1261/19February 1845, between Medina and Jidda.[95]

It is not certain at what date the *Duʿā-yi ṣaḥīfa* was written, but its inclusion in the *Kitāb al-fihrist* immediately after the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* suggests that it might have been contemporary with it. This seems to be confirmed by a statement in the latter work that "we have sent down unto you with this book that written *ṣaḥīfa*, that the people may read his prayers (*daʿwātahu*) by day and by night,"[96] which is almost certainly a reference to this work. Māzandarānī refers to it by the title a *Ṣaḥīfa al-makhzūna*,[97] and a comparison of texts under these two titles confirms that they are indeed the same work. This important early piece is a collection of fourteen prayers, largely designed for use on specific days or festivals, such as the ʿĪd al-Fiṭr, ʿĪd al-Aḍḥā, the night of ʿĀshūrā, and even the night of Bāb's "declaration" on 5 Jumādā I. Mullā ʿAlī Basṭāmī carried a copy of this work with him to the *ʿatabāt* in the autumn of 1844, and it appears to have been copied and distributed there.[98] Similarly when Bushrūʾī left Shīrāz shortly after Basṭāmī, but in the direc-

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[92] CUL Browne F. 28 (item 6).

[93] On the identity of the works listed in the *Risāla-yi dhahabiyya*, see MacEoin, *Sources*.

[94] I have collated the lists in two manuscripts in INBA 4011.C (pp. 62–9) and INBA 6003.C (pp. 285–93).

[95] Shirazi, *Khuṭba fī Jidda*, p. 332. See last chapter; note 130.

[96] Shirazi, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, f. 67b.

[97] Māzandarānī, *Asrar al-āthār*, vol. 4, pp. 246–7.

[98] Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 106.

tion of Tehran, he also carried a copy of the *Ṣaḥīfa makhzūna*, together with the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* and some other short works.[99] At least seven manuscripts of this work are still in existence.[100]

It seems that at least three major works of the Bāb were written in the course of his nine-month *ḥajj* journey. Of these, the most important is undoubtedly the *Ṣaḥīfa bayna ʾl-ḥaramayn*. This treatise was written, as the title indicates, between Mecca and Medina, for Mīrzā Muḥīṭ Kirmānī and Sayyid ʿAlī Kirmānī (who were also on the *ḥajj* that year),[101] on and possibly after 1 Muḥarram 1261/10 January 1845.[102] This work of about one hundred short pages is an unsystematic collection of replies to questions together with prayers. Among the topics dealt with are: the Bāb's *mubāhala* challenge to Mīrzā Muhīt;[103] the use of talismans;[104] the seven causes of creation;[105] the courses of the celestial bodies;[106] and right conduct (*sulūk*).[107] There are prayers to be said at sunset,[108] after the noon and dawn *ṣalāts*,[109] on the evening of Friday,[110] and at the beginning of every month,[111] as well as instructions for pilgrims to the Shrine of Ḥusayn.[112]

Of particular interest is a lengthy passage in which the Bāb sets out a somewhat strenuous daily routine for the seeker (*sālik*), with directions as to prayer, *nawāfil*, fasting (which includes an additional fast of ten days each month to the age of thirty, of fifteen days from thirty to forty, of three days from forty to fifty, and of Ramadan only from fifty), the taking of gum mastic, water, and milk, study (including that of *fiqh*), sleep and prayers during the night.[113] Several manuscripts of this work

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[99] Ibid., p. 121.
[100] Among these is an unidentified copy in CUL, Add. 3704 (6).
[101] Title of Library of the University of Leiden MS 2414. See also CUL Browne MS F. 7, pp. 4, 14. On the place of writing, see ibid., p. 10; cf. Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 137.
[102] Shirazi, *al-Ṣaḥīfa bayna ʾl-ḥaramayn*, pp. 10, 89, 96, 97.
[103] Ibid., pp. 14–15.
[104] Ibid., pp. 27–37.
[105] Ibid., p. 35; cf. idem, *Risāla furūʿ al-ʾAdlīyya*, ms. in INBA 5010 C, p. 16.
[106] Idem, *al-Ṣaḥīfa bayna ʾl-ḥaramayn*, pp. 38–41.
[107] Ibid., pp. 41–6, 49–55, 50–64, 66–84. In the *Risāla furūʿ al-ʿAdliyya* (p. 32), the Bāb states that "The path of servitude and the journey towards God have been set out in detail in the *Ṣaḥīfa-yi ḥaramayn* (sic.)."
[108] Shirazi, *al-Ṣaḥīfa bayna ʾl-ḥaramayn*, pp. 46–8.
[109] Ibid., pp. 55–8; 64–6.
[110] Ibid., pp. 84–96.
[111] Ibid., pp. 96–101.
[112] Ibid., pp. 101–22.
[113] Ibid., pp. 66–84.

are known to exist, the earliest of which are one in the Baha'i archives in Haifa, date 1261/1845, and another in their Tehran archives, dated the same year.

The fate of the *Kitāb al-rūḥ*, composed at sea on the Bāb's return journey,[114] was less fortunate. According to Nicolas, this book, which the Bāb himself thought highly of, describing it as "the greatest of all books,"[115] and which he wished to have sent to all the ulama,[116] was seized at the time of his arrest and thrown into a well in Shīrāz.[117] Nicolas claims that it was rescued by "pious hands," albeit in a seriously damaged condition.[118] As a result, several partial copies are in existence today, a total of five manuscripts of differing degrees of completeness being known to the present author. This work would also appear to be known as the *Kitāb al-ʿadl*,[119] and is recorded as having originally consisted of seven hundred suras.

A third work, of some interest for its doctrinal implications, also appears to have been composed during this journey. According to Zarandī, when the Bāb returned to Bushehr in 1845, he sent Mullā Muḥammad-ʿAlī Bārfurūshī (who had accompanied him to Mecca) ahead of him to Shīrāz.[120] Bārfurūshī was entrusted with a letter to the Bāb's uncle, Ḥājī Mīrzā Sayyid ʿAlī,[121] and a copy of a work entitled the *Khaṣāʾil-i sabʿa*: "a treatise in which He had set forth the essential requirements from those who had attained to the knowledge of the new Revelation and had recognized its claims."[122] This work was given to Mullā Ṣādiq Khurāsānī by Bārfurūshī when the latter reached Shīrāz, and it was in accordance with one of the precepts contained in it that Mullā Ṣādiq made use of an altered form of the *adhān* in the Masjid-i Shamshīrgarān in Shīrāz.[123]

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[114] Nicolas, *Séyyèd Ali Mohammed dit le Bâb*, p. 213; Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 288.

[115] *Aʿẓam al-kutub*: see Māzandarānī, *Asrar al-āthār*, vol. 4, p. 44.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Nicolas, *Séyyèd Ali Mohammed, dit le Bâb*, p. 60.

[118] Ibid.

[119] Māzandarānī, *Asrar al-āthār*, vol. 4, p. 45; cf. Shirazi, *Risāla furūʿ al-ʿAdliyya*, pp. 7, 9.

[120] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 142.

[121] Translation in Nicolas, *Séyyèd Ali Mohammed, dit le Bâb*, pp. 214–8.

[122] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 143.

[123] Ibid., p. 144. In a letter to Khurāsānī written at the same time, the Bāb instructs him to chant the *adhān* and to teach in the mosque "where the verses were sent down from your Lord"; this was the Shamshīrgarān Mosque near the Bāb's home, and not the Masjid-i Naw, as Zarandī states (see letter quoted in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 149; Hamadānī, *Tārīkh-i-Jadīd*, pp. 200, 201). According to Fayḍī, however, the

A riot ensued, as a result of which Bārfurūshī, Khurāsānī, and a third Bābi named Mullā ʿAlī-Akbar Ardastānī were physically punished and expelled from the city, not long before the Bāb's arrival there—the first example of opposition to the Bābis in Iran (though hardly the conscious attack on Bābism which later partisan sources make it out to be).[124]

Although I have never been able to trace a copy of this work, there seems to be at least one manuscript in existence, since both Ishrāq Khāvarī, and Muḥammad ʿAlī Fayḍī refer to its contents. Since they are of considerable interest, I shall list the seven regulations given in this work as cited by these two writers:[125]

1. To read the *Ziyāra al-jāmiʿa al-kubrā* on Fridays, festivals, and holy nights, after the performance of ablutions and purification of body and clothes with great care, in a spirit of sanctity.
2. To perform the prostration of the ritual prayer (*ṣalāt*) on the grave of Imām Ḥusayn, in such a way that the nose of the worshipper touches the grave.
3. To add the formula *ashhadu anna ʿAlīyan qablu Muḥammad ʿabdu baqiyyati ʾllāh* ("I bear witness that ʿAlī Muḥammad [i.e. the Bāb] is the servant of the Remnant of God") to the *adhān*.[126]
4. Each believer to hang round his neck, reaching to his chest, a talisman (*haykal*) in the Bāb's hand, containing various names of God and other mysterious devices based on the divine names.[127]
5. Each believer to wear a ring of white agate bearing the words: "there is no god but God; Muḥammad is the Prophet of God; ʿAlī is the *walī* of God; 273."[128]
6. To drink tea with the greatest cleanliness and delicacy.
7. To refrain from smoking.

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book was given, not to Khurāsānī, but to the Bāb's uncle, Ḥājī Mīrzā Sayyid ʿAlī (Fayḍī, *Ḥaḍrat-Nuqṭa-yi ūlā*, p. 153.

[124] Balyuzi, *The Báb*, pp. 76–8.

[125] Fayḍī, *Ḥaḍrat-Nuqṭa-yi ūlā*, pp. 53–4; ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Muḥāḍirāt* (Tehran: Muʾassasa-yi Millī-yi Maṭbūʿāt-i Amrī, 126 B. [1963]), vol. 2, pp. 785–6.

[126] Compare the *adhān* formula used by the Ḥurūfīs and described in the *Istiwānāma* of ʿAlī al-Aʿlā (see Bausani, "Ḥurūfiyya," p. 601).

[127] On the Bāb's use of the *hayākil* for men and *dawāʾir* for women, see Browne, *Materials*, p. 216; Māzandarānī, *Asrar al-āthār*, vol. 3, pp. 46–7, vol. 4, pp. 115–20. For a fuller discussion, see Denis MacEoin, "Nineteenth-Century Bābi Talismans", *Studia Iranica* 14:1 (1985), pp. 77–98.

[128] The figure "273" here is a reference to the words "*ʿAlī Muḥammad bāb Allāh*."

It is, I think, clear that none of these prescriptions constitutes, in strict terms, an abrogation of any part of the Islamic *sharīʿa*; they appear to be rather in the nature of supererogatory observances designed to mark out the followers of the Bāb as especially pious—a point to which we shall return.

An important work which seems to have been written in Bushehr after the Bāb's return from the *ḥajj* is the *Ṣaḥīfa* (or *Kitāb*) *aʿmāl al-sana*. This work contains fourteen chapters, interspersed with unnumbered sections, basically dealing with the observances and prayers for various important dates in the Muslim calendar, and, in this respect, bearing a close resemblance to the *Ṣaḥīfa makhzūna*. Of even greater importance are two works written most proBābly shortly after the Bāb's return to Shīrāz in the summer of 1845.[129] These are two related treatises on *fiqh*, the *Ṣaḥīfa-yi ʿAdliyya* and the *Risāla furūʿ al-ʿAdliyya*, dealing with *uṣūl* and *furūʿ* respectively.

The *Ṣaḥīfa-yi ʿAdliyya* consists of five *abwāb* as follows:

1. On the mention of God
2. In explanation of the Balance according to the command of God
3. On the knowledge of God and his saints (*awliyāʾ*)
4. On the return to God (*maʿād li ʾllāh* [sic])
5. On the prayer of devotion to God (*ikhlāṣ li ʾllāh* [sic]).

This would appear to be the first Persian work of the Bāb's, as he himself explains in the text.[130] It is of particular value in helping us form a clear picture of the Bāb's ideas at this juncture, especially since it seems to represent the first step taken to address himself to a wider audience than the Shaykhi ulama for whom his earlier works had been written. In the course of this work, he states that the Islamic legal system "shall not be abrogated";[131] speaks of his verses as "utter nothingness when compared with a single word of the book of God or the words of the people of the house of purity [i.e., the Imāms]";[132] praises Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī,

[129] The Bāb is now known to have been about one week's journey from Shiraz at Kunār-takhta, on 24 Jumādā II 1261/30 June 1845 (see Balyuzi, *The Báb*, p. 105).
[130] Shirazi, "Risāla furūʾ al-ʾAdlīyya," pp. 3–4.
[131] Ibid., p. 5.
[132] Ibid., p. 7; cf. p. 10.

but condemns his followers;[133] refers to a vision of the head of the Imām Ḥusayn, which he appears to have regarded as instrumental in giving him his earliest inspiration;[134] condemns the concept of the oneness of existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) as unbelief;[135] lists the seven bases of mystical knowledge (*maʿrifa*) as divine oneness, concepts, the gates (*abwāb*), the imamate, the pillars (*arkān*), the *nuqabāʾ*, and the *nujabāʾ*;[136] states that prayer through the Imām or others is unbelief, and denies that either al-Aḥsāʾī or Rashtī prayed through ʿAlī or thought him the Creator (a point on which, as we have seen, they had been attacked);[137] regards the station of the Imāms as higher than that of the prophets;[138] states that "most of the men and women of the Twelver Shiʿi sect, by virtue of their ignorance of this station [i.e., of the *nuqabāʾ*]", shall go to hell;[139] declares the enemies of al-Aḥsāʾī and Rashtī to be unbelievers like the Sunnis;[140] speaks of the former as the "pure Shiʿi" (*shīʿa khāliṣ*);[141] writes of the necessity of belief in a physical resurrection and the Prophet's ascent to heaven (the *miʿrāj*), condemns the idea of spiritual resurrection and maintains that al-Aḥsāʾī did not speak of it;[142] and, finally, speaks of obedience to himself, as the "servant" of the twelfth Imām, as obligatory.[143] When compared with statements in earlier works, it is clear that the Bāb had opted for the use of *taqiyya* or concealment of one's true beliefs, perhaps because this text was in Persian and more easily understood.

The *Risāla furūʿ al-Adlīyya* is often found in manuscripts accompanying the foregoing, but is generally less common. It has the distinction of being, as far as is known, the earliest work of the Bāb's to have been translated. While its author was staying at the house of Mīr Sayyid Muḥammad, the *Imām-Jumʿa* of Isfahan, in the course of his visit to that city from late 1846 to 1847, Mullā Muḥammad-Taqī Haravī (a Shaykhi

[133] Ibid., p. 13.
[134] Ibid., p. 14.
[135] Ibid., p. 16.
[136] Ibid., pp. 20–31. This hierarchy is based on a tradition related by Jābir ibn Ḥayyān (d. 803); for an early Bābi interpretation, see al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, "Risāla," in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 528; see al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 1, pp. 8–1, 60, and (on *maʿrifa* of the first four stations), pp. 26–7.
[137] Shirazi, Risāla furūʿ al-ʿAdliyya," pp. 20, 22.
[138] Ibid., p. 24.
[139] Ibid., p. 31.
[140] Ibid., pp. 32–3.
[141] Ibid., p. 33.
[142] Ibid., p. 34.
[143] Ibid., p. 41.

scholar to whom we have referred previously as a close disciple of Rashtī) translated the *Risāla* from Arabic into Persian. It consists of seven chapters as follows:

1. A prayer of visitation *Ziyāra jāmiʿa (ṣaghīra)*
2. On obligatory prayer (*ṣalāt*)
3. On the regulations governing obligatory prayer
4. On the alms tax (*zakāt*)
5. On *khums*
6. On jihad
7. On *dayn*

All of these topics are dealt with in the traditional Shiʿi manner, often entering into minute details of observances, purification, and suchlike, and suggesting some familiarity on the part of the Báb with works of *fiqh*.

The most important work which can be assigned to the period of the Báb's residence in Shīrāz from July 1845 to September 1846 is the well-known *Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar*, a commentary of over one hundred folios written for Sayyid Yaḥyā Dārābī (known by the *laqab* Waḥīd), during the visit he made to Shīrāz to interview the Báb (according to Bábi accounts, on behalf of Muḥammad Shāh).[144] An account of the writing of this work is given by Zarandī.[145] It appears to have been widely circulated by the Báb's followers: ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Navāʾī speaks of it being sent to Tehran, Kerman, and Isfahan,[146] but it undoubtedly went much further afield than that—it was used, for example, by Qurrat al-ʿAyn when preaching Bábism in Kirmanshah,[147] and we may, I think, assume that Dārābī himself carried a copy on his travels, which carried him to most parts of Iran.

Interesting as it undoubtedly is in places, and highly regarded as it was by the early Bábis, this work is, for the most part, almost unreadable, consisting of highly abstract and insubstantial speculation on the verses,

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[144] On Dārābī, proBábly the most active Bábi *dāʿī* of this period and leader of the Bábi risings in Yazd and Nayrīz, see Bāmdād, *Rijāl*, vol. 4, pp. 433–8; Muḥammad-ʿAlī Fayḍī, *Nayrīz-i Mushkbīz*. (Tehran: Muʾassasa-yi Millī-yi Maṭbūʿāt-i Amrī, 129 B. [1972]), pp. 7–75; Muḥammad Shafīʿ Rawḥānī-Nayrīzī, *Lamaʿāt al-anwār* (Tehran: [s.n.], 130 B. [1973]), vol. 1, pp. 40–54.

[145] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 174–6.

[146] Notes to Iʿtiḍād al-Salṭana, *Fitna-yi Báb*, p. 160.

[147] Al-Baghdādī, *Risāla amriyya*, p. 112.

words and even letters of the sura on which it is supposed to be a "commentary". Of greater interest are the numerous *aḥādīth* which the Bāb quotes in a later section of the work, indicating his familiarity with works of tradition and his concern with the prophecies relating to the advent of the Qāʾim. In view of the development of Bābi doctrine after 1848, it is of interest to note the Bāb's reference here to the fact that, although the permitted things (*ḥalāl*) and prohibitions (*ḥarām*) of Muḥammad will endure "until the day of resurrection", yet when the Qāʾim appears, "he shall bring a new book, new laws, and a new dominion".[148]

We have here again, as in the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, an appeal to the inimitable verses of the book,[149] but, in distinction to the *Ṣaḥīfa-yi ʿAdliyya*, it is claimed that only the words of the Imāms can compare with those of the Bāb.[150] As in the latter work, he praises al-Aḥsāʾī and Rashtī but condemns their followers,[151] while here he maintains that "all that Kāẓim and Aḥmad before him have written . . . does not equal a single word of what I have revealed to you."[152]

Nevertheless, as we shall note in the next section, the claims which he advances in this work are in apparent contradiction to those which he had made previously.[153] The Bāb's remarks here on the concept of *rukn al-rābiʿ* shall also be dealt with separately. It is of interest to note that, in the course of this *tafsīr*, the Bāb specifically identifies the Imāms as the general cause of creation (*ʿilla kulliyya fī ibdāʿ al-mumkināt wa ikhtirāʿ al-mawjūdāt*)[154]—a doctrine for which al-Aḥsāʾī had been attacked.[155] During this period, the Bāb also wrote a large number of *tafsīrs*, including the *Tafsīr āyat al-nūr*, the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-qadr*, the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-tawḥīd*, and those on various *aḥādīth*; he also continued to pen replies to queries from a large number of individuals and to write treatises on topics such as *jabr* and *tawḥīd, qadr*, and even grammar and syntax (*naḥw wa ṣarf*).[156]

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[148] Shirazi, Tafsīr *Sūrat al-kawthar*, f. 28a.
[149] Ibid., f. 5a.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid., ff. 6a–6b, 19a.
[152] Ibid., f. 11b; cf. ff. 24a., 25a.
[153] See ibid., ff. 7b, 15a, 17b.
[154] Ibid., f. 99b.
[155] For the Shaykh's view, see al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 1, pp. 25–6, 64.
[156] A list of these works, with notes of the manuscripts in which they occur may be found in MacEoin, *Sources*.

It is, I think, clear that ample material exists, albeit scattered and, at times, badly transcribed, which may serve as a basis for the study of the inception and early development of the Bāb's thought. One of the most difficult things about following this development through his entire career is its very rapidity, with several large-scale modifications of doctrine taking place in the space of only six years. Most that has been written about the Bāb's thought has concentrated on his later ideas, as expressed in the Persian *Bayān* and other works of the late period. This needs to be balanced in future studies by detailed reference to his ideas at this critical early stage. In the works we have mentioned above may be found answers to several important questions, such as what the Bāb's earliest claims were, what his attitude was to Islam, the Qurʾān, the *sharīʿa*, the Imāms, and the *abwāb*, what he thought about the advent of the Hidden Imām, what his ideas were with regard to jihad, and what he thought of the Shaykhi school.

## The Early Claims of the Bāb

In our first chapter, we indicated several ways in which the charismatic authority of the Imāms was transferred or routinized in the period following the presumed disappearance of the twelfth Imām, and discussed the development of charisma among the ulama, especially the *mujtahidūn, marājiʿ al-taqlīd*; and, in the modern period, ayatollahs. Later, in our discussions of al-Aḥsāʾī and Rashtī, we showed how their roles as "bearers" of the knowledge of the Imāms represented a particularly dramatic expression of the "polar motif" in Shiʿism, and were closely related to its "gnostic motif". In our last section, we demonstrated how, in his early writings, the Bāb emphasized the "gnostic motif" by laying claim to direct knowledge from the Hidden Imām, which was, in turn, *waḥy* from God, and, in our final chapter, we shall return to this motif in relation to the concept of "inner knowledge" (*bāṭin*) "revealed" by the Bāb. At this point, however, it will be useful to discuss—albeit more briefly than is desirable—the polar motif as developed in the early claims of the Bāb, both in terms of his own statements and those of his followers concerning him.

It will, perhaps, be as well to take as our starting point the Shaykhi doctrine of the "fourth support" (*al-rukn al-rābiʿ*). In *Izhāq al-bātil*, Kirmānī maintains that the "basic question" involved in the dispute with Bābism is the existence of the true bearer (*ḥāmil*) of the *rukn al-rābiʿ*.

When Rashtī died, there had to be a bearer after him, and people went in search of his successor in this capacity. At this point, the Bāb made his claims and many came to regard him as this *ḥāmil-i rukn-i rābiʿ*.[157] In the same work, Kirmānī states that, during the lifetime of Rashtī, the Bāb had read what he (Kirmānī) had written on the need for a fourth support and the impossibility of any age being deprived of it.[158] Inadvertently, as it were, Kirmānī here provides us with an important clue as to the nature of the doctrine of the *rukn al-rābiʿ* 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 doctrine as expounded by Kirmānī in seven works between 1261/1845 and 1282/1865.[159] Briefly, it is this: traditional Shiʿi theology speaks of five bases (*uṣūl*) of religion—the divine unity (*tawḥīd*), prophethood (*nubuwwa*), resurrection (*maʿād*), justice (*ʿadl*), and the imamate (*imāma*).

Shaykhi belief, according to Kirmānī, is that knowledge of God, like that of the Prophet or Imāms, implies and involves a knowledge of all of His attributes. Since none of these attributes can be denied by the believer, it makes more sense to speak of "the knowledge of God" 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 unbelievers punished";[160] from another point of view, belief in the resurrection is necessitated by a belief in the Prophet and the veracity of his words.[161] "Therefore," he writes, "all five of the bases of religion are clearly affirmed in these three bases [i.e., knowledge of God, *nubuwwa*, and *imāma*]."[162]

A fourth *aṣl* or *rukn* 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 (i.e., use

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[157] Kirmānī, *Izhāq al-bāṭil*, p. 107, cf. p. 10, where Rashtī is referred to as *ṣāḥib al-rukn al-rābiʿ*.

[158] Ibid., p. 106; cf. p. 175.

[159] Apart from those works specifically cited, we have also referred to Kirmānī, *Hidāyat al-ṭālibīn*, pp. 168–77. Kirmānī also discusses this topic in other works, notably the manuscript "Ilzām al-nawāṣib."

[160] Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī, *Risāla-yi sī faṣl* (Kirman: Chāpkhāna-yi Saʿādat 1368 [1949]), p. 22. On this basis, Kirmānī discusses resurrection after divine justice in the section on *tawḥīd* in *al-Fiṭra al-salīma*, vol. 1, pp. 223ff, 292ff.

[161] On this basis Kirmānī discusses resurrection after prophethood in *Irshād al-ʿawāmm*, vol. 1, pp. 110ff.; vol. 2, pp. 7ff.

[162] Kirmānī, *Risāla-yi sī faṣl*, p. 23.

*taqlīd*).[163] Kirmānī 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 exercise his own judgment.[164] The recognition of such a *mujtahid* (or *ʿālim, faqīh*, etc.) ranks, therefore, as a fourth support of religion.[165]

The nature of this fourth *rukn* is elsewhere expressed by Kirmānī in somewhat different terms. Religious questions, he says, are of two kinds: knowledge of essences (*dhawāt*) and knowledge of the statements (*aqwāl*) of these essences. The knowledge of the essences involves four groups: knowledge of God, the Prophet, the Imāms, and the generic (*nawʿī*) knowledge of the friends (*awliyāʾ*) and enemies (*aʿdāʾ*).[166] With respect to the statements of these four groups, man is required to know the divine decrees (*sharāʾiʿ*), which obliges him to know the words of the prophets in which they are expressed, which in turn demands knowledge of the words of the Imāms in which these latter are interpreted; the bearers of the knowledge of the Imāms are the transmitters (*rawāt*) of their words and the scholars (ulama) familiar with their traditions, whose words must also be known.[167] Knowledge of the words of these four groups constitutes the *uṣūl*.[168] Thus, the four *uṣūl* or *arkān* are:

1. Knowledge of God
2. Knowledge of the Prophet
3. Knowledge of the Imāms
4. Knowledge of the *awliyāʾ* of the Imāms.[169]

In the sense that the term *awliyāʾ* may be applied to a wide range of people—in its fullest sense to all the Shiʿa—including *nuqabāʾ* and *nujabāʾ*,

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[163] On there being no *taqlīd* in *ḍurūrīyāt* or *uṣūl*, see Āl Kāshif al-Ghiṭāʾ, *Aṣl al-Shīʿa wa uṣūluhā*, p. 107.

[164] Kirmānī, *Risāla-yi sī faṣl*, p. 23.

[165] Ibid., p. 24.

[166] Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī, "Risāla dar javāb-i Mullā Ḥusayn ʿAlī Tawīsargāni," in *Majmaʿ al-rasāʾil*, vol. 15, (Kirman: Maṭbaʿat al-Saʿādat, 1972), p. 146 ; idem, *al-Fiṭrah al-salīma*, vol. 3, p. 190; cf. idem, "Risālah dar rafʿ-i baʾḍ-i shubahāt," in *Majmaʿ al-rasāʾil*, vol. 15, pp. 198–9.

[167] Idem, "Javāb-i Tawīsargāni," p. 147; cf. idem, *Rukn-i rābiʿ* (Kirman: Chāpkhāna-yi Saʿādat, [19—]), p. 9.

[168] Idem, "Javāb-i Tawīsargāni," p. 147.

[169] Idem, *Rukn-i rābiʿ*, p. 21; idem, *al-Fiṭra al-salīma*, vol. 3, pp. 185, 190.

in practice the *mujtahidūn* and *fuqahāʾ* are the lowest grade of the *rukn al-rābiʿ*.[170]

In his *Risāla-yi sī faṣl* and the *Risāla dar jawāb-i yik nafar-i Iṣfahānī*, Kirmānī devotes considerable space to refuting the charge that he regarded himself in a specific sense as the *rukn al-rābiʿ*, or that the term could, indeed be applied to a specific person in a given age. "The fourth support of the faith," he writes, "consists of the scholars (ulama) and worthies (*akābir*) of the Shiʿa, and they are numerous in every period."[171]

> We regard the *rukn al-rābiʿ* as love (*walāyat*) for the friends of God (*awliyāʾ Allāh*) and dissociation (*barāʾat*) from the enemies of God; after the *arkān*, we regard the *nuqabāʾ* and *nujabāʾ* as the greatest of the friends of God.... But, by God, we have not considered it obligatory to know the friends of God in the form of their chiefs (*aʿyānihim*) or their individual members (*ashkhāṣihim*), and have not laid on men an insupportable duty (*taklīf mā lā yuṭāq*). Rather, we have said that the generic knowledge (*maʿrifat-i nawʿ*) of the *awliyāʾ* is essential, that is, "what sort of person is the *walī* and what are his attributes?".... We have not said that one should recognize a specific or definite *naqīb*, or that one should recognize one of the *nujabāʾ* in a specific or definite form.[172]

The relevance of the foregoing to our earlier discussion of the role of the *arkān, nuqabāʾ, nujabāʾ* and ulama as general bearers of the charisma of the Imāms does not, I think, need further elaboration.

Kirmānī also refutes the idea that al-Aḥsāʾī or Rashtī were the *rukn al-rābiʿ* in their respective ages. In the general sense, he says, this is true, in that they fulfilled the conditions necessary for *marājiʿ al-taqlīd*. "But", he goes on, "God forbid that I should regard them as the specific *rukn al-rābiʿ* for their ages."[173] In this general sense also, Kirmānī regards himself as a *marjaʿ* after al-Aḥsāʾī and Rashtī,[174] but refutes any charge of his having claimed personally to be the *nāʾib* or representative of the Imām.[175] The Bābis, however, have, he maintains, held it as obligatory to obey a single individual.[176]

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[170] Idem, "Risāla dar javāb-i yik nafar Iṣfahānī," in *Majmaʿ al-rasāʾil*, vol. 15, (Kirman: Maṭbaʿat al-Saʿādat, 1972), p. 81.
[171] Idem, *Risāla-yi sī faṣl*, p. 31.
[172] Idem, "Javāb-i yik nafar Iṣfahānī," pp. 79–80.
[173] Idem, *Risāla-yi sī faṣl*, p. 31.
[174] Idem, *Risāla-yi chahār faṣl* (Kirman: [s.n.], 1324 Sh [1946]), pp. 1, 3.
[175] Idem, "Risāla dar rafʿ-i baʾḍ-i shubahāt," pp. 199–201.
[176] Idem, "Javāb-i yik nafar Iṣfahānī," p. 82.

Originally, the Bāb himself would appear to have taught a version of the *rukn al-rābiʿ* doctrine similar to that developed more fully by Kirmānī. In his earliest extant work, the *Risāla fi ʾl-sulūk*, he states that "religion stands on four pillars: *al-tawḥīd, al-nubuwwa, al-wilāya*, and *al-shiʿa*."[177] In the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-baqara*, he repeats that "the *shiʿa* are the *rukn al-rābiʿ*" and quotes a popular *ḥadīth* in this connection, in which the Imām Mūsā al-Kāẓim ibn Jaʿfar (745?–799) states that the "greatest name" (*al-ism al-aʿẓam*) consists of four letters: "the first is the statement "there is no god but God"; the second "Muḥammad is the Prophet of God"; the third is ourselves [the Imāms]; and the fourth our *shiʿa*."[178]

The *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* and other works written soon after Shirazi's declaration contain no reference to the doctrine, but it is discussed again under the title "the hidden support" (*al-rukn al-makhzūn*) in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar*, written for Sayyid Yaḥyā Dārābī, who had not been a Shaykhi.

"Had you been one of the companions of Kazīm," he writes, "you would understand the matter of the hidden support, in the same way that you comprehend the [other] three supports."[179] He then argues that, "just as you stand in need of an individual sent from God who may transmit unto you what your Lord has willed, so you stand in need of an ambassador (*ṣafīr*) from your Imām."[180] If it should be objected that the ulama as a whole fulfill this function (a view Kirmānī held by this date, if not before), he would reply that the ulama differ from one another in rank, some being superior to others. They are not even in agreement on all issues, as is evident from the variation of 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 of the inferior rank in order to give our allegiance to his superior—a process which must, in the end, lead us to the recognition of a single person superior to all others.[181] "It is impossible," he writes, "that the bearer of universal grace from the Imām should be other than a single individual."[182]

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[177] Shirazi, "Risāla-fi 'l-sulūk," manuscript in INBA 6006.C, p. 73; cf. a *risāla* by an unidentified Bābi in INBA 6003C, p. 384.

[178] Shirazi, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-baqara*, ff. 5a–5b.

[179] Idem, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar*, f. 36a. On the "hidden support", cf. letter to Muḥammad Shah in idem, *Muntakhabāt-i āyāt*, p. 14.

[180] Idem, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar*, f. 36b; cf. f. 68a.

[181] Ibid. Compare the dialectical argument back to the Imāms used by Ḥasan-i Sabbāḥ (d. 1124), described by Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins*, p. 54.

[182] Shirazi, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar*, f. 37a.

The *rukn al-rābiʿ* doctrine is developed in relation to the Bāb by Qurrat al-ʿAyn in an undated *risāla.* Describing Muḥammad and the Imāms as the collective "sign" of God's knowledge to His creation,[183] she indicates that they have appeared in every age in different forms and "clothing" and that men have been and shall be tested by this until the day of resurrection.[184] In each age, these "signs" appear in the form of "perfected humanity" (*insāniyyat-i kāmil*) and "all-embracing radiance" (*nūrāniyyat-i shāmil*).[185] Faith (*īmān*) is based on four pillars (*arkān*),[186] the fourth pillar being the "manifest towns" (*qurā ẓāhira*) referred to in Qurʾān 34:18, that is, the ulama, from whom the mass of believers (*raʿāyā*) must take sustenance (i.e., knowledge fed to them during the period of the *ghayba*).[187] God has chosen to reveal the station of the *rukn al-rābiʿ* in this age, although it was previously concealed, just as the *rukn* of *wilāya* was kept hidden in the time of Muḥammad.[188] The meaning of the term *rasūl* in each age is the "bearer of the hidden sign", whom God reveals whenever he deems it suitable.[189] In this age, he has revealed the *rukn al-rābiʿ* and sent a *rasūl, bayyina*, and *dhikr al-imām* (i.e. the Bāb),[190] This individual, she says is the 'manifest town' (in the singular) revealed by God.[191] That the *rukn al-rābiʿ* has, therefore, been revealed in a single person is made fully clear some pages further on, when she states that God has sent the pure *shīʿa* in a specific form (*shīʿa-yi khāliṣ-rā az maqām-i ikhtiṣāṣ nāzil farmūda*).[192]

Sayyid Yaḥyā Dārābī (originally a non-Shaykhi, as we have mentioned) also applies the *rukn al-rābiʿ* concept to the Bāb in what appears to be a letter belonging to the slightly later period:

> He [God] sent him [Adam] to reveal the mystery of one of these [four] *arkān*, namely that of *tawḥīd* and the sign of the gracious one [i.e., God];

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[183] Qurrat al-ʿAyn, "Risāla," in possession of an Azalī Bābi in Tehran, pp. 3–4.
[184] Ibid., p. 6.
[185] Ibid. For a discussion of the *insān al-kāmil* concept in a Bābi context see Hermann Roemer, *Die Bābi-Beha'i: Die jüngste Mohammedanische Sekte* (Potsdam: [s.n.], 1912), pp. 12–13.
[186] Qurrat al-ʿAyn, "Risāla," in possession of an Azalī Bābi in Tehran, pp. 6–7, 8.
[187] Ibid, p. 8. References to Qurʾān 34:18 in similar contexts are extremely common in Shaykhi and Bābi literature of this period, see for example Kirmānī, *Risāla-yi tīr-i shihāb*, pp. 179–81.
[188] Qurrat al-ʿAyn, "Risāla," in possession of an Azalī Bābi in Tehran, p. 10.
[189] Ibid., p. 12.
[190] Ibid., p. 14.
[191] Ibid.
[192] Ibid., p. 18.

> and assistance was given in the spread [of this principle] by the other prophets, both those endowed with constancy (*ulū ʾl-ʿaẓm*) and the rest, until the rise of the sun of knowledge from the horizon of certitude, that is, the seal of the prophets and the prince of men and *jinn* [i.e., Muḥammad]. And he commanded him to reveal the mystery of the second *rukn*, namely, that of *nubuwwa*, the source of all truths, until the day of al-Ghadīr [i.e. Ghadīr Khumm], the best of days and the pivot of all ages. Whereupon he brought himself to perfection and entrusted his successors (*waṣiya ilā awliyāʾihi*) the revelation of the third *rukn*, that is, the *rukn* of *wilāya* and the interpretation (*taʾwīl*) of the Qurʾānic verse "when it is said to them 'There is no god but God,' they grow proud" [37:35]. [This continued] until the rising of the sun of eternity in sixty-one preceded by one thousand and two hundred [i.e., 1260], when the Imāms (*āl-Allāh*) and the letters of the word of explanation inspired the heart of their servant, whose breast was expanded for all revelations by the shining of the body of the princess of women [i.e., Faṭima], nay of all created things in the kingdom of command and creation, that he might reveal the mystery of the fourth *rukn* of the universal word, the last of the conditions of faith. At this point, the ages came to their close (*tammat al-adwār*) and the dispensations were completed (*kamulat al-akwār*).[193]

The Bāb himself emphasizes the need for a bearer of the divine knowledge in every age. The earth, he says, is never empty of the proof (*ḥujja*) of God,[194] and there must always be a "bearer of the cause of God" (*ḥāmil amr Allāh*) between prophets (*ʿalā fiṭratin min al-rusul*).[195] Thus, he himself, as the *dhikr*, has come during such an interval.[196] During the shorter Occultation (*ghayba*), he states, the Hidden Imām was represented on earth by *wukalāʾ* and *nuwwāb*, these being the four *abwāb*.[197] Thus, the Imām sent the *abwāb* down during the *ghayba* and recently sent Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī and Kāẓim (Rashtī).[198] A similar view is put forward in a *risāla* written by an anonymous Bābi in 1264/1848, where it is stated that, in the shorter Occultation there appeared the "four appointed gates" (*al-abwāb al-arbaʿa al-manṣūṣa*), while in the greater Occultation there were "gates

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[193] Sayyid Yaḥyā Dārābī quoted in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 474.
[194] Shirazi, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar*, f. 94b.
[195] Ibid. For the last phrase, see Qurʾān 5:19.
[196] Idem, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, f. 106a.
[197] Shirazi, Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar, ff. 65b, 66a, 66b ff. By contrast, later Bahaʾi doctrine regards the four *abwāb* as imposters and, indeed, maintains that the twelfth Imām was never born at all (Bahāʾu'llāh, in Ishraq Khavari, ed., *Māʾida-yi āsmanī*, vol. 4, pp. 91, 141.
[198] Shirazi, "Qayyūm al-asmā," f. 41a.

not appointed by name or connection," who appeared in every age until two further specific gates were sent—al-Aḥsāʾī and Rashtī.[199]

It does seem that the acceptance of Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad as *bāb* was facilitated by prior recognition of al-Aḥsāʾī and Rashtī as "the Shaykh and Bāb" (*al-shaykh al-bāb*) and 'the Sayyid and Bāb' (*al-sayyid al-bāb*),[200] or as "the first Bāb" and "the second Bāb",[201] or as "the previous two gates",[202] or simply as "the two gates".[203] Even the later *Kitāb-i nuqṭat al-kāf* speaks of them as "those two mighty gates."[204] The Bāb himself refers to them on several occasions as "the two previous gates of God"[205] and speaks of his "revelation" as being in confirmation of "the two gates."[206]

The close relationship between the Bāb and his two predecessors is clearly outlined by Qurrat al-ʿAyn in what seems to be an early *risāla*. Beginning with the assertion that man has been created to know God, but that the gate of direct *maʿrifa* is closed to him,[207] she refers to a tradition from the Imām Ṣādiq, who indicated that man might know God "through his name and his attribute,"[208] This "name and attribute" has a place of revelation (*maẓhar*) and appearance (*ẓuhūr*) in every age and epoch.[209] God chooses an individual, teaches him what he wishes, and makes him his Proof, Gate, Prophet, Remembrance, and Apostle (*ḥujja, bāb, nabī, dhikr*, and *rasūl*) to the creation.[210] There is no difference between the *nabī, waṣī, rasūl*, and *bāb* in reality.[211] God sent down the prophets, then Muḥammad, then the Imāms; after this, the Twelfth Imām became hidden.[212] Since, however, it was still necessary for men to be guided, the *abwāb* were appointed.[213] Following them, there appeared

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[199] *Risāla* by an unidentified Bābi in INBA 6006.C, p. 8.
[200] *Risāla* by an unidentified Bābi in INBA 6003.C, pp. 400, 401–2.
[201] *Risāla* by an unidentified Bābi in INBA 6006.C, pp. 8–9.
[202] Qurrat al-ʿAyn, *Risāla* in Gulpāyagānī, *Kashf al-Ghiṭāʾ* p. 18; idem, letter to Mullā Javād Vilyānī in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq* by, p. 488.
[203] Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, *Risala*, in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 504.
[204] Kāshānī, *Nuqṭat al-Kāf*, p. 100.
[205] Shirazi, letter to Mīrzā Ḥasan Khurāsānī, in INBA 6003.C, p. 321; idem, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, f. 139a.
[206] Ibid., f. 64b.
[207] Qurrat al-ʿAyn, *Risāla*, in Gulpāyagānī, *Kashf al-Ghiṭāʾ*, p. 2.
[208] Ibid., p. 3.
[209] Ibid.
[210] Ibid.
[211] Ibid., p. 4; cf. Shirazi, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar*, f. 109b, where Muḥammad and the Imāms are described as "one person."
[212] Qurrat al-ʿAyn, *Risāla*, in Gulpāyagānī, *Kashf al-Ghiṭāʾ*, p. 5.
[213] Ibid., pp. 5–6.

in every age "an arbiter" (*ʿadūl*) to keep the faith pure.[214] The Shiʿa were thus guided until there appeared sinful ulama who advanced various claims and rendered it necessary for the Imām to distinguish the good from the wicked.[215] The Imām singled out a perfect man, taught him his inner knowledge, and made him *maʿṣūm*—this was al-Aḥsāʾī.[216] After him, God appointed Rashtī as another sign.[217] On the Sayyid's death, it was necessary for God to establish a sign according to the exigencies of the time and place, so he revealed the Bāb as his gate and proof,[218] as "the third gate after the two" (*al-bāb al-thālith baʿda ʾl-ithnayn*),[219] as the fourth letter of the greatest name of God,[220] and as the *bāb, dhikr*, and *rasūl*.[221]

In this earliest period, then, the Bāb made himself known as a gate to the Imām succeeding al-Aḥsāʾī and Rashtī. Mīrzā Muḥammad ʿAlī Zunūzī thus describes these early claims:

> At the beginning of the cause, he made himself known by the title *bāb* and "servant of the *baqiyyat Allāh*," so that, as people say, he was regarded as having been sent by the Hidden Imām, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan.... He established his verses below the words of the Imāms, but above those of the Shaykh and the Sayyid... and gave himself out as an interpreter (*mubayyin*) and promulgator (*murawwij*) of the Qurʾān and Islam... while all his followers... regarded him as the gate of divine knowledge and as superior to the Shaykh and the Sayyid.[222]

"Most of the Bābis in the first years," writes Māzandarānī, "regarded the Bāb as the pillar of the knowledge of the Imām."[223] The Bāb thus identifies himself in the *Qayyūm al- asmāʾ* as "the servant [of God] and the gate of his proof [i.e., the Hidden Imām] unto all the worlds,"[224] as "the servant of God and the gate of the *baqiyyat Allāh*,"[225] and as "the gate of the *walī*."[226] In this respect, he is no different from the *abwāb* of the past[227]

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[214] Ibid., p. 6; on the *ḥadīth* quoted here, see chapter 1 above, note 27.
[215] Ibid., p. 7.
[216] Ibid., pp. 8–11.
[217] Ibid., pp. 11–13.
[218] Ibid., p. 13.
[219] Ibid., p. 2.
[220] Ibid.
[221] Ibid., p. 14.
[222] Zunūzī, *Risāla* quoted in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, pp. 31, 32.
[223] Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 314.
[224] Shirazi, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, f. 46b.
[225] Ibid.
[226] Ibid., f. 69b.
[227] Ibid., f. 50b.

(who are, indeed, regarded as still alive),[228] except that he is the "seal of the gates" (*khātim al-abwāb*),[229] the "gate of your expected Imām."[230] His appearance, then is for the express purpose of making the way ready for the Imām's parousia; his earliest books, states Qurrat al-ʿAyn, were sent out to prepare men for the advent of the Qāʾim,[231] which will take place after him.[232]

Writing in retrospect in the *Dalāʾil-i sabʿaʾ*, the Bāb speaks thus of his earliest claims:

> Consider the grace of the promised one (*ḥaḍrat-i muntaẓar*) in so extending his mercy to the people of Islam (*al-muslimīn*); so that he might give them salvation, he that is the first of all created things and the manifestation of the words "Verily, I am God" revealed himself as the *bāb* of the Qāʾim of the family of Muḥammad."[233]

On the principle that belief in the *abwāb* leads to belief in the Imāms, the Prophet and God, and disbelief in them to *kufr*,[234] the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* states, in the words of the Imām, that

> There is none who has followed this remembrance [*hādhā 'l-dhikr*—the Bāb] but that he has followed me; whoever loves the remembrance for the sake of God, loves me; whoever seeks to behold me, let him behold his face, and whoever seeks to hearken to my words (*al-ḥadīth minnī*), let him give ear to the novelties of wisdom and the keys of the mercy from the tongue of God.[235]

Similarly, whoever visits the Bāb, it is as if he has visited the Imāms,[236] while whoever obeys the *dhikr* and his book has obeyed God and his saints.[237] He is, indeed, the gate of God[238] and his remembrance;[239] those

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[228] Ibid., f. 31a.
[229] Ibid., f. 36a.
[230] Ibid., f. 96a.
[231] Qurrat al-ʿAyn, *Risāla*, in Gulpāyagānī, *Kashf al-Ghiṭāʾ*, p. 14.
[232] Ibid., p. 15.
[233] Shirazi, *Dalāʾil-i sabʿa*, p. 29; cf. idem, quoted in Māzandarānī, *Asrār al-āthār*, vol. 5, p. 369.
[234] See idem, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar*, f. 66a.
[235] Idem, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, f. 76a.
[236] Ibid., f. 166a.
[237] Ibid., f. 3a.
[238] Ibid., ff. 19a, 69b. On the Imāms as the gate of God, see Kirmānī, *al-Kitāb al-mubīn*, vol. 1, pp. 227–31; Muḥammad Khān Kirmānī, *Yanābīʿ al-ḥikma* (Kirman: Maṭbaʿat al-Saʿāda, 1353–56 [1963–66]), vol. 1, pp. 437–55.
[239] Shirazi, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, f. 103b.

who pledge allegiance to him have done so to God,[240] and those who visit him have visited God on his throne.[241]

Identification with the Imām (but not, at this stage, with God) is taken at times beyond simple representation. Thus, "the Imām" declares that "we are he and he is we, save that he is himself and is our servant, who was a witness in all the worlds in the Mother of the Book; and we are ourselves, whom God has made his proofs collectively to all the worlds, through the mighty truth."[242] "God," he states, "has made him [the Bāb] my own self in the worlds of command and creation. I am, by God's permission, never absent from him for the least period that your Lord, the merciful, can calculate, nor is he ever absent from me."[243] Again, he says that "those that have disbelieved in God ask you about meeting me (*ʿan liqāʾī*); say "behold me, if your souls be firm, and you shall see him,' "[244] while, in a later passage, he declares that "my proof unto you is this person [who is] my own person."[245]

We have here perhaps the clearest and most highly developed expression of the continuance of the charismatic authority of the Imām during the period of the *ghaybat al-kubrā*. Once we move into the later stage of the Bāb's claims, from about 1848 onwards, we enter a different charismatic framework; he is no longer claiming to be the channel of the Imām's authority nor even his alter ego, as it were, on earth, but to be the Imām himself and, before long, a theophanic representation of the divinity (*maẓhar ilāhī*). The Bāb is the focus of charismatic attention throughout (although not the only focus), but, in the early period, his authority is derived (latently) from the overriding charismatic image of the Imām, whereas, at a later stage, he assumes an independent authority canceling all previous notions of charismatic relationship, transforming latent into original, "prophetic" charisma.

Although even the earliest claims of the Bāb constantly threaten to overturn the system of relationships on which they are postulated (by claiming, for example, to be the person of the Imām), this threat is kept in check by the presence of a dialectic tension between more developed

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[240] Ibid., f. 73b.

[241] Ibid., ff. 103b, 143 b. On Ismaili identification of the Imām with God, see Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm Qūhistānī, *Haft Bāb, or, Seven Chapters*, translated and edited by W. Ivanow (Bombay: Ismaili Society, 1959), pp. 37–8.

[242] Shirazi, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, f. 73b.

[243] Ibid., f. 76b.

[244] Ibid., f. 89a.

[245] Ibid., f. 109a.

claims on the one hand and less startling ones—and even recantations of claims—on the other. The use of *taqiyya* leads to some remarkable *voltes faces*. Thus, he states in an early prayer that "I am the bearer of a knowledge like Kāẓim, and if God should choose to reveal another cause, he will be the solace of my eyes; otherwise, I have not claimed anything and do not say that I am the bearer of a cause other than that."[246] In the *Ṣaḥīfa-yi ʿadliyya*, he describes himself as a "servant" chosen by the Hidden Imām "in order to protect the faith of God,"[247] and indicates that his words are as "utter nothingness" compared to the Qurʾān and the words of the Imāms.[248]

This tendency is most marked in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar*, where he declares that anyone who says he claims *waḥy* and a Qurʾān is a blasphemer, as is anyone who says he claims to be "the gate of the *baqiyyat Allāh*,"[249] and maintains that he has not claimed "special *bābiyya*".[250] He is merely, he states, a Persian chosen to protect the faith of the Prophet and the Imāms,[251] and a servant of God confirming the laws of the Qurʾān.[252] In general, however, a gradual development may be observed, whereby the Bāb explores most of the permutations of radical charismatic authority available to him within the terms of Shaykhi and Shiʿi theory. Taken beyond these limits, the claims inherent in extreme Shiʿi theophanology led inevitably to a complete break with Shaykhism and, in the end, to the abandonment of Islam itself.

[246] Prayer in INBA 6004.C, p. 188.
[247] Idem, *Ṣaḥīfa-yi ʿadliyya*, p. 13; cf. p. 7.
[248] Ibid., p. 7; cf. p. 11.
[249] Idem, "Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar," f. 7b.
[250] Ibid., f. 15a.
[251] Ibid., f. 4b.
[252] Ibid., f. 7b.

CHAPTER SIX

# THE BĀBĪ *DAʿWA* AMONG THE SHAYKHIS AND THE BREAK WITH SHAYKHISM

## The *Daʿwa* in Karbala

According to al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, the Bāb's initial "revelation" (*ẓuhūr*) to the *ḥurūf al-ḥayy* lasted from the tenth (*al-ʿashr al-awwal*) of Jumādā I to 20 Jumādā II 1260/7 July 1844.[1] He then instructed them to return to their homes,[2] telling them not to reveal his name or identity,[3] but urging them to announce that the *bāb* or special representative (*nāʾib-i khāṣṣ*) of the Hidden Imām had appeared.[4] Through these "forerunners" (*sābiqūn*) and the men they met and converted, the claims of the new teacher were rapidly made known, principally to the Shaykhi communities in the areas they visited. Mullā Yūsuf ArBābīlī succeeded in converting most or all of the large Shaykhi population of Mīlān in Azerbaijan.[5] Mullā Aḥmad Ibdāl Marāghaʾī acquainted Mullā Ḥusayn Dakhīl Marāghaʾī with the Bāb's claims; the latter in turn traveled to Shīrāz, only to find that the Bāb had left on the *ḥajj*. Returning to Marāgha, he made a point of telling the Shaykhis in every town and village en route of the Bāb's appearance, while he succeeded in converting most of the Shaykhis in Marāgha itself.[6] Mullā Jalīl Urūmī was instructed to go to Qazvīn, where he married and stayed for some three years teaching Bābism, his converts consisting in the main of Shaykhis from the town.[7]

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[1] Al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, *Risāla*, in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 511.

[2] Ibid.; Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 92, 94; Shirazi, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, ff. 198a, 199a, 200a. If these later passages represent the original instruction, my conjectured dating for the latter part of this work would be rendered problematic.

[3] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 94; Gulpāyagani, *Kashf al-ghiṭāʾ*, p. 72; Gulpāyagani, quoted in Balyuzi, *The Báb*, pp. 37–8; al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, *Risāla*, in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 511.

[4] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 94; Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī, *Risāla dar radd-i Bāb-i murtāb*, 2nd ed. (Kirman: [s.n.], 1384 [1964]), p. 18; Qurrat al-ʿAyn, *Risāla*, in Gulpāyagānī, *Kashf al-ghiṭāʾ*, p. 20.

[5] Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 41.

[6] Ibid., pp. 56, 58.

[7] Samandar, *Tārīkh-i Samandar*, p. 351.

Mullā Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī, along with his inseparable brother and cousin, was sent to Khurāsān via Tehran, where he attempted to present a letter from the Bāb to Muḥammad Shah and his prime minister, Ḥājī Mīrzā Āqāsī. In this missive, the king was called on to embrace the Bāb's cause in return for a promise of victory over foreign states.[8] Bushrūʾī finally proceeded to Mashhad, where he established a flourishing center for Bābi propaganda, again drawing much support from Shaykhi ulama.[9] In this way, a growing section of the Shaykhi school followed the Bāb in the period of the earliest claims, even if—as happened in Marāgha, for example—many of these abandoned him some three years later on his assumption of the station of Qāʾim and his abrogation of the Islamic *sharīʿa*. The unity of Shaykhism was irretrievably shattered, and a core of convinced Bābis created, who were eager to put into practice the radical changes implicit in the Bāb's later claims.

The most shattering impact made by the dissemination of Bābi propaganda on the Shaykhi world occurred, inevitably, at its heart, in Karbala. Most or all of the group which had arrived in Shīrāz with Mullā ʿAlī Basṭāmī returned to Karbala, although it would seem that Basṭāmī himself did not accompany them on this occasion. Al-Karbalāʾī states that they arrived there on 26 Rajab/11August.[10] The following day, 27 Rajab/12 August, was the *ziyārat al-mabʿath*, and Shaykhis from Baghdad, Ḥilla, and elsewhere had gathered in Karbala with those from the town itself; on hearing that Basṭāmī's group had returned, they met with them and were told something of what had occurred.[11] According to al-Karbalāʾī, "the cause of the Imām was manifested in the month of Rajab and was so much spread about that there remained no-one in this region who had not heard of it."[12] It seems likely that the Bāb's identity was, in fact, revealed by some of the *ḥurūf al-ḥayy*, for al-Karbalāʾī notes that

> those who had seen the Bāb before that said "if such a person is making a claim, then I shall accept him (*fa-anā min al-muslimīn*)"; this included

[8] Sipihr, *Nāsikh al-Tavārīkh*, vol. 3, p. 235; Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 86. The Bāb wrote several further letters to Muḥammad Shah, from Bushehr, Kulayn, and the prison in Mākū. For texts of some of these, see CUL Browne F. 28, item 7; Shirazi, *Muntakhabāt-i āyāt*, pp. 5–8, 9–13, 13–18.

[9] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 23–6, 267.

[10] Al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, *Risāla*, in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 511.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid., p. 512.

> Bālāsarīs and persons weak in their faith in Shiʿism, among the people of Kāẓimiyya, and likewise servants of the blessed shrines.[13]

The Bāb himself states in an early letter that he never mentioned his name in any of his works, but that some of his first followers revealed it.[14]

Although he may have left Shīrāz before the other members of his group, possibly shortly after Bushrūʾī's departure,[15] Basṭāmī did not arrive in Karbala until about October 1844.[16] He traveled by way of Bushehr (where he visited the Bāb's uncle, Sayyid ʿAlī), Najaf and Kufa,[17] carrying with him a copy of the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*,[18] a *ziyāratnāma* to be read at the shrine of ʿAlī in Najaf,[19] and a copy of the *Ṣaḥīfa al-makhzūna*.[20] With Basṭāmī's arrival at the ʿ*atabāt*, events began to move at an increasingly rapid pace, precipitating a final break in the already disintegrating Shaykhi community, lending fresh impetus to the new movement of the Bāb, and giving to the Shiʿi ulama in Iraq their first premonition of the alarming developments which were to take place there and in Iran in coming years.

While in Najaf, on instructions from the Bāb, Basṭāmī made known the latter's claims to Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥasan al-Najafī; to whom we have referred to in our first chapter as the leading Shiʿi ʿ*ālim* and *marja*ʿ

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Shirazi, quoted in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, pp. 279–80.

[15] In a letter to his uncle, Sayyid ʿAlī, the Bāb, speaking of the return to earth of Muḥammad and the Imāms in the persons of the *ḥurūf al-ḥayy*, states that the first to return was Muḥammad and that he was the first messenger of the Qāʾim (i.e., Bushrūʾī—see Shirazi, *Bayān-i fārsī* 1:2, p. 6; 1:3, p. 8); the second to return was ʿAlī, and he took the message of the Bāb to Ḥājī Mīrzā Sayyid ʿAlī (his uncle) in Bushehr (i.e., Basṭāmī—see Mīrzā Ḥusayn ʿAlī Nūrī, Bahāʾ Allāh, *Lawḥ-i Naṣīr*, in *Majmūʿa-yi alvāḥ-i mubāraka*, ed. Muḥyī ʾl-Dīn Ṣabrī (Cairo: Saʿdat Press, 1920), pp. 190–1: idem, letter quoted in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, pp. 223–4. Zarandī states that Basṭāmī was the first to leave Shīrāz (*The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 87–90).

[16] Evidence for this date may be found in Rawlinson to Sir Stratford Canning (8 January 1845): "About three months ago, an inferior priest of Shiraz appeared in Kerbela, bearing a copy of the Koran, which he stated to have been delivered to him, by the forerunner of the Imām Mehdi, to be exhibited in token of approaching advent" (in Rawlinson to Sir Justin Sheil, 16 January 1845, FO 248/114). Later reports from Rawlinson confirm that the reference is to Mullā ʿAlī.

[17] Tanakābūnī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 196; Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 90–1; Baghdādī, *Risāla amrīyya*, p. 106; Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, pp. 106.

[18] Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 187.

[19] Ibid., p. 186.

[20] Ibid., p. 187. The Bāb himself notes that he sent the *Ṣaḥīfa al-makhzūna* with the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* (see *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, f. 67b).

*al-taqlīd* of this period. According to Kāẓim Samandar, Mullā ʿAlī carried with him a letter from the Báb addressed to al-Najafī.[21] The Shaykh's reaction and that of his *ṭullāb*—among whom were numbered several Shaykhis—was necessarily negative, and they expelled Basṭāmī from Najaf as a heretic[22]—the first of many cases in which the Báb's claim served as a means of identifying the interests of Shaykhis and Bālāsarīs, by providing a target which both could condemn.

According to Samandar, the Báb instructed his followers to call a meeting of the *ulama* in Karbala and to challenge them to a *mubāhala*.[23] Whether or not Mullā ʿAlī actually issued such a challenge, his activities in Karbala certainly aroused fierce opposition from the *mujtahids* there. Concentrating his preaching among the Shaykhis, he soon succeeded in winning over, what, in Sir Henry Creswick Rawlinson's (1810–1895) words, constituted "a considerable section…of the Sheeahs of Nejef, who…have lately risen into notice as the disciples of the High Priest Sheikh Kazem [i.e., Rashtī], and who are in avowed expectation of the speedy advent of the Imam."[24]

If anything, Basṭāmī's influence was much greater among the Shaykhis of Karbala than among those of Najaf. Although he was himself arrested soon after his arrival in Karbala,[25] imprisoned and tried in Baghdad,[26]

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[21] Samandar, *Tārīkh-i Samandar*, p. 347; cf Nuri, *Lawḥ-i-Naṣīr*, in *Majmūʿa*, pp. 190–1. Māzandarānī quotes part of a second letter from the Báb to al-Najafī, written after the latter's rejection of his claims (*Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 107).

[22] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 90–1.

[23] Samandar, *Tārīkh-i Samandar*, p. 347. On the extensive us of *mubahāla* as a form of confrontation between Bābis and their opponents before 1848, see Denis MacEoin, "The Bābi Concept of Holy War", *Religion*, 12 (1982): pp. 109–10.

[24] Rawlinson to Canning, 8 January 1845 (FO 248/114).

[25] Baghdādī, *Risāla amriyya*, p. 106. This source indicates that Basṭāmī spent about three months in prison in Baghdad before his trial there; since the trial took place on 13 January 1845, he must have been transferred to Baghdad about the middle of October.

[26] Ibid., pp. 106–7; Tanakābūnī, *Qiṣaṣ*, pp. 196–7; Wardī, *Lamaḥāt*, pp. 138–40. A full account of Basṭāmī's arrest and trial is given by Moojan Momen, "The Trial of Mullā ʿAlī Basṭāmī: A Combined Sunnī-Shīʿī *Fatwā* against the Báb", *Iran* 20 (1982), 113–43, available online at: www.northill.demon.co.uk/relstud/mullaali.htm. See also, Balyuzi in *The Báb*, pp. 61–8; Moojan Momen, *The Bābi and Bahaʾi Religions, 1844–1944: Some Contemporary Western Accounts* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1981), pp. 83–90. The court of inquiry was attended by both Shiʿi and Sunni ulama, under the presidency of Najīb Pāshā; ʿAlī Wardī states that "this was the first gathering of its kind in the Ottoman period, since it was not then customary for the ulama of both parties to meet together in a single gathering for a trial," *Lamahāt*, p. 138.

On Basṭāmī's final end, see Denis MacEoin, "The Fate of Mulla ʿAlī Basṭāmī", *Bahaʾi Studies Bulletin*, 2:1 (1983), p. 77.

and finally exiled to Istanbul,[27] where he was sentenced to labor in the docks,[28] he succeeded in converting large numbers even while in prison, through the mediation of Shaykh Muḥammad Shibl Baghdādī, the late Sayyid Kāẓim's *wakīl* in Baghdad.[29]

During his stay at the *ʿatabāt*, Basṭāmī had, in fact, awoken something of a chiliastic fervor among the Shaykhis of the region. There already existed a sense of messianic expectation in Karbala and Baghdad. According to al-Karbalāʾī (who had by then accepted the Bāb's cause without, at that time, knowing anything of his identity), people 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".[30] 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 Mullā Jaʿfar Kirmānshāhī as saying that he was once with al-Aḥsāʾī during the latter's preparations for his last journey to Mecca in 1826; some people asked him concerning the signs of the appearance of the Imām; and he merely replied "Sixty-one."[31]

Mulla Jaʿfar is said to have spread this "prophecy" before and after the death of Rashtī. According to al-Karbalāʾī some Jews in Karbala referred to the Bāb's cause as being "what we awaited in the month of Rabīʿ I of the year Sixty-one,"[32] while many Ṣūfīs, particularly those of the Niʿmatullāhī order, were expecting the Imām to appear—al-Karbalāʾī claims that he had heard twenty-five years previously certain prophecies from them referring to the year Sixty-one.[33] Everyone, he writes, expected the promised one to appear from his own group, and he specifically mentions here the Ṣūfīs, Bālāsarīs, Ismailis, other Shiʿis, and even Sunnis.[34]

How widespread this sense of expectancy really was outside the circles of the Shaykhi school (and even within these circles) is extremely difficult to say without independent evidence, but it is clear that it was by no means restricted to the Shaykhi community.

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[27] Balyuzi, *The Báb*, pp. 66–7.
[28] Momen, *The Bābi and Bahaʾi Religions*, p. 89.
[29] Baghdādī, *Risāla amriyya*, pp. 105–6. Muḥammad Shibl was the father of Muḥammad Muṣṭafā.
[30] Al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, *Risāla*, in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 512.
[31] Ibid., p. 514.
[32] Ibid., p. 515.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.

The purpose of the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, one of the works of the Bāb brought to the *ʿatabāt* by Basṭāmī was, in the words of Rawlinson,

> to prepare the Mohammedan world for the immediate manifestation of the Imām, and to identify the individual to whom the emendations of the text [of what was regarded, as we have noted, as a corrupted copy of the Qurʾān] were revealed, as his inspired and true precursor.[35]

Basṭāmī's arrest and trial did little to calm the growing unrest and messianic expectancy; 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 Imām, and I am apprehensive that the measures now in progress will rather increase than allay the excitement.[36]

The nervous anticipation which this activity aroused was further intensified by the arrival of news that, on leaving for pilgrimage in September,[37] the Bāb had said that he would reveal his cause in Mecca, enter Kufa and Karbala, and fulfill the prophecies.[38] In various letters, he called on his followers to gather together in Karbala, in order to aid the Qāʾim when he would appear.[39] In one of these letters, he writes:

> In this month, there has occurred that which your Lord had promised unto everyone, old or young. He shall, indeed triumph over the holy land (*al-arḍ al-muqaddaṣa*—i.e. Karbala) by virtue of a word through which all that is in the heavens and on the earth shall be cleft asunder; wait, therefore.… He who shall arise in truth (*al-qāʾim bi ʾl-ḥaqq*) is the one who shall dispense justice; he shall be made manifest from Mecca.… Lend your support, then, unto the Qāʾim (whose advent) you have awaited, in the company of those who expect him, from every direction, and do not

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[35] Rawlinson to Canning, 8 January 1845 (FO 248/114).

[36] Rawlinson to Sheil, 16 January 1845 (FO 248/114).

[37] The Bāb left Shīrāz on 26 Shaʿbān 1260/10 September 1844 (Shirazi, *Khuṭba fī Jidda*, p. 332).

[38] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 63, 96, 158; Kirmānī, *Izhāq al-bāṭil*, p. 15. On the various prophecies relating to the appearance of the Qāʾim in Mecca and Kūfa, and other events associated with his advent, see Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, *Kitāb al-irshād*, ed. Sayyid Kāẓim al-Mūsawī al-Miyāmawī (Tehran: [s.n.], 1337 [1957]), pp. 336–45; Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 53, pp. 1–144; anon, untitled *risāla* in *Nivishtijāt wa āthār-i aṣḥāb-i awwaliyya-yi amr-i aʿlā*, vol. 80, INBA, pp. 1–196; al-Aḥsāʾī, *Ḥayāt al-nafs*, pp. 91–134; Shirazi, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar*, ff. 37b–40b, 77b–88b.

[39] Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 235.

> create mischief in the land. Truly, behind Kufa a new cause shall be manifested.[40]

In an early letter to Mīrzā Ḥasan-i Khurāsānī (d. 1852),[41] the Bāb instructs him to "send greetings from him who is the remembrance of the name of your Lord unto those who were the first to believe (*al-sābiqūn*) and tell them to travel to Karbala (*al-arḍ al-muqaddaṣa*)."[42]

Large numbers of Bābis appear to have responded to the Bāb's appeal and headed for Karbala to await his arrival, many of them, apparently, preparing to fight a holy war in the company of the Imām, in conformity with the explicit exhortations of the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*.[43] Numbers of these seem to have brought with them or obtained arms with which to wage this jihad, in accordance with the Bāb's instructions in that book to "purchase arms for the day of the gathering together (*yawm al-jamʿ*)."[44]

According to Kirmānī, the followers of the Bāb spread out, telling men of his promise to come to Karbala with the intention of leaving the shrine of Ḥusayn on the day of ʿĀshūrā, bearing a sword, in order to lead his followers in jihad.[45] On 27 January, 1845, Rawlinson reported to Sir Stratford Canning that "the concourse of Persian pilgrims at Kerbela at the present season is immense—it is estimated that between twenty and thirty thousand of these devotees are now assembled at the shrine of Ḥusayn."[46]

It is unclear how many of those assembled at Karbala at this period anticipated an actual war and how many believed that they would go forth in the company of the Imām to re-enact the suffering and martyrdom of the day of ʿĀshūrā. Al-Karbalāʾī maintains that some said the Bāb commanded his followers not to rise up in Karbala, and quoted the tradition "the heads of my followers shall be given as presents even as those of the Turks and the Daylāmites."[47] This passion motif certainly

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[40] Shirazi, quoted in ibid.

[41] A convert of Bushrūʾī, fought at Shaykh Ṭabarsī, killed in Tehran in 1852 (see ibid., p. 169; Malik Khusravī, *Tārīkh-i Shuhadāʾ*, vol. 2, pp. 78–9, vol. 3, pp. 313–4).

[42] Shirazi, quoted in INBA 6003.C, pp. 320.

[43] Māzandarānī, *Tārikh-i-zuhūru'l-haqq*, pp. 121, 235. For a detailed account of the Bāb's changing views on holy war, see MacEoin, "Bābi Concept of Holy War", pp. 93–129.

[44] Shirazi, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, f. 176b.

[45] Kirmānī, *Izhāq al-bāṭil*, pp. 15, 111; Kirmānī, *Risāla-yi tīri shihāb*, in *Majmaʿ al-rasāʾil-i fārsī*, vol. 1, p. 197.

[46] Rawlinson to Canning, 22 January 1845 (FO 195/237).

[47] al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, *Risāla*, in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 514.

loomed large in the minds of the Bābis besieged in the fort of Shaykh Tabarsī in 1848.

The ʿĀshūrā rites, which had developed in Iran in the sixteenth century, had for a long time been proscribed by governors of Iraq, but during the governorship of Alī Riḍāʾ Pasha, a Bektāshī Ṣūfī with Shiʿi sympathies, permission was given, and both *taʿziyas* and processions began to be held in 1832.[48] Religious tension between Sunnis and Shiʿis in Karbala, already unusually tense following the sack of the city in 1842, was all too easily heightened during the Muḥarram mourning period. Turkish-Persian relations were particularly bad at this period and, since Basṭāmī's trial had already stirred up considerable animosity on this basis, even between the two governments, the influx of Iranian Shiʿis anticipating some form of messianic upheaval was clearly a matter of concern. The situation in Karbala threatened to be explosive and, if the Bāb had actually arrived, it is hard to say what might have happened.

Kirmānī maintains, however, that the Bāb had miscalculated the distance from Mecca to Karbala and that, realizing he could not succeed in reaching his destination by the 10th of Muḥarram, he was compelled to put back the date of his arrival to Naw-Rūz (21 March).[49] In the event, the land-route from Mecca to Karbala was closed by Arab tribes and the Bāb was forced to return to Iran by way of Bushehr.[50] When Muharram and then Naw-Rūz passed and the Bāb did not put in an appearance, no one knew whether "he had been drowned at sea or burnt on land" and, in the end, his followers felt ashamed of the claims they had put forward on his behalf.[51] Rawlinson noted that

> the religious excitement which has been for some time prevalent among the Sheeahs of this quarter, is beginning gradually to subside, the imposter who personated the character of the forerunner of the Imām Mehdi, and who was expected to declare himself at Kerbela during the present month on his return from Mecca, having been deterred by a sense of personal danger from attempting any further agitation, and having accordingly joined as a private individual the caravan of pilgrims which is travelling to Persia by the route of Damascus and Aleppo.[52]

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[48] Wardī, *Lamaḥāt*, pp. 109–10.
[49] Kirmānī, *Risāla-yi tīri shihāb*, p. 197; cf. idem, *Izhāq al-bāṭil*, p. 111.
[50] Idem, *Risāla-yi tīri shihāb*, p. 198; cf. idem, *Izhāq al-bāṭil*, p. 111.
[51] Idem, *Izhāq al-bāṭil*, p. 110.
[52] Rawlinson to Sheil, 28 February 1845 (FO 248/114).

Kirmānī himself regarded both the Bāb's call to wage jihad and his eventual failure to fulfill the promises he had made as evidence of the falsehood of his mission.[53]

What happened, in fact, was that the Bāb sailed from Jidda on 24 Ṣafar 1261/4 March 1845,[54] and reached Bushehr on 8 Jumādī I/15 May, as noted previously. Shortly after his arrival there, he sent a letter to Karbala, proBābly with Ḥājī Sayyid Javād Iṣfahānī, telling his disciples still assembled there that it had proved necessary to alter his plans in order to return directly to Iran, and that they ought to proceed to Isfahan and remain there until the arrival of further instructions.[55] Whatever the reasons for the Bāb's change of plans, it precipitated a serious breach in the ranks of his followers in Karbala, leading large numbers to abandon him. According to al-Karbalāʾī, "only a tiny band" remained after this incident, the trial of Mullā ʿAlī, and the arrest, some six months later of, Mullā Ṣādiq Khurāsānī, Mullā Muḥammad-ʿAlī Bārfurūshī, and Mullā ʿAlī Akbar Ardastānī in Shīrāz.[56] This small group of diehards regarded the change in intentions as the interposition of *bidʿa* and were, if anything, reinforced in their new allegiance.[57]

The Bāb himself 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 sins and the divine proclamation to them be completed.[58] In his *Kitāb al-fihrist*, completed in Bushehr about one month after his return to Iran, he writes "Woe to you, O people of the earth! Some of you have contended against our signs; as a result we have forbidden our signs to all men for a period of five years, as a punishment for their lies."[59] In effect, the proclamation of rising up (*qāʾimiyya*) and resurrection (*qiyāma*) was

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[53] Kirmānī, *Izhāq al-bāṭil*, pp. 95, 127–44, 164–76; idem, *Risāla dar radd-i Bāb-i murtāb*, pp. 29–30; idem, *Risāla-yi tīri shihāb*, pp. 195, 210, 241.

[54] Shirazi, *Khuṭba fī Jidda*, pp. 332–3.

[55] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 158. Sayyid Javād met the Bāb at Masqat and returned with him to Bushehr; he was then permitted to go to the *ʿatabāt* by way of Basra and must certainly be the person who carried word there of the Bāb's arrival and the change in his plans (see Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 100).

[56] Al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, *Risāla*, in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 503.

[57] See Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 158. Parallels can, of course, be made with other millenarian cults for whom the non-fulfillment of prophetic expectations acts as reinforcement for belief (see the classsic sociological study by Leon Festinger, *When prophecy fails: A social and psychological study of a modern group that predicted the destruction of the world*, New York, 1964.

[58] See al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, *Risāla*, in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 512.

[59] Shirazi, *Kitāb al-fihrist*, ms in INBA 4011C, p. 63; INBA 6003.C, p. 286.

"postponed" to the fifth year of the Bāb's career. Up to that point—and possibly after it—he seems to have retained a desire to return to Karbala, the most appropriate place for such a proclamation. This is evidenced by a short letter written by him from prison in Mākū to Sayyid Aḥmad Yazdī, one of the group of Bābis who formed a close circle in Karbala under the leadership of Qurrat al-ʿAyn, in which he writes: "I beseech God that he may gladden the hearts of the believers through his grace and make it possible for us to rise up and enter the holy land (*al-arḍ al-muqaddaṣa*)."[60]

With the Bāb's arrival in Shīrāz in early July 1845, it became possible for those who remained loyal to him in Karbala either to travel to meet him in person or to receive news of him at first hand from those who returned from Shīrāz. A considerable movement between Karbala and Shīrāz now began, as a result of which the Bāb's now precarious position was again strengthened and his authority extended over what was by now developing into a more consciously radical group of Shaykhis under the leadership of Qurrat al-ʿAyn in Karbala. Mīrzā Hādī Nahrī and his brother Mīrzā Muḥammad ʿAlī Nahrī, who had frequently met the Bāb in Karbala, had already gone to Shīrāz while he was in Arabia, the former then returning to the ʿ*atabāt*, where he doubtless brought further information about the absent Sayyid to his companions.[61] Other Shaykhis traveled between the two towns, among them Shaykh Ṣāliḥ Karīmī, a convert of Basṭāmī's,[62] Shaykh Sulṭān al-Karbalāʾī,[63] Shaykh Ḥasan Zunūzī,[64] Sayyid Javād Karbalāʾī,[65] and Āqā Sayyid ʿAbd al-Hādī Qazvīnī, who later married a niece of Qurrat al-ʿAyn.[66]

Māzandarānī states that, in 1261/1845, pilgrims returned from Mecca to Karbala, where they mentioned the claims of the Bāb, having heard of them while taking part in the *ḥajj*; these individuals proBābly returned to Karbala in the early months of 1845.[67] In an early prayer, the Bāb gives the names of a number of individuals whom he informed of his claims while in Mecca; these included Sayyid ʿAlī Kirmānī, to whom we have

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[60] Shirazi to Sayyid Aḥmad Yazdī, in INBA 4012C, p. 96.
[61] ʿAbbās Effendi, Abd al-Bahāʾ, *Tadhkirat al-wafaʾ fi tarjumati ḥayāti qudamāʾi ʾl-aḥibbāʾ* (Haifa: ʿAbbāsiyya Press, 1342 [1924]), pp. 262–70.
[62] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 271.
[63] Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 38.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid., p. 244.
[66] Ibid., p. 383; Samandar, *Tārīkh-i Samandar*, pp. 135–6, 173.
[67] Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 104/b.

previously referred as the leading supporter of Karīm Khān in Karbala.[68] It appears that Sayyid ʿAlī had, in fact, accepted the Bāb's claims for a time, following the return of the *ḥurūf al-ḥayy* from Shīrāz, but that he had become nervous when arrests began among the Bābis (presumably after Basṭāmī's arrival) and headed for Mecca.[69] He appears to have been accompanied on the *ḥajj* by Mīrzā Muḥīṭ Kirmānī and Mullā Ḥasan Gawhar, both of whom also met the Bāb in Mecca and were challenged by him there to *mubāhala*, or mutual imprecation.[70] As we have noted, the Bāb's *Ṣaḥīfa bayna 'l-ḥaramayn* was addressed to Sayyid ʿAlī and Mīrzā Muḥīṭ; the latter received a copy on his return to Karbala.[71] In view of the position held by these three men in the Shaykhi community generally and in Karbala in particular, there is no doubt that their meeting with the Bāb and their negative reaction to his claims were important factors in shaping the views of their followers in this respect, and may also have had an influence on the response of Karīm Khān, with whom Sayyid ʿAlī and Mīrzā Muhīt were generally on good terms.

Writings of the Bāb were also reaching Karbala in this period. As mentioned previously, Basṭāmī carried several of these to Iraq (and the other *ḥurūf al-ḥayy* may have brought some as well), and they were soon circulating in the Karbala region. An important early manuscript collection of works of the Bāb, containing the *Qayyūm-al asmāʾ, Ṣaḥīfa aʿmāl al-sana, Ṣaḥīfa makhzūna*, numerous sermons (*khuṭub*), *ziyārāt*, and prayers, was transcribed in Karbala in mid 1262/1846 by a certain Muḥammad ʿAlī, in the Mīrzā Jaʿfar *madrasa*.[72]

In a letter from Karbala, dated 1263/1847, from Shaykh Sulṭan al-Karbalāʾī to Bābis in Iran, the Bāb's commentary, the *Tafsīr ḥadīth al-jāriyya*, his *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, a *khuṭba*, and several letters are quoted in a context which suggests that they were familiar to the Bābis in Karbala.[73] Among the early writings of the Bāb are five prayers addressed in direct reply to individuals resident in Karbala[74]—evidence that

[68] Shirazi, prayer quoted in ibid., p. 271.
[69] Al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, *Risāla*, in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 519.
[70] Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 271; Shirazi, *al-Ṣaḥīfa bayna 'l-ḥaramayn*, pp. 14–15.
[71] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 134–7.
[72] Ms. collection in INBA 5006C.
[73] Shaykh Sulṭan al-Karbalāʾī to Bābis in Iran, quoted in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, pp. 245–9.
[74] Shirazi, in INBA 6003C, pp. 295–8, 305–18. Evidence that these prayers were written before 15 Jumādā II 1261/21 June 1845 is to be found in the fact that they are mentioned in the Bāb's *Kitāb al-fihrist*, completed on that date (see *Kitāb al-fihrist*, p. 69).

communication existed between the Bāb and his followers there from almost the earliest period. We may also note that, according to al-Baghdādī, Qurrat al-ʿAyn read portions of the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar* to the ulama in Karbala.[75]

## Qurrat al-ʿAyn

Leadership of the nascent Bābi community at the heart of the Shiʿi world fell, curiously enough, to the one woman numbered among the *ḥurūf al-ḥayy*, Qurrat al-ʿAyn. Born in Qazvīn in 1814,[76] she was raised under the tutelage of her father, Ḥājī Mullā Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Baraghānī (1753–1854), and her uncles Ḥājī Mullā Muḥammad Taqī Baraghānī (1752–1847—who pronounced the *takfīr* against al-Aḥsāʾī) and Ḥājī Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī Baraghānī (b. 1761) (who was a Shaykhi). Married at the age of fourteen to Muḥammad Taqī's son, Mullā Muḥammad Baraghānī (d. 1878), she traveled soon afterwards with him to Karbala, where he studied for some thirteen years.[77] Already well educated by her father and uncles, she continued to acquire a knowledge of *fiqh, kalām*, and other religious sciences.

At some period, whether during this or a subsequent stay in Karbala, she associated with the leading *ulama* there and eventually determined to ask for *ijāzāt* from various *mujtahids.* It seems that, on the basis of her writings, they admitted she was sufficiently learned to merit an *ijāza*, but said that it was not customary for one to be given to a woman.[78]

This was not strictly true. It was not uncommon for the daughters of ulama to be as well educated as their sons and, indeed, to become ulama (or, more correctly, *ʿālimāt*) themselves, even, in some cases, being granted *ijāzāt*. The daughters of Shaykh Jaʿfar ibn Khiḍr al-Najafī Kāshif al-Ghiṭāʾ, for example, were regarded as *faqīha*,[79] while Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān Tanakābūnī states that "among the generality of women, there

[75] Baghdādī, *Risāla amrīyya*, p. 108.
[76] Wardī, *Lamaḥāt*, p. 152. Most other sources give 1817, but Dr. al-Wardī's information is taken from Ḥājj Shaykh ʿAbbūd al-Ṣāliḥī, a descendant of her father, who has assured the present writer that it is based on family records.
[77] Ibid., p. 153.
[78] Samandar, *Tārīkh-i Samandar*, pp. 344–5.
[79] Tanakābūnī, *Qiṣaṣ*, p. 185.

have been many with *ijāzāt*"[80] and gives the names of several of them.[81] In the modern period, a woman *mujtahid* named ʿAlawiyya attained considerable fame in Isfahan, receiving *ijāzāt* from three of the leading *marājiʿ al-taqlīd* of her time.[82] Significantly, many of the early female converts to Bābism were also well educated, including Qurrat al-ʿAyn's sister Marḍiyya Khānum (1817–1895), and the mother and sister of Mulla Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī.[83]

Whether independently or, as has been suggested, under the influence of her maternal cousin, Mullā Javād Vilyānī,[84] or her uncle, Ḥājī Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī,[85] she became attracted to Shaykhism and appears to have studied under Rashtī in Karbala.[86] She seems to have returned to Qazvīn with her husband and children in 1841,[87] but our sources are contradictory as to her movements in the next few years. Most authorities have assumed that she was again in Karbala when she received news of the Bāb's appearance, possibly through Mulla ʿAlī Basṭāmī, but, in fact—as we have noted above—she herself clearly states in a letter to Mullā Javād Vilyānī that she was still in Qazvīn when she first heard of young claimant. It would seem, however, that she headed for Karbala shortly after this, and may even have been there when Basṭāmī arrived.[88] According to the *Kitāb-i nuqṭat al-kāf*, she professed "outward belief" after the perusal of some of the writings of the Bāb, possibly those brought to Karbala by Basṭāmī.[89]

Qurrat al-ʿAyn's position in Karbala was greatly enhanced by the fact that, from the time of her arrival, she took up residence in the house of the late Sayyid, her classes there taking the place of those given by him.[90]

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[80] Ibid., p. 128.

[81] Ibid. For details of others, see Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān, Iʿtimād al-Salṭana, *Khayrāt-i Ḥisān* (Tehran: [s.n.], 1886). See also Robert and Elizabeth Fernea, "Variations in Religious Observance among Islamic Women," in *Scholars, Saints and Ṣūfīs: Religious Institutions in the Middle East since 1500*, edited by Nikki R. Keddie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), pp. 385–401.

[82] Ḥājj Mullā ʿAlī Vāʾiẓ Tabrizī Khiyābānī, *Ulamāʾ-i muʿāṣirīn*, pp. 311–25.

[83] Others include Shams-i-Jahān Bigum, a grand-daughter of Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh; Khurshīd Bigum, a cousin of Ḥājj Mullā Muḥammad Bāqir Shaftī; and Bigum Kūchik, a maternal aunt of Ḥājī Mīrzā Jānī Kāshānī.

[84] ʿAbbas Effendi, *Tadhkirat al-wafāʾ*, p. 292; Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 312.

[85] Samandar, *Tārīkh-i Samandar*, p. 334.

[86] Ibid., pp. 344–5.

[87] Wardī, *Lamaḥāt*, p. 153.

[88] ʿAbbās Effendi, *Tadhkirat al-wafāʾ*, p. 295.

[89] Kāshāni, *Nuqṭat al-Kāf*, p. 140.

[90] Samandar, *Tārīkh-i Samandar*, p. 346.

The importance of thus securing for the followers of the Báb the seat of the leadership of the Shaykhi school is stressed by Shirazi in a letter to Ḥājī Mīrzā Ḥasan Khurāsānī, apparently written after his return from the *ḥajj*. In this letter, he states that "it is incumbent on one of you to teach our verses in the house of the previous gate of God (*báb Allāh al-muqaddam* [i.e., Rashtī])."[91] Qurrat al-ʿAyn appears to have given three separate classes in Rashtī's house—the first a general class open to anyone, the second for Bábi men, and the third for Bábi women. Apart from this, it seems that, in keeping with the practice of al-Aḥsāʾī and Rashtī, she gathered about her a small band of elite disciples (*khawwāṣ*), to whom she imparted the more recondite, gnostic elements of the Shaykhi and, as time passed, Bábi *taʿlīm*.[92] It was not long, indeed, before the Bábis in Karbala became divided into two groups: those who followed Qurrat al-ʿAyn and those who refused to do so. At the beginning of a letter discussing this division, Mullā Aḥmad ibn Ismāʿīl Khurāsānī states that there are many religious sects in existence: there are, to begin with, Sunnis and Shiʿis; these latter are, in turn, divided between Bālāsarīs and Shaykhis; the latter are themselves divided into two groups—the Bábis and the rest; and the Bábis have also been split into two parties—those who follow the daughter of Ṣāliḥ Qazvīnī (i.e., Qurrat al-ʿAyn) and the rest.[93]

The composition of the group centered around Qurrat al-ʿAyn is of some interest. Whereas those who went with Bushrūʾī or Basṭāmī to Shīrāz were, with the exception of an Indian, Saʿīd Hindī, all Iranians, Qurrat al-ʿAyn's circle contained a number of Arabs from Baghdad and Karbala. This fact is particularly important in indicating that, whatever the causes of later dissension in the Bábi community of Iraq, Arab-Iranian rivalry seems to have played little or no part in it. Similarly, in apparent contrast to the group which initiated the Bábi movement, several of Qurrat al-ʿAyn's supporters were elderly members of the ulama

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[91] Shirazi to Ḥājī Mīrzā Ḥasan Khurāsānī, in INBA 6003C, p. 320.

[92] This circle included three of the *ḥurūf al-ḥayy*: Mullā Muḥammad Bāqir Tabrizī, Mullā Muḥammad-ʿAlī Qazvīnī, and Mullā Muḥammad Hādī Qazvīnī, as well as Shaykh Ṣāliḥ Karīmī (see Malik Khusravī, *Tārīkh-i shuhadāʾ*, vol. 3, pp. 77–81); Āqā Sayyid Aḥmad Yazdī (see Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 459); Shaykh Sulṭān al-Karbalāʾī (see ibid., pp. 244–5); Mullā Ibrāhīm Maḥallātī (see ibid. pp. 389–90); Sayyid ʿAbd al-Hādī Qazvīnī (see Samandar, *Tārīkh-i Samandar*, pp; 135–7, 173); Saʿīd al-Jabbāwī (see Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 261); and Hājī Muḥammad al-Karādī (see ibid., pp. 261–2).

[93] Mullā Aḥmad ibn Ismāʿīl Khurāsānī quoted in Wardī, *Lamaḥāt*, p. 160.

class. Considering that the views associated with her and her followers came to be regarded as the most revolutionary of those held by any Bābi group in the early period, there is a strong indication here that youthful kicking against the traces of precedent was not the only nor even the dominant element to be found in the dynamic of the new sect in its attempt to generate a paradigm shift. In general, the role of elderly figures in revolutionary or messianic movements has been to mitigate to some extent the earliest extremes as the movement has begun to move into a phase tending towards rapprochement with the established order, whereas here we can observe a number of elderly divines consciously going in the vanguard of the most radical departure from religious and social norms.[94]

This Karbala-based group was largely composed of ulama, most if not all of whom had studied under Rashtī and one or two under al-Aḥsāʾī. Their activities centered mostly around the classes given by Qurrat al-ʿAyn, although there is some evidence that she herself initiated lecture groups held by other scholars.[95] It would appear that, during her earlier stay in Karbala, and proBābly in the early period of her later residence, she lectured on works by al-Aḥsāʾī and Rashtī,[96] but, as time passed and more of the Bāb's works became available, her classes eventually concentrated on them to the exclusion of others.

Although it is clear from her letters that she persisted in intellectual debate to the end of her life, various accounts indicate that her lecturing became more and more akin to preaching and that her preaching became increasingly impassioned. At her more popular classes, as distinct from those limited to the elite circle of scholars and close initiates to whom we have referred, her fervor and eloquence won her large audiences and created a stir wherever she went.[97] These preaching activities, with their ever-heightening air of tension and messianic expectancy, were ultimately responsible for much of the public outcry against her that led, in the end, to her expulsion from Iraq in 1847; but it was in the course of her more specialized classes and her discussions with other Bābi intellectuals that the ideas voiced to a wider audience were initially

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[94] On the role of the younger generation in paradigm shifts, see Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3rd. Ed., Chicago, 1996.

[95] See ibid., p. 161.

[96] Hājī Muḥammad Muʿīn al-Salṭana, "Sharh-i ḥāl-i Ṭāhira Qurrat al-ʿAyn," appended to *Tarīkh-i Muʿīn al-Salṭana*, p. 3.

[97] Wardī, *Lamaḥāt*, p. 156.

formulated and the startling conclusions she drew from the Bāb's writings were reached.

## The Shaykhi Reaction to the Bābi Mission (*Daʿwa*)

Relations between the Bābis, especially the "Qurratiyya" branch, and the rest of the Shaykhi community in Karbala became progressively worse. It appears that, at some point, Mullā Ḥasan Gawhar claimed *wiṣāya* and Mīrzā Muḥīṭ Kirmānī *niẓāra*,[98] implying some form of succession to Rashtī and a degree of authority over the school. Mīrzā Muḥīṭ seems to have vacillated between making a claim to personal leadership and giving support to Karīm Khān, for whom he proBābly acted as an agent in Karbala; but his attitude towards Bābism appears to have remained negative.[99] Mullā Ḥasan retained the greatest influence among the non-Bābi Shaykhis and followed Rashtī's policy of fostering ties with the governor of Karbala.[100] His relations with Qurrat al-ʿAyn and her followers were particularly bad; having fallen into a serious disagreement with her during a visit to Kāẓimiyya,[101] he preached against her and her circle in his own class and those of Mīrzā Muḥīṭ,[102] and was active in making complaints against her to the authorities in Baghdad and Istanbul, as a result of which she was held under house arrest in the former city and finally expelled from Iraq in the spring of 1847.[103] Relations between the Shaykhi groups in Karbala were complicated by Karīm Khān Kirmānī's unfavorable reaction to the Bāb.

As far as can be determined, Mullā Ṣādiq Khurāsānī, an elderly Shaykhi who had studied under Rashtī, was the first Bābi to communicate the claims of Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad to Karīm Khān. Converted by Bushrūʾī in the course of the latter's visit to Isfahan in mid-1844, Khurāsānī headed for Kirman,[104] carrying with him, in the words of

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[98] Al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, *Risāla*, in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 510.
[99] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 137.
[100] Wardī, *Lamaḥāt*, p. 169.
[101] Ibid., p. 156.
[102] Shaykh Sulṭān al-Karbalāʾī, letter in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 256.
[103] Wardī, *Lamaḥāt*, p. 169.
[104] See Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 100–1; Mīrzā Ḥusayn Hamadānī, *Tārīkh-I jadīd*, pp. 200–1; Kirmānī and Kirmānī, *Hasht bihisht*, p. 286 n. 1. There is contradictory evidence which suggests that Khurāsānī traveled to Kirman in the summer of 1845, after his expulsion from Shīrāz in June (Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 183–7). The present reconstruction would seem, however, to avoid most inconsistencies.

Karīm Khān, "a number of suras in the style of the Qurʾān, a number of books in the style of the *Ṣaḥīfa al-Sājjādiya*, and several *khuṭub* in the style of the *Nahj al-balāgha*."[105] The "suras" in question were a number of chapters from the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, as is clear from those parts of them quoted by Karīm Khān in several of his works. Mullā Ṣādiq was, according to Kirmānī, brought to a meeting presided over by him, defeated in argument, and sent on his way.[106]

Khurāsānī was followed to Kirman after some time by Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī Bārfurūshī, proBably the best acquainted of all the Bāb's followers with his teachings at this stage. Bārfurūshī brought with him a letter for Kirmānī in the Bāb's own hand, and succeeded in delivering it to him before being expelled like his predecessor;[107] the letter in question is quoted in full by Kirmānī in *al-Shihāb al-thāqib*.[108] Mullā Ṣādiq and Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī were, according to Kirmānī, the only Bābis he ever met.[109] However, in his final attack on the Bāb (written in 1283/1867), he refers to and quotes from the *Bayān-i Fārsī*, and gives detailed references to what would seem to be the Arabic *Bayān*,[110] evidence that, even if he did not have further direct contact with Bābis, he was at least able to obtain their literature.

In 1845, Karīm Khān was aged thirty-five and was at the height of his powers. As we have indicated previously, he was already a firm claimant to the position of supreme leader of the Shaykhi school. Between 1247/1832, the date of his first extant *risāla*, 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 the *Irshād al-ʿawāmm* (written in four parts between 1263/1847 and 1267/1851), the *Risāla-yi hidāyat al-ṭālibīn* (1261/1845), the *Jawāmiʿ al-ʿallāj* (1269/1853), and the *Rujūm al-shayāṭīn* (1268/1852).

It is hardly surprising, then, that Karīm Khān's response to the Bāb's claims took the form of a series of refutations in Arabic and Persian, which were spread widely—to Shaykhis in particular. Māzandarānī

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[105] Kirmānī, *Risāla dar radd-i Bāb*, pp. 27–8; see also p. 58.
[106] Ibid., p. 28. See also Nicolas, *Séyyèd Ali Mohammed, dit le Bâb*, pp. 228–9.
[107] Kirmānī, *Risāla dar radd-i Bāb*, p. 27.
[108] Idem, *al-Shihāb al-thāqib fi rajm al-nawāsib*, pp. 25–7.
[109] Idem, *Risāla dar radd-i Bāb*, p. 58.
[110] See ibid., pp. 44, 47–55.

maintains that Kirmānī attacked the Bāb in no less than twelve of his works, although he fails to give all but a few of their titles.[111] Kirmānī himself writes in his *Risāla-yi ṣī faṣl* (1269/1853):

> I have written five or six books in refutation of him [i.e., the Bāb], and have sent them to different parts of Azerbaijan, Persian Iraq, Arab Iraq, Hejaz, Khurāsān, and India. I have also written letters to the ulama and sent petitions to officials of the various governments. At times in Yazd and Kirman, and on a journey to Khurāsān, I have made clear their unbelief from pulpits, with proof and evidences.[112]

Of these "five or six books," only three are actually known: *Izhāq al-bāṭil* (1261/1845); *Risāla-yi tīri shihāb* (1262/1846); and *al-Shihāb al-thāqib* (1265–1849). A fourth complete work in refutation of the Bāb, the *Risāla dar radd-i Bāb-i murtāb*, was written by Kirmānī at the request of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh in 1283/1867.

Karīm Khān's numerous and often complex objections to the claims of the Bāb are, perhaps, best summarized in his own list of ten items in the Bāb's teachings (as found in his early writings) which he identifies as opposed to Islam, some of them being regarded as *bidʿa*. These are listed in the *Risāla-yi tīri shihāb* as follows:[113]

1. The claim of *waḥy* after that of Muḥammad.
2. The claim to bring a new book after the Qurʾān.
3. Legitimization of jihad, which is illegitimate in the time of the *ghayba*.
4. The prohibition on writing his books in black ink, and the requirement to write them in colored ink.
5. The promulgation of claims regarded as the prerogatives of the Prophet and Imāms.
6. The decree that his name be mentioned in the *adhān*.
7. The claim to *niyāba khāṣṣa*.
8. The decree that all must obey him, and that whoever refuses to do so is a *kāfir*.

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[111] Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 312. Bahāʾ Allāh states that Kirmānī wrote an attack every year, (Nūrī, *Alwāḥ-i mubāraka-yi ḥaḍrat-i Bahāʾ Allāh* [facs. ed.] ([New Delhi?: s.n.], 1310 [1892]), p. 16.

[112] Kirmānī, *Risāla-yi sī faṣl*, pp. 34–5.

[113] Idem, *Risāla-yi tīri shihāb*, p. 211; cf. p. 241; cf. also idem, *Izhāq al-bāṭil*, pp. 82, 95, 107.

9. The claim that all must worship him and regard him as the *qibla* and *masjid*.
10. Deceits relating to the twelfth Imām [apparently in respect of prophecies relating to his advent, or the claim to have revelation from him].

On the basis of such points, Kirmānī declares the Bāb a *kāfir*, maintaining that "our God is not his God, our Prophet is not his Prophet, and our Imām is not his Imām."[114]

The fierceness of Kirmānī's attacks and his outright condemnation of the Bāb as a *kāfir*, whose claims and teachings were *bidʿa*, immediately polarized the Shaykhi community. For the Bābis, Karīm Khān became the embodiment of opposition to their cause: in the writings of the Bāb, he appears to be identified with "the first to disbelieve" (corresponding negatively to Bushrūʾī, "the first to believe"), the "Tree of Negation," and the "Embodiment of Hellfire," whose abode is "the Land of Fire" and whose food is "the Tree of Zaqqūm".[115] Al-Karbalāʾī draws a comparison between Kirmānī and the Umayyads, the Sufyanids (those of the Umayyad rulers descended from Abū Sufyān), the followers of Muʿāwiyya, and the first Umayyad caliph Muʿāwiyya ibn Abī Sufyān (r. 661–680),[116] while Zarandī speaks of him as the "Antichrist" (Dajjāl?) of the Bābi revelation.[117] Elsewhere, Mīrzā Muḥammad ʿAlī Zunūzī, identifying Ḥājī Mīrzā Āqāsī as Dajjāl, refers to Kirmani as "the manifestation of Sufyān" (*ẓuhūr-i Sufyānī*).[118] When copies of *Izhāq al-bāṭil* reached Karbala, both Qurrat al-ʿAyn and al-Qatīl ibn al Karbalāʾī wrote

[114] Ibid., p. 92.

[115] See Shirazi, *Bayān-i fārsī*, 2:5, pp. 27–8; 2:10, p. 46; 2:16, p. 65; 2:17, p. 67; idem, quoted in Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Qāmūs-i Īqān*, vol. 1, p. 42; Edward Granville Browne, "The Bābis of Persia. II," p. 910.

[116] Al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, *Risāla*, in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 517, 519.

[117] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 40.

[118] Mīrzā Muḥammad ʿAlī Zunūzī, quoted in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 35. For other references to Kirmani in later Bābi and Bahaʾi works, see Nūrī, *Kitāb-i-Iqān* (Cairo: Farajuʾllāh Zakī, 1934), pp. 142–8; idem, *al-Kitāb al-aqdas*, Bombay (Mumbai)?, n.d., pp. 56–59 (trans. as *The Kitāb-i-Aqdas* (sic)*: the Most Holy Book* (Haifa: Bahaʾi World Centre, 1992), pp. 78, 242 (The "land of Kāf and Rāʾ" refers to Kirman); Shoghi Effendi, in *Maʾida-yi Āsmānī*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Ishrāq Khāvarī (Tehran: Muʾassasa-yi Millī-yi Maṭbūʿāt-i Amrī, 128–129 B. [1971–1973]), vol. 6, pp. 59, 64, 79; Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Qāmūs-i Īqān*, vol. 1, pp. 40–50, vol. 2, pp. 665–70. The concept of an opponent (*ḍadd*) of each prophet is also a feature of Ismaili doctrine (see Naṣīr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ṭūsī, *The Rawḍat al-taslīm: Commonly called Tasawwurat*, edited by and translated W. Ivanow (Leiden: E. J. Brill, for the Ismaili Society, 1950), p. 151).

counter-polemics against it.[119] Sayyid ʿAlī Kirmānī and Mīrzā Muḥīṭ were informed of Qurrat al-ʿAyn's refutation of Karīm Khān[120] and, as a result, relations between them and her appear to have further deteriorated.

Equally serious in the effect on Bābi/orthodox Shaykhi relations in Karbala was the defection to Karīm Khān of Mullā Javād Vilyānī, Qurrat al-ʿAyn's maternal cousin, who had, for a time, been a convert to Bābism but apostatized after meeting the Bāb in Shīrāz. One of the first in Qazvīn to acknowledge the Bāb as the new Shaykhi leader, he had been one of those awaiting his arrival in Karbala in 1845.[121] Disappointed by the Bāb's failure to appear, he traveled to Shīrāz with a group of fellow-Shaykhis, including Mullā ʿAbd al-ʿAlī Harātī and Mīrzā Ibrāhīm Shīrāzī. Within a short time of their arrival in Shīrāz, Mullā Javād and these two companions came into conflict with the Bāb and his other followers there, including Mullā Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī.[122] Serious disagreements seem to have occurred, in the course of which these three men were expelled from the community of believers and allied themselves in some way with the Bāb's enemies in the city. This schism appears to have led to the outbreak of disturbances of some kind between Bābis and non-Bābis, resulting in the expulsion from Shīrāz of Mullā Javād and his companions by the civil authorities.[123] It is not clear why these men rather than the Bāb's other newly-arrived disciples, defying a ban on meeting with their *magister spiritualis*, should have been expelled.

Having by now rejected the Bāb as a legitimate successor to Rashtī, Vilyānī and his fellow-recusants made for Kirman, where they joined forces with Karīm Khān. In Kirman, Vilyānī appears to have adopted the role of spokesman on behalf of Kirmānī and to have written letters in support of his claims to various individuals, as is indicated by al-Karbalāʾī, who refers to Vilyānī as Kirmānī's "herald" (*munād*).[124] The secession of three followers of the Bāb and the transfer of their allegiance to himself was without a doubt a valuable factor in enhancing Kirmānī's reputation at this critical juncture. Undoubtedly, too, these men were able to supply him with very much of the fresh information

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[119] Only the work of the latter seems to have survived; it is the *risāla* referred to frequently in these pages.

[120] Shaykh Sulṭān Karbalāʾī, "Maktūb," pp. 256–7.

[121] Qazvīnī, *Tārīkh*, p. 474; Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 159 (where Mullā Javād is incorrectly called "Baraghānī").

[122] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 161.

[123] Ibid., pp. 161–2.

[124] Al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, *Risāla*, in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, pp. 520, 527.

which he incorporated into his second and third attacks on the Bāb. Two untitled treatises in refutation of the latter were, in fact written by Karīm Khān in reply to questions from Vilyānī.[125] The latter returned after some time to Qazvīn, where he himself is reported as having written a polemic against the Bāb, the text of which does not, unfortunately, seem to have survived.[126]

The Bāb, for his part, regarded this act of apostasy on the part of Mullā Javād, Mullā ʿAbd al-ʿAlī, and Mīrzā Ibrāhīm, as a serious setback, and wrote at length and in very strong terms deprecating their actions. In a letter written in Shīrāz, proBābly not long after these events, he states that

> the worst thing which has befallen me is the action of Khuwār al-Vilyānī [i.e., Mullā Javād] 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 Ḥusayn made sacrifices in my path'.[127]

In another letter, quoted by Zarandī, he refers to Mullā Javād and Mullā ʿAbd al-ʿAlī as "the Jibt and Tāghūt, the twin idols of this perverse people [the Shaykhis?]," [128] while elsewhere he speaks of them and Mīrzā Ibrāhīm as "the Golden Calf, and its body and its lowing."[129] Vilyānī, in particular, is often referred to in Bābi and Bahaʾi literature as "*khuwār*", the "lowing" of the Golden Calf.[130] The opening passage of the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar*, written not long after these events in Shīrāz, makes lengthy and pained reference to the infidelity of these three men.[131]

Mullā Javād's rejection of the Bāb and his expulsion from the ranks of his followers had repercussions in Karbala. He himself wrote a letter to Qurrat al-ʿAyn, evoking an impassioned and, at times, severe reply from her, addressed to him, Mullā ʿAbd al-ʿAlī and "others".[132] Written in 1261/1845, this would seem to be the earliest dated work of Qurrat

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[125] Kirmānī, *Al-Shihāb al-thāqib*, p. 2.
[126] Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 388.
[127] Shirazi, quoted in ibid., p. 280.
[128] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 162; on the terms "Jibt" and "Tāghūt", see Qurʾān 4:51.
[129] Shirazi, prayer quoted in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 275.
[130] Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 388; al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, *Risāla*, in ibid., p. 520; Qazvīnī, *Tārīkh*, p. 473; and see generally prayers of the Bāb quoted in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, pp. 269–70, 273–4, 274.
[131] Shirazi, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar*, f. 3a–3b.
[132] Shirazi, quoted in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, pp. 484–501; cf. Hamadānī, *Tārīkh-i-Jadīd*, p. 283.

al-ʿAyn's which we possess. It contains fairly detailed references to the content of Vilyānī's original letter, outlining the nature of his objections before proceeding to refute them. Among the points raised by Mullā Javād were: the Bāb's failure to appear in Karbala,[133] the difficulty for most people in reading the Arabic writings of the Bāb,[134] his acceptance of parts of the Bāb's writings but not others,[135] the possibility that God may establish the truth in a person or place not fit to receive it,[136] his own claim to have written a "Qurʾān" more eloquent and complete than the Bāb's *tafsīr* [i.e., the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*],[137] the confusion of the language of the latter work,[138] and the station accorded Mullā Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī by the Bāb.[139]

Taken together, the arguments raised by Vilyānī—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 Bāb. Already shaken in his convictions by the latter's failure to appear in Karbala as he had promised, Mullā Javād had clearly headed for Shīrāz with the express intention of engaging in *mubāhala* with him; a major factor in his eventual disenchantment with and rejection of the Bāb was certainly the latter's reaction to his attempt to put his claims to the proof.

*Mubāhala* was common at this period, and the Bāb not only engaged in it himself, but instructed several of his followers to do so on his behalf, or else approved of their doing so.[140] In this case, however, the Bāb regarded such a challenge as unacceptable and even improper. In a prayer written after Vilyānī's departure from Shīrāz, he writes:

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[133] Qurrat al-ʿAyn to Vilyānī, in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 485.
[134] Ibid., p. 489; cf. Shirazi, *Risāla furūʿ al-ʿAdliyya*, p. 3.
[135] Qurrat al-ʿAyn to Vilyānī, in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, pp. 491–2.
[136] Ibid., p. 492.
[137] Ibid., p. 493.
[138] Ibid., p. 495.
[139] Ibid., p. 499; cf. pp. 121, 388.
[140] See Samandar, *Tārīkh-i Samandar*, p. 347; Shirazi, *al-Ṣaḥīfa bayna ʾl-ḥaramayn*, pp. 14–15; idem, prayer quoted in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 271; idem, letter, in ibid, p. 274; idem, letter dated 7 Dhū ʾl-Ḥijja 1262/ 26 November 1846, in Āvāra, *Kawākib*, pp. 105–6; idem, letter to Muḥammad Shah, in *Muntakhabāt*, p. 11; Qurrat al-ʿAyn, letter in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*. p; 352; ʿAbbās Effendi, *Tadhkirat al-wafāʾ*, p. 29; Baghdādī, *Risāla amrīyya*, pp. 110, 113.

*Mubāhala* continues in use today between various Muslim groups (Deobandis and Barelwis, for example). It has had many applications in the Pakistani debate between the Ahmadi (Qadiani) minority and the majority (for an intriguing, if somewhat insane, example, see Rashid Ahmad Chaudhry, 'The mubahala challenge and the response of mullahs', at: http://www.alislam.org/library/links/00000170.html).

> Know that Javād Qazvīnī has written in his letter in Persian, which he wrote with the images of hell, vain words, among which were those in which he sought to put our proof to the test… In his letter, he has challenged me to *mubāhala*, thus making a liar of himself—for it is as if he had not read in the book of God that *mubāhala* is my decree and my sign, and that he has no authority to issue a challenge to it.[141]

The point at issue is that of the station to be accorded the Bāb. In declaring himself to be the sole source of divine guidance then on earth—whatever the precise nature of his claim—the Bāb demanded a degree of non-rational obedience which Mullā Javād and other Shaykhis seem to have been unwilling to give. The history of Bābism up to 1848 is marked by a high measure of tension between the cautious intellectualizing of the large numbers of Shaykhi Bābis who became more and more disillusioned and abandoned the Bāb in greater and greater numbers as his doctrines and injunctions jarred increasingly with established theory, and the unthinking dedication of bands of saints and fanatics who argued, fought, and were, in the end all but wiped out for a cause they often understood little of. There is, in many respects, a useful analogy here with the epistemological stance of the Nizārī Ismailis of Ḥasan Ṣabbāḥ and his successors, in which reason is abandoned in favor of existential recognition of the Imām as the only source of truth and guidance.[142]

The emphasis which the Bāb placed on observance of the Islamic laws and his references to his station as being below that of the Imām, attracted much of that section of the Shaykhi community which sought for a formal continuation of the leadership provided by al-Aḥsāʾī and Rashtī in the context of a rigid adherence to Islamic practice and veneration for the Imāms, thereby tending towards the routinization of charisma within the school.

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 Bāb elements which were clearly in a state of tension with his apparently normative and traditionalist injunctions. There thus emerged a group that, although initially amenable to the claims explicit or implicit in the Bāb's writings, persisted in judging those claims in terms of existing theology. When the Bāb seemed to jettison much of the theory on which their

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[141] Shirazi, letter quoted in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 274.
[142] See Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins*, pp. 51–60, 126–31.

judgments were based, the ideological edifice of their faith appeared to collapse for such individuals.

Mullā Javād seems to have been one of the first (proBābly a little after Sayyid ʿAlī Kirmānī) to detect an incongruity between the Bāb's claims and the modes in which he actually proposed to establish them. Thus, the Bāb'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 available to the ulama. Joining Karīm Khān, who sought to approximate Shaykhi doctrine more and more closely to the established norms of Twelver Shiʿism, he was able to find in the books of his new shaykh a consistency between claims and criteria that he had not found in the writings of the Bāb.

By contrast, Qurrat al-ʿAyn, as is clear from her letter to Vilyānī, had both seen the implications of the Bāb's claims and ideas and found them consonant with her own attitudes. Where Vilyānī saw only purposeless contradictions, she seems to have apprehended a dialectical process. Where he appears to have wanted to see in Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad a third *bāb* succeeding to and, to some extent, continuing the charisma of al-Aḥsāʾī and Rashtī, she, while speaking of these latter as " the two previous gates,"[143] nevertheless saw in the role of the Bāb a distinct break with the charismatic modes of Shaykhism and a thrust in a wholly new direction, into a new "universe of discourse". In her letter to Vilyānī, she quotes Rashtī as having said near his death that he was "but as a herald (*mubashshir*) for that great cause."[144]

Elsewhere in the course of her reply to Mullā Javād, Qurrat al-ʿAyn cites a tradition of Imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, to the effect that *waḥy* could be given to someone other than the Prophet, and this is a context referring to the Qāʾim himself.[145] That she regarded the writings of the Bāb as inspired in such a manner seems clear from her numerous comparisons between them and the Qurʾān, and her quotation of a passage from the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, which declares that "my proof is this book from God."[146]

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[143] Qurrat al-ʿAyn, *Risāla*, in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 488.
[144] Ibid., p. 493.
[145] Ibid., p. 490.
[146] Ibid.

It is likewise clear from several of her references to the Bāb that she looked on him, if not as a prophet or imām, certainly as the possessor of a most exalted spiritual station. In various places in her letter, she refers to him as "the central Point of the Circle of Existence,"[147] and "the Lord of Lords, Manifestation of the grace and loving-kindness of the King of Beneficence."[148] These titles do not seem to refer to any particular station for the Bāb, such as *qāʾimiyya*, and they certainly do not provide grounds for believing that Qurrat al-ʿAyn thought of him at this point as the promised Imām himself. But such titles, coupled with the general tone of profound respect with which she refers to the Bāb in this letter, indicate a preparedness on her part to accept as valid any role which he might assign to himself in the future.

## Division Within the Bābi Community

Vilyānī's defection must have caused profound anxiety to the Bābi enclave in Karbala, where the issue of relations between Shaykhism and Bābism was most sharply felt. More serious, however, were the problems raised in the course of a violent split among the Bābis, involving Qurrat al-ʿAyn and her supporters on the one hand and Mullā Aḥmad Khurāsānī and his followers on the other. Although communications between the Bāb and his devotees were never entirely severed, contact did, at times, become difficult, and it was, in any case, impossible to refer to him any and every question for elucidation or arbitration. For this reason, Mullā Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī was empowered by the Bābi prophet to reply to questions and issue challenges to *mubāhala* on his behalf.[149]

However, the task of exposition of Bābi doctrines in a number of provincial centers fell increasingly on the leading followers of the Bāb in those areas: in Mashhad, Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī Bārfurūshī assisted Bushrūʾī in this task;[150] in Burūjird, Kurdistan, Tehran, Qazvīn, Isfahan, Qum, and elsewhere, the peripatetic Sayyid Yaḥyā Dārābī taught and expounded the new *daʿwa*;[151] in Tehran, Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī Zanjānī, despite restrictions placed on him there by the civil authorities, was able

147 Ibid., pp. 488, 495.
148 Ibid., p. 491.
149 Shirazi, *Risāla furūʿ al-ʿAdlīyya*, pp. 3–4; Māzandarānī, *Asrār al-āthār*, vol. 4, pp. 247–8.
150 Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 267.
151 Ibid., p. 465; Rawḥanī-Nayrīzī, *Lamaʿāt*, vol. 1, pp. 46, 50.

to give advice to his fellow-Bābis;[152] and, in Qazvīn, Mullā Jalīl Urūmī gave classes in Bābi doctrine on the Bāb's personal instructions.[153]

Qurrat al-ʿAyn's role as a center of authority for the Bābis of Karbala was confirmed by the Bāb himself in more than one letter,[154] but it was inevitable that her performance of this function should excite suspicion and hostility in some quarters. Whereas Vilyānī and his companions rejected the Bāb and his doctrines as such, and thereby separated themselves from the Bābi community, Mullā Aḥmad and his supporters maintained adamantly that their opposition to Qurrat al-ʿAyn was based on a desire to purify the faith of the Bāb from the false interpretations and harmful innovations which she was introducing into it. Unlike the defection of Vilyānī, therefore, this disagreement resulted in an actual division within Bābism, rather than a retraction from it.

Mullā Aḥmad Khurāsānī (also known as Muʿallim-i Ḥisārī)[155] was a *mujtahid* from Nāmiq near Turshīz, who had undertaken the task of teaching the children of Rashtī. Informed of the Bāb's claims in a letter from Bushrūʾī, he had become one of his earliest followers in Karbala. He spent some time after his conversion in Khurāsān, where he became better acquainted with Bushrūʾī, but decided, in the end, that his place was in Iraq and so returned to Karbala, possibly early in 1262/1846.

During his absence, however, Qurrat al-ʿAyn and others had risen to prominence in the community there, and friction began to develop between them and Mullā Aḥmad around Ramadan 1262/September 1846. Shaykh Sulṭān al-Karbalāʾī describes an altercation on 23 Ramadan/13 September between Mullā Aḥmad and Mullā Bāqir Tabrizī over the question of smoking, which the former did not regard as prohibited. Qurrat al-ʿAyn and Rashtī's widow (whom she had won round) were drawn into the dispute and from petty beginnings the matter grew into a serious argument.[156]

Khurāsānī himself, in his version of the disagreement, makes no reference whatever to the smoking incident, and instead locates the origins of the dispute between him and Qurrat al-ʿAyn in a much less trivial debate concerning her position and that of Mullā Bāqir. According to Khurāsānī, Mullā Bāqir interpreted a letter from the Bāb in praise of

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[152] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 539.
[153] Samandar, *Tārīkh-i Samandar*, p. 351.
[154] Shirazi, in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, pp. 331, 331–2, 332–3, 333–4.
[155] On Mullā Aḥmad see ibid., p. 157–60.
[156] Al-Karbalāʾī, *Risāla* in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, pp. 245–6.

Qurrat al-ʿAyn as evidence that the Bābis should gather about her and, despite his protests, proceeded to assemble a group of men in support of her, including Shaykh Sulṭān al-Karbalāʾī, Shaykh Ṣāliḥ Karīmī, and Mīrzā Hādī Nahrī. Khurāsānī continued to protest and, in the end was condemned for his pains as an unbeliever and forbidden either to lecture to the believers or to teach the children (presumably those of Rashtī). Qurrat al-ʿAyn, for her part, decreed that whatever might be said by Mullā Bāqir should be regarded as true and accepted by all.[157]

Khurāsānī sought support for his views, writing letters to a number of individuals, including the Bāb (by then proBābly in Isfahan), Mullā Shaykh ʿAlī Turshīzī in Shīrāz, Sayyid Ḥusayn Yazdī in Isfahan, and Sayyid ʿAlī [Shubbar?] in Kāẓimiyya.[158] According to Mullā Aḥmad, replies were received from both the Bāb and Sayyid Ḥusayn Yazdī in condemnation of the words and behavior of his opponents—but these were not specific refutations of Qurrat al-ʿAyn or Mullā Bāqir, since he had not referred to them by name in his original letters.[159]

The disagreement soon developed doctrinal justifications and elaborations. Al-Wardī mentions several points of doctrinal difference, including two which are not referred to elsewhere. The first of these is that Mullā Aḥmad regarded the works of al-Aḥsāʾī and Rashtī as immortal and continued reading from them (and presumably, lecturing from them). Qurrat al-ʿAyn and her followers, on the other hand, looked on these works as abrogated by the Bāb.[160] Although, as we shall see, the Bāb did at a later date specifically forbid his followers to read the works of al-Aḥsāʾī or Rashtī or to sit with their followers, the only passage known to me in his early writings which might be interpreted this way is his general statement in the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* that all the books of the past, except those from God, had been abrogated.[161] That Qurrat al-ʿAyn and her supporters may have drawn a more specific conclusion with regard to the works of the founders of Shaykhism is a fact of no little moment.

The other point mentioned by Wardī is that Qurrat al-ʿAyn was said to have forbidden mourning for the Imām Ḥusayn or the performance of *ziyāra* to the shrines of the Imāms, on the grounds that there is no real

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[157] Mullā Aḥmad Khurāsānī, *Risāla*, in Wardi, *Lamaḥāt*, p. 160.
[158] Ibid., p. 161.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Wardī, *Lamaḥāt*, p. 159.
[161] Shirazi, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, f. 56a.

meaning in references to the "thirst" or "death" of Ḥusayn.[162] If this be true, she was clearly opposed here to the Bāb's own teaching.[163]

Her position was, however, much enhanced at this juncture by the arrival of several letters from the Bāb, in which he spoke of her in terms of the highest praise and approbation.[164] Strengthened in her position by statements in her favor from such a source, Qurrat al-ʿAyn continued to emphasize the significance of the role of the *ḥurūf al-ḥayy* as the *sābiqūn* who had recognized the Bāb before all others. Mullā Aḥmad and his companions—for he seems to have acquired a following of his own by this stage—objected vigorously to what they regarded as unwarranted interpretations by her of certain passages in the Bāb's writings referring to the *sābiqūn*, while their opponents countered with various quotations of a more explicit nature.[165] Khurāsānī went on to allege that his rivals believed "that the remembrance (*al-dhikr*) [i.e., the Bāb], is a lord apart from God, and his gate and the first to believe in him, Mullā Ḥusayn is Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh [i.e., the Prophet], and the second to believe in him, Mullā ʿAlī, is ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, and Qurrat al-ʿAyn is the reality of Fāṭima, and the remaining eleven [sic] *sābiqūn* are the other Imāms, and the Shaykh and the Sayyid [i.e. al-Aḥsāʾī and Rashtī] were created from the surplus matter of the bodies of the *sābiqūn*."[166] A meeting was called in Rashtī's house (where Khurāsānī also seems to have lived) in order to resolve this particular issue, attended by Mullā Aḥmad and several of his companions.

The matter appears to have remained unresolved, however; both sides stayed intransigent and tension continued as before. Shaykh Sulṭān refers to the accusations of Khurāsānī regarding the claims made for the *sābiqūn* as mere "falsehoods".[167] As we have already noted, however, the Bāb himself did teach that the *ḥurūf al-ḥayy* where identical with the Prophet, Imāms, *abwābs*, and Fāṭima, and there seems little doubt that

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[162] Wardī, *Lamaḥāt*, p. 159. Presumably Qurrat al-ʿAyn based this belief on the quasi-Docetic notion that the Imams are supernatural beings who could not actually suffer bodily harm, even if they showed it outwardly.

[163] Shirazi, letter to Qurrat al-ʿAyn, in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 333; idem, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, f. 104b.

[164] See letters quoted in al-Karbalāʾī, *Risāla* in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 247; see also note 1273 above.

[165] Ibid., pp. 248–50.

[166] Ibid., p. 252.

[167] Ibid.

this doctrine was being promulgated in some form by the group around Qurrat al-ʿAyn and Mullā Bāqir.

The former in particular appears to have been the object of great veneration in this respect, becoming the center of a cult in which she was regarded as "the fair and spotless emblem of chastity and the incarnation of the holy Fatima."[168] The *Kitāb-i nuqṭat al-kāf* describes the origins of this veneration as follows: originally, the followers of Qurrat al-ʿAyn practiced extremely severe forms of asceticism; they would not eat bread bought from the bazaar because they regarded it as unclean, inasmuch as anyone who rejected the Bāb thereby rejected the Prophet and, in so doing, rejected God[169] (that is, they became unbelievers [*kuffār*], whose persons and property were considered ritually unclean [*najis*]).

This situation continued until the Bāb's *Risāla furūʿ al-ʿAdliyya* reached Karbala. Here it was stated that the glances of Fāṭima and the Imāms (*āl Allāh*) were among the agents whereby impure and forbidden (*ḥarām*) materials could be rendered lawful (*ḥalāl*).[170] When she read this, Qurrat al-ʿAyn claimed to be "the manifestation of Fāṭima (*maẓhar-i jināb-i Fāṭima*)" and said that "the glance of my eye has the same effect as that of hers, and whatever I cast my gaze upon shall be made pure." She then instructed her companions to bring whatever they bought in the bazaar for her to render *ḥalāl*.[171] According to Māzandarānī, she was also regarded by some as "the point of divine knowledge" after Rashtī.[172] It is not, perhaps, surprising that, according to ʿAbbās Effendi, she claimed to be divine in the course of the Bābi conclave held at Bidasht in Mazandaran in 1848.[173]

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[168] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1944), p. 32; Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 295.

[169] On the orthodoxy of this view in Bābi doctrine, Shirazi, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, f. 103a.

[170] The original passage may be found in chapter one of the *Furūʿ al-ʿAdliyya* (INBA 5010.C, there numbered "chapter seven", p. 94; also the Persian translation there numbered "chapter thirteen", p. 130); it reads: "And among the purified substances in certain verses are those things which have fallen beneath the gaze of the Family of God; even though none of the ulama have mentioned this, nevertheless, the decision rests with him whom God hath caused to witness the creation of the heavens and the earth."

[171] Kāshānī, *Nuqtat al-Kāf*, pp. 140–1.

[172] Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 314.

[173] ʿAbbās Effendi, *Makātīb-i ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿa Kurdistān al-ʿIlmiyya, 1330 [1910–21]), vol. 2, p. 255. We can observe an interesting extension of this "charismatic field" (as defined by Berger) in Bābism, with the later role of Mullā Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī and Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī Bārfurūshī as the "Qāʾim-i Khurāsānī" and "Qāʾim-i Jīlānī" respectively, contemporaneous with the Bāb's own claim to *qāʾimīyya*

Despite attempts by Qurrat al-ʿAyn to defuse the tension within the Bābi community by calling on her partisans to tone down their remarks about her,[174] and to placate Mullā Aḥmad in person,[175] no lasting rapprochement was possible. The Bāb himself remained eager to effect a reconciliation even at the cost of some doctrinal blurring. In general, it seems that, although he disapproved of the behavior of Khurāsānī and was strongly in favor of Qurrat al-ʿAyn, he deprecated antagonism on either side, instructed the followers of Qurrat al-ʿAyn to avoid attacking Mullā Aḥmad, and instructed all involved to remain united in spite of their disagreements. In a letter from prison in Mākū, he writes:

> I have read your letter and informed myself of what you mentioned in it. I had heard from your companion about the dissension in the holy land [Karbala]…. Know that the *sābiqūn*, so long as they do not have doubts or misgivings in their own affair, have been chosen for that honor above all others. But neither their words nor their actions are proof for anyone—rather, in this day the proof is but one individual [i.e., the Bāb himself]. Even if there servants enter the faith of God who leave them behind in knowledge or deeds, yet that honor is theirs from God and nobody may rival them in that. No one has the right to reject them, as long as he does not see them commit what would be contrary to the faith. This is the measure of justice in what concerns them.
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> Nor do any of those who arrive from the house of justice [i.e., the house of Rashtī] have the right to condemn the pure one (*al-ṭāhira*) [i.e., Qurrat al-ʿAyn] in respect of her learning, for she has understood the [various] aspects of the cause through the grace of God. In this day, she is an honour to this sect, and whoever wrongs her in the faith will commit a manifest sin.
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> The same goes for those who have followed her—none of them has the right to reject Aḥmad in the house of justice, for he has understood our message in the verses of justice; though I am aware that he has committed a clear iniquity in this disagreement, I won't reveal it in this letter or speak

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(see Sayyid Muḥammad Hādī Zavāraʾī, *Waqāyiʿ-i mīmiyya* (CUL, Browne Or. MS. F. 28, item 1), pp. 1, 3, 54, 70; idem, *Majlis-i shahādat-i ḥaḍrat-i awwal man āmana, Qāʾim-i Khurāsānī* (CUL, Browne Or. MS. F. 28, item 2), passim; Luṭfʿ Alī Mīrzā Shīrāzī, *Tārikh-i Vaqāyiʿ-i Mazāndarān* (CUL, Browne Or. MS. F. 28, item 3; available in facsimile in University of Michigan British Manuscript Project 749(4), #3. East Lansing, Mi.: H-Bahai, 2001 at http://www.h-net.org/~bahai/arabic/vol5/lutfali/lutfali.htm.), p. 71 ; Kāshānī, *Nuqṭat al-Kāf*, pp. 152, 154, 181, 199, 202.

[174] See Qurrat al-ʿAyn letters, quoted in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, pp. 360, 361, 362.

[175] Khurāsānī, *Risāla*, in al-Wardi, *Lamaḥāt*, p. 161.

> of it, so they can return to what they were commanded and no-one may condemn anyone else.[176]

In a letter to Mullā Aḥmad himself, the Bāb speaks favorably of Qurrat al-ʿAyn, defends her from the charge of having denied the identity between outward and inward realities, and goes on:

> As for what you have asked about the pure leaf, concerning the fact that she has claimed for herself the station of being a proof for others—there's nothing dreadful or serious about this, since laudable meanings can be attributed to "being a proof".… She has recognized the aspects of my decree and has pondered on the lights shining from my verses. Let none of my followers repudiate her, for she only speaks with evidences that have shone forth from the people of sinlessness [i.e., the Imāms] and tokens that have radiated from the people of truth. This is enough for her as an honour among this sect.[177]

We can see, then, that in spite of serious accusations on the one hand and excessive adulation on the other, Qurrat al-ʿAyn appears to have succeeded in steering a middle course which evoked a favorable reaction from the Bāb and preserved her position in the Bābi hierarchy as a leading exponent of the new doctrines. As far as it is accurate at this stage to speak of such a thing, we may consider her a representative of the orthodox mainstream of Bābi thought, even if her expression of that thought was to prove at times controversial even to other exponents of it.

Her insistence on turning to the Bāb for guidance or on referring to his writings for information on doctrine and practice was to prove a valuable unifying factor in a religious movement which had expanded numerically more rapidly than its tenets had been expounded or published abroad. The Bāb not yet attempted to systematize his theories. Changes in doctrinal emphasis which occurred from time to time as his claims developed in complexity or as circumstances demanded caution in their exposition, combined with a serious lack of manuscript copies of even his major writings and the existence of incorrectly copied versions of some of them, all led to a degree of doctrinal confusion in the widely-scattered Bābi communities. This confusion became particularly marked in the period following the Bāb's execution in 1850. In this context, it was inevitable that there should be clashes both of personality and opinion, particularly where someone as outspoken and impatient

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[176] Shirazi, quoted in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 332.
[177] Ibid., p. 333.

of contradiction as Qurrat al-ʿAyn was concerned. There is little doubt but that, in the end, she would have carried the day with the Bābis in Karbala in her struggle with Mullā Aḥmad; but other events intervened before a final and decisive clash could take place.[178]

## First Steps Towards the Abrogation of the Islamic *Sharīʿa*

Qurrat al-ʿAyn was by now making unequivocal claims for the Bāb as the bearer of a divine mission expanding and fulfilling that of al-Aḥsāʾī and Rashtī, and as the immediate precursor of the Imām, while asserting that no-one could be saved unless he believed in him.[179]

Such a position could not but be extremely embarrassing to the non-Bābi Shaykhi leadership in Karbala, especially Mullā Ḥasan Gawhar and Muḥīṭ Kirmānī. Many of the points advanced by Qurrat al-ʿAyn in evidence of the claims of the Bāb—such as the identity of station between prophet and Imām or the divine inspiration of the Bāb's writings[180]—were among those adduced by Karīm Khān in his refutation of him. Although the orthodox Shaykhi community of Iraq does not seem to have been unduly hostile to the Bābis in the early period, the growing prestige and influence of Karīm Khān and his demand to be recognized as overall head of the sect made it necessary for them to clarify their position vis-à-vis the followers of a man whom he had categorically condemned as a heretic. This final break with Shaykhism was to be given a sharp impetus by a serious worsening of relations between Qurrat al-ʿAyn and the Shiʿi community at large.

Mullā Aḥmad Khurāsānī states that, during the period of his disagreement with Qurrat al-ʿAyn, she became increasingly well-known to the population of Karbala and that, after some time, certain people became so disturbed by her behavior that they went to the governor, to whom they complained that she was an unbeliever (*kāfira*).[181] The

[178] Mullā Aḥmad continued to play an active, if not very prominent, role in the promulgation of Bābism (see Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, pp. 159–60). He was, it seems, arrested for a time as late as 1876, and appears to have died a natural death in 1886. (See ʿIshrāq Khāvarī, *Taqvīm*, pp. 93, 106.

[179] See, in particular her letter printed as an appendix to Gulpāyagānī, *Kashf al-ghiṭāʾ*.

[180] See ibid., p. 4.

[181] *Risāla*, in al-Wardī, *Lamaḥāt*, p. 161.

*Nuqṭat al-kāf* suggests that it was her behavior in rendering food from the bazaar lawful which excited the suspicions of the populace.[182]

It is also likely that the strife between her party and that of Mullā Aḥmad, as well as the increasing hostility between her and the Shaykhi leadership, may have given cause for concern in a city already seriously divided by factional disputes of various kinds. In a letter written shortly after her arrival in Baghdad, following her departure from Karbala around the beginning of 1847, she complains that her enemies had condemned her followers and issued a *fatwā* of *takfīr*, and that the outcry produced had reached the ears of the "unbelievers" (presumably the Shiʿi populace as a whole).[183]

But at the root of her trouble with the Shiʿi population lay Qurrat al-ʿAyn's crucial decision to abrogate part or all of Islamic law, possibly as a preparation for the introduction of innovations to be recommended by the Bāb.

At the beginning of the *daʿwa*, he had insisted on full observance of the religious law. Thus, for example, he writes in the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* that "God has made the laws of Muḥammad and his *awliyāʾ* [i.e., the Imāms] binding in every book until the resurrection."[184] He himself confirms in his later *Dalāʾil-i sabʿa* that it was his intention in the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* to "command observance of the law of the Qurʾān, so that men might not be disturbed by a new book and a new cause."[185] In the *Saḥīfa-yi ʿAdliyya*, he states that

> since no change may be decreed for [the faith of God], this blessed *sharīʿa* shall never be abrogated. Nay, what Muḥammad has declared lawful (*ḥalāl Muḥammadin*) shall remain lawful to the day of the resurrection, and what he has declared unlawful (*ḥarām Muḥammadin*) shall remain unlawful until the day of resurrection.[186]

This same point regarding the inviolability of the *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām* of Muḥammad was made publicly by the Bāb in the course of a *khuṭba* [sermon] delivered by him in the Vakīl mosque of Shīrāz in 1845,[187] and in the contemporary *Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar*.[188] In this latter work, the

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[182] Kāshānī, *Nuqṭat al-Kāf*, p. 141.
[183] Qurrat al-ʿAyn letter, quoted in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 348.
[184] Shirazi, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, f. 185b.
[185] Idem, *Dalāʾil-i Sabʿa*, p. 29.
[186] Idem, *Risāla furūʿ al-ʾAdliyya*, pp. 5–6.
[187] See account by Ḥājī Mīrzā Ṣādiq Muʿallim in Balyuzi, *The Báb*, pp. 97–8.
[188] Shirazi, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar*, f. 28a.

Báb describes himself as "the servant of God confirming what you possess of the injunctions of the Qurʾān"[189] and declares that "it is incumbent on all to act in accordance with it [the Qurʾān]; whoever rejects a word of it has disbelieved in the prophets and messengers and shall have his punishment in the fire of hell."[190] Similarly, in an early letter to Qurrat al-ʿAyn, he writes, "rest assured that all the externals of the *sharīʿa* are observed. Whoever neglects the least of its laws, it shall be as if he has neglected all of them."[191] 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 Qurʾān."[192]

In general, the Báb sought to clarify obscure or tangled issues related to the details of the *sharīʿa*. In the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar*, he refers to the inability of the ulama to give correct judgments on *furūʿ*,[193] and, in the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, states that he has clarified certain laws over which there had been disagreement.[194] The *Risāla furūʿ al-ʿAdlīyya* is, as we have noted, a systematic attempt to set out in detail the finer points of observance relating to certain major aspects of the *sharīʿa*, such as obligatory prayer (*ṣalāt*), the alms tax (*zakāt*), and jihad. Beyond this, however, he introduced a number of ordinances which extended and intensified the standard Qurʾānic regulations. Thus, for example, he prohibited smoking in the *Khaṣāʾil-i sabʿa* and recommended supererogatory prayer and fasting in the *Ṣaḥīfa bayna 'l-ḥaramayn*. Mīrzā Muḥammad ʿAlī Zunūzī[195] writes that, in his early letters, the Báb

> put desirable matters (*mustaḥabbāt*) in the place of obligatory (*wājibāt*), and undesirable matters (*makrūhāt*) in the place of forbidden (*muḥarramāt*). Thus, for example, he regarded it as obligatory to have four tablets (*muḥr*) of the soil [from the shrine] of the Prince of Martyrs [i.e., Imām Ḥusayn] on which to place the hands forehead and nose during the prostration of the obligatory prayer (*namāz*); he considered the pilgrimage on ʿĀshūrā a duty; he laid down prayers (*adīʿa*) and supererogatory observances (*taʿqībāt*); he proclaimed the obligation of Friday prayer…; and he fashioned amulets (*hayākil*), charms (*aḥrāz*), and talismans (*tilismāt*) such as

[189] Ibid., f. 7b.
[190] Ibid., f. 11a.
[191] Letter quoted in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 344.
[192] Letter in INBA 7009.C, p. 133.
[193] Shirazi, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar*, f. 4b.
[194] Shirazi, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, f. 185b.
[195] A relative of Shaykh Ḥasan Zunūzī and himself an *ʿālim*, he was executed with the Báb in Tabriz in 1850 (See Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, pp. 27–31.).

> are prepared among the people[196].… All his companions acted with the most circumspection according to the *usūl* and *furū* of Islam.[197]

The early followers of the Bābi movement appear to have been as noted for the strictness of their observance of Islamic law as they were later to be characterized for their abandonment of it; in this respect they significantly resemble the pre-*qiyāma* Niẓārī Ismailis.[198] Ḥājī Muḥammad Muʿīn al-Salṭana Tabrizī quotes several individuals, including Ḥājī Aḥmad Mīlānī and Mullā Bāqir Tabrizī, on the attitude of the Bābis at this period to the Islamic *sharīʿa*. Mīlānī, for example, performed a fast of three consecutive months during Rajab, Shaʿbān and Ramaḍān. Similarly, they would not wear black clothes because the Imāms had forbidden this color as belonging to the ʿAbbāsid dynasty, which had persecuted them. For this same reason, even the writing of books in black ink was prohibited (red or gold ink normally being used instead); the Bāb himself wrote in red ink before the composition of the *Bayān-i Fārsī*.[199]

In many of her early letters, Qurrat al-ʿAyn herself emphasized that "this is the traditional way (*sunna*) of God, which was in the past and shall be in the future. You shall find no change in the *sunna* of God."[200] Innovative in her interpretation of Islamic doctrine as she may have been, it was as a staunch defender of Shiʿi orthodoxy (as she understood it) that she represented herself to her fellow-believers in the Bāb and to the population at large. So long as the Bāb appeared to command strict obedience to the law, she strove to enforce such obedience within the Bābi community. But, by the summer of 1846, she began to infer from

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[196] On the important role played by talismans in Bābism, see Denis MacEoin, "Nineteenth-Century Bābi Talismans", *Studia Iranica* 14:1 (1985), pp. 77–98. The article includes several reproductions of *hayākil and dawāʾir*. It is reprinted here.

[197] Mīrzā Muḥammad ʿAlī Zunūzī, quoted in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, pp. 31–2.

[198] Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍl Allāh Hamadānī, *Jāmiʿ al-tawārikh: qiṣmat-i Ismāʿīlīyān va Fāṭimīyān va Nizārīyān va Duʿāyān va Rāfiqān* ed. Muḥammad Taqī Dānish-pizhū, Muḥammad Mudarrisī Zanjānī (Tehran: Bungāh-i Tarjuma va Nashr-i Kitāb, 1338 [1959]), p. 98; Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins*, p. 118.

[199] Nuqabāʾī, *Qurrat al-ʿAyn*, p. 6; on the use of colored inks, see Shirazi, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, ff. 67a, 162b, 192b; Qurrat al-ʿAyn, *Risāla*, in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 345. On the "color motif" in heterodox Iranian movements, see Biancarmia Scarcia Amoretti, "Sects and Heresies," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 4, *The Period from the Arab Invasion to the Seljuqs*, ed. R. N. Frye (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 513–14; Edward Granville Browne, *A Literary History of Persia* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1902), vol. 1, pp. 311–2.

[200] Qurrat al-ʿAyn, *Risala* in Gulpāygānī, *Kashf al-ghiṭāʾ*, pp. 3–4.

the Bāb's writings that it was time to suspend the laws of the Islamic revelation.

Samandar clearly states that "she understood the [need for] the abrogation of the laws of the Qurʾān before all or most of the people of the *Bayān* [i.e. the Bābis], deriving this from the stage of development reached by the words of the Bāb."[201] Muʿīn al-Salṭana also refers to her originality in abrogating the Qurʾānic laws, laying stress on what he regards as her spiritual perception in so doing before it was made known that the Bāb had done so; he does, however, incorrectly attribute this behavior to the period when she was in Qazvīn and Tehran, from 1847.[202]

Mīrzā Muḥammad ʿAlī Zunūzī also refers to the fact that "with the permission of the Sayyid [i.e., the Bāb], Qurrat al-ʿAyn in practice rendered null and void all the previous laws and observances."[203] Shaykh Maḥmūd ibn ʿAbd Allāh Ālūsī (1802–1853), the well-known Sunni *muftī* of Baghdad (with whom Qurrat al-ʿAyn stayed for two months in 1847), remarks that

> She was one of those who followed the Bāb after the death of Rashtī, and then disobeyed him in some matters, among them religious obligations (*takālīf* ). It is said that she used to speak of permitting women to be seen by men (*ḥall al-furūj*) and the suspension of all religious obligations whatsoever.[204]

Qurrat al-ʿAyn herself dates the beginning of her move to abrogate the *sharīʿa* from the month of Rajab 1262/June–July 1846. In a letter written about this time, she states that "the gate of tribulations was opened through the revelation of the blessed leaf from the blessed, crimson tree [i.e., a letter from the Bāb] in the month of God (*shahr Allāh*) [i.e., Rajab]…in which he addressed this insignificant one, calling on her to carry out his commands."[205] This letter from the Bāb seems to have instructed her to tell her husband (*qul* [sic][206] *li-baʿliki*) that this new cause was not like that of Muḥammad who came before. Strengthened,

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[201] Samandar, *Tārīkh-i Samandar*, p. 349.
[202] Nuqabāʾī, *Qurrat al-ʿAyn*, pp. 6–7.
[203] Zunūzī, quoted in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 35.
[204] Shaykh Abū ʾl-Thanāʾ Maḥmūd ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-maʿānī fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿaẓīm wa ʾl-sabʿ al-mathāni*, quoted in al-Wardī, *Lamaḥāt*, p. 169; cf. Gulpāyagānī, *Kashf al-ghiṭāʾ*, p. 95.
[205] Letter quoted in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 349.
[206] The verb should, of course, be feminine.

as she puts it, by God's grace and might, she read these verses to the believers, telling them of the greatness of God's cause and calling on them to strive to understand "the verses of innovation" (*āyāt al-badʿ*). She then summoned them to "enter the gate of innovation, prostrating yourselves." Some, she says, accepted this summons and "discarded restraints and shut their eyes to rules and regulations," while others objected and censured her.[207]

Not enough detail is given by Qurrat al-ʿAyn in her letter for us to tell exactly what was involved in the abandonment of the more severe Islamic laws (*ḥudūd*).[208] It was certainly not a full-scale abrogation such as took place later, under her direction, at the conclave of Bidasht, nor is there any evidence that it involved a wholesale plunge into antinomianism such as seems to have occurred at Alamut in 1164, when the Ismaili leader Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad proclaimed the advent of the *Qiyāma* and abolished all observances of the *sharīʿa*.[209] There are, nevertheless, numerous and significant parallels with the latter event, especially in terms of doctrine. When Ḥasan addressed his followers assembled at Alamut, he announced to them that a letter had come to him from the hidden Ismaili Imām, containing new guidance:

> The Imām of the age sends his blessings unto you and mercy, and designates you his servants, whom he has singled out. He has removed from you the burden of obedience to the *sharīʿa*, and has brought you to the time of resurrection (*al-qiyāma*).[210]

"The ties and chains of *sharīʿat* restrictions," writes Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm Qūhistānī, "were taken from the necks of the faithful."[211] Juwaynī writes concerning the Ismaili beliefs at this period that

> They explained paradise and hell…in such a way as to give a spiritual meaning to these concepts. And then on the basis of this they said that the Resurrection is when men shall come to God and the mysteries and truths of all Creation be revealed, and acts of obedience abolished, for in the world to come all is reckoning and there is no action. And this is the spiritual [Resurrection] and the Resurrection promised and awaited

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[207] Ibid.

[208] The *ḥudūd* are laws for the punishment of "crimes against God" such as adultery, apostasy, theft, or inebriation. Other crimes are dealt with by *taʿzīr* punishments, which are at the discretion of the *qāḍī*.

[209] See, for example Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins*, pp. 148–9; Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967), pp. 71–5.

[210] Hamadānī, *Jāmiʿ al-tawārikh*, p. 164.

[211] Quhistani, *Haft Bāb*, p. 42.

> in all religions and creeds is this, which was revealed by Ḥasan. And as a consequence thereof men have been relieved of the duties imposed by the Shariʿa because in this period of the Resurrection they must turn in every sense towards God and abandon the rites of religious law and established habits of worship.[212]

It is of particular interest to note how closely the development of Ḥasan's claims parallels that of the Báb's—from missionary (*dāʿī*) and *ḥujja* of the Imām, to the Imām himself in spiritual reality (*al-ḥaqīqa*), to the Qāʾim proclaiming the age of resurrection.[213]

Although it is necessarily difficult to know what motivated Qurrat al-ʿAyn to begin to abandon the *sharīʿa* at this point, it seems very likely that it was for reasons similar in many respects to those adduced by the Niẓārīs for their own abrogation of those same laws. As we have briefly noted before, many Shaykhis, like the Ismailis, placed considerable emphasis on the distinction between the outward observances of the faith (*al-ẓāhir*) and its inward realities (*al-bāṭin*), and believed that the age of *bāṭin* had commenced with al-Aḥsāʾī and would culminate in the appearance of the Hidden Imām. Thus, side by side with the central "polar motif" emphasizing the role of the bearer of charisma, we find a "gnostic motif" in which revelation of *bāṭin* takes precedence over other elements of faith and doctrine.[214] In our chapter on Rashtī, we referred briefly to an important passage in his *Sharḥ al-qaṣīda*, in which he refers to the inception of an age of *bāṭin* with al-Aḥsāʾī; it will be worthwhile at this point to look again at this passage in somewhat greater detail.

The Sayyid begins by stating that the prophet Muḥammad possesses two names, one on earth (Muḥammad) and one in heaven (Aḥmad). Since the name is a revelation (*al-ism huwa 'l-ẓuhūr*), this means that Muḥammad is revealed twice (*lahu ẓuhūrān*). One revelation is in the outward worlds (*al-ʿawālim al-ẓāhiriyya*), with respect to the external

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[212] ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ʿAtā Malik Juwaynī, *The Tārīkh-i-Jahan-gusha of ʿAlaʾu 'd-Din ʿAta Malik-i-Juwayni*, ed. Mirza Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdu'l-Wahhab-i-Qazwini (Leyden: E. J. Brill; London: Luzac, 1912–37), vol. 3, pp. 237–8, trans. as *The History of the World-Conqueror*, trans. John Andrew Boyle (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1958), vol. 2, pp. 695–6. See also Ṭūsī, *Rawḍat al-taslīm*, pp. 172–3.

[213] See Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins*, pp. 151–3. Nāṣir-i Khusraw Qubādhiyānī notes that "he [the Qāʾim] shall first foster the *sharīʿa*, then he shall stand in his own station and make manifest the truth" (Nāsir-i Khusraw, *Kitāb-vajh-i dīn* (Berlin: Kaviani, 1343 [1925]), p. 166).

[214] On the value of the gnostic motif in Shaykhi and Bābi doctrine, see Peter L. Berger, "From Sect to Church: A Sociological Interpretation of the Bahaʾi Movement"; and Peter Smith, "Motif Research: Peter Berger and the Bahaʾi Faith," pp. 210–34.

aspect of bodies, their regulations, acts, and so on, and has its location (*maẓhar*) in the name Muḥammad. The other is in the inward worlds (*al-ʿawālim al-bāṭiniyya*) and its location is known as Aḥmad. Since creation is on the arc of ascent (*al-qaws al-suʿūdī*) and, as it rises back to its origin, becomes progressively more refined;[215] and since, from the time of the Prophet, there has appeared at the beginning of each century someone to propagate (*man yurawwiju*) the laws appropriate to that stage (of development); and since the beginning of the arc was education for the appearance of outward laws, and its propagator (*al-murawwij*) in each century has propagated the *sharīʿa* according to the outward exigencies of the people; and since the outward body has two stations, one relating to differences, accidents and changes, the other free of these; and since each stage reaches perfection only through six phases (*aṭwār*)—therefore, the outward laws related to the manifestation of the name of Muḥammad reached a state of perfection only after twelve hundred years.

On the completion of these twelve hundred years, the first age (*al-dawra al-ūlā*) connected with the outward aspects of the sun of *nubuwwa* and the twelve periods of the moon of *wilāya* were ended.[216] The second age is for the purpose of making explicit the laws relating to the appearance of inner truths and mysteries. By way of another analogy, the first age was for the education of bodies and the spirits belonging to them, like the fetus in the womb, while the second age is for the education of pure souls and spirits, unconnected to bodies. In this second age, outward realities are subordinate to inward, in distinction to the first age, in which the reverse was true. The name of the Prophet in this age is his heavenly name, that is Aḥmad; the propagator and leader (*raʾīs*) of this age was also named Aḥmad (al-Aḥsāʾī).[217]

In a treatise written by an anonymous Bābi who had clearly been a Shaykhi, reference is similarly made to two ages; that of *ẓāhir*, ending in the twelfth century, and that of *bāṭin*, beginning with the appearance of al-Aḥsāʾī.[218] The Shaykh himself "revealed of hidden knowledge what

[215] On the relationship of the arcs of descent and ascent to the periods of *nubuwwa* and *wilāya*, see Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, vol. 1, pp. 209, 211, 273.

[216] The analogy here is with the cycle of the solar year and the twelve lunar months.

[217] Rashtī, *Sharḥ al-qaṣīda* ([Tabriz?: s.n.], 1269 [1853]), quoted in Abū ʿl-Faḍl Gulpāyagānī, *Kitāb al-farāʾid* (Cairo: Matbaʿa Hindiyya, 1315 [1897]).

[218] *Risāla*, in INBA 6003.C, pp. 380–416; this reference, p. 407; cf. pp. 399, 413, 415.

men could bear,"[219] but throughout his lifetime and in the early days of Rashtī, concealment of their real teachings (*taqiyya*) was completely observed.[220] This author uses a similar analogy to that adopted by Rashtī in the last section of the above passage: he compares the world to a body without a spirit, in the same way that a child develops by degrees. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, it resembled a child of bout ten, endowed with powers of discretion and, in the time of the seal of the gates (i.e., the Bāb),[221] developed to the stage of a child on the verge of maturity. The beginning of maturity will, he says, occur on the appearance of the Hidden Imām.[222]

Much the same analogy is used by al-Karbalāʾī, who states that the period of Shaykh Aḥmad (*al-shaykh al-bāb*) and Sayyid Kāẓim dated from the beginning of the first century of the second age (*dawra*) up to the appearance of the Bāb; their period was "a body (*jasad*) for this substance (*li-hādhā 'l-jism*) and a substance (*jism*) for that spirit (*li-tilka 'l-rūḥ*), and an outward form (*ẓāhir*) for that inward reality (*li-dhālika 'l-bāṭin*) and an inward reality for the inward reality of all inward realities (*li-bāṭin al-bāṭin*)."[223]

In a *risāla* written at a slightly later date, Qurrat al-ʿAyn states that, in this day, the decree of the *bāṭin al-bāṭin* of the Qurʾān is manifest,[224] and indicates that the outward meaning of the holy book is related to the Prophet while its inner meaning belongs to the Imāms.[225] The Bāb himself made it clear that he spoke concerning the *bāṭin al-bāṭin*, in the same way that the Imām Ḥusayn spoke of the *bāṭin al-zāhir*.[226] By

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[219] Ibid., p. 399.

[220] Ibid., p. 403.

[221] On the Bāb's own use of this title, see Shirazi, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, f. 36a.

[222] *Risāla*, in INBA 6003.C, p. 408. Kirmānī also makes use of a developed form of this analogy (Kirmānī, *Risāla-yi tīr-i shihāb*, pp. 167–77). For the use of a similar analogy in an Ismaili context, see al-Ṭūsī, *Rawḍāt al-taslīm*, pp. 152–3. One might with profit compare Hegel's use of much the same idea in relation to the evolutionary development of the spirit in history (see *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, translated by H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 129–31.

[223] *Risāla*, in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 513.

[224] See Qurrat al-ʿAyn, autograph *risāla* ms. in possession of Azalī Bābi in Tehran, pp. 19, 22–3 (Photocopy in the author's possession).

[225] Ibid., pp. 11–12.

[226] Letter quoted in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 280. There is an echo here of the recurrent theory of three historical ages, as found in Joachim of Floris (1135–1202) and others, For examples, see Norman Cohen, *The Pursuit of the Millenium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists in the Middle Ages*, rev. ed. (London: Maurice Temple Smith, 1970).

contrast, Karīm Khān Kirmānī objected that, since the work of al-Aḥsāʾī and Rashtī was as yet incomplete and the *bāṭin* had not been perfected, it cannot be time for the revelation of the *bāṭin al-bāṭin*.[227] He, however, agreed that "the outward stages of the holy law reached perfection in the twelfth century, that is, in one thousand two hundred."[228]

As we shall see presently, Qurrat al-ʿAyn had concluded that the time for concealing the true meaning of Islam and observing its outward form had ended. Her decision to dispense with the Islamic *sharīʿa* at this period must be carefully distinguished from her later announcement, at the Bidasht gathering, that the dispensation of Islam was abrogated. In the latter case, the rationale for the abrogation of the entire Islamic system was the conviction that the *qiyāma* had occurred and that the Qāʾim had appeared and revealed a new *sharīʿa* (even if it was not yet made known to his followers).

In Karbala, it was not the end of the Islamic religious dispensation as such which was at issue, but, rather, the open revelation of the *bawāṭin* of the faith and, hence, the abandonment of all outer practices. As may be expected, this move was to provoke considerable consternation in the Bābi community and, as the decision became public, among the Shaykhi and orthodox Shiʿi and Sunni populations. Serious opposition came first from the Shaykhis and the Shiʾis but, in Baghdad, Qurrat al-ʿAyn's behavior was to provoke heavy and determined criticism from a large section of the Bābi community.

Following an incident on 1 Muharram 1263/ 20 December 1846,[229] in which Qurrat al-ʿAyn and her sister celebrated the Bāb's birthday in the house of Sayyid Kāẓim, interrupting a meeting for *rawḍa-khwānī* while dressed in bright clothing and henna,[230] she was arrested and imprisoned for a few days.[231] It appears that she was then kept confined in her home, although free to receive visitors, for some three months, while the governor wrote to Baghdad for advice on how to deal with the

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[227] Kirmānī, *Risāla-yi tīri shihāb*, pp. 178–81.

[228] Ibid., p. 175.

[229] Samandar states only "the birthday of the Bāb" (1 Muḥarram). I have supplied the year from the fact that he subsequently mentions that this event led to her being sent to Baghdad.

[230] Samandar, *Tārīkh-i Samandar*, pp. 346–7; cf. p. 78. See also Nūrī, quoted in Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Māʾida*, vol. 8, pp. 186–7.

[231] Mullā Aḥmad ibn Ismāʿīl Khurāsānī *risāla*, quoted in al-Wardī, *Lamaḥāt*, pp. 161–2; ʿAbbās Effendi, *Tadhkirat al-wafāʾ*, pp. 271–2, 296–7; Qurrat al-ʿAyn, *Risāla*, in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, pp. 350, 354–5.

situation.[232] In an account of a visit made to Qurrat al-ʿAyn, apparently at this period, Mullā Aḥmad Khurāsānī gives, in her own words as he remembered them, an unequivocal statement of her intentions at this point, although even he does not seem to have realized how critical for the future development of Bābism these intentions were to be:

> She asked me "Do you know why I summoned you?". I replied "No". She said, "I was previously given the responsibility for the authority (*wilāya*) of Mullā Bāqir, and I made it incumbent on all of you to accept it. Yet no-one accepted it from me, with the exception of fourteen individuals, seven men and seven women. Now I shall present you with something else." I said, "What is that?" She replied "It has come to me, through the tongue of my inner mystic state (*bi-lisān al-ḥāl*), not through physical speech, that I wish to remove all concealment (*taqiyya*) and to establish the proof of the remembrance and go to Baghdad.[233]

An argument ensued, at the end of which Mullā Aḥmad left, maintaining that he had himself received no fewer than seven letters from the Bāb, all commanding observance of *taqiyya*.[234] There appears to be ample evidence that Qurrat al-ʿAyn was acting quite independently of the Bāb on the basis of her own promptings and her esoteric interpretation of his writings.

In a letter addressed to various groups and written in Baghdad shortly after her arrival there from Karbala, Qurrat al-ʿAyn refers clearly in several places to her decision to discard *taqiyya*. She remarks "how strange it is that this tiny sect, which can hardly be said to exist, so small is it, has fallen into quarrels and become scattered."[235] She then criticized those "who do not make efforts in the path of their Lord," and who curse anyone who does, "while the Muslims reproach [the one who makes such efforts], saying his blood may be shed with impunity, since he has opposed the Lord of Might and torn aside the veil of *taqiyya*."[236] She complains that her opponents do not understand the real meaning of *taqiyya* and only hold to it out of fear.[237] After this general criticism, she turns her attention to one individual, saying "you did not write out copies [of the Bāb's works] after it was made incumbent on you to pen

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[232] ʿAbbās Effendi, *Tadhkirat al-wafāʾ*, pp. 296–7.
[233] *Risāla*, quoted in al-Wardī, *Lamaḥāt*, p. 162. On the abolition of *taqiyya* on the appearance of the Qāʾim, see al-Qummī, *A Shiʾite Creed*, p. 111.
[234] *Risāla*, quoted in al-Wardī, *Lamaḥāt*, p. 162.
[235] Qurrat al-ʿAyn, *Risāla*, in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 344.
[236] Ibid.
[237] Ibid.

his books in gold ink, making the excuse of *taqiyya*."[238] She then calls on this same individual to "discard the meaning which you have given to *taqiyya* and return unto the decree of your Lord."[239] After this, addressing "the noble ones" (i.e., the followers of the Bāb), she calls on them to "carry the verses of God unto every soul . . . and follow the decree of innovation in the latter book."[240] Referring to the distinction between *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin*, she speaks of "the community of believers who have reached the station of outwardly demonstrating Islam but who turn aside from its reality."[241] There then follows the passage quoted above, in which she describes how, following the arrival of a letter from the Bāb, she began to call on the Bābis to discard the laws of Islam. Finally, towards the end, she claims that God has freed her from sins and error and that whatever may be said by her or, indeed by her followers, is the truth.[242]

Qurrat al-ʿAyn left Karbala early in 1263/1847; in just over a year, having in the meantime been at the center of several controversies in Baghdad (where she was condemned by a section of the Bābi community for appearing unveiled in the presence of men), Hamadān, Kirmanshah, and Qazvīn (where she was accused of plotting the murder of her uncle, Ḥājī Mullā Muḥammad Taqī), she spearheaded the movement for the abrogation of Islam at a gathering of some eighty-one Bābis at Bidasht in Mazandaran,[243] following the Bāb's own declaration of *qāʾimīyya* in prison at Mākū.[244] As the extreme views adopted by her, the Bāb, and other leaders forced large numbers to abandon the movement, to return either to Shaykhism or to mainline Shiʿism,[245] Bābism acquired the radical, post-Islamic form in which it is best known. The roots of later Bābi doctrine lie in Shaykhi theories of charismatic leadership and revealed inner truth. The Bāb and his followers carried these and other, related,

[238] Ibid., p. 345.
[239] Ibid., p. 346.
[240] Ibid.
[241] Ibid.
[242] Ibid., p. 350.
[243] See Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 292–8 (and note the reference to explicit antinomianism on p. 298); Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, pp. 109–12; Joseph Arthur, comte de Gobineau, *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale*, 10th ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1957), pp. 165–9; Nicolas, *Séyyèd Ali Mohammed, dit le Bâb*, chapter 4.
[244] Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, pp. 69–72, 164–6.
[245] See for example al-Baghdādī, *Risāla amrīyya*, pp. 109–110; Samandar, *Tārīkh-i Samandar*, p. 80; Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 297, 461; Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 58.

concepts to what was a logical conclusion but, in so doing, broke entirely from the Shaykhi school, from Shiʿism and, in the end, from Islam.

## The Bābi Rejection of Shaykhism

Karīm Khān's rejection and refutation of the Bāb, his identification of him as a heretic, and his continued efforts to emphasize the validity of the Shaykhi school as a legitimate *silsila*—a sort of *ecclesiola* or personal prelature—within the framework of strictly orthodox Twelver Shiʿism, made it difficult for the followers of the Bāb to continue to describe themselves as Shaykhis without a large measure of confusion. The distinctions between "Shaykhis", "Bābis", or even "Karīm Khānis" were blurred for quite some time in the public mind,[246] and it rapidly became almost as desirable for the followers of the Bāb to dissociate themselves from the Shaykhi school as it was for the latter to sever any real link with Bābism.

As early as 1846, in his commentary on the *Sūrat al-kawthar*, the Bāb, referring to the Shaykhis, spoke of "the falsehood of this sect (*fiʾa*)", the followers of which had "committed what Pharaoh did not commit before this" and who were "in this day of the people of perdition."[247] He takes pains, however, to point out that both al-Aḥsāʾī and Rashtī would agree that the Shaykhis had gone astray. At the same time, he makes clear his relationship to his predecessors when he writes that "all that Kāẓim and Aḥmad before him have written concerning the truths of theology and sacred topics does not match a single word of what I have been revealing to you."[248] Similarly, he takes care to refute the charge that his Quranic commentaries were merely references to the words of al-Aḥsāʾī and Rashtī, maintaining that no one, not even they, could rival him in writing,[249] although their words were confirmed by his verses.[250]

Continued opposition to his cause by the Shaykhi leadership seems to have hardened the Bāb's attitude with regard to the school. In his *Risāla dar radd-i Bāb-i murtāb*, Karīm Khān, in order to make it clear that the Bāb was actually opposed to Shaykhism, quotes a passage from the

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[246] As late as 1307/1890, Hamadānī was obliged, in his *Kitāb al-ijtināb*, to refute the claim that "the Bābi sect is accounted as belonging to the Shaykhi school" (p. 144).
[247] Shirazi, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar*, f. 6b.
[248] Ibid., f. 11B.
[249] Ibid., f. 24a.
[250] Ibid., f. 25a.

latter's writings on this subject. The passage in question, although not identified as such would appear from its description as "concerning the knowledge of the [divine] name *al-Quddūs*, in the first stage (*martaba*)", to be one of several sections missing from standard texts of the Bāb's *Kitāb al-asmāʾ*, all the *abwāb* of which are similarly headed.

Kirmānī begins by quoting the Bāb's statement that

> We have forbidden you…[to read] the *Tafsīr al-ziyāra* [i.e., the *Sharḥ al-ziyāra al-jāmiʿa al-kabīra*] or the *Sharḥ al-Khuṭba* [i.e., the *Sharḥ al-Khuṭba al-ṭuṭunjiyya*], or anything written by either Aḥmad or Kāẓim.… Should you look on even a letter of what we have forbidden you, even should it be for but the twinkling of an eye or even less, God shall, in truth, cause you to be veiled from beholding him whom he shall manifest [*man yuẓhiruhu*—the messianic figure of later Bābi literature].[251]

He then proceeds to quote a statement from the same passage, in which the Bāb says that "Aḥmad and the *fuqahāʾ* 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 people of limitation and their knowledge is as nothing before God."[252] Finally he quotes the following:

> O people of the remembrance and the *Bayān*; we have prohibited you today, just as we have prohibited you from reading the fairy-tales of Aḥmad and Kāẓim and the *fuqahāʾ*, from sitting down in the company of those who have followed them in the decree, in case they lead you astray and cause you to become unbelievers. Know, O people of the *Furqān* [Qurʾān] and the *Bayān*, that you are now enemies to those who have followed Aḥmad and Kāẓim, and they are enemies to you; you have no greater enemy on the face of the earth than them, nor have they any enemy greater than you.… Whoever allows into his heart seven sevenths of ten tenths of the head of a grain of mustard of love for these people, the one God manifests will punish him with a painful fire upon the day of resurrection.[253]

The Islamic insistence on knowing and shunning the enemies of the true faith is present here in all its force; it recurs again and again in the course of divisions within the Bābi and Bahaʾi communities.

The Bāb's attitude to al-Aḥsāʾī and Rashtī had not changed fundamentally—at quite a late date, for example, he wrote a *ziyāratnāma* for the

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[251] Kirmānī, *Risāla dar radd-i Bāb*, p. 45.
[252] Ibid., p. 46.
[253] Ibid.

former[254]—but it is quite clear that, towards the end of his life, he came to regard the Shaykhi school as represented by Kirmānī as not merely misguided but as positively inimical to true religion. This hardening of attitude may well have been immediately occasioned by the actively hostile role of several Shaykhi *ulama* in the Bāb's examination at Tabriz in 1848, to which we have referred previously; but this would not, in itself, seem sufficient to explain it. Of greater significance was the proclamation of *qāʾimiyya* at this time.

If it had been necessary for Kirmānī and other Shaykhi leaders to disclaim any relationship with the Bāb or his ideas, it was now equally vital for the latter to dissociate himself from Shaykhism, in order to avoid continued ambiguity concerning his role and station. By stressing, at this point, the alienation of the Bāb from Shaykhism, his followers (more and more of whom were coming from a non-Shaykhi background)[255] 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 Bābism and Shaykhism, we can observe not only the beginning of a processes whereby the latter school effectively acquired the status of an *ecclesiola* within the wider community of Twelver Shiʿism, but also—and, perhaps, more vividly still—the mechanics of the development which transformed Bābism from a movement within the Shaykhi school to a distinct sect of Shiʿism and, in the end, to an idiosyncratic religious movement claiming independence from the revelatory jurisdiction of Islam.

With the transformation of Bābism into an independent religious affiliation eschewing (in theory at least) all sectarian connection with Islam, it passes out of the area of our immediate concern. At this juncture, the study of Bābism proper may be said to begin—an important and useful study, but one not immediately relevant to the questions we have sought to answer, however tentatively, in these pages. What I have to say about that later phase may be found in the books I have devoted to it, and in the articles which are republished in the second part of this volume.

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[254] This *ziyārartnāma* may be found in CUL Browne F. 20 ff. 85b–87b.

[255] The widening of the Bāb's appeal and the decrease in the numerical importance of Shaykhis within the Bābi movement is noted by Moojan Momen in "The Social Basis of the Bābi Upheavals in Iran (1848–1853): A Preliminary Analysis," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (Cambridge) vol. 15 (1983), pp. 157–83.

With the development of independent Bābism, its suppression, and its eventual failure in that form, the latest and perhaps the last of the great sectarian responses to the problems of charisma and authority in Shiʿism had run its course. The impact of the West and the subsequent secularization of much of Iranian society were to raise fresh problems and to demand new responses from the religious institutions, responses that have worked themselves on the political and social stages since the 1979 revolution, and in Iraq since the fall of Saddam Husayn.

Bābism and, indeed the later Baha'i sect to which it gave birth,[256] were lessons for the ulama: charisma, unless controlled within routinized forms, could run riot and lead, in the end, beyond Shiʿism and even beyond Islam itself. The modern development of Iranian Shiʿism has, in many ways, been a search for these routinized forms, be it in the office of Ayatollah, or that of the Supreme Guide and the various organizations of ulama that form part of the state system, or the earlier re-organization of theological studies in Qum by Ayatollah Burūjirdī (1875–1961), or the attempt to define the role of the *marjaʿ al-taqlīd* (as in the exposition *Baḥthī dar bāra-yi rūḥāniyyat wa marjaʿiyyat*).[257] As the Iranian revolution and the regime it founded have succeeded in establishing for the ulama a leading position in society and a formal role within the sphere of government, we have witnessed a further, more thorough, routinization and organization of charismatic authority in Shiʿism. There are, as I write, early signs that President Mahmoud Ahmadinezhad anticipates an early appearance of the Hidden Imam. Whether this, in turn, will lead to further outbursts of prophetic charisma in heterodox movements remains a matter for speculation; the study of Shaykhism and Bābism may, at least, help us to speculate more clearly.

[256] I use "sect" advisedly: early Baha'ism is simply an offshoot of Bābism for some time; later, in various phases, it seeks to take on the quality of an independent religion, though its current status is closer to that of a New Religious Movement, as defined by modern sociologists of religion.

[257] This latter point is discussed in Ann K. S. Lambton, "A Reconsideration of the Position of the Marjaʿ al-Taqlīd and the Religious Institution," *Studia Islamica* (Paris) vol. 20 (1964), pp. 115–35.

PART TWO

# REFLECTIONS ON SHAYKHISM AND BABISM

# CHANGES IN CHARISMATIC AUTHORITY IN QAJAR SHIʿISM*

In the 1943 edition of the Khurasan Yearbook, printed in Mashhad, there appeared what purported to be a Persian translation of a document entitled *Iʿtirāfāt-i siyāsī yā yād-dāshthā-yi Kinyāz Dālgorūki* ('Political confessions, or the memoirs of Count Dolgoruki'). These 'memoirs' were reprinted with various alterations in the following year at Tehran, published in some newspapers, and issued in several editions over the next few years. Now largely forgotten, they enjoyed considerable popularity and gained a certain notoriety at the time of their first appearance, providing (it was alleged) documentary evidence of a deliberate Russian plot to undermine the unity of Islam in Iran by initiating and fostering the growth of the heterodox Bābī movement, through the agency of Prince Dmitrii Ivanovich Dolgorukov, Russian Minister in Tehran from 1845 to 1854. This supposed translation has long since been exposed as a rather clumsy forgery,[1] the main purpose of which was clearly to discredit the Bahaʾi religious minority. It is, however, primarily of interest as one of the earliest examples of what was to become a popular genre of Iranian writing in the post-war period: revelations of the secret machinations of the imperial powers during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, designed to weaken and control Iran from within and to destroy the influence of Islam among the people.[2] This theme, which has been taken up with renewed vigour since the Islamic Revolution, is a particularly well-developed example of the conspiracy theory of history, resting as it does on circumstantial or misunderstood evidence and

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* First published in E. Bosworth and C. Hillenbrand (edd.), *Qajar Iran: Political, Social and Cultural Change*, Edinburgh, EUP, 1983, pp. 148–176.

[1] See 'Abbās Iqbāl Āshtiyānī, *Yādgār*, viii–ix (1328sh./1949), 148 ('…it (the tract) is absolutely fictitious and is the work of impostors'); Mujtabā Mīnavī, *Rāhnamā-yi kitāb*, i–ii (1342 sh./ 1963), 22 ('I have confirmed that these memoirs have been forged'); Ahmad Kasravī, *Bahāʾīgarī*, Tehran 1327/1948, 88–9 ('Without doubt, it is a forgery and, as I have recently learnt, an extremely ambitious man who lives in obscurity but has for years been trying to make himself famous, wrote it and spread it secretly among the people.'). For a more detailed analysis of the contents, see Anon, *Bahthī dar radd-i yād-dāshthā-yi majʿūl*, Tehran 1973.

[2] Among the best-known examples of this literature, we may note: M. Maḥmūd, *Tārīkh-i ravābit-i siyāsī-yi Īrān va Inglīs dar qarn-i nuzdahum*, 4 vols., Tehran 1949–50; M. Mujtahidī, *Īrān va Inglīs*, Tabriz 1947; Ismāʿīl Rāʾīn, *Huqūqbigīrān-i Inglīs dar Īrān*, Tehran 1968.

on a verificationist approach to the empirical data.[3] Such theories are of importance, less for the occasional truths they reveal about political intrigue (the reality of which can scarcely be denied) and more of what they tell the observer about the perspectives and preoccupations of those who originate or cling to them.

A marked feature of the Iranian perspective has been its continuing concern with Babism and, more particularly, its offshoot Bahaʾism, as the favourite tools of first Russian, then British, and, eventually, American and Zionist policies within Iran. Exposure of the Dolgorukov memoirs has not prevented polemicists, even in recent years, from either retaining a residual faith in them[4] or looking for alternative evidence that the Bābī-Bahaʾi movement has been a central agency of foreign disruption in Iran.[5] More tragically, accusations, supported by exceedingly flimsy evidence, of subversion on behalf of foreign powers, have been levelled at Bahaʾis executed by the present régime.[6] It is undeniable that the British and Russians were seriously interested in the Bābīs (as they were in any movement of potential significance in the Middle East at this period) and that later contacts between Bāhāʾīs and British and Russian government officials or missionaries were often cordial and of mutual benefit,[7] but the sort of evidence that would lead to the far-reaching conclusions of the polemical literature is lacking.

On a wider level, Ismāʾīl Rāʾīn has argued that the emergence of millenarian movements across the Islamic world in the nineteenth century was the result of deliberate British interference in religious affairs, with the intention of creating confusion and disunity among the Muslim

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[3] On conspiracy theories of ignorance and society, see Karl Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, London 1972, 7–8, 123, 341–2; idem, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, 2 vols., London 1962, π, 94–5, 101, 133, 330. On the verificationist approach, see idem, *Conjectures*, 35ff., 39ff., 228ff.

[4] Sayyid Hasan Kīyāʾī. 'Bahāʾī, az kujā va chigūna paydā shuda ast?', Tehran 1349/1970.

[5] See, for example, Ismāʿīl Rāʾīn, *Inshiʿāb dar Bahāʾiyyat pas az marg-i Shawqī Rabbānī*, Tehran n.d., chs 1, 3; Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir Najafī, *Bahāʾīyān*, Tehran 1979, Book 2, Section 2. Some Western writers have seen Babism as a response to foreign pressures during the 1840s: see, for example, N. R. Keddie, 'Religion and Irreligion in Early Iranian Nationalism', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, iv, 3 (1962), 268.

[6] See Roger Cooper, *The Bahaʾis of Iran*, Minority Rights Group Report, no. 51, London 1982, 10–11, 13.

[7] For examples, see M. Momen, *The Bābī and Bahaʾī Religions, 1844–1944: Some contemporary Western Accounts*, Oxford 1981, which provides numerous materials from diplomatic and missionary records.

populations under their political control.[8] If we leave aside the questions of deliberate plotting and collusion, this theory is not as implausible as it might at first appear. The work of Edward Said, Jacques Waardenburg and others[9] has, in recent years, provided us with sometimes profound insights into the ways in which Islam was reinterpreted and restructured in the European mind as part of the colonial process, before being returned in its reconstituted form to the Muslim world, there to be implanted in the Muslim mind.[10] In direct and indirect ways, from the administration of the Oudh bequest by the British in Iraq[11] to Louis Rinn's plan to make the Tijāniyya Sufi order the 'église nationale' of Algeria,[12] the imperial powers involved themselves deeply and not always impartially in Islamic religious affairs. The protection of religious minorities such as Druzes, Maronites, Jews, Armenians and Bahā'is became a central prop for European politics in the Middle East; such groups were 'studied, planned for, designed upon by European Powers improvising as well as constructing their Oriental policy'.[13] More generally, external pressures have often led indirectly to changes of emphasis or direction in the religious sphere, as in the 'maraboutic crisis' of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century North Africa or in the effect of modern industrialisation and urbanisation in encouraging a possibly final shift towards a scriptural, puritanical form of Islam in some areas.[14] Nor should we forget the impact of European ideas and values on religious reformers in India, Turkey, Egypt and elsewhere.

Outside the Islamic world, the impact of western culture and religion, mediated through colonial agents, traders and missionaries, evoked

[8] *Inshi'āb dar Bahā'iyyat*, 128–32.

[9] Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York 1978; Jacques Waardenburg *L'Islam dans le miroir de l'Occident*, The Hague 1963.

[10] [Since this was first written, Said has exerted a considerable and unhealthy influence on many disciplines, from sociology to literature. Post-colonial studies have infected academic life, burying Said's better insights beneath a weight of anti-Westernism. Two recent studies have challenged the Saidian orthodoxy: Ibn Warraq, *Defending the West: A Critique of Edward Said's 'Orientalism'*, Prometheus, 2007 and Robert Irwin, *The Lust of Knowing: the Orientalists and their Enemies*, Penguin, 2007.

[11] This was a *waqf* fund established by the Shi'i ruler of Oudh and Lucknow, Sultan Ghāzī al-Dīn Haydar (1814–27), originally administered directly by two Shi'i mujtahids, one in Karbalā' and one in Najaf. The fund came under British control following the annexation of Oudh in 1856.

[12] See Jamil Abun-Nasr, *The Tijāniyya—a Sufi Order in the Modern World*, Oxford 1965, 58–9.

[13] Said, *Orientalism*, 191.

[14] See Ernest Gellner, *Muslim Society*, Cambridge 1981, 56–69.

significant mutations of indigenous religious forms and, in many cases, resulted in the emergence of revolutionist, millenarian, or modified thaumaturgical movements, such as the cargo cults of Melanesia, the Hau Hau movement of New Zealand, the Ghost Dances of North America, numerous indigenous churches of sub-Saharan Africa, or the Taiping rebellion in China.[15] It would, therefore, seem not unreasonable to suppose that something of the same kind occurred in the Islamic world and that the numerous heterodox or extremist movements of the early modern period represent a similar, if culturally more sophisticated, response to foreign pressures. All the evidence, however, suggests that this was not the case and that the major movements of this type—the Wahhābiyya, Tijāniyya, Sanūsiyya, Sudanese Mahdiyya and Bābiyya—all emerged primarily in response to indigenous pressures and demands, whatever their later response to or involvement with foreign ideas and politics. There are, I think, numerous and complex reasons why the Islamic experience was, in fact, very different from that of peoples in less developed countries (the Taiping case requires separate analysis). A literate tradition, autonomous religious institutions such as the mosque, *madrasa, zāwiyya, takiyya, hawza-yi ʿilmī, ʿataba*, or *imāmzāda*, the hierarchical establishments of the *ʿulamāʾ*, a developed religio-legal system, and an abiding sense of cultural and spiritual superiority—these are undoubtedly among the factors that enabled the Muslim world to resist deep Western penetration in the religious sphere. Such resistance was virtually impossible in the case of less developed societies lacking a reified and rationalized religious system or in which the religious institution had not achieved any marked degree of autonomy within the overall social structure.

It is the contention of the present writer that Babism and, to a lesser extent, Bahaʾism, apart from whatever intrinsic interest they may possess as sectarian movements, are significant, not as examples of foreign interference in religious affairs in Iran or mere reactions to less direct external pressures on Qajar society, but as indicators of a wider autochthonous development within Iranian Shiʿism during the nineteenth cen-

[15] The most comprehensive study of this subject is Bryan Wilson's *Magic and the Millennium*, London 1973. On the Taiping, see Guenter Lewy, *Religion and Revolution*, New York 1974, ch. 7 (with bibliographical references in notes) and, in the present context, E. P. Boardman, *Christian Influence upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion 1851–1864*, Madison, Wise. 1952. Nikkie Keddie has drawn parallels between Babism and the Taiping movement ('Religion and Irreligion', 268–70) and speaks of western influences on similar developments elsewhere (ibid., 270).

tury. This development, which has continued through various phases down to the modern period (in which it has played a not inconsiderable role in the success of the Iranian Revolution) has several components, but it is, I think, best examined through two closely-related issues: the creation of a new orthodoxy and the regeneration of charismatic authority.

In a sense, there is a contradiction here. The establishment of an orthodoxy implies, even demands, an increase in charismatic routinization rather than the reverse, while the emergence of fresh charismatic impulses in an already routinized situation would seem logically to lead to more heterodox developments. Babism is, of course, an excellent example of the latter process, with its achievement of a major charismatic breakthrough around 1848, but even here the situation is confused by the existence of what Peter Berger has called a 'charismatic field',[16] whereby both original and semi-routinized charisma was spread unusually widely through the movement, linking it even in its later stages with wider developments in orthodox Shi'ism. Not only that, but Babism is clearly the extreme example of charismatic change in the period and can only be well understood against a background of less thoroughgoing, original charismatic authority throughout the Shi'i establishment.

The contradiction is, however, more apparent than real, since it presupposes a rather more rigid demarcation between the three types of Weberian authority—rational-legal, traditional, and charismatic—than is actually present in most empirical situations. The idea that charismatic leaders emerge only outside existing institutional structures, whether by breaking entirely free of them or by appearing in a context external to them, has been questioned.[17] Michael Hill has referred to the concept of charismatic 'latency' as a means of explaining the continuation and even revival of charisma within ostensibly routinized institutions: 'Although the process of routinization is concerned with the development of more formalized roles and ideological definitions, and thus depicts a movement towards traditional or rational-legal types of legitimation, we still hold open the possibility that any institution that claims a charismatic pedigree will retain in its structure of roles a latent form of charisma which is always available as a source of legitimacy for office-holders who are involved in the process of innovation."[18]

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[16] 'From Sect to Church: A Sociological Interpretation of the Baha'i Movement', unpublished PhD dissertation, New School for Social Research, New York 1954, 161–2.

[17] See Michael Hill, *A Sociology of Religion*, London 1973, 151–2, 165–9.

[18] Ibid., 172.

Rather, therefore, than try to resolve the apparent contradiction inherent in the pattern of orthodox/charismatic developments within modern Shiʿism by judicious juggling of theory or historical data, I prefer to argue that the various paradoxes involved are of the essence of the Shiʿi experience in the past two centuries and that the latter provides an important example of charismatic latency. The search for a new form of Shiʿi orthodoxy since the late eighteenth century has been largely, if not exclusively, centred on the question of authority, while traditional methods of clerical organisation have necessitated the resolution of this question within a charismatic rather than a strict rational-legal or traditional context.

Ernest Gellner, basing his argument on an important but neglected sentence in Hume's *Natural History of Religion*, argues that Weber's routinization formula does not distinguish between non-scripturalist. mediatory, pluralistic religion on the one hand and monistic, puritan, scripturalist ('enthusiastic') religion on the other. Routinization of charisma, he maintains, is 'specially characteristic of monistic faiths', whereas 'in pluralistic religion, charisma is born routinized, so to speak, and does not decline into such a condition'.[19] Although Gellner may be thinking primarily of popular Sufism in North Africa, this theory can be applied, albeit with qualifications, to Shiʿism from, if not the very earliest period, one very close to it.

That routinization of some sort is present in the very concept of the *imām* as successor to the original charismatic authority of the Prophet is evident, but it is, I think, also clear that this does not preclude further routinization or, perhaps more importantly, revitalization of charisma within a context of routinization less thoroughgoing than that experienced in the case of monistic religions. It would, for example, be misleading to speak in terms of a strictly Weberian charisma of office in early Shiʿism, even though subsequent rationalizations and regularizations appear to create such a picture. Rather than an easy passage of routinized charismatic authority from father to son in a basically primogenital line, as is suggested by retrospective definitions of a chain of twelve 'legitimist' Imams,[20] the evidence suggests a much more flexible

[19] *Muslim Society*, 14.

[20] On the concept of a 'legitimist' line of Imams, see S. H. M. Jafri, *The Origins and Early Development of Shia Islam*, London and New York 1979, chs 9, 10, 11. On the rationalization of a line limited to twelve Imams, see E. Kohlberg, 'From Imāmiyya to Ithnā'-'Ashariyya', *BSOAS*, xxxix/3 (1976), 521–34.

situation, in which allegiances shifted, often radically, between numerous contenders for the Imamate. Not only that, but the ever-present possibility that any one of these Imams might be the Qāʾim who would lead the final *khurūj* against injustice, coupled with the fact that so many did, in fact, advance such claims,[21] kept a form of original charisma on the boiling point, as it were, for along time. There might be no prophets after Muḥammad, but a would-be Qāʾim could advance charismatic claims every bit as influential as those of a prophet and in many ways more intense.

Even when some degree of routinization has been achieved, mediatory movements have a tendency to reassert the force of original charisma (preserved in its latent form) without necessarily destroying the framework of routinized authority. This can be achieved by means of enhancing the link between the bearer of routinized charisma and the original charismatic figure, as happened in the genesis of new Prophet-centred Sufi orders, such as the Tijāniyya, Sanūsiyya, or Khatmiyya (Mīrghaniyya), in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. [22] Or it can come about through a radical change in the political or economic power of the holder of the charismatic office, as in the case of the Ismāʾīliyya following the move to India of the Aghā Khan in the 1840s.[23] Berger has pointed to a similar process involving the Israelite prophets from the eighth century BC, emphasizing the radicalization of the basic message of the institutionalized Nabi movement.[24] Similar developments in modern Shiʿism, however, appear to be the result of a much longer and more complex process.

The first major charismatic crisis for Imāmī Shiʿism was the death in 260/872 of the eleventh Imam, al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī, at the early age of twenty-seven. As had occurred on similar occasions in the past. Ḥasan's death precipitated a large number of schisms among his followers, including one centred on his brother Jaʿfar that seems to have already

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[21] See, for example, J. M. Hussain, *The Oeeultation of the Twelfth Imam*, London 1982,12–15.

[22] See J. S. Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, Oxford 1971, ch. 4. For further details, see Abun-Nasr, *Tijāniyya*, N. Ziadeh *Sanūsīyah*, London 1958, and J. Voll, 'A History of the Khatmiyya Tariqah in the Sudan', unpublished PhD dissertation. Harvard University 1967.

[23] For a short but perceptive discussion of this point, see Gellner, *Muslim Society*, 104–9.

[24] Peter Berger, 'Charisma and religious innovation: the social location of Israelite prophecy', *American Sociological Review*, xxviii/6 (1963), 940–50.

been brewing during the Imam's lifetime.[25] The present situation was particularly critical, however, in that Ḥasan was widely assumed to have died without offspring, thus threatening to put an end to the direct line of the Imamate. From the point of view of the present discussion, it is more or less irrelevant whether or not a son actually survived Ḥasan. What is significant is that the most successful resolution of the crisis was that achieved by a section of the Qatʿiyya faction, which clung to the belief that a son existed but was at present in concealment from all but an elite handful of his followers—a belief that preserved the locus of authority in a living Imam while facilitating a routinization of his charisma in the persons of the four successive intermediaries who claimed to act on his behalf between 872 and 940. Discussions that centre on the existence or non-existence of the twelfth Imam in empirical terms miss the point, at least as far as the question of authority is concerned. It is sufficient that the four *abwāb* succeeded in convincing a majority of the Imāmī Shiʿa of the reality of his occultation and the legitimacy of their vicegerency. [26]

Since the time of the sixth Imam, an organised system of representation (*wikāla*) had existed in the main Shiʿi centres, and this had been considerably expanded under the seventh and eighth Imams.[27] The seclusion of the Imams Hādī and al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī in Sāmarrā under Abbasid supervision had led to an increase in the religious and political roles of their agents,[28] but there seems to be no evidence that this resulted in any very marked transfer of charisma to the latter. Nevertheless, there had been a tendency towards routinization of the *wikāla* system itself, with a number of families in Baghdad, Hamadān, al-Ahwāz, and elsewhere coming to monopolize the function of *wakīl*,[29] and on al-ʿAskarī's death this facilitated the move to routinize the Imam's charisma in the person of the principal *bāb* or *safīr*, through whom alone access to the source of authority was possible. Such routinization as took

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[25] Hussain, *Oeeultation*, 57–65.

[26] I do not wish to suggest that the matter is entirely irrelevant, even in terms of the present question. If, for example, the four abwāb were, as the present writer is inclined to believe, perpetrating a pious fraud, even for the best of motives, that alone would tell us much about perceptions of authority within the Shiʿi community and the degree (in such a case minimal) of routinized charisma invested in the leading agents of the Imams before the death of al-ʿAskarī.

[27] Hussain, *Occultation*, 79–84.

[28] Ibid., 81.

[29] Ibid., 82.

place, however, although considerable, was far from total. During the seventy-year period of what was later termed the 'lesser occultation', charisma remained 'wild'. The four *abwāb* had to combat not only competing theories concerning the method of continuation of the Imamate, but also rival *wukalāʾ* in various Shiʿi centres,[30] some of whom, like Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad al-Shalmaghānī, are said to have advanced 'extremist' claims to prophethood or divine incarnation. What is significant in the present context—it is a point to which we shall return—is the way in which the *abwāb* used excommunication (*takfīr*) as a means of defending not merely doctrinal orthodoxy but, primarily, their own authority. Nevertheless, it is evident that, by the time of the fourth *bāb*, Abu 'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Sammarī (d. 329/940), the charismatic authority of the agent, on the one hand, had been increased to the point where his utterances came to be regarded as statements of the Imam himself,[31] while the systematisation of the representative system, on the other, had been much advanced by the establishment of a *dār al-wikāla* in Baghdad and by a formalization of the method of appointment to the position of *bāb al-imām*.

Al-Sammarī's death threw this as yet undeveloped system into confusion. Whatever the reasons for his failure to appoint a successor or for the subsequent non-appearance of plausible claimants to that rank, the trauma of total occultation demanded radical initiatives on the part of the Imāmī leadership. What is, on the face of it, extraordinary is the fact that the *wikāla* organisation did not seek to link in some way the new theory of complete occultation with its obviously well-developed base for a continuing charismatic leadership system. The most likely solution to this somewhat curious historical problem—and I offer it only tentatively here—seems to lie in the increased authority of the Imāmī ʿulamāʾ from as early as the time of the second *bāb*.[32] The authority of the ʿulamāʾ was originally legal-traditional rather than charismatic, being based on their role as jurisprudents and transmitters of the *akhbār* (traditions) of the Imams, and it had been much overshadowed from the beginning by the charismatic authority of the latter.[33] Following the occultation of

[30] See ibid., 9, 99–104, 126–31; Muḥammad Jawād Mashkūr, *Tarikh-i Shia wa firqahā-yi islām tā qarn-i chahārdahum*, Tehran 1976, 138 and n. 2, 142–6.

[31] Hussain, *Occultation*, 156.

[32] Ibid., 117.

[33] See ʿAbbās Iqbāl, *Khāndān-i Nawbakhtī*, Tehran 1386/1966, 69: 'the Imāmiyya differed from other Islamic sects in that they always had recourse to the infallible Imams in matters of Quranic commentary, interpretation of revealed verses, and the sunna of

the Imam, therefore, the ʿulamāʾ—who functioned as individuals rather than as a corporate body—were no obvious threat to the authority of the *abwāb* and were, presumably, relatively free to extend their own influence without coming into direct conflict with the principal bearers of charisma. This influence was obviously sufficient to carry the community over the obstacle presented by total occultation, while the greater freedom of action now available to the ʿulamāʾ permitted the relocation of charismatic authority, not only in them as individuals and as a group, but in several other related loci of continuing significance, such as the collections of traditions transmitted from the Imams and the major books of Shīʿī *fiqh*.

It is of the very essence of Shiʿism that knowledge of God cannot be obtained without knowledge of the Prophet and that this, in turn, is unattainable without knowledge of a living Imam: 'he who dies without an Imam, it is as if he has died in the days of barbarism before Islam'.[34] It was essential, therefore, to the very continuation of Shiʿism that the Imam himself be perceived as an abiding presence, an ultimate source of authority, not only in the logical but also in an existential sense. Living in an interworld spiritually connected to this world, the Imam could continue to exercise his function as maintainer of the equilibrium of the universe and object of the active faith of the Shiʿa, with whom he remained in contact through dreams, visions and revelatory intuition (*kashf*).[35] Remarkably little of the theoretical authority of the Imam can be said to have been dissipated by his entry into occultation: he was (and is) alive, not only in the heart of the believer, and not merely in a supernatural realm accessible to the saint or mystic, but, potentially at least, in real places, where he has been seen by real people. At the same time, he is in occultation, and it is this that strengthens his symbolic function by making him a source of legitimization for authority, rather of authority per se. The sense—one might better say 'the experience'—of the Imam's continuing presence confers upon all other loci of charisma within Shiʿism a special status, simultaneously slowing down the pro-

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the Prophet'. Many early Shiʿi theologians were 'corrected' in their views by the Imams or their close companions (ibid., 74).

[34] Ḥadīth of Muḥammad transmitted by Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq in Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī, *Rawḍat al-Kāfi*, Najaf 1385/1965–6, 129.

[35] On the question of visions of the Imam, see Ḥājj Zayn al-ʿAbidīn Khān Kirmānī, 'Risāla dar jawāb-i Āqā-yi Niẓām al-Islām Iṣfahānī', in *Majmaʿ al-rasāʾil-i fārsi*, viii, Kirman 1352/1973, 72–103.

cess of routinization and legitimating or sanctifying it in all its aspects. There is an important parallel here with the New Testament resurrection story, which, it has been argued, facilitated the transmission of charisma to the apostles, thus overcoming the 'blocking' effect of a cult based on the founder's actual death.[36]

One of the most effective means of avoiding premature routinization of charisma is the introduction of eschatological and chiliastic themes into the overall charismatic perspective. By identifying the hidden Imam as the promised Mahdī and al-Qāʾim bi 'l-Sayf, the one who would arise with the sword to restitute the rights of the Shīʿa,[37] the very act of postponing the moment of his return itself served as a further brake on the routinization process. At the same time, it left open the possibility of a fully-fledged reassertion of charismatic authority legitimated by messianic claims. That no major Twelver messianic movement appeared until the nineteenth century indicates how successfully routinizing strategies were balanced up to that point by a sense of the Imam's presence and expectation of his imminent advent.

Within this context, the shift from a strictly legal-rational to a charismatic authority among the ʿulamāʾ was necessarily hesitant and prolonged, whatever retrospective lists of *marājiʾ al-taqlīd* from the time of al-Kulaynī (d. 328/329) to the present may seek to suggest.[38] Such a shift was, however, implicit in the theory of the necessity for a living 'proof of God on earth, which, in its extended form, could be applied to those outstanding scholars and saints who would protect the true faith from corruption and act as guides to the truth: 'In every generation of my people', the Prophet is recorded as saying, 'there shall be an upright man who shall cast out from this religion the corruption of the extremists, the arrogation of the false, and the interpretation of the ignorant'.[39] In their most charismatically developed form, such traditions centred on the existence within the Shiʿi community of individuals known as

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[36] See Hill, *Sociology of Religion*, 173–4.

[37] On Shiʿi millenarianism, see A. A. Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism*, Ithaca, NY, 1979.

[38] For a more radical discussion of this theme, see J. Eliash, 'Misconceptions regarding the juridical status of the Iranian 'Ulama', *IJMES*, 1 (1979). J. Eliash's view that the ʿulamāʾ had no real authority in terms of actual Shiʿi doctrine is, in a sense, irrelevant to our present concern with perceptions of authority rather than the genuineness or otherwise of its declared sources.

[39] Ḥadīth in Ḥājj Muḥammad Khān Kirmānī (ed.), *al-Kitāb al-mubīn*, Kirman 1354 sh./1975–6, 434.

*nuqabāʾ* and *nujabāʾ*.[40] A tradition ascribed to the eleventh Imam, for example, states that 'we shall send unto them the best of our *shīʿa*, such as Salmān, al-Miqdād, Abū Dharr, ʿAmmār and their like in the age following them, in every age until the day of resurrection'.[41]

Except for these early examples, however, there is a certain reserve about naming these supreme 'nobles' and 'directors' of the Shiʿa, whereas no such reservations apply to the major Shiʿi ʿulamāʾ, seen—particularly later generations—as renewers (*mujaddidūn*) or propagators (*murawwijūn*) of the faith in each century, or simply as inheritors (*wurathāʾ*) of the authority of the Prophet and the Imams. Through such actual figures, the 'polar motif' of Shiʿism[42] could be continued much as it was in the Sūfī orders. It was not, however, until the thirteenth/nineteenth century that the role of the individual scholar began to take on in practice something of the charismatic significance with which it had been endowed in theory from the tune of the lesser occultation. In the meantime, attention was focussed more generally on the ʿulama as a body: 'Were it not for those of the ʿulamāʾ who will remain after the occultation of your Imam, calling [men] unto him, producing evidences on his behalf, and striving for his faith with the proofs of God, delivering the weak among the servants of God from the snares and demons of Satan and from the traps of the wicked, there would be no-one but would abandon the faith of God'.[43]

The coincidence of freedom from charismatic restraint following the death of the last *bāb* with relative political tolerance under dynasties such as the Sāmānids, Hamdānids and Būyids gave powerful impetus to the development of Shiʿi scholarship but, in the absence of any fully-fledged, centralized, and stable Twelver state, the religious authority of the ʿulamāʾ was not unduly routinized in the service of a secular system in which ultimate power resided. The very fact that the ʿulamāʾ remained scattered in the various centres of Shiʿi activity throughout the Middle East meant that they preserved a high degree of independence from the demands of functioning within a wholly Shiʿi context in a single state system as well as from the hierarchical imperatives of a church-like

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[40] On this theme, see idem, *Irshād al-ʿawāmm*, Kirman 1380/1960, 142–449.

[41] Ḥadīth in idem (ed.), *Faṣl al-khiṭāb*, Kirman 1392/1972, 95.

[42] The 'polar' concept is derived from that of the *quṭb* or *aqṭāb* as human centres of religious authority.

[43] Ḥadīth transmitted from Imam Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī, from the *Tafsīr al-imām*, in Kirmāni, *Faṣl al-khiṭāb*, 95.

structure which would be imposed by a centralized body of ʿulamāʾ.

This situation changed radically following the rapid emergence and consolidation of the Safavid state in the early sixteenth century. From this time on, it became possible to think and act in terms of a centralized body of Twelver Shiʿi ʿulamāʾ, a development which had two major consequences. On the one hand, there occurred the routinization of the inherited charismatic authority of the ʿulamāʾ in something resembling an ecclesiastical system in the context of a church-state symbiosis; on the other, as the dynasty declined in power, the very large numbers of ʿulamāʾ who did not accept positions as state-appointed ecclesiastical functionaries and who refused to recognize the ultimate legitimacy of the Safavid or any other secular state became highly influential over the Shiʿi masses, particularly in rural areas. It was their ability to claim charismatic authority inherited from and wielded on behalf of the Imam over against the secular, illegitimate state that gave and still gives the Shiʿi ʿulamāʾ so much of their popular appeal and, hence, their effective power base. Ironically, therefore, the very existence of the Safavid, Qajar and Pahlavi states did much to enhance the charismatic authority of the ʿulamāʾ, providing them with a political role which was clear throughout the nineteenth century and which is, perhaps, best exemplified in the part played by them in the recent revolution.

It is probably this factor, together with the availability of the Ishrāqī school of thought as a tolerably respectable form of quasi-heterodoxy (but not of overt social deviation), that explains the absence of important sectarian movements in the later Safavid period. The Shiʿi position provides an unusual and significant exception to Werner Stark's thesis that 'in general terms it can be said that sects arise above all where there is an "established" religion, a state church'.[44] The reason for this may become clear if, bearing in mind what we know of the opposition of the Shiʿi ʿulamāʾ in general to secular government, we continue with our quotation from Stark: 'As this state church is, by nature, by definition, an adjunct of the conservative forces in the country, any and every movement of social dissatisfaction must condemn it as it condemns the existing property or power relations. And as it is easier to contract out of a church than out of an economic or political system, revolutionary sentiment may work itself out, by preference, in the abandonment of the official form of religion and the formation of, and the joining in,

[44] *The Sociology of Religion: A Study of Christendom*, London 1966–7, 11, 60.

sectarian efforts'.[45] Stark's thesis may, in fact, need much qualification, since it applies only to certain types of sect, but it does serve to point up the curious situation that pertained in Safavid Iran, where the orthodox religious leadership itself provided an alternative to the state system that had established the faith in the first place. What is, perhaps, more significant, however, is the possible relevance of Stark's comments to the nineteenth-century situation, where a radical sectarian movement provided precisely that kind of revolutionary alternative both to the state and to the established church, despite the fact that a large body of the ʿulamāʾ remained, if only *in potentia*, opposed to secular rule. How can this be explained?

Several strands come together in the first half of the nineteenth century. The ʿulamāʾ, first properly developed under the Safavids, found themselves regrouped, protected, and increasingly powerful. The position of the *mujtahid* had been, as we shall note, defined and stressed, and the way was now open for the appearance of outstanding clerical figures with unprecedented charismatic authority; legal authority, in the form of jurisprudence, had reached the peak of its development,[46] but its expression was closely linked to charismatic figures such as Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥasan al-Najafī (d. 1266/1850), whose *Jawāhir al-kalām* is the most outstanding work of *fiqh* in the post-Safavid period; messianic expectation was on the increase with the approach of the year 1260, the one thousandth lunar year after the first disappearance of the Imam. By this time, however, it is obvious that there was growing tension between these elements. The authority implicit in the exercise of independent *ijtihād* did not mesh well with that contained in the definitive volumes of *fiqh*, nor did the charismatic role of the *marjaʿ al-taqlīd* as developed during the nineteenth century harmonize readily with the chiliastic hope of the Imam's return, although it clearly represented a major development of the authority inherent in the concepts of an outstanding scholar in each generation and the continued presence of *nuqabāʾ* and *nujabāʾ* in

[45] Ibid.

[46] Cf. Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī: 'In these days…the knowledge of *fiqh* and the outward form of the religious law…have reached the state of perfection…the beginning of the appearance and spread of the jurisprudence and traditions of the Shiʿa was at the end of the eleventh century, that is, one thousand one hundred; now (1268/1851–2), it is less than two hundred years that these manifest Shiʿi sciences have been spread in the world. The truth of the matter is that the outward stages of the holy law reached perfection in the twelfth century, that is, one thousand two hundred' ('Risāla-yi tīr-i shihāb', in *Majmaʿ al-rasāʾil-i fārsī, I*, Kerman 1386/1966–7, 175).

the community. The extreme veneration accorded the most outstanding ʿulamāʾ conflicted to some extent with the charismatic role of the ʿulamāʾ as a body, and also with the more diffuse concept of *nuqabāʾ* and *nujabāʾ* within the more widely charismatic Shiʿi ecclesia. The early nineteenth century can, then, be described as a period for Shiʿism in which several related issues came to a head at once and in which potential charismatic tensions which had remained unresolved from the time of the lesser occultation rose to the surface and shrilly demanded attention.

The beginnings of this process are to be found in the revolution in Shīʿī thinking that occurred towards the end of the eighteenth century in the shrine centres of Iraq. The collapse of the Safavid dynasty in 1722 had left Twelver Shiʿism peculiarly vulnerable to the fluctuations of political fortune, but it had, at the same time, temporarily freed the ʿulamāʾ from the constraints under which they had functioned, even in the later period of Safavid rule. Sequestered in the comparative safety of the *ʿatabāt* or in the various enclaves in an Iran deprived of effective central or, at times, even local government, the ʿulamāʾ could well regard themselves as the remaining representatives of the vanished Shiʿi state and could now give free rein to speculation on the role of the mujtahid class, continuing and extending a debate which had begun within the context of that state.[47]

This debate reached its climax in the clash between the Akhbārī and Uṣūlī (or Mujtahidī) theological schools, which ended in the victory of the latter party on the eve of the Qajar restoration. For our present purposes, the most significant thing about this doctrinal struggle is the fact that it seems to represent a process exactly the reverse of that which it has come to typify in subsequent Shiʿi writing, in which the Akhbārīs are portrayed as innovators first appearing in the seventeenth century under the inspiration of Mullā Muḥammad Amīn Astarābādī (d. 1033/1623–4). The truth of the matter would appear to be that the emergence of a definable 'Akhbārī' school at this date is more a reflection of the growing power of the mujtahids and the early development of what came to be identified as the Uṣūlī position.[48] Astarābādī himself

[47] For a contemporary account of this earlier debate, see Jean Chardin, *Voyages de Monsieur le Chevalier Chardin en Perse*, Amsterdam 1711, 11, 207–8, 337.

[48] Sayyid Kāzim Rashtī (d. 1260–1844) confirms this view in the course of a defence of the Uṣūlī position, where he indicates that although the practice of *ijtihād* dates back as far as the time of the Imams, the written presentation of Uṣūlī theory is a modern phenomenon ('Risāla dar jawāb-ī baʿḍ-i ahl-i Iṣfahān', in *Majmaʿ al-rasāʾil-i fārsi*, xvi, Kirman n.d., 303–4). Watt has suggested that the appearance of Akhbarism may have

regarded his views as representative of a 'purer', more primitive line of Shīʿī thought, and held the Uṣūlī school to be an innovation which had not existed before the time of al-Kulaynī (d. 329/940–1), that is to say, the later period of the lesser occultation.[49] He saw his own role as that of restoring the Akhbārī teachings to their former position of dominance within Shiʿism, emphasising traditional and rational-legal bases of authority (primarily the Qurʾān and *sunna*) as against the routinized charisma of the mujtahids. Not only was Āstārābādī opposed to the practice of *ijtihād* (independent reasoning) as current in his own day, but he criticized retrospectively several of the leading figures of Shīʿī theology in the period following the occultation of the Imam.

Central to the Akhbārī-Uṣūlī dispute as it developed through the eighteenth century was the question of the legitimacy of *ijtihād*. The Akhbārī stance here echoes a phenomenon to which we have referred above—the inhibition of independent theological thought or discussion. By the presence of the Imam or the sheer pressure of his charismatic authority rooted in a view of him as the sole infallible source of guidance. Whereas Akhbārī thinking rejected *ijtihād* uncompromisingly, limiting *fiqh* to the extrapolation of rulings from the Qurʾān and canonical works of ḥadīth, the Uṣūlīs employed the additional principles of consensus (*ijmāʿ*) and reason (*ʿaql*) applied through *ijtihād*.[50] Uṣūlī rationalism provided the basis for a more flexible response to unaccustomed situations (which multiplied in the nineteenth century), particularly since it was possible for mujtahids to recommend action on the basis of presumption (*ẓann*), in contrast to Akhbārī scholars, who were committed to acting only on matters of absolute certainty (*yaqīn*) or positive knowledge (*ʿilm*), these latter being derived only from the Qurʾān or traditions related from the Imams.[51]

Theological considerations apart, the practical consequences of the Uṣūlī stance were considerable. For the Akhbārīs, all men, the ʿulamāʾ included, were directly subject to the decisions of the Imams, whom they were obliged to imitate in all their affairs. But the Uṣūlī school proposed

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been due may have been due to the forcible incorporation of men of Hanbalite sympathies into the Imamite state' (W. M. Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, Edinburgh 1962, 170).

[49] Muḥammad Amīn Āstārābādī, 'Dānish-nāma-yi Shāhī', quoted Muḥammad Bāqir al-Mūsawī al-Iṣbahānī (Khwānsārī), *Kitāb rawḍāt al-jannāt fī aḥwāl al-ʿulamāʾ wa ʾl-sādāt*, n.p. 1367/ 1947–8, 33.

[50] Ibid., 35, no. 2; Rashtī, 'Risāla . . . ahl-i Iṣfahān', 301–2.

[51] Iṣbahānī, *Rawḍāt*, 35, no. 3.

a division of mankind into two groups: those required to practice imitation (*taqlīd*) in religious and legal matters, and those entitled to exercise their own judgment (*ijtihād*).[52] The former, known as *muqallidūn*, must imitate, not the Imams, but the *mujtahidūn* or, to be more precise, each *muqallid* must choose a single mujtahid, whose decisions he will follow in all matters. Since the Uṣūlīs regard the exercise of *ijtihād* as obligatory during the period of *ghayba* and prohibit *taqlīd* to a deceased mujtahid,[53] the actual prestige and authority of living scholars of that rank were necessarily raised to an unprecedented level. Not only that, but the criteria of learning and intellectual ability became paramount among the factors (which also included piety, asceticism, and so on) contributing to a scholar's prestige. A perfect mujtahid (*mujtahid muṭlaq*) was one versed in all the religious ordinances and sciences (especially *uṣūl al-fiqh*, the bases of jurisprudence)—a quality the Akhbārīs restricted to the Imams.[54] This being so, it is evident that the success of Uṣūlī thinking would lead, not only to an increase in the prestige of individual ʿulamāʾ, but also to a heightened importance for the Shiʿi theological school complexes (*ḥawzāt-i ʿilmī*), especially those at the shrine centres, as the sole locations where comprehensive learning of this kind could easily be acquired. This, in its turn, necessarily gave a considerable impetus to the creation of a more centralized ecclesiastical network and to the greater systematization of the methods of role and status ascription within it.

Despite the advances made by the Uṣūlī party during the latter part of the Safavid period, the collapse of the dynasty led initially to an increase in the influence of their rivals. It was only gradually that the Uṣūlī position, redefined in the context of the absence of a Shiʿi state, was reasserted at the ʿatabāt during the interregnum, reaching its climax towards the end of the eighteenth century in the work of Āqā Muḥammad Bāqir Bihbahānī (d. 1208/1793), generally regarded as the *mujaddid* (Restorer) of the thirteenth-century *hijrī* and as the man responsible for the final victory of Uṣūlī Shiʿism. Bihbahānī succeeded in reformulating the nature of *ijtihād*, in establishing on a firm foundation the role of the

[52] Ibid., no. 6. Āqā Muḥammad Bāqir Bihbahānī deals with this point at length in his *Risāla dar inḥisār-i mardum bi-mujtahid wa muqallid*.

[53] Ibid., 35–6, nos. 7, 14. I.

[54] Ibid., 36 nos. p. 10. On the qualifications of a *mujtahid jāmiʿ al-sharāʾiṭ*, see Rashtī, 'Risāla . . . ahl-i Iṣfahān', 306–39.

mujtahid, and in laying the basis for a system of jurisprudence which has been in use in Twelver circles ever since.[55]

Bihbahānī's influence was paramount in the effective centralization of Shiʿi scholarship at the *ʿatabāt* by the beginning of the Qajar period and in the weaving of a complex web of master-pupil relationships, in which generations and individuals repeatedly overlapped. Where the Safavid and earlier periods had seen a scattering of Shiʿi learning through Iran, Arab Iraq, and the Bahrayn and Jabal ʿĀmil regions, the second half of the eighteenth century witnessed a high degree of concentration of scholars in a central location to which students headed in growing numbers, and from which some left as well-qualified ʿulamāʾ to teach in Iran, India and elsewhere. A noticeable proportion of those ʿulamāʾ trained by Uṣūlī teachers in Iraq during this period were Iranians, which has led one recent writer to argue that 'the Uṣūlīs may perhaps be regarded as the Persian element against the Arabs, or at least against the Arab element, which predominated in the intellectual and social background of the Akhbārī leaders'.[56] While there are, I think, good reasons for regarding this as an exaggerated or oversimplified picture of the situation—it fails, for instance, to take into account many leading Iranian Akhbārīs, such as Astarābādī himself, Mullā Muḥammad Fayḍ Kāshānī, Qāḍī Saʿīd Qummī or Mīrzā Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Nabī Nīshāpūrī—it does, nevertheless, bring to light what is certainly a factor worth considering in any study of the development of Usūlism, linked as the movement became to the revival of organised Shiʿism in Iran and the rapid spread of Uṣūlī ʿulamāʾ there in the early Qajar period.

The reformation inspired by Bihbahānī was fraught with serious consequences for Twelver Shiʿism. Before his offensive against the fundamentalism of Akhbārī thought, relations between the two parties had not been unduly embittered and neither side seems to have attempted outright condemnation of the other on the grounds of heresy. Bihbahānī's *takfīr* against the Akhbārīs set a dangerous precedent to be followed in the case of the Niʿmat Allāhī Sūfīs and the Shaykhīs. From Bihbahānī onwards, Twelver Shiʿi orthodoxy becomes increasingly well-defined and the threat of outright *takfīr* emerges as an ultimate sanction against

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[55] See Hamid Algar, *Religion and State in Iran 1785–1906*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969, 34.

[56] Vahid Rafati, The Development of Shaykhī Thought in Shiʿi Islam', unpublished PhD dissertation, UCLA, 1979, 30.

ideas, groups, and individuals likely to challenge the orthodox system, its doctrines, or its exponents.

A further consequence of the Uṣūlī victory was the rapid growth in the power of the small mujtahid class throughout the nineteenth century, leading to the emergence of outstanding individuals as 'sources of imitation' (*marājiʿ al-taqlīd*; sg., *marjaʿ al-taqlīd*), whose importance lay not only in their role as centres of charismatic authority, but increasingly in their notional and actual value as focal points for the unity of the Shiʿi population. The current practice of identifying certain leading ʿulamāʾ from Kulaynī to individuals in the modern period as principal *marājiʿ*[57] is, I think, little more than an attempt to rationalise an unsystematic historical development. The concept of *marjaʿiyyat* seems to have been clearly defined in the sense that it now bears only around the middle of the nineteenth century, with the general recognition as *marjaʿ* of Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥasan al-Najafī, referred to previously as the author of the *Jawāhir al-kalām*. It was a pupil of al-Najafī, Shaykh Murtaḍā Dizfūlī Ansārī, Shaykh al-Ṭāʾifa (d. 1281/1864–5), who carried the role of *mujtahid* and *marjaʿ* to its highest point. Having succeeded al-Najafī as the leading *ʿālim* at the shrine centres, Ansārī was soon acknowledged as *marjaʿ*, not only in Iraq and Iran, but also in Turkey, Arabia and India, thus becoming the first of that rank to be universally recognized throughout virtually the entire Shiʿi world.[58]

The sense of unity achieved under Ansārī was ruptured for a short time by various claims to leadership on his death, but it was continued in the end by Mīrzā Muḥammad Ḥasan Shīrāzī (d. 1312/1895), the Mīrzā-yi Shīrāzī who issued a *fatwā* against the Tobacco Régie in 1892. In many respects, Shīrāzī's influence exceeded that of his predecessor. He is described by his own pupil, Ḥasan al-Ṣadr, as 'the leader of Islam, the vicegerent of the Imam, the renewer (*mujaddid*) of the divine laws (sc. at the beginning of the fourteenth century).... The leadership of the Jaʿfarī sect throughout the world was centred in [him] towards the

[57] For examples, see Abd al-Hādī Hairi, *Shiism and Constitutionalism in Iran*, Leiden 1977, 62–3 (citing 'mimeographed research' entitled *Tashkīlāt-i Madhhab-i Shīʿa* by Āqā Muḥammad Vakīlī Qummī); (Husayn) Khurāsānī, *Maktab-i tashayyuʿ dar sayr-i tārīkh*, Tehran 1341 sh./1962–3, 194–6; M. J. Fischer, *Iran: From Religious Dispute to Revolution*, Cambridge, Mass., and London 1980, 252–4 (referring to Sayyid Ahmad al-Ḥusaynī Ashkvarī Āsaf-āqā, *al-Imām al-ḥakīm*, Najaf 1384/ 1966).

[58] See Hairi, EI2 art. 'Shaykh Murtaḍā Anṣārī' (with a good bibliography).

end of his life'.[59] The lack of any real, hierarchically-organized ecclesiastical system meant, however, that the situation was again destabilized on Shīrāzī's death, with general disagreement as to which individual might qualify for the title of 'most learned' (*aʿlam*) and thereby be deemed acceptable as sole *marjaʿ*.

Although it is obvious that, by the end of the nineteenth century, there was considerable pressure in the direction of full-scale routinization of charismatic authority in the person of a single *marjaʿ*, it is equally apparent that the religious establishment as a whole was not then sufficiently organized to act as a suitable framework within which supreme *marjaʿiyyat* could operate to full advantage or, more importantly, perpetuate itself by means of a rational system of succession. In the years following the death of Shīrāzī, a succession of scholars emerged to foster the role of *marjaʿ*, whether on an absolute or restricted basis, thus keeping alive the possibility of a living charismatic authority in the Shiʿi world.[60] Āyat Allāh Ḥusayn Burūjirdī (d. 1961) was particularly successful in consolidating the position of the sole *marjaʿ*, but even in his case there were many who tended to look on him as the head of the body of ʿulamāʾ in a primarily organizational rather than a charismatic sense. In spite of his efforts to centralize the religious establishment by emphasizing the organizational and educational roles of the *ḥawẓa-yi ʿilmī* at Qum and to rationalize the system of *marjaʿ*-based leadership,[61] Burūjirdī was still unable to resolve the problem of succession. Nevertheless, his reforms had touched a responsive chord among many ʿulamāʾ faced with the need to re-evaluate and restructure their role in the light of changing conditions, and, in 1962, a group of Shiʿi thinkers met to discuss changes in the curricula of the theological colleges and in the function of the religious leadership. Their recommendations for reform in these areas apart, the deliberations of this group (published in

[59] Quoted Muḥammad Muḥsin Shaykh Āghā Buzurgal al-Ṭihrānī, *Ṭabaqāt aʿlām al-Shīʿa*, Najaf 1954–6, i, 440.

[60] We may note the following as particularly important: Shaykh Muḥammad Kāẓim Khurāsānī (d. 1329/1911), Ḥujjat al-Islām Sayyid Muḥammad Kāẓim Ṭabāṭabāʾī Yazdī (d. 1337/1919), Mīrzā Muḥammad Taqī Hāʾirī Shīrāzī (d. 1338/1920), Shaykh Fatḥ Allāh Sharīʿat-i Iṣfahānī (d. 1338/1920), Ḥājj Sayyid Abu 'l-Ḥasan Iṣfahānī (d. 1365/1946), Ḥājj Āqā Ḥusayn Qummī (d. 1946), Shaykh Muḥammad Kāẓim Shīrāzī (d. 1367/1947), Ḥājj Aqā Ḥusayn Burūjirdī (d. 1380/1961), Āyat Allāh Kāẓim Slıarīʿatmadārī Qummī, Āyat Allāh Muḥammad Hādī Mīlānī, and Shaykh Muḥsin al-Ḥakīm (d. 1970).

[61] See Algar 'The oppositional role of the Ulama in twentieth-century Iran', in N. R. Keddie (ed.) *Scholars, Saints and Sufis*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1972, 243–4; on the early re-establishment of the *ḥawza* at Qum, see Fischer, *Iran*, 109–112.

the same year) are significant for the proposal that a form of collective *marjaʿiyyat* would be more suitable for present conditions,[62] a proposal that has effectively been implemented by the recent election of a *majlis-i khibrigān* to deliberate on the succession to Khomeini or, perhaps, to succeed him as a body. Routinizing and rationalizing tendencies, encouraged by new social and economic demands and by the example of modern bureaucratic techniques and systems then being developed in Iran, were clearly becoming vigorous by the early 1960s.

It is, therefore, all the more significant for our present argument to note that, in spite of this, the appeal of undiluted charismatic authority has continued with unabated strength among the masses, that it proved a basic factor in the success of the revolution in 1978, and that it continues to act as a central rallying-point without which the present regime would almost certainly have collapsed long since. Āyat Allāh Khomeini's direct appeal to straightforward charismatic authority, combined with his unprecedented personal popularity (the latter much enhanced by his exposure in the media and reinforced by the emotional upsurge generated by the revolution of which he has been the figurehead) has successfully withstood new pressures towards the wholesale routinization of the religious institution. At the same time, Khomeini provides an excellent illustration of an obvious but acknowledged problem inherent in the traditional system of *marjaʿ* selection. The insistence on *aʿlamiyyat* necessarily results in the incumbency of aged men of greatly limited life expectancy, whose opportunities for developing the institution are thus circumscribed. By comparison with the system of transmitting charismatic office by direct descent, the more open Shiʿi method reveals here a central weakness.

This increased concentration on individual charismatic authority is further indicated by the growing use in the present century of the title *āyat allāh* for *mujtahid*s of the rank of *marjaʿ*. The title seems to have been first applied to two leading ʿulamāʾ of the constitutional period, Sayyid ʿAbd Allāh Bihbahānī and Sayyid Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabāʾī, after which its use was extended and normalized.[63] Recently, there has been a tendency to institutionalize the title, particularly and significantly in the

[62] *Baḥthī dar bāra-yi marjaʿiyyat wa rūḥāniyyat*, Tehran 1341/1962; for an analysis, see A. K. S. Lambton, 'A reconsideration of the position of the Marjaʿ al-Taqlīd and the religious institution', *Studia Iranica*, I, (1964), 115–35.

[63] J. Calmard, EI2 Suppl. art. 'Āyat Allāh'.

form *āyat allāh al-uẓmā*, used of the chief *marjaʿ*, as in the case of both Burūjirdī and Khomeini.

In seeking to identify individual ʿulamāʾ as centres of supreme or nearly supreme authority, Shiʿism since the last century has taken its most far reaching step since the end of the lesser occultation in the projection of the Imam's charisma into fresh loci. The implications of such a development are clear. The supreme *marjaʿ* or *āyat allāh* is the living deputy of the Imam in a distinct and active sense: '…public during deputies who have a thorough knowledge from the proper sources are, during the long absence, like an Imam, and following them is comparable to following an Imam. Since Shiʿa depends (sic) upon the one who is the most learned and accepts him as the public deputy, in every epoch the person who is the most learned and pious is regarded as the public deputy, and the people follow his ideas and his decisions concerning religious affairs.'[64] This link with the Imam is vividly illustrated by Ḥājī Mīrzā Yaḥyā Dawlatābādī, who writes that among the factors inducing Mīrzā Muḥammad Ḥasan Shīrāzī to live in Sāmarrā was the existence there of the cellar in which the hidden Imam had first entered occultation, a connection which increased the stature of his *nāʾib*.[65] According to Binder, 'Burūjirdī's supporters came close to representing him as the sole spokesman for the hidden Imam',[66] and it has recently become common to refer openly to Āyat Allāh Khomeini as the *nāʾib-i Imām*.[67] The Islamic revolution, by transforming radically the role of the ʿulamāʾ in Iranian society and by laying the foundations for a full-scale institutionalization of the religious establishment, has already created a new context within which the question of charismatic leadership (expressed as *vilāyat-i faqīh*) can be further explored. Whether or not the present regime remains in power, the religious institution in Iran can never return in its position prior to 1978.

I have referred briefly to the contemporary situation in order to draw attention to the continuity that has characterised developments in the sphere of charismatic leadership over the past two centuries, in spite of frequent hiatuses and fresh initiatives. The picture I have drawn, how-

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[64] Mahmoud Shehabi, 'Shiʿa', in K. W. Morgan (ed.), *Islam, the Straight Path*, New York, 1958, 202.

[65] *Tārīkh-i muāṣir yā ḥayāt-i Yaḥyā*, Tehran n.d., I, 27

[66] L. Binder, 'The proofs of Islam: religion and politics in Iran', in G. Makdisi (ed.), *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of Hamilton A. R. Gibb*, Leiden 1965, 132.

[67] See Fischer, *Iran*, 6.

ever, is defective in several respects, not least in its neglect of the general development of the ʿulamāʾ as a class during this period. The emergence of outstanding *marājiʿ* must be set against the wider background of the appearance of large numbers of important scholars, many of them wealthy and politically powerful in their own right. We can detect, moreover, a growing tendency to supplement the links provided by *ijāza* (licence to teach) or shared discipleship by those of physical descent and marriage. Not only was the power of the individual mujtahid increasing, but that of certain clerical families, such as the Bihbahānīs, Ṭabāṭabāʾīs or Najafīs, was growing in proportion, to the extent that entry into the highest ranks of the ʿulamāʾ class became increasingly difficult (though not impossible) for someone outside the circle of this power structure. Of equal significance, although rather less straightforward, are the links established by intermarriage between the upper echelons of the religious class and the political and economic élites of pre-revolutionary Iran.[68]

In the modern period a new development has occurred, the implications of which have yet to be fully appreciated. This is the emergence of 'lay' scholars like ʿAlī Sharīʿatī or Mahdī Bāzargān, whose manifestly non-clerical training and position served to point up the clerical characteristics of the traditional ʿulamāʾ. For the first time in Shiʿi history, religious scholarship has ceased to be the prerogative of a madrasa-trained élite (except in its more specialised aspects), but this in itself can only encourage an emphasis on the institutional characteristics of the latter—their role as *fuqahāʾ*, their mosque- and madrasa-related functions, their control of *awqāf* and other endowments (particularly the stipends paid to *ṭullāb*) and, above all else, the charismatic base of their authority.

Of considerably greater interest for the topic under discussion, however, are the heterodox developments referred to at the beginning of this article. It is, I think, axiomatic that attempts to redefine orthodoxy will lead to the identification or emergence of heterodoxy, particularly in the context of an established church system like that which began to reappear in Iran under the Qajars. I have suggested above that the Safavid experience provides an exception to Stark's thesis that sects are more likely to emerge where there is a state church. That the opposite is true of the nineteenth century tells us much, I think, about the nature of the Qajar establishment and the development of the religious institution under it.

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[68] For modern examples of both developments, see ibid., 89–95.

The earliest crisis faced by the newly-triumphant Uṣūlī school was the excommunication around 1822 of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī (d. 1241/1826), from whom the later Shaykhī school took its name and inspiration.[69] The attempt to condemn al-Aḥsāʾī as a heretic (initiated in Qazvīn by Mullā Muḥammad Taqī Baraghānī (d. 1263/1847) is significant because of its contemporary unpopularity. Al-Aḥsāʾī, an Arab *ʿālim* long resident in Iran, was one of the best-known and most admired Shiʿi cholars of his day and had attracted the attention of Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh and his son Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā, the Governor of Kirmānshāh, under whose patronage the Shaykh had lived for several years. Although doctrinal issues were made the formal basis for the *takfīr*, these were of a nature which might not have attracted undue attention during the Safavid period, nor does al-Ahsāʾī's basic orthodoxy seem to have been in doubt to many leading ʿulamāʾ who refused to sanction the excommunication. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that al-Aḥsāʾī and his more recondite theories simply provided suitable targets which helped crystallize the position of the 'orthodox' school. There is, however, another aspect to the problem. Al-Aḥsāʾī was the leading representative of a continuing theme within the Uṣūlī tradition, namely an emphasis on non-rational modes of understanding and perception in religious matters.[70] This emphasis is particularly clear in the case of Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī Baḥr al-ʿUlūm (d. 1212/1797), the leading contemporary of Bihbahānī, who attempted to combine intuitive revelation (*kashf*) with reason (*ʿaql*), the latter being the mainstay of the Uṣūlī method. Tunakābunī refers to mystical encounters between Baḥr al-ʿUlūm and the hidden imām, in the course of which various mysteries were revealed to him.[71] Many other scholars of the period, such as Sayyid Jaʿfar Dārābī Kashfī (d. 1267/1850)

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[69] See D. M. MacEoin, art. 'Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī', in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. For further details of the development of early Shaykhism, see idem, 'From Shaykhism to Babism: a study in charismatic renewal in Shiʿi Islam', unpublished PhD dissertation, Cambridge University 1979, chs 2, 3 (published in this volume); Rafati, 'Development'; H. Corbin, 'L'École Shaykhie en théologie Shiʿite', *Annuaire de l'Ecole Pratique des Hautes études*, Section des sciences religieuses (1960–1), 1–59. I have recently been notified of a new work dealing with nineteenth-century heterodox developments in Iran: Mangol Bayat, *Mysticism and Dissent*, Syracuse 1982.

[70] Attention has been drawn to this theme by Abbas Amanat, 'The Early Years of the Babi Movement', unpublished PhD dissertation, Oxford University 1981, 23–9. [Now published as *Resurrection and Renewal: Making of the Babi Movement in Iran*, Cornell University Press, 1989.]

[71] Ibid., 24, quoting *Qiṣaṣ al-ʿulamāʾ*.

and Mulla Asad Allāh Burūjirdī Ḥujjat al-Islām (d. 1271/1854), claimed to have been granted revelations of hidden truths.[72]

Al-Aḥsāʾī himself believed that his knowledge was directly granted him by the Prophet and the Imams (the latter in particular). Speaking of his knowledge of various sciences, his successor, Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī (d. 1260/1844), states that they 'came to that distinguished one in true and veracious dreams from the Imams of guidance.'[73] The role of the Imams as spiritual guides has always been emphasised in Shiʿism, and Akhbārī reliance on intuition before reason brought it to the forefront of religious practice, but al-Aḥsāʾī seems to have gone further than most in his claims to such guidance. 'The ʿulamāʾ,' he wrote, 'derive their knowledge one from the other, but I have never followed in their way. I have derived what I know from the Imams of guidance, and error cannot find us way into my words, since all that I confirm in my books is from them and they are preserved from sin and ignorance and error. Whosoever derives [his knowledge] from them shall not err, inasmuch as he encountered the Imams.'[74] In one place, al-Aḥsāʾī speaks of his dreams, in which he encountered the Imāms, as *ilhām*,[75] but more usually he speaks of *kashf* or *mukāshafa*, the 'unveiling' of inner meanings by means of these visions. The importance of *kashf* as a means of attaining knowledge supplementary or complementary to either reason (as emphasized by the Uṣūlīs) or tradition (as stressed by the Akhbārīs) is reflected in the alternative name of 'Kashfiyya' applied to the Shaykhī school.

Yet al-Aḥsāʾī did not seek to dissociate himself or his teachings from the Uṣūlī tradition. There is no reason to believe that he ever wished to divorce his inward inspirations obtained from the Imams (who, he claimed, had given him spiritual *ijāzāt*) from the more conventional guidance to be gained from a teacher who provided, through a physical *ijāza*, a living link with a chain of mujtahids going back to the Imams and the Prophet and, in a sense, transmitting their *baraka* as well as their knowledge to men. The relationship between al-Aḥsāʾī's direct visionary

[72] Ibid., 25–9.

[73] *Dalīl al-mutaḥayyirīn*, n.p. 1276/1859–60, 11.

[74] *Sharḥ al-Fawāʾid*, n.p. 1272/1856, 4 (the original text was completed in 1233/1818).

[75] *Kuntu fi tilka al-ḥāl dāʾiman arī manāmāt wa-hiya ilhāmāt*: autobiography in Abu 'l-Qāsim b. Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn (Ibrāhīmī), *Fihrist-i kutub-i Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī wa sāʾir-i mashāyikh-i ʿiẓam*. Kirman 1977, 141.

experiences of the Prophet and the Imams, on the one hand, and his formal links with the ʿulamāʾ (through reading and writing books and letters, studying and teaching, receiving and granting *ijāzāt*) on the other, is a particularly compelling example of the complex functioning of charisma and authority in Shiʿism. We have already observed how routinized and direct forms of charismatic authority could co-exist fairly easily within a single system of Shiʿi orthodoxy, and, from this point of view, there is no reason why al-Aḥsāʾī would not have been able to continue as a leading representative of the intuitive end of the spectrum of authority, had it not been for the insistence of a relatively tiny group of ʿulamāʾ who wished to press the issue of orthodoxy in his case.

The Shaykhī school that crystallised round Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī in Karbalāʾ between 1826 and 1844 emphasised the charismatic role of al-Aḥsāʾī and his successor. Rashtī's appointment as head of the body of al-Aḥsāʾī's disciples is noteworthy for several reasons. It is the earliest example of an attempt to regularize the method of authority transmission, preceding by several decades the efforts of al-Najafī and al-Anṣārī to appoint successors to the rank of supreme *marjaʿ*. It was, moreover, unorthodox in content, for Rashtī was seen, not merely as a mujtahid inheriting the authority of his teacher, but as the direct recipient of a body of knowledge derived by means of *kashf* through al-Aḥsāʾī from the Imams and, through them, from God Himself: 'he (Rashtī) has learnt what he knows orally from me (al-Aḥsāʾī), and I have learnt [what I know] orally from the Imams, and they have learnt from God without the mediation of anyone.[76] Karīm Khān Kirmānī explicitly makes a comparison between al-Aḥsāʾī's appointment of Rashtī with the *naṣṣ* of Muḥammad designating ʿAlī or that of each Imam in respect of his successor.[77] This system of appointment became further routinized in the Kirmānī branch of Shaykhism, in which a line of descendants of the above Karīm Khān succeeded one another as heads of the school.[78]

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[76] al-Aḥsāʾī, quoted in Karīm Khān Kirmānī, *Hidāyat al-ṭālibīn*, Kirman 1380/1960–1, 71. For a later Shaykhī attempt to interpret this passage conformably to orthodox Shīʿī thought, see Ḥājj Zayn al-ʿĀbidin Khān Kirmānī, 'Risāla…Niẓām al-Islām Iṣfahānī', 49–72.

[77] Kirmānī, *Hidāyat*, 71–2. The later Shaykhī schools of Tabriz and Kerman (the latter enduring to the present) became somewhat routinized and attempted to reintegrate themselves within the main stream of orthodox Shiʿism.

[78] On Kirmānī Shaykhism, see Corbin, 'L'école shaykhie'. Following the assassination in 1979 of ʿAbd al-Riḍā Khan, leadership of the school passed out of the family to a Shaykhī scholar in Iraq, Ḥājj Sayyid ʿAlī Mūsawī, who is regarded as the most learned (*aʿlam*).

The crisis that followed the death of Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī at the beginning of 1844 led to the emergence of Babism,[79] a short-lived but tremendously influential millenarian movement that carried the role of charismatic leader to its greatest lengths. The founder of the movement, Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad Shīrāzī, the Bāb (d. 1266/1850) was profoundly influenced by the Shaykhī doctrine of the 'Fourth support' (*al-rukn al-rābiʿ*), according to which the faith was based on four 'supports': God, the Prophet, the Imams, and the Shiʿa.[80] An extreme development of this doctine tended towards the identification of the fourth of these supports with the ʿulamāʾ or with one individual from among them. Shīrāzī urged this latter version of the doctrine in terms which illustrate with extreme clarity the central argument of the present article, that a renewed emphasis on charismatic authority among the ʿulamāʾ as a whole tended to result in an increased focus on individuals. In his *Tafsīr sūrat al-kawthar*, Shīrāzī writes: 'Just as you stand in need of an individual sent from God who may transmit unto you what your Lord has willed, so you stand in need of an ambassador (*safīr*) from your Imam'.[81] If it should be objected that the ʿulamāʾ as a whole fulfill this function, he would reply that the latter differ in rank and that they are not always in agreement. Having accepted this argument, he goes on, we are compelled to abandon an *ʿālim* of inferior rank for one of higher standing, a process which must, in the end, lead to recognition of a single individual superior to all others.[82] 'It is impossible,' he concludes, 'that the bearer of universal grace from the Imam should be other than a single individual.'[83] This is not in essence, markedly different to the principle from the single *marjaʿ*, but the application of the theory in a Bābī context had much more radical consequences.

In the first phase of his prophetic activity, Shīrāzī claimed to be a bearer of divine knowledge like Rashtī and al-Aḥsāʾī, but also proclaimed himself to be a new 'gate' sent by the hidden Imam to prepare men for

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[79] For a bibliography of Babism, see D. M. MacEoin, 'Babism', in L. P. Elwell-Sutton (ed.), *Bibliographical Guide to Iran*, London, 1982; for details, see idem, arts. 'Bāb', 'Babism', 'Bayān' in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*; idem, 'From Shaykhism to Babism', *Sources*; Amanat, Early Years.

[80] On this doctrine as developed by the Shaykhīs of Kirman, see MacEoin, 'Shaykhism to Babism', 168–70; Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī, *Rukn-i rābiʿ*, Kirman 1368/1949.

[81] *Tafsīr sūrat al-kawthar*, Cambridge University Library, Browne Or. Ms. F.10, f.36b (cf. f.68a).

[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid., f.37a.

his imminent advent. As gate and representative of the Imam, the Bāb is, in a sense, identified with him: 'there is none who has followed this remembrance (i.e. the Bāb) but that he has followed me (the twelfth Imam); whoever loves the remembrance for the sake of God loves me; whoever seeks to behold me, let him behold his face; and whoever seeks to listen to my words, let him give ear to the novelties of wisdom and the keys of mercy from the tongue of God'.[84] Identification with the Imam passed at times beyond the limits of simple representation. Thus, the Imam declares that 'we are he and he is we, save that he is himself and is our servant'[85] or that God has made him (the Bāb) my own self in the worlds of command and creation. I am, by God's permission, never absent from him for the least period that your Lord, the Merciful, can calculate, nor is he ever absent from me.'[86]

The early Bābī preaching mission, directed towards the advent of the Imam in 1845, collapsed for a variety of reasons, including the Bāb's own failure to appear in Karbalāʾ in Muḥarram 1261 to initiate the *ẓuhur* or appearance of the Imam, his subsequent recantation of his claims in Shīrāz in the same year, and his adoption for a period after that of a policy of *taqiyya*. In late 1847, however, while in prison in Azerbaijan, the Bāb announced himself as the Imam in person, returned as the Qāʾim to abrogate the laws of Islam and in usher in the millennium. This claim itself led imperceptibly to the promulgation in the later works of the Bāb, such as the *Bayān-i Fārsī*, of a new doctrine, based on a theory of successive theophanies, of which the Bāb himself was the latest.[87] Whereas in the earlier stages of his short career, the Bāb's authority was derived latently from the overriding charismatic image of the Imam, in this final stage he assumed an independent authority that cancelled all previous notions of charismatic relationship, transforming latent into original, 'prophetic' charisma. This is significant enough in itself, providing in one sequence almost the entire spectrum of nineteenth-century Shiʿi charismatic modes, but Babism exhibited yet another curious feature in its later stages: a multiplicity of claims to charismatic 'stations' within

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[84] ʿAlī Muḥammad Shīrāzī, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, Cambridge University Library, Browne Or. Ms., f.11, f.76a.

[85] Ibid., f.73b.

[86] Ibid . f.76b.

[87] On this theory, see E. G. Browne (ed.), *Kitāb-i Nuqṭatuʾl-Kāf*, Leyden and London 1910, introd. xxvi–xxix.

the movement, including a rash of theophanies following the death of the Bāb.[88]

Out of the theophanic chaos of Babism in the 1850s there emerged two main successor groups: the Azalis, led by Mirzā Yaḥyā Nūrī Ṣubḥ-i Azal (d. 1333/1912), and the Baha'is, led by the latter's half-brother, Mīrzā Ḥusayn ʿAlī Nūrī Bahāʾ Allāh (d. 1309/1892).[89] The former group, which based its legitimacy on Azal's appointment as successor to the Bāb, remained committed to conservative policies and rapidly exhausted the charismatic dynamism of the original movement. On Azal's death in 1912, leadership of the movement passed in little more than theory to Ḥājī Mīrzā Yaḥya Dawlatābādī (d. 1359/1939), and since then the Azalī group has lacked any very clear principle of organisation or leadership.[90] By way of extreme contrast, Baha'ism from the beginning stressed the original charismatic role of Bahāʾ Allāh, revered, not as a successor to the Bāb, but as the next in the sequence of theophanies, identified with a messianic figure mentioned in the later Bābī scriptures. This is in itself an extremely interesting development, involving as it did the immediate invocation of prophecies whose obvious reference was to the distant future, a device which clearly became essential as a means of avoiding the premature routinization of charisma within the movement.

Although official Baha'i doctrine emphasises Bahāʾ Allah's claim to be a 'divine manifestation' (*maẓhar ilāhī*), and rejects any notion of incarnationism,[91] numerous passages in the prophet's own writings express unequivocal claims to divinity. He is 'the creator of all things'[92] who taught all the names to Adam[93] and sent Moses to Pharaoh.[94] He

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[88] See for example, MacEoin, 'The Bābī concept of holy war', *Religion*, xii (1982), 114–15; *Nuqtatuʾl–Kāf*, 252–61. Berger's reference to this as a 'charismatic field' is relevant ('From Sect to Church', 161–2).

[89] For a brief bibliography of the latter group, see MacEoin, 'Baha'ism', in Elwell-Sutton (ed.), *Bibliographical Guide*.

[90] On the contrast between Babism and Baha'ism in this respect, see Peter Berger, 'Motif messianique et processus social dans le 'Baha'isme', *Archives de Sociologie des Religions*, iv (1957), 93–107.

[91] See, for example, Shoghi Effendi, 'The Dispensation of Baha'u'llah', in idem, *The World Order of Baha'u'llah*, rev. ed. Wilmette, 111. 1969, 112–14.

[92] Bahaʾ Allāh, letter in *Athār-i qalam-i aʿlā*, II, Tehran n.d. (= a paginated reprint of texts originally published with *al-Kitāb al aqdas*, Bombay 1314/1896), 177.

[93] Letter in ibid., 194.

[94] Letter (*ṣaḥīfat Allāh*) in idem, *Alwāḥ-i mubāraka-yi ḥaḍrat-i Bahāʾ Allāh . . . shāmil-i ishrāqāt . . .*, Tehran n.d., 195.

explicitly writes 'verily, I am God' (*innanī anā 'llāh*),[95] declares that 'the essence of the pre-existent (*dhāt al-qidam*) has appeared' (evidently in his person),[96] and claims (again in reference to himself) that 'he has been born who begets not nor is begotten'.[97] Several passages, indeed, refer to the undesirability of making public his claims to divinity (*ulūhiyya*) and lordship (*rubūbiyya*)[98] as well as to the permissibility of regarding him equally as the direct appearance of the unseen or as an indirect manifestation of the divinity.[99] Even the more moderate Bahaʾi doctrine that knowledge of God can only be obtained in any age through his manifestation (and, hence, today, only through Bahāʾ Allāh)[100] provides an extreme example of charismatic development, in which all other intermediaries between man and the deity have been removed.

In the later stages of its development, Bahaʾism provides an almost ideal model of charismatic routinization, a process much facilitated by the spread of the movement in the West and the incorporation into it of rational methods and elaborate, increasingly baroque bureaucratic mechanisms.[101] But it is precisely here that we are confronted by an interesting and significant paradox. The absence of a recognized successor to Shoghi Effendi (d. 1957), a great-grandson of Bahāʾ Allāh who had

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[95] Letter in ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Ishrāq Khāvarī (ed.), *Māʾida-yi āsmānī*, Tehran, 1971–3, iv, 208.

[96] Letter to Ḥāji Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Qazvīnī, in ibid., viii, 113. The passage continues: 'the spirits of the prophets circle around him, together with the lote-tree of the extremity. Say, Muḥammad ascended for seventy thousand years before he reached the porch of this gate'.

[97] *Lawḥ-i mīlād-i ism-i aʿẓam*, in ibid., iv, 344 (the reference is to the Qurʾān, sura 112). Other statements of interest in this context include his claim that the sun was created from 'a spark of his radiance' (*Sūrat al-ḥajj* in idem, *Athār-i qalam-i aʿlā*, iv, Tehran 19767, 77) and his curious assertion that, in exiling him from Iran the Ottomans had 'expelled God from His house' (ibid., 68).

[98] See, for example, passages in Ishrāq Khāvarī (ed. ), *Māʾida*, VIII, 123, 155, 162.

[99] See Bahāʾ Allāh, *Lawḥ-i Jamāl*, in idem, *Alwāḥ-i Bahāʾ Allāh*, Bombay (?), 1893, 219.

[100] See idem, *al-Kitāb al-aqdas*, text printed in 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ḥasanī, *al-Bābiyūn wa 'l-Bahāʾīyūn fī ḥāḍirihim wa-māḍīhim*, Sidon 1962, 109; idem, 'Lawh-i tajallīyāt', in *Ishrāqāt*, 201; idem, letter in ibid., 293–4; idem, 'Lawḥ-i Salmān', in *Majmūʿa-yi alwāḥ-i mubāraka*, Cairo 1920,144–5 ; idem, 'Lawh-i Salmān', in *Majmūʾa-yi alwāh-i mubāraka*, Cairo 1920, 144–5; idem, 'Lawḥ-i tawḥīd', in ibid., 311; idem, *Kitāb-i mustatāb-i īqān*, Cairo n.d., 110.

[101] On developments up to 1957, just before the death of Shoghi Effendi, see Berger, 'Motif messianique', and idem, *From Sect to Church*; on these and subsequent developments, see Vernon E. Johnson, *An Historical Analysis of Critical Transformations in the Evolution of the Bahaʾi World Faith*, unpublished PhD dissertation, Baylor University 1974.

been intended as the first in a line of 'guardians of the faith' (*awliyā-yi amr Allāh*), left the movement without a major charismatic locus, and subsequent developments accelerated the routinization process to the point where the running of affairs was almost exclusively in the hands of bureaucratic institutions. Perhaps more significantly, attempts to continue, the guardianship in another line or to find an alternative charismatic base were effectively blocked by the remarkably well-developed coercive powers of the routinized institutions. In the late 1960s, however, steps were taken by those same institutions to introduce what is, in effect, a clerical hierarchy whose power is based increasingly on charisma of office, their principal legitimation being that of continuation of the Guardianship in a collective sense. Theological problems aside, Bahaʾism presents us with the most extreme case of charismatic renewal in nineteenth-century Shiʿism and, in the modern period, with an extraordinary example of the endurance of charisma in a highly routinized system and its muted resurgence under unfavourable conditions.

The link between charismatically-based authority claims and concern with doctrinal purity and a sense of orthodoxy is well illustrated in Babism and Bahaʾism. In the former case, early attempts to organize the religious community involved the excommunication of individuals who challenged the authority of the Bāb or his leading followers,[102] while, in the later phase of the movement, an extreme exclusiveness was combined with marked intolerance towards non-believers.[103] Bahaʾism reversed the Bābī doctrine of intolerance to preach a message of universal brotherhood and inter-religious harmony, but this was paralleled by an increased emphasis on internal unity and doctrinal purity, with frequent resort to excommunication in the case of dissidence. Several of the movements we have referred to as examples of revived charismatic authority share this feature of heightened exclusiveness and internal rigidity, the Tijāniyya, Sanūisiyya, and Khatmiyya Sūfī orders being cases in point.

Babism and Bahaʾism by no means exhaust the range of charismatic options available within the context of Qajar Shiʿism. A more extended study would need to examine the revival of Niʿmat Allāhī Sufism from the late eighteenth century,[104] the charismatic element in popular

[102] See MacEoin, 'From Shaykhism to Babism', 199–207.
[103] See idem, 'Babi concept of Holy War', 108–9.
[104] On this, see W. R. Royce, *Mir Maʿsūm ʿAlī Shāh and the Niʿmat Allāhī Revival 1776–77 to 1796–97*, unpublished PhD dissertation, Princeton University 1979.

religion of the period,[105] the Indian and Iranian Ismāʾīlī revivals centred on Hibat Allāh b. Ismāʾīl, Shāh Khalīl Allāh, and Aghā Khān Ḥusayn ʿAlī Shah,[106] the career of Mullā Sādiq Urdūbādī in the Caucasus in the late 1830s,[107] the revolt of Sayyid Husayn Kalārdashtī (Sayyid ʿĀlamgīr) in 1891[108] and other similar developments. It is a period of extremist claims, with charismatic and millenarian themes to the fore, but such movements are in themselves meaningless unless interpreted as part of a broader pattern, list as the more moderate developments of the age are given context and depth when set beside the growth of heterodoxy.

[105] See Amanat, *Early Years*, ch. 2, 'Sufism and popular religion'.
[106] See ibid., 91–2; Algar, 'The revolt of Aghā Khan Mahallātī and the Transference of the Ismāʾīlī Imāmate to India', *Studia Iranica*, xxix (1969), 55–81.
[107] See Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Raḥīq-i makhtūm*, Tehran 1973–5, nn. 309–10.
[108] See N. R. Keddie, *Religion and Rebellion in Iran*, London 1966, 136–40.

# EARLY SHAYKHĪ REACTIONS TO THE BĀB AND HIS CLAIMS*

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

Unlike Shaykh Aḥmad al-Ahsā'ī, who had designated Sayyid Kāẓim as his successor, the sayyid left no clear instructions as to the leadership of the school after him. Within a very short time the Shaykhī sect split into several factions, of which the two largest were that grouped around Sayyid ʿAlī-Muḥammad Shīrāzī, the Bāb, on the one hand, and that centered on the figure of Ḥājī Mullā Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī (1810–1871) on the other. These factions expressed two diametrically opposed tendencies inherent in Shaykhīsm. The first moved away from the outward practice of Islam toward a concentration on the development of its inward (*bāṭinī*) 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 Shīʿī majority which had formerly excommunicated the founder of Shaykhīsm and his successor.

Once these incompatible interpretations of Shaykhī thought came to be openly expressed, an unrelenting hostility grew up between the two parties—a hostility fiercer than any that had existed previously between Shaykhīs and Bālāsaris (the Shīʿī majority).

## Events in Karbala after the Death of Sayyid Kāẓim

In order to trace the origins of this split in Shaykhīsm, let us examine briefly what occurred on the death of Sayyid Kāẓim, particularly with

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respect to the initial foundation of Bābīsm as a school of thought within the Shaykhī 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 Bābī/Karīm Khānī division, and many of them from very much later.

Karīm Khān Kirmānī himself has stated that Sayyid Kāẓim 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 Bābī of Karbala who had himself been among his disciples. This individual (who gives his name somewhat curiously as al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī) states that "those among the pupils (*al-ṭullāb*) 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 Mullā Ḥasan Gawhar and Mīrzā Muḥīṭ Kirmānī, the most eminent disciples of the late sayyid then in Karbala, and asked if they had heard anything from Sayyid Kāẓim ragarding 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 Karbala. Mīrzā Muḥīṭ's instructions to stay put received apparent corroboration in what al-Qatīl describes as "a foundationless rumor" which became current at this point, to the effect that Sayyid Kāẓim 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, Ṣafar, Rabīʿ I, and Rabīʿ II, corresponding approximately to February, March, April, and May) thinking that Muḥīṭ might be correct in his claims. It would appear, however, that a number of these students became disillusioned with Mīrzā Muḥīṭ, rejected him, and dispersed from Karbala.[4]

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[1] Kirmānī, *Izhaq al-bāṭil*, p. 14.
[2] Quoted in Māzandarāni, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 510.
[3] Ibid., p. 502.
[4] Ibid., p. 510.

This version of events is corroborated in its essentials by Mīrzā Ḥusayn Khān Dakhīl, the son of Mullā Ḥusayn Dakhīl, a Shaykhī who had lived in Karbala with Mullā Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī and later became a Bābī. Mīrzā Ḥusayn Khān 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 *ṣāḥib-i amr* ('Bearer of the Cause')."[5] This in its turn corroborates the much later Bahāʾī account given by Mullā Muḥammad Zarandī, Nabīl, in his narrative. Zarandī states that "For a time, fear and anxiety filled the hearts of Siyyid [sic] Kāẓim's faithful disciples," but he indicates that several of them were aware that "Siyyid Kāẓim 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 Mullā Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī returned to Karbala on 1 Muḥarram 1260/22 January 1844, he met with Mullā Ḥasan Gawhar, Mīrzā Muḥīṭ Kirmānī "and other well-known figures among the disciples of Siyyid Kāẓim," and that these individuals made various excuses for not leaving Karbala.[7]

## Claims to Leadership of the Shaykhī School

The first claims to leadership of the Shaykhī community were made in Karbala. The main claimants were, in fact, the above-mentioned Mullā Ḥasan Gawhar and Mīrzā Muḥīṭ Kirmānī. According to al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, the former claimed "trusteeship" (*wiṣāya*) and the latter "superintendency" (*niẓāra*), but it is not clear whether these claims were made in conjunction or separately. Tanakābunī actually states that these two men were brothers,[8] although he seems to be the only source which links them in this way.

Mullā Ḥasan had been one of the closest disciples of Sayyid Kāẓim. 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 Mahdī Ṭabāṭabāʾī. ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Navāʾī speaks of him as acquiring

[5] From an incomplete manuscript quoted in Måzandaråni, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 55.
[6] Nabīl (Zarandī), *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 47.
[7] Ibid., p. 48.
[8] Tanakābuni, *Qiṣaṣ al-ʾulamā*, p. 186.
[9] Rashtī, *Dalīl al-mutaḥayyirīn*, p. 71.

a sufficient following to be regarded by many as the effective successor of Sayyid Kāẓim in Karbala.[10] That the Bāb himself regarded Mullā Ḥasan as of some importance is indicated by a reference in the former's *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, written in Būshihr on 15 Jumādā II 1261/21 June 1845, shortly after his return from pilgrimage to Mecca, in which a letter to Mullā 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 Mullā Ḥasan and Karīm Khān Kirmānī in the lifetime of Sayyid Kāẓim had already had a disagreement with Mullā Yūsuf ʿAlī Ardibīlī, who was later to become one of the Bāb's close disciples.[12]

Mīrzā Muḥīṭ originally known as Mīrzā Muḥammad Ḥusayn, was an uncle of Ḥājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī, and had been the tutor of Sayyid Kāẓim's two sons, Sayyid Ḥasan and Sayyid Aḥmad.[13] He was to meet the Bāb in the course of the latter's pilgrimage, and was the recipient of his important early work, the *Ṣaḥīfa bayna 'l-ḥaramayn.*[14] According to Zarandī, Mīrzā Muḥīṭ vacillated between allegiance to Karīm Khān Kirmānī and a claim to personal leadership of the Shaykhī community. [15]

Mullā Ḥasan and Mīrzā Muḥīṭ 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 Shaykhī community there fell to one of Sayyid Kāẓim's sons, Sayyid Aḥmad.[16] Although Sayyid Aḥmad's influence within the Shaykhī school remained largely restricted to Iraq, he does seem to have acquired a position of some prestige with the Shīʿī 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 Jumādi I 1295/19

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[10] Navāʾī, *Fitna-yi Bāb*, p. 232n (from a marginal note in Navāʾī's copy of *al-Mutanabbiyyin* by Iʿtadad al-Salṭāna).

[11] The Bāb, *Kitab al-fihrist*, mss. 6003.C, p. 291; and 4011.C, p. 68.

[12] Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 49.

[13] Navāʾī, *Fitna-yi Bāb*, p. 232.

[14] Nabīl, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 134–38.

[15] Ibid., p. 137.

[16] Sayyid Kāẓim had, it would seem, one daughter and two sons, Sayyid Ḥasan and Sayyid Aḥmad. The daughter was later married to Hājī Sulaymān Khān Afshar.

[17] Chahārdihī, *Shaykhigarī*, p. 266.

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 fatḥer, 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 Qāsim, who also became involved in political troubles.[19] Under the leadership of Sayyid Aḥmad and his son, the Shaykhī 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 Shaykhī community came to be centered in three places: Tabriz, Kerman, and Shiraz. In Tabriz, the man who claimed leadership of the Shaykhīs was Mīrzā Shafīʿ Thiqat al-Islām Tabrīzī, a mujtahid who had studied under Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kāẓim in Karbala.[20] Apart from him, there were several other notable Shaykhīs in the city, the most outstanding of whom were Ḥājī Mullā Maḥmūd Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ and Muḥammad Māmaqānī Ḥujjat al-Islām. Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ achieved distinction as tutor to the then crown prince, Nāṣir al-Dīn Mīrzā, by virtue of which position he was later to preside over the examination of the Bāb held in Tabriz in August 1848, and attended by the prince, leading government officials, religious dignitaries, and eminent members of the Shaykhī community (including Mīrzā ʿAlī-Asghar, the Shaykh al-Islām of the city).[21] Māmaqāni was also present at that tribunal, and was later among the ulama who signed a fatwa for the Bāb's death before his execution in July 1850.[22]

Like Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ, Māmaqānī succeeded in making himself respectable to the Shiʿi community at large, and his family was to retain

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[18] Ibid., p. 238. See also Aqā Buzurg Tihrāni, *Nuqabā al-Bashar fiʾl-qarni ʾl-rabiʿ ʿashar*, part 2, p. 102.

[19] I'timad al-Salṭāna, *al-Maʾāthir* p. 184; Abuʾl-Qasim, *Fihrist-i kutub*, vol. 1, p. 123n.

[20] Chahārdihī, *Shaykhīgarī*, pp. 39–40. 21

[21] Numerous and conflicting accounts of this important tribunal have been written. See, in particular, Sipihr, *Nāsikh al-Tawārikh*, vol. 3, pp. 125–30; Hidayat, *Rawḍat al-ṣafā*, vol. 10, pp. 118–21 (based on a report by Nizam al-ʿUlama); Browne, Traveller's Narrative, vol. 2, pp. 277–90 (Note M); idem, *Nuqṭatuʾl-Kaf*, pp. 133–38; idem, *Materials*, "Five unpublished contemporary documents, Persian and English, relating to the Bāb's examination at Tabriz in 1848," pp. 245–64; Zaʾīm al-Dawla, *Miftāḥ Bābi ʾl-Abwāb*, pp. 137–45; Nabil, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 314–20; Māzandarāni, *Ẓuhūr al-Haqq*, vol. 3, pp. 9, 10, 14–20; Tanakābunī, *Qiṣaṣ al-ʿUlamā*, pp. 56–59. [For a comprehensive account, see MacEoin 'The Trial of the Bāb', in this volume.]

[22] Nabīl, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 509–10.

for some time a position of considerable importance in Azerbaijan.[23] Although incidents between Shaykhīs and Bālāsarīs took place intermittently in Tabriz (notably a riot in 1850), it is clear that the Shaykhī notables of that city were particularly eager to identify themselves with the main body of Shīʿī Islam. They emerged as the leading figures in the trial, condemnation, and sentencing of the Bāb for heresy. They were certainly more successful in this rapprochement with orthodoxy than were their principal rivals, Ḥājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī and his successors.

## Karīm Khān Kirmānī

Since we are concerned in this paper with the response of Karīm Khān Kirmānī to the Bāb and his claims, it will be useful to give some details at this point about his background and career. Karīm Khān's father, Ibrāhīm Khān Ẓahīr al-Dawla, was a cousin and son-in-law of Fatḥ-ʿAlī Shāh, the second king of the Qājār dynasty.[24] At the beginning of Fatḥ-ʿAlī's reign, Ibrāhīm Khān 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] Ibrāhīm Khān's relationship with the ruling dynasty was strengthened by his marriage to Hümayun Sultān Khānum Khānumān,[27] the eldest daughter of Fatḥ-ʿAlī Shāh and a sister of Ḥusayn-ʿAlī Mīrzā Farmānfarmā and Ḥasan-ʿAlī Mīrzā Shujāʿ al-Salṭana, and by the marriage of two of his sons to

[23] For details of Māmaqānī and his sons, see Chahārdihī, *Shaykhigarī*, pp. 176–98; Māzandarāni, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 9; Iʾtimad al-Saltana, *al-Maʾāthir*, p. 161. Māmaqāni died in 1268 or 1269/1851–2 or 1852–3.

[24] Ibrāhīm Khān was the son of Mahdī Quli Khān, a son of Muḥammad-Ḥasan Khān, a son of Fatḥ-Alī Khān Qājār (not to be confused with Fatḥ-ʿAlī Shāh). Mahdī Qulī Khān was a brother of the first Qājār ruler, Aqā Muḥammad Khān. The latter put his brother to death and gave his widow and child (Ibrāhīm Khān) into the keeping of his nephew Bābā Khān, the future Fatḥ-ʿAlī Shāh. Ibrāhīm Khan's mother had three more children by Fatḥ-ʿAlī, these being two daughters, Zaynāb Khānum and Khadīja Khānum, and a son, Muḥammad-Qulī Mīrzā Mulk Ārā (see ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Navāʾī, "Karīm Khān," pp. 112–13).

[25] Raḍawī, *Tadhkirāt al-awliyāʾ*, p. 56.

[26] Sipihr, *Nāsikh al-tawārikh*, vol. 1, p. 354; Aḥmadī, *Farmāndihān-i Kirmān*, pp. 12, 50, 55.

[27] She is also known as Nawwāb Mutaʿāliyya and Dawlat Gildī: see Sipihr, *Nāsikh al-Tawārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 155; ʿAḍud al-Dawla, *Tārīkh-i ʿAḍudī*, p. 316.

two other daughters of the monarch.[28] In addition to this, Karīm Khān himself was later married to a daughter of Muḥammad-Qulī Mīrzā Mulk Ārā, the third son of Fatḥ-ʿAlī Shāh.

During the twenty-one-year period he held the governorship of Kerman, Ibrāhīm Khān 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 Āqā Muḥammad Shāh. In the course of his term as governor, Ibrāhīm Khān built several important buildings, including a *madrasa*, 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 Niʿmat Allāh al-Baḥranī, Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn al-Aḥsāʾī (who lived at Sīrjān), and Mullā ʿAlī Aʿmā.[29] He showed particular favor to Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī whom he met on several occasions in Yazd during the Shaykh's residence there. It has been suggested that it was through Ibrāhīm Khān's influence that Fatḥ-ʿAlī Shāh invited the Shaykh to Tihrān in 1808.[30]

Ibrāhīm Khān is said to have had forty wives by whom he had twenty sons and twenty-one daughters.[31] The mother of Karīm Khān was a daughter of Mīrzā Raḥīm, the Mustawfī of Tiflis. She 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. Shaykhī accounts describe Karīm Khān as a remarkable child who began writing at an early age and showed signs of incipient greatness.

On the death of Ibrāhīm Khān, the inevitable disagreements broke out among his sons, but Karīm Khān is said to have avoided becoming involved in this wrangling and continued his studies and devotions.[33] In

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[28] Rustam Khān was married to Shāh Gawhar Khānum, the nineteenth daughter of Fatḥ-ʿAlī, and Naṣr Allāh Khān to Tājlī Bigum, the twelfth daughter (see Aḥmadi, *Farmandihan*, p. 50); Sipihr, *Nāsikh al-tawārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 158; ʿAḍud al-Dawla, *Tārīkh-iʿ ʿAḍudī*, p. 319.

[29] Bāstāni Pārīzī in Aḥmadī, *Farmāndihān*, pp. 12–13.

[30] Kirmānī, "Ṭaʾifay-i Shaykhiyya," *Majalla-yi mardum-shināsī*, p. 252.

[31] ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Navāʾī in ʿAḍud al-Dawla, *Tārīkh-i ʿAḍudī*, p. 195n. Pārizi gives 21 as the figure for sons (Aḥmadi, *Farmāndihān*, p. 52n).

[32] Raḍawī, *Tadhkirāt al-āwliyāʾ*, pp. 58–59.

[33] Ibid., p. 64.

search of the "perfect Shīʿī," he associated with various sects, but was eventually guided to Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī in Karbala. Despite certain obstacles, he travelled to Karbala, via Isfahan and Kermanshāh (where he met Shaykh ʿAlī, a son of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī), and at last met Sayyid Kāẓim. The sayyid is said to have seen great promise in Karīm Khān and accepted him as his pupil. At one point, it is recorded Karīm Khān 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 Kāẓim was, however, accepted.[34]

Karīm Khān's first visit to the sayyid took place in about 1828, when he was eighteen, and was extended to 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 Kāẓim. He received considerable praise from his teacher and made marked progress under his instruction. After some time, however, the sayyid instructed Karīm Khān 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 Qājār family might excite suspicions concerning his own political motives. At about this time, Karīm married his half cousin, one of the twenty-three daughters Muḥammad-Qulī Mīrzā Mulk Ārā. In Kerman, he continued correspond with Sayyid Kāẓim, whose regard for him is apparent from numerous letters. Among these is a brief letter in which the sayyid writes, speaking of Karīm Khān, "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 Kāẓim, Karīm Khān, then aged about thirty-four, began to claim for himself the position of leader of the Shaykhī community. Within a short time he was able to draw to himself the majority of the Iranian and a number of the Arab Shaykhīs who had not become Bābīs. In general, those Shaykhīs who became followers of the Bāb for a time, only to abandon him at a later stage in the development of his doctrines, tended to turn to Karīm Khān as an alternative. By the end of his life, Karīm Khān had so consolidated his position as head of the sect that the succession, after a brief dispute, passed to his second son Ḥājī Muḥammad Khān (1263/1846–1324/ 1906), and from him to his brother Ḥājī Zayn

[34] Ibid., p. 70.
[35] Quoted ibid., p. 79.

al-ʿĀbidīn Khān (1276/1859–1360/1942), from him to his son Shaykh Abu ʾl-Qāsim Khān Ibrāhimi, Sarkār Āqā (1314/1896–1389/1969), and from him to his son, the last Kerman-based head of the school, ʿAbd al-Riḍā Khān Ibrāhimī, Sarkār Āqā (assassinated 1979).

Our sources do not make clear the details of how Karīm Khān established his position as head of the Shaykhī 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 Bāb proved to be of particular help to him in consolidating his influence with that section of the Shaykhī 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 Shaykhīsm to Shiism as a whole, and to define his attitude toward what he regarded as heterodox Shaykhī views. While conserving the identity of the school, Karīm Khān and his successors strove to integrate it as far as possible into the orthodox community, largely by playing down those elements in the original Shaykhī teaching which clashed most forcibly with traditional or existing views, and by emphasizing those aspects which asserted their similarity with accepted Shīʿī beliefs.

This emphasis can be seen throughout the works of Karīm Khān, but we may use as an example section 17 of his *Risāla-yi sī faṣl*, 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 Shiʿis; whatever the Shīʿīs agree upon in respect of the principles of religion, we confess the same, and whatever they reject, we also reject. We regard the consensus (*ijmāʿ*) of the Shiʿis on the bases (*uṣūl*) and subsidiaries (*furūʿ*) of faith as evident and proven." The rest of the section is a summary of standard Shiʿi beliefs on God, the Prophet, and the Imams.[36]

[36] Kirmānī, *Risāla-yi sī 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.

This trend towards orthodoxy was given an added impetus by the emergence of the Bāb as an identifiable and vulnerable target for the concerted attacks of conventional Shiʿis and Shaykhīs alike. The fact that the Bāb and all his principal followers had been students of Sayyid Kāẓim, coupled with the veneration given by the Bābīs to Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kāẓim as precursors of their movement, or as "the two preceding Bābs," placed the remaining Shaykhīs in serious danger of being too closely linked with Bābīsm in the minds of the public and the ulama. At first, this simply meant the continuation of the ostracism of the Shaykhī school by many of the orthodox community. But before long, it began to carry the risk of physical persecution as the Bābīs 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 Shaykhī ulama, as we have seen, proved eager to take a leading role in the theological, judicial, and even physical attack on the Babis.

For Karīm Khān, the emergence of such a target proved the key to establishment of his own role as the defender of Shaykhī doctrine against the "heretical views" of the Bābī Shaykhīs, 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 Bāb, 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 Bābīsm as an innovation (*bidʿa*) essentially unconnected with Shaykhism, and, on the other, positive in its consolidation of the orthodox Shiʿi position which he strove to adopt for the school. It is worth noting that, in all four refutations, and particularly in the earliest, *Izhāq al-bāṭil*, considerably more space is devoted to argument in favor of orthodox doctrine than to condemnation of Bābī belief.

## Circumstances Preceding The Bāb's Claim

In order to understand the nature of Karīm Khān's refutation of the Bāb, 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 Bābī movement. We have seen that, for a period of some four months after the death of Sayyid Kāẓim, the Shaykhī community of Karbala found itself unable to initiate any positive action to determine the succession to its late head. Then, as al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī states, a break with Mīrzā Muḥīṭ Kirmānī occurred and people began to disperse. This

dispersal may well have been initiated, and was certainly led, by a young Shaykhī of about thirty-one, Mullā Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī, who had returned to Karbala shortly after the sayyid's death, after an absence of some three years. During that period, he had travelled to Isfahan and Mashhad at the request of Sayyid Kāẓim, in order to clarify the Shaykhī position to Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir Shaftī and Ḥājī Mīrzā ʿAskarī, then Imam Jumʿa of Mashhad.[37]

Mullā Ḥusayn appears to have been one of a number of Shaykhīs who believed that Sayyid Kāẓim had given indications that the advent of the hidden Imam and the era of the "innermost reality" (*bāṭin al-bāṭin*) was imminent. This is not to suggest that they expected the Imam himself to be made known on the death of Sayyid Kāẓim, 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 Shaykhī population of Karbala, is the treatise by al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī referred to above. This writer lays stress on the fact that Sayyid Kāẓim constantly alluded to "a cause" (*amr*) which would appear on his death, and leaves no doubt that a sizeable section of the Shaykhī community hoped for the beginning of the end, as it were.

Corroboration that a considerable measure of muted messianic expectation was current among the Shaykhīs of Karbala at this period may be found in a letter written by Qurrat al-ʿAyn in 1261/1845 (about the same time as al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī's treatise) in which she quotes Sayyid Kāẓim 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 ʿAlī al-Sāmiri, the last of the four gates who had followed the twelfth Imam, had said when asked "Who shall be the Bāb after you?",

[37] Nabīl, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 19–24, 416.

[38] Qurrat al-ʾAyn, letter to Mullā Javād Wilyānī, quoted in Māzandarāni, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 493.

people thought that the cause to which Sayyid Kāẓim alluded was similar to that of the four gates during the period of the lesser occultation of the hidden Imam. But Sayyid Kāẓim clearly stated "Our cause is not like that of the gates."[39] The appearance of the Bāb clearly represented for many a distinct break with the charismatic modes of Shaykhīsm, 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 Bābī and Bahāʾī sources have telescoped matters by stating that the predictions of Sayyid Kāẓim led directly to the recognition of the promised Imam in the person of Sayyid ʿAlī-Muḥammad Shirāzī, only months after the death of Sayyid Kāẓim. In fact, the Bāb did not claim to be the return of the hidden Imam until the period of his imprisonment in Mākū in 1847–48. Those Shaykhīs who met him Shiraz in May 1844 and shortly after, accepted him as the representative (*nāʾib*) of or gate (*bāb*) to the Imam, who would make things ready for the Imam's appearance once the world was ready.

Letters from a number of early Bābīs who had been Shaykhīs, including al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, make it clear that the acceptance of Sayyid ʿAlī-Muḥammad as the Bāb was facilitated by prior recognition (on the part of certain Shaykhīs at least) of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī and Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī as "the two previous gates," or as "the Shaykh and Bāb" (al-Shaykh al-Bāb) and "the Sayyid and Bāb" (al-Sayyid al-Bāb),[40] or as "the first Bāb" and "the second Bāb."[41] A later Bābī work, the so-called *Nuqṭat al-Kāf*, probably written in the early 1850s, similarly refers to Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kāẓim as "those two mighty Bābs."[42] The Bāb himself speaks of Sayyid Kāẓim as "the previous gate of God" on more than one occasion.[43] This is not, of course, evidence that Sayyid Kāẓim, for example, was spoken of as "Bāb" in his lifetime, but it does demonstrate that references to him as such were 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.

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[39] Ibid.

[40] From a *risāla* by an unidentified Bābī, ms. 6003.C, pp. 401–2, Bahāʾī Archives, Tihrān.

[41] From another *risāla*, also by an unidentified Bābī, ms. 6006.C, pp. 8–10, Bahāʾī Archives, Tihrân.

[42] Browne, *Nuqṭatuʾl-Kāf*, p. 100.

[43] The Bāb to Ḥaji Mīrzā Ḥasan Khurāsāni, ms. 6003.C, p. 321, Bahāʾī Archives, Tihrân.

We shall return shortly to the question of the Bāb's initial claims, but first it will be useful to fill in the details of how he came to make them. Mullā Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī and a number of other Shaykhīs, after consultation as to the wishes of Sayyid Kāẓim, retired to the Masjid al-Walī, a mosque in Kūfa, to engage in seclusion (*iʿtikāf*) for the standard forty-day period (*arbaʿīn*) common among Sufis and others. Nabīl-i Zarandī, writing long after these events, appears to limit the number participating in the retreat to those who were later to become the Bāb'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 Kāẓim and by virtue of that search alone discovered the Bāb, and those who were prepared to wait for developments. Actually, quite a large number appear to have been engaged in the seclusion. Mīrzā Ḥusayn Hamadānī, the author of the *Tārīkh-i jadīd*, relates that he was present at the retreat in the mosque at Kūfa (obviously a fiction of convenience on his part) and that he saw there, apart from several of those who later became disciples of the Bāb, a Mīrzā ʿAbd al-Hādī, a Mullā Bashīr, and "many other learned and devout men who had retired into seculsion."[44] Fāḍil Māzandārānī mentions Hājī Sayyid Khalīl Madāʾinī, a tribal leader who had studied under Sayyid Kāẓim, as also present.[45]

After the celebration of the birth of the Prophet on 12 Rabīʿ I/ 1 April, Mullā Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī left Kūfa with his brother and cousin, heading for Kerman with the intention of meeting and consulting there with Muḥammad Karīm Khān. That this was his aim at this point is confirmed by Shaykh Muḥammad Tāqī Hashtrūdī, an early Bābī from the Shaykhī school, in his *Abwāb al-hudā*, where he quotes Mullā Ḥusayn 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 Abū 'l-Ḥasan Sharaf Shīrāzī. This author quotes a Bābī who had accompanied Mullā Ḥusayn to Shiraz as follows: "He [Mullā Ḥusayn], 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 Hājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān, as it may be that the sayyid [Sayyid Kāẓim] meant that

[44] Browne, *Tārīkh-i Jadīd*, p. 33.
[45] Māzandarāni, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 262.
[46] Hashtrudi, quoted in Māzandarāni, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 117.

I should enter the service of the Imam through him.' In this belief we came to Shiraz."[47]

The route taken by Mullā Ḥusayn and his companions passed, however, through Būshihr and Shiraz, where it would seem that they sought out Sayyid ʿAlī-Muḥammad Shīrāzī. According to one account, Mullā Ḥusayn told Mīrzā ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Khurāsānī that "since the Seyyid ʿAlī Muḥammad had honoured me with his friendship during a journey which we made together to the Holy Shrines [of Karbalā and Najaf], I at once on reaching Shiraz sought out his abode."[48] Other sources confirm that Mullā Ḥusayn had at least seen the Bāb during the letter's stay in Karbala in 1841, probably shortly before the former's departure for Isfahan.[49]

## The Bāb at Karbala

The Bāb 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 Būshihr. Influenced, no doubt, by the fact that his uncles and relatives "were among the lovers and admirers of Shaykh Aḥmad and Siyyid Kāẓim,"[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 Kāẓim."[51] While this is certainly correct in the sense that the Bāb never completed a full course of studies on the basis of which he might have been given an *ijāza* by the sayyid or other mujtahids, it is misleading in terms of the Bāb's own attitude towards Sayyid Kāẓim. In the *Risāla-yi sulūk*, one of the Bāb's earliest works, written in the lifetime of the sayyid, he speaks of him as "my lord, support, and teacher" (*sayyidī wa muʿtamadī wa muʿallimī*),[52] while he refers to himself in an early prayer as having been "one of the

[47] Quoted in Khān Bahādur Āghā Mīrzā Muḥammad, "Some New Notes on Babiism," Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, July 1927, p. 448.
[48] Quoted in Browne, *Tārīkh-i jadīd*, p. 34.
[49] Nicolas, *Séyyèd Alī Mohammed*, p. 193; Fayḍī, *Ḥaḍrat-i Nuqṭa-yi ūlā*, pp. 101–102.
[50] Nabīl, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 30.
[51] Balyuzi, *The Báb*, p. 42.
[52] The Bāb, *Risāla-yi sulūk*, mss. 4011.C, p. 127; 6006.C, p. 74; 6010.C, p. 483, Bahāʾī Archives, Tihrân. See also, Māzandarānī, *Asrār al-āthār*, vol. 4, pp. 158–59.

companions of Kāẓim, may my spirit be his sacrifice."[53] Similar references can be found in numerous other early letters of the Bāb.[54]

Several sources indicate that, in the course of his stay in Karbala, and, particularly his visits to Sayyid Kāẓim, the Bāb became acquainted with, and attracted a certain amount of attention from, a number of Shaykhīs, many of whom later became his followers.[55] These individuals included Mullā Sādiq Khurāsānī, Shaykh Ḥasan Zunūzī, Mullā Aḥmad Muʿallim Ḥisārī, Sayyid Javād Karbalāʾī, Mīrzā Muḥammad Rawḍa-Khwān Yazdī (a future "Letter of the Living"), Mīrzā Muḥammad-ʿAlī Nahrī, Mīrzā Hādī Nahrī, and Mullā Jaʿfar Qazvīnī. Mullā Ḥusayn Dakhīlī, the son of Mullā Ḥusayn Dakhīl Marāghaʾī, states in an unfinished manuscript that his father met the Bāb with Sayyid Kāẓim, and that a group of mutual friends used to talk about him before the sayyid's death. This group included Mullā Aḥmad Ibdāl Marāghaʾī (another future "Letter of the Living"), Āqā Muḥammad Ḥasan, Āqā Muḥammad-Ḥusayn Ughlī Marāghaʾī (Khāla), and Mullā ʿAlī Ardibīlī.[56] That the Bāb had met and served Sayyid Kāẓim and was held in respect by him while in Karbala is admitted by Karīm Khān in his first attack on him, *Izhāq al-Bāṭil*, although he points out that he himself never met him.[57]

## The Bāb's Earliest Claim

Sayyid ʿAlī-Muḥammad's first claim to be the "Bāb" was made, according to his own statement in the Persian *Bayān*, to Mullā Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī on the evening of 22 May 1844.[58] Some three weeks before that, on 4 May, another group of Shaykhīs set off from Karbala for Shiraz, travelling by sea according to al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī.[59] The same source states that this group consisted of seven individuals, namely, Mullā ʿAlī Basṭāmī, Mullā ʿAbd al-Jalīl (Urūmī), Mīrzā Muḥammad-ʿAlī Qazvīnī, Mullā Ḥasan Bajistānī, Mullā Aḥmad (Ibdāl) Marāghaʾī, Mullā Maḥmud

[53] The Bāb, ms. 6005.C, pp. 5–6, Bahāʾī Archives, Tihrân.
[54] Māzandarānī, *Asrār al-āthār*, vol. 4, p. 369.
[55] Nabīl, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 25–50; Samandar, *Tārīkh*, pp. 16–17; Qazvīnī, "Tārīkh," pp. 463–64; Nicolas, *Séyyèd Ali Mohammed*, pp. 191–95; Māzandarāni, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, pp. 55, 97, 158, 458; Abu ʾl-Faḍl Gulpāygānī and Sayyid Mahdī Gulpāygāni, *Kashf al-ghiṭāʾ*, p. 57.
[56] Quoted in Māzandarāni, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 55.
[57] Kirmānī, *Izhaq al-Bāṭil*, pp. 104–105.
[58] The Bāb, *Persian Bayān*, 2:7, p. 30.
[59] Quoted in Māzandarāni, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 510.

Khūʾī, and Mullā Muḥammad Miyāmī.[60] Zarandī, 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 Bāb individually and accepted his claims, being numbered by him among the "Letters of the Living" (*ḥurūf al-ḥayy*), apparently identical with the group referred to elsewhere as "forerunners" (*sābiqūn*). It included Mullā Muḥammad-ʿAlī Qazvīnī and his brother Mīrzā Hādī, the first of whom was the brother-in-law of Fāṭima Khānum Baraghānī (Ṭāhira), named Qurrat al-ʿAyn by Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī. This woman had won a reputation as an outstanding radical Shaykhī scholar (*ālima*) and was to become a center for endless controversy following her acceptance of the Bāb. On recommendation of her brother-in-law, she was included by the Bāb in his list of "Letters of the Living," although she still lived in Qazvīn. The last member of the group was a young student from Māzandarān who had, it seems, also been engaged in seclusion at the mosque at Kūfa, but had travelled independently to Shīrāz. Mullā Muḥammad-ʿAlī Bārfurūshī, later known as Quddūs, became a close favourite of the Bāb and eventually led the Bābī rising in his native province in 1848. By the time of his arrival in Shiraz, Muḥammad Ḥasan and Muḥammad Bāqir, brother and cousin of Mullā Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī, had also joined the ranks of the Bāb's earliest disciples.

Before proceeding to describe how this group spread the claims of the Bāb to their fellow Shaykhīs, it will be useful to devote a few paragraphs to a discussion of what those claims were. Bahāʾī sources have tended to attribute the Bāb's later, more developed claims retrospectively to the inital period of his ministry, resulting in a serious distortion of the pattern in which the Bāb's thought developed. The nature of the Bāb'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 Kāẓim, 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" any cause other than that to which he referred.[62] In the same prayer, he goes on to say that the days

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[60] Ibid.

[61] Nabīl, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 66, 80–81.

[62] The Bāb, *Prayer in reply to a questioner*, ms. 6003.C, p. 188, Bahāʾī Archives, Tihrân.

of "his Proof" (*ḥujjat*) 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 *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*. As we shall see shortly, intense messianic expectation came to characterize much Bābī propaganda in the first year or after the Bāb's initial declaration.

On the opening page of the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, the Bāb writes: "God has decreed that this book be sent down in interpretation of the Sūra of Joseph, from Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib [i.e., from the twelfth Imam, the promised Qāʾim] to his servant that it may be the Proof of God revealed from the Remembrance [*al-Dhikr*, a title widely used by the Bāb at this time] unto all mankind."[63] Similarly, in the opening passage of the *Ṣaḥīfa makhzūna*, 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 Baqīyyat Allāh, Lord of the Age [titles of the twelfth Imam], hath in his turn delivered it to his Gate (Bāb), the Remembrance, that it may be the clear proof of God from the Remembrance unto all the worlds."[64] In his slightly later *Ṣaḥīfa-yi ʿadliyya*, written during his stay in Shiraz following his pilgrimage, the Bāb 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 Bāb actually claimed to be the Hidden Imam, he did not seek to conceal the nature of his earlier claims. This is evidenced by the *Dalāʾil-i sabʿa*, 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 Bāb of the Qāʾim of the family of Muḥammad, and in his first book commanded observance of the laws of the Qurʾān so that men might not be disturbed by a new Book and a new Cause.[66]

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[63] The Bāb, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, F.11, p. 1.
[64] The Bāb, *Ṣaḥīfa makhzūna*, ms. 5006.C, p. 284; 6009.C, p. 1, Bahāʾī Archives, Tihrân.
[65] The Bāb, *Ṣahifay-i Adliyya*, p. 13; cf. p. 7.
[66] The Bāb, *Dalāil-i Sabʾa*, p. 29.

Mīrzā Muḥammad-ʿAlī Zunūzī (who was executed with the Bāb in 1850), writes in a dialogue between himself and a Shaykhī scholar that "people in the beginning believed the Bāb was sent by the Hidden Imam," and goes on to state that, at the start of his career, the Bāb maintained that his words were below those of the Imam, although greater in rank than those of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī or Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, making himself out to be an interpreter of the Qurʾān, while his followers faithfully observed the Islamic law.[67] This is largely borne out by statements of the Bāb himself in his *Ṣaḥīfa-yi ʿadliyya*, 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 [Qurʾān] or the words of the people of the House of Purity [the Imams]," and again, "the words that flowed forth from my tongue and pen, and those which 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 Bāb did not seek to abrogate the Qurʾān or the Islamic legal system (*sharīʿa*). In the *Ṣaḥīfa-yi ʿadliyya*, he makes this point explicit when he writes: "Since there can be no change decreed for (the Faith of God), this blessed shariʾa 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-ʿAyn, noted for her eagerness to abolish the Islamic code, he writes: Be thou assured that all the externals of the *sharīʿa* 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 Qurʾān."[71]

His first group of seventeen disciples remained for a short time with the Bāb, being instructed by him and making copies of his earliest writings, including the commentary on the *Sūrat al-baqara*, the *Qayyūm*

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[67] Quoted in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, pp. 31–33.
[68] See the Bāb, *Ṣaḥīfa-yi ʿadliyya*, pp. 7, 11.
[69] See the Bāb, *Ṣaḥīfa-yi ʿadliyya*, pp. 5–6.
[70] Quoted in Māzandarāni, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3. p. 334.
[71] The Bāb, ms. 7009.C, p. 133, Bahāʾī Archives, Tihrān.

*al-asmāʾ*, the *Ṣaḥīfa-yi makhzūna*, and the *ziyārat-nama* for the Imam ʿAlī. They then dispersed from Shiraz, travelling to different parts of Iran, and beyond, in order to acquaint people in those regions with the claims of the Bāb. Through these "forerunners" and the men they met and converted, the claims of the new teacher were rapidly made known, principally to the Shaykhī communities in the areas they visited. Mullā Yūsuf Ardibīlī succeeded in converting most or all of the large Shaykhī population of Mīlān in Azerbaijan.[72] Mullā Aḥmad Ibdāl Marāghaʾī acquainted Mullā Ḥusayn Dakhīl Marāghaʾī with the claims of the Bāb. The latter in turn travelled to Shiraz, only to find that the Bāb had gone to Arabia on pilgrimage. Returning to Marāgha, he made a point of telling the Shaykhīs in every town and village he passed through of the appearance of the Bāb, and succeeded in converting most of the Shaykhīs in Marāgha itself.[73] Mullā Jalīl Urūmī was instructed to go to Qazvīn, where he married and stayed for some three years teaching Bābīsm. His converts were mainly Shaykhīs from the town.[74]

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

## The Impact of the Bāb's Claim in Karbala

The most shattering impact made by the dissemination of Bābī propaganda on the Shaykhī world occurred at the heart of that world, in Karbala. Al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī states that Mullā ʿAlī Bastāmi and his companions returned to Karbala on 11 August, and proceeded to teach what they were permitted of the Bāb's claims.[75] Other sources, however, suggest that Mullā ʿAlī, possibly accompanied by one or two others of

[72] Māzandarāni, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 41.
[73] Ibid., pp. 56, 58.
[74] Samandar, *Tārikh*, p. 351.
[75] Māzandarāni, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 511.

the "Letters of the Living," reached there about October.[76] Mullā ʿAlī first went to Najaf, where he presented a letter from the Bāb to Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥasan Raʾīs al-ʿUlamāʾ, the leading Shiʿi divine of that period.[77]

It is not difficult to understand the Bāb's reasons for writing to Raʾīs al-ʿUlamāʾ. He was the sole *marjaʿ al-taqlīd* for the Persian Shiʿis 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 Aqā Muḥammad-Bāqir Bihbahānī, Sayyid Muḥammad-Mahdī Ṭabāṭabāʾī Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, Shaykh Jaʿfar al-Najafī, Shaykh Muḥammad-Bāqir Shaftī, Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī, and others, and his own outstanding pupil, Shaykh Murtaḍā Anṣārī who was to become the first mujtahid to be recognized as *marjaʿ* for the entire Twelver Shiʿi world. In Shaykh Muḥammad-Ḥasan's violent rejection of the claims of the Bāb 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 Shiʿism) against a claim to even more far-reaching and direct authority—a claim which threatened to supplant the entire ecclesiastical structure of Shiʿi Islam.[78]

Significantly, Nabīl indicates that there were Shaykhīs among the followers of Shaykh Muḥammad-Ḥasan, and that they joined with the non-Shaykhī ulama in condemning Mullā ʿAlī as a heretic and expelling him from Najaf.[79] If this is so, it shows clearly how, from the beginning, the Bāb's claims served as a means of unifying the interests of Shaykhīs and Bālāsaris by providing a target which both could condemn as heretical.

Despite this initial rebuff, Mullā ʿAlī's teaching among the Shaykhīs in Karbala and, later, from prison in Baghdad, was highly successful and resulted in large numbers of converts. These included Shaykh Muḥammad Shibl al-Baghdādī, who had been Sayyid Kāẓim's represen-

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[76] See Rawlinson to Canning, 8 January 1845, F.O. 248/114; quoted in Balyuzi, *The Báb*, p. 61.

[77] Samandar, *Tārīkh*, p. 347. Māzandarāni quotes part of a second letter from the Bāb to Shaykh Muḥammad-Ḥasan, written after the latter's rejection of Mullā ʿAlī and his message (*Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 107).

[78] On Shaykh Muḥammad-Ḥasan, see Khwānsarī, *Rawḍat al-jannat*, p. 181; Iʾtimād al-Salṭāna, *al-Maʾāthir*, pp. 135–36.

[79] Nabīl, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 90–91.

tative in Baghdad; Shaykh Bashīr al-Najafī, a mujtahid of seventy-five; Shaykh Sulṭān al-Karbalāʾī; and Shaykh Ṣāliḥ Karīmī.[80] He also appears to have met and conversed with Qurrat al-ʿAyn, who had recently arrived in Karbala from Qazvīn.

After Mullā ʿAlī's trial in January 1845, and his removal from Baghdad to Istanbul some months later, the core of Shaykhī Bābīs he left behind continued to win others over to the side of the Bāb, effecting a permanent breach in the Shaykhī community of Iraq. During his stay there, Mullā ʿAlī had, in fact, created something of a chiliastic fervor among the Shaykhīs of the region.

There had already existed a sense of messianic expectation in Karbala and Baghdad, notably among the Shaykhī community there. According to al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, those who had accepted the Bāb'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 Ḥājī Mullā Jaʿfar Kirmānshāhī 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-Karbalāʾī, some Jews in Karbala referred to the appearance of the Bāb's cause as being "what we awaited in the month of Rabīʿ I of the year '61,"[83] while many sufis, particularly those of the Shāh Niʿmat Allāhī order, were expecting the Imam to appear—al-Karbalāʾī had heard twenty-five years previously certain prohecies 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, Bālāsarīs, Ismāʿīlīs, other Shiʿis (presumably those not opposed to Shaykhism), and even Sunnīs.[85] How widespread this sense of expectancy really was outside the circles of the Shaykhī school (and even

[80] Baghdadi, *Risāla Amriyya*, p. 106.
[81] Māzandarāni, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 512.
[82] Ibid., p. 514.
[83] Ibid., p. 515.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.

within those circles) is extremely difficult to say, but there is evidence that it was not restricted to that school.

The purpose of the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, one of the works of the Bāb brought by Mullā ʿAlī 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 Qurʾān] were declared to have been revealed, as his inspired and true precursor."[86] Mullā ʿAlī'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 Bāb, 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 Qāʾim when he appeared.[88] Large numbers of Bābīs headed for Karbala to await the Bāb's arrival, many of them, it would appear, preparing to fight a *jihād* in the company of the Imam.[89] As we shall see, the Bāb's action in thus assembling his followers in anticipation of an uprising (*khurūj*, literally, "coming out") was to be included by Karīm Khān Kirmānī as a major piece of evidence against the Bāb. In reality, however, nothing came of the Bāb'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 Bāb arrived in Būshihr on 15 May.[90] Shortly after his arrival there, he sent a letter to Karbala, probably via Ḥājī Sayyid Javād Iṣfahānī, telling his disciples there that it had proved necessary to alter his plans

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[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] Māzandarāni, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 235.

[89] Ibid., p. 121.

[90] See the Bāb's *Khuṭba fī Jidda*, mss. 5006.C, pp. 332–333; and 3036.C, pp. 404–6; *Kitāb aʿmāl al-sana* in ms. 5006.C, p. 270.

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 Bābīs in Karbala, causing large numbers to abandon the Bāb. According to al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, "only a tiny band" remained after this incident and the arrest, a couple of months later, of Mullā Sādiq Khurāsānī and others in Shiraz.[92] This small group regarded the change in intentions as the interposition of *badāʾ* (alteration of the divine will) and was, if anything, reinforced in its allegiance. The Bāb 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 Qāʾim-hood and resurrection (*qāʾimiyya* and *qiyāma*) was postponed until the fifth year of the Bāb's career.

With the arrival of the Bāb 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 Bāb's now precarious position was again strengthened and his authority extended over what was by now developing into a more consciously radical group of Shaykhīs under the leadership of Qurrat al-ʿAyn in Karbala.

Mīrzā Hādī Nahrī and his brother Mīrzā Muḥammad-ʿAlī Nahrī, who had frequently met the Bāb in Karbala, had already gone to Shiraz while the Bāb was in Arabia, the former returning to Karbala, where he doubtless brought further information about Sayyid ʿAlī-Muḥammad to his companions there.[94] Other Shaykhīs travelled between the two towns, among them Shaykh Ṣālih Karīmī, a convert of Mullā ʿAlī Bastāmī; Shaykh Sultān Karbalāʾī; Shaykh Ḥasan Zunūzī; Sayyid Javād Karbalāʾī; and Aqā Sayyid ʿAbd al-Hādī Qazvīnī, later the husband of

[91] Nabīl, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 158. Ḥājī Sayyid Javād met the Bāb at Masqat and returned with him to Būshihr; he was then permitted to go to the *ʿatabāt* by way of Basra, and must certainly be the person who carried word of the Bāb's arrival and the change in his plans (Māzandarāni, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 100).

[92] Māzandarāni, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 503.

[93] See al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalāʾī, in Māzandarāni, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 512; the Bāb's *Kitab al-fihrist*, mss. 6003.C, p. 286, and 4011.C, p. 63.

[94] ʿAbd al-Bahā, *Tadhkīrāt al-Wafāʾ*, pp. 269–70.

a niece of Qurrat al-ʿAyn.[95] Through these and other individuals, various books and letters of the Bāb reached Karbala and were circulated in the region. Works such as the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, *Ṣaḥīfa-yi makhzūna*, *Ṣaḥīfa-yi aʿmāl al-sana*, the commentary on the *Ḥādīth al-Jāriyya*, and other minor writings became well known and served as the basis for propaganda and polemic, both with respect to the unconvinced among the Shaykhī population at large, and within the ranks of the Bābī community itself.[96]

## Mullā Javād Vilyānī

Of considerable importance for the future relationship between the Shaykhī and Bābī movements was the arrival in Shiraz of Mullā Javād Vilyānī, a former Shaykhī of Qazvīn who had lived for a short time in Karbala. Mullā Javād was a paternal cousin of Qurrat al-ʿAyn, who was by now the leading figure among the Bābīs of Karbala, and had been responsible for introducing her to Shaykhī doctrine at an early age. One of the first in Qazvīn to acknowledge the Bāb as the new Shaykhī leader, he had been one of those awaiting the Bāb's arrival in Karbala. Disappointed by the Bāb's failure to appear, he travelled to Shiraz with a group of fellow Shaykhīs, including Mullā ʿAbd al-ʿAlī Harātī and Mīrzā Ibrāhīm Shirāzī. Within a short time after their arrival in Shiraz, Mullā Javād and his two companions came into conflict with the Bāb and his other followers there, including Mullā Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī. 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 Bāb's enemies in the city. (Mullā Javād seems to have distributed some of the Bāb's writings for the use of his opponents as evidence of heresy.)

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[95] Nabīl, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 271; Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, pp. 38, 244, 383; Samandar, *Tārīkh*, pp. 135–36, 173.

[96] See, for example, the extensive quotation from works of the Bāb in Shaykh Sulṭān Karbalāʾī's letter to Bābīs in Iran, quoted in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr 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" (*naqḍ-i mithāq*) in Bābī-Bahāʾī history. Covenant-breakers (*nāqiḍīn*) 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 Shiʿism with regard to the covenant made by mankind with the prophets and the Imams.

This schism appears to have led to the outbreak of disturbances of some kind between Bābīs and non-Bābīs, resulting in the expulsion from Shiraz of Mullā Javād and his companions by the civil authorities. Why these men rather than the Bāb's other newly arrived disciples, should have been expelled is a matter for speculation.

Having by now rejected the Bāb as a legitimate successor to Sayyid Kāẓim, Mullā Javād and his fellow dissidents made for Kerman, where they joined forces with Karīm Khān. In Kerman, Mullā Javād appears to have adopted the role of spokesman for Karīm Khān, and to have written letters in support of his claims to various individuals, as is indicated by al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalā'ī, who refers to Mullā Javād as "the herald" (*munād*) of Karīm Khān.[98] The defection of three followers of the Bāb, and the transfer of their allegiance to himself, was without doubt a valuable factor in enhancing Karīm Khān's reputation at this critical juncture. Undoubtedly, these men were able to supply Karīm Khān with much of the fresh information which he incorporated into his second and third attacks on the Bāb—*Tīr-i shihāb* (1846) and *al-Shihāb al-thāqib* (January 1849). Two untitled treatises in refutation of the Bāb were, in fact, written by Karīm Khān in direct reply to questions from Mullā Javād.[99] The latter returned after some time to Qazvīn, where he is reported to have himself written a refutation of the Bāb, the text of which does not appear to be extant.[100]

The Bāb, for his part, regarded this act of apostasy on the part of Mullā Javād, Mullā ʿAbd al-ʿAlī, and Mīrzā Ibrāhīm, 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 Bāb states that "the worst thing which has befallen me is the action of Khuwār al-Wilyānī [i.e., Mullā Javād] 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] Ḥusayn made sacrifices in my path.'"[101] In another letter, quoted by Zarandī, the Bāb refers to Mullā Javād and Mullā ʿAbd al-ʿAlī as "the Jibt and Ṭāghūt, the twin idols of this perverse people,"[102]

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[98] Quoted in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, pp. 520, 527.
[99] Kirmānī, *Al-Shihāb al-thāqib*, p. 2.
[100] Māzandarāni, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3 p. 388.
[101] Quoted in ibid., p. 280.
[102] Nabīl, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 162; on the terms "Jibt" and "Taghut," see Quran 4:51. (The reference to Mullā Javād as Baraghāni in Nabīl, pp. 159 and 161, is incorrect.)

while he elsewhere speaks of them and Mīrzā Ibrāhīm as "the Golden Calf, and its body, and its lowing."[103] Mullā Javād, in particular, is often referred to in Bābī and Bahāʾī literature as *khuwār*, the "lowing" of the Golden Calf.[104] The opening passage of the Bāb's commentary of the *Sūrat al-kawthar*, written in Shiraz shortly after these events for Sayyid Yaḥyā Darābī, makes lengthy and pained reference to the infidelity of these three men.[105]

Mullā Javād's rejection of the Bāb, and his expulsion from the ranks of his followers, had repercussions in Karbala. He himself wrote a letter to Qurrat al-ʿAyn, and received an impassioned and sometimes stern reply from her, addressed to him, Mullā ʿAbd al-ʿAlī, 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 Mullā Javād's original letter, outlining the nature of his objections before proceeding to refute them. Among the points raised by Mullā Javād were: the Bāb's failure to appear in Karbala, the difficulty for most people in reading the Arabic writings of the Bāb, his acceptance of parts of the Bāb'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 "Qurʾān" more eloquent and complete than the Bāb's *tafsīr* (the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*), the confusion of the language of the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, and the station accorded Mullā Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī by the Bāb.[107]

Taken together, the arguments raised by Mullā Javād—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 Bāb. Already shaken in his convictions by the Bāb's failure to appear in Karbala as he had promised, Mullā Javād had clearly headed for Shiraz with the express intention of engaging in *mubāhala* or trial by faith with him. A major factor in his eventual disenchantment with and rejection of the Bāb was certainly the latter's reaction to his attempt to thus put his claims to the proof.

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[103] Prayer quoted in Māzandarāni, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 275.

[104] Māzandarāni, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 388; al-Qatil ibn al-Karbalāʾī, in Māzandarāni, p. 520; Qazvinī, "Tārīkh," quoted in Samandar, p. 473. See generally, prayers of the Bāb quoted in Māzandarānī, pp. 269–70.

[105] The Bāb, *Tafsir Sūrat al-kawthar*, f.3a and f.3b.

[106] In Māzandarāni, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 484 ff.; cf. Browne, *Tārīkh-i jadid*, p. 283.

[107] Quoted in Māzandarāni, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 485; also, pp. 489, 491–93, 495, 499; cf. pp. 121, 388.

Trial by faith of this kind was common during this period, and the Bāb himself instructed several of his followers to engage in such contests with their adversaries. In this case, however, the Bāb regarded such a challenge as unacceptable and improper. In a prayer written after Mullā Javād's departure from Shiraz, he writes: "Know that Javād Qazvīnī 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 *mubāhala*, thus making a liar of himself—for it is as if he had not read in the Book of God that *mubāhala* 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 Bāb. In declaring himself to be the sole source of divine guidance then on earth (whatever the precise nature of his claim), the Bāb demanded a degree of obedience which Mullā Javād and other Shaykhīs seem to have been unable to give. The history of Bābīsm up to 1848 is marked by a high measure of tension between the cautious intellecualizing of the large numbers of Shaykhī Bābīs who became more and more disillusioned and abandoned the Bāb 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 Bāb 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 Shaykhī community which sought for a formal continuation of the leadership provided by Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kāẓim 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 Bāb 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 Bāb's writings, persisted in judging such claims in terms of existing theory. When the Bāb seemed to discard much of the theory on which their judgments were based, the ideological edifice of faith appeared to collapse for such individuals.

Mullā Javād seems to have been one of the first to detect an incongruity between the Bāb's claims and the modes in which he actually

[108] Letter quoted ibid., p. 274.

proposed to establish them. Thus, he considered that the Bāb'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 Karīm Khān, who sought to rationalize Shaykhī 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 Bāb. Not unsurprisingly, Karīm Khān, challenged by two emissaries of the Bāb, had already recognized the heterodox nature of the Bāb's claims and teachings and had himself, not long before Mullā Javād's arrival in Kerman, initiated a campaign of written and oral attacks on the Bāb which was to continue over several years.

## Karīm Khān's Response to the Bāb's Claim

During this period, Karīm Khān was beginning to make his independent bid for leadership of the Shaykhī school. Mullā Javād arrived in Kerman shortly after the visits of two emissaries from the Bāb who had gone to that city in the hope of winning the allegiance of Karīm Khān.

As far as can be determined (though the question is too detailed to discuss here) Mullā Sādiq Khurāsānī, an elderly Shaykhī who had studied under Sayyid Kāẓim, was the first Bābī to communicate the claims of the Bāb to Karīm Khān.

Converted by Mullā Ḥusayn Bushrū'ī in the course of the letter's visit to Isfahan in mid-1844, Mullā Ṣādiq headed for Kerman carrying with him, in the words of Karīm Khān, "a number of suras in the style of the Qur'ān, a number of books in the style of the *Ṣaḥīfa Sajjādiyya* [a popular collection of prayers attributed to the fourth Imam, ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn 'al-Sajjād'], and a number of sermons (*khuṭbas*) in the style of the *Nahj al-Balagha*" [a compilation of traditions ascribed to the Imam ʿAlī].[109] The suras in question were a number of chapters from the Bāb's

[109] Nabīl, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 100–101; Browne, *Tārīkh-i Jadīd*, pp. 100–201. (There is, unfortunately, contradictory evidence which suggests that Mullā Ṣādiq travelled 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

*Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, as is clear from those parts of them quoted by Karīm Khān in several of his works. Mullā Sādiq was, according to Karīm Khān, brought to a meeting presided over by the latter, defeated in argument, and sent on his way.

He was followed after some time by Mullā Muḥammad-ʿAlī Bārfurūshī Quddūs, the Bāb's companion on his pilgrimage, and, therefore, probably the best acquainted of all the Bāb's followers with his teachings at this stage. Mullā Muḥammad-ʿAlī brought with him a letter in the Bāb's own hand for Karīm Khān, and succeeded in delivering it to him before being expelled like his predecessor.[110] The letter in question is quoted in full by Karīm Khān in his *al-Shihāb al-thāqib*.[111] Mullā Sādiq and Mullā Muḥammad-ʿAlī were, according to Karīm Khān, the only Bābīs he ever met.[112] In his final attack on the Bāb, written in 1283/1867, however, he refers to and quotes from the Bāb's Persian Bayān and gives detailed references to what would seem to be the Arabic Bayān.[113] This is evidence that, even if he did not have further direct contact with Bābīs, he was able to obtain their literature.

In 1845, Karīm Khān was aged thirty-five and was at the height of his power. In his *Hidāyat al-ṭālibīn*, written in Dhū 'l-Ḥijja 1261/December 1845, he suggests that he was already acting as head of the Shaykhī school when he follows an account of the sufferings of Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kāẓim with a description of his own sufferings at the hands of various opponents. Between 1247/1832 (the date of his first extant treatise) 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 *Irshād al-ʿawāmm* (written in four parts between 1263/1847 and 1267/1851), *Hidāyat al-ṭālibīn*, (written in Yazd in 1261/1845), *Jawāmiʿ al-ʿallāj* (written in 1269/1853), and *Rujūm al-shayātīn* (written in 1268/1852.

It is hardly surprising then that his response to the message of the Bāb took the form of a series of refutations in Arabic and Persian which were spread widely, to Shaykhīs in particular. Fāḍil Māzandarānī maintains

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adopted to prevent confusion in a general paper.) Kirmānī, *Risāla dar radd-i Bāb*, pp. 27–28; see also p. 58.

110 Kirmānī, *Risāla dar radd-i Bāb*, p. 27.

111 Kirmānī, *Al-Shihāb al-thāqib*, pp. 25–27.

112 Kirmānī, *Risāla dar radd-i Bāb*, p. 58.

113 Ibid., pp. 44, 47–55.

that Karīm Khān attacked the Bāb in no less than twelve of his works, although he fails to give all but a few of their titles.[114] Karīm Khān himself writes in his *Risāla-yi sī faṣl*, written in 1269/1853: "I have written five or six books in refutation of him [the Bāb], and have sent them to different parts of Azerbaijan, Persian Iraq, Arab Iraq, Ḥijāz, 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: *Izhāq al-bāṭil*, completed on 12 Rajab 1261/17 July 1845; *Tīr-i shihāb*, completed on 12 Rabiʿ I 1262/10 March 1846; and *al-Shihāb al-thāqib*, completed on 21 Ṣafar 1265/16 January 1849. A fourth complete work in refutation of the Bāb, the *Risāla dar radd-i Bāb-i murtāb*, was written by Karīm Khān at the request of Naṣir al-Dīn Shāh in 1283/1867.

## Karīm Khān's Statements about the Bāb

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 Karīm Khān in *Izhāq al-bāṭil* and *Tīr-i shihāb*, 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 Shiʿi doctrine, such as the miraculous character of the Qurʾān, miracles, and the tokens and stations of the *nuqabāʾ* and *nujabāʾ*. Here we shall deal only with those sections which deal specifically with the Bāb and his doctrines.

Karīm Khān gives brief and somewhat vague accounts of the Beb 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 Shaykhī community on the death of Sayyid Kazim and the dispersal of his followers in search of the bearer (*ḥāmil*) of the Fourth Support (*rukn-i rābiʿ*), a point to which we shall return. This indecision, he says, and the search In which it resulted were seen by the Bāb as an opportunity to make a claim for himself; during the lifetime of Sayyid Kāẓim, he

[114] Māzandarāni, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 400.
[115] Karīm Khān, *Risāla-yi si faṣl*, pp. 34–35.

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 Karīm Khān, the Bāb had heard of the appearance of a certain Mullā Ṣādiq in Azerbaijan who had acquired a following of some twelve hundred during Sayyid Kāẓim's lifetime. Qāsim Zunūzī is quoted in a Bahāʾī history of ʿIshqābād as stating that a certain Mullā Ṣādiq from Urdūbād near the Araxes had proclaimed to the people there the imminent advent of the Qāʾim, 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 ʿAbd al-Karīm Urdūbādī who was himself eventually exiled to Smolensk.[117]

It is also alleged by Karīm Khān that the Bāb became aware of what he had written on the necessity of the Fourth Support and the impossibility of any age being without it.[118] Karīm Khān maintains that on the death of Sayyid Kāẓim, the Bāb 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 Bāb 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 Qurʾān, which he claimed to have been revealed to him, a *ṣaḥīfa* challenging those of the Imams, and sermons in emulation of those of ʿAlī.[120] These claims were initially made to a group of Shaykhīs who arrived in Shiraz with the hope of raising their own position, but Karīm Khān maintains that these individuals were "new in the Cause" and little informed of its realities.[121]

According to Karīm Khān, the Bāb's followers began to spread out, making known his promise to come to Karbala at Muḥarram (1261)

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[116] Kirmānī, Iẓhāq al-bāṭil, pp. 14, 106, 107.
[117] Quoted in Ishrāq Khāvari, *Raḥīq-i makhtūm*, vol. 2, pp. 309–310; cf. Kazem Kazemzadeh, "Two Incidents in the Life of the Bāb," p. 23.
[118] Kirmāni, *Izhāq al-bātil*, p. 106; cf. p. 175.
[119] Ibid., pp. 106, 111; Kirmāni, *Tīr-i shihāb*, p. 242.
[120] Kirmānī, *Izhāq al-bātil*, pp. 14–15.
[121] Ibid., pp. 14, 107.

with the intention of coming out of the shrine of Ḥusayn on the day of ʿAshūrā (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 Bāb's following there grew considerably. Karīm Khān maintains, however, that the Bāb 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-Rūz (21 March). In the event, the road from Mecca to Karbala was closed by Arab tribes, and the Bāb was forced to return by way of Būshihr. When Muḥarram and then Naw-Rūz passed and the Bāb 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 Būshihr, the Bāb 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 Bāb which appears to have reached Karīm Khān by the time of writing *Tīr-i shihāb*, 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 Bāb calling on him to bring a military force to Shiraz with which to wage war with him, and instructing him to tell his *muʾadhdhin* to include the Bāb's name in the *adhān* formula.[124] The text of this letter is not quoted by Karīm Khān in *Tīr-i shihāb*, but does appear, apparently in full, in his later work, *al-Shihāb al-thāqib*.[125]

Nevertheless, a good deal of space is taken up in both works under discussion here with quotations from writings of the Bāb available to Karīm Khān, in particular the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*. Karīm Khān maintains that the Bāb's production of a book in form of the Qurʾān, with verses (*āyāt*), suras, and indications for *Sajda*, is in itself evidence against him.

Karīm Khān's arguments concerning the Bāb's writings are developed principally in two ways: detailed discussion of the miraculous nature (*iʿjāz*) of the Qurʾān[126] and commentary on the language and content of the Bāb's works.[127] The Bāb's Arabic comes in for heavy criticism,

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[122] Ibid., pp. 15, 111; Kirmānī, *Tīr-i shihāb*, p. 197.
[123] Kirmānī, *Izhāq al-batil*, pp. 15, 110–11; idem, *Tīr-i shihāb*, pp. 197–98, cf. p. 182.
[124] Kirmānī, *Tīr-i shihāb*, p. 194.
[125] Kirmānī, *al-Shihāb al-thāqib*, pp. 25–27.
[126] See especially Kirmānī, *Izhāq al-bāṭil*, pp. 18–75.
[127] Ibid., pp. 80–103; idem, *Tīr-i shihāb*, pp. 201–210.

being described as grossly incorrect, incoherent, and inelegant.[128] One argument used in this context is that it is meaningless to argue that our inabīlity to make sense of the Bāb'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? Karīm Khān refutes the Bāb's claim of his ability to write Arabic in spite of being unlearned, on the grounds that his stay in Karbala and his association with Arabs in the *garmsīr* 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 Bāb cited by him, Karīm Khān identifies ten items in the Bāb's teaching which are opposed to Islam and some of which are heretical innovation (*biḍʿa*):

1. The claim to a new revelation (*waḥy*) after that of Muḥammad,
2. The claim to bring a new book after the Qurʾān,
3. Legitimization of *jihād* 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 *adhān*,
7. The claim to "special vicegerency" of the Imam (*niyāba khāṣṣa*).
8. The decree that all must obey him, and that whoever refuses to do so is an infidel (*kāfir*),
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]

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[128] Kirmānī, *Izhāq al-bātil*, pp. 83–84, 88–90, 102–103; idem., *Tīr-i shihāb*, pp. 188–90.

[129] Kirmānī, *Tīr-i shihāb*, pp. 190, 199.

[130] See ibid., p. 210, cf. p. 241; cf. Kirmānī, *Izhāq al-bātil*, pp. 82, 95, 107.

On the basis of the above points, Karīm Khān declares the Bāb 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 Bāb's call to wage war in the time of concealment of the Imam. Numerous traditions are cited to demonstrate that the waging of *jihād* is illegitimate except under the Imam himself.[132]

Karīm Khān also succeeds in extracting evidence from the passages he quotes, to demonstrate that the Bāb had advanced a variety of claims in respect of his own person. These passages show that the Bāb had made a claim to the role of Gate to the Imam (*bābiyya*), the station of Imam (*imāma*), a prophetic mission (*risāla*), and even divinity (*ulūhiyya*).[133]

A curious tension exists between the actual claims of the Bāb made in his writings of this period, and clearly demonstrated by passages such as those quoted earlier in this paper, and those claims Karīm Khān attributes to him on the basis of an inductive process using a limited number of the Bāb's works. References to *waḥy* (revelation), *jihād* (holy war), *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām* (matters that are permitted and forbidden), and the like, enabled Karīm Khān to perceive a trend toward increasingly elevated claims on the part of the Bāb well before the majority of such claims were made explicit. It is, perhaps, worth noting that it was not until 1848, when the Bāb announced his claim to be the Qā'im and abrogated the *sharī'a*, that large numbers of Shaykhī Bābīs, including most of those in Marāgha, and many at the conference of Bidasht, abandoned him as a heretic on basically the same grounds that had served Karīm Khān 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 Bāb's claims on the majority of Shaykhīs, however, one important point must be considered. In *Izhāq al-bāṭil*, Karīm Khān maintains that the "basic question" involved is the existence of the true bearer (*ḥāmil*) of the "Fourth Support" (*rukn-i rābi'*). When Sayyid Kāẓim died, there had to be a bearer after him, and people went in search of his successor in this capacity. At this point, the

[131] Ibid., pp. 92, 94–95; idem, *Tīr-i shihāb*, p. 212.
[132] Kirmānī, *Izhāq al-bātil*, pp. 127–44, 164–73; idem, *Tīr-i shihāb*, pp. 195, 210.
[133] Kirmānī, *Izhāq al-bātil*, pp. 82, 86, 97; idem, *Tīr-i shihāb*, pp. 192, 209.
[134] Māzandarāni, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, pp. 58, 165.

Bāb made his claims, and many came to regard him as this bearer of the Fourth Support.[135] As mentioned above, Karīm Khān maintained that, during the lifetime of Sayyid Kazirn, the Bāb had read what Karīm Khān had written on the need for a Fourth Support and the impossibility of any age being deprived of it. Inadvertently, Karīm Khān 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 Karīm Khān in three works: *Hidāyat al-ṭālibīn* (Dhū 'l-Ḥijja 1261/December 1845),[136] *Risāla-yi sī faṣl* (1269/1853),[137] and *Rukn-i rābiʿ* (1282/1865–66). Briefly, it is this: traditional Shiʿi theology speaks of five roots (*uṣūl*) of religion: the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*), prophethood (*nubuwwa*), resurrection (*maʿād*), the justice of God (*ʿadl*), and imamate (*imāma*). According to Karīm Khān, Shaykhis believe 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" (*maʿrifat-i khudā*) 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 roots of religion are clearly affirmed in these three roots." [140]

A fourth base or support (*rukn*) is added on the grounds that the roots 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* (imitation) of a scholar of the rank of mujtahid is in itself another area in

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[135] Kirmānī, *Izhāq al-bātil*, p. 107; cf. p. 10, where Sayyid Kāzim is referred to as the "Lord of the Fourth Support" (*Ṣaḥīb al-rukn al-rābiʿ*).

[136] See Karīm Khān, *Hidāyat al-ṭālibīn*, pp. 168–77

[137] See idem, *Risāla-yi sī faṣl*, pp. 16–33.

[138] Ibid., p. 22. On this basis, Karīm Khān discusses resurrection after divine justice in the section on tawhid of his work *Fiṭrat al-salīma* (sic).

[139] On this basis, he discusses resurrection after prophethood in his *Irshād al-ʿawāmm*.

[140] Kirmānī, *Risāla-yi sī faṣl*, p. 23.

which every believer must rely on his own judgment. The recognition of such a mujtahid (or *ʿālim, faqīh*, etc.) ranks, therefore, as a fourth root of religion. Karīm Khān also expresses the necessity of such a support in his short treatise *Rukn-i rābiʿ* (The Fourth Support) 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 *Risāla-yi sī 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 Shiʿi faith, and they are numerous in every period."[141] He also refutes the idea that Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī 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 (*marjaʿ 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 did at one point 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 Bāb as late as 1846. In the commentary on the *Sūrat al-kawthar*, written that year in Shiraz for Sayyid Yaḥyā Darābī, the Bāb discussed the question of the Fourth Support (which he refers to as "the Hidden Support") for the benefit of Sayyid Yaḥyā, who was not a Shaykhī.

"Had you been one of the companions of Kāẓim," writes the Bāb, "you would understand the matter of the Hidden Support, in the same way that you comprehend the [other] three supports."[144] The Bāb argues that, "just as you stand in need of an individual sent from God who may trans-

[141] Ibid., p. 29.
[142] Ibid., p. 31.
[143] Kirmānī, *Risāla-yi chahār faṣl*, pp. 1, 3.
[144] The Bāb, *Tafsīr*, f.36a.

mit unto you that which your Lord hath willed, so you stand in need of an ambassador (*safīr*) 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 Karīm Khān maintained by this date), the Bāb 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 variations 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 Bāb 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 Bāb'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 the station of *bāb* or *nāʾib* of the Imam, Karīm Khān found it expedient to alter the doctrine in a manner designed to bring it closer to orthodox Shiʿi thinking and clearly opposed to that of Bābīsm. Such a move would certainly be in line with his general policy in this respect, as we have observed earlier. Even though Bābī doctrine very soon abandoned the Fourth Support concept, it obviously held connotations for most Shiʿi ulama, which made it essential for Karīm Khān so to modify it that, in the end, it amounted to a straightforward expression of the orthodox position concerning the need for a *marjaʿ al-taqlīd.* In the development of this doctrine we can, perhaps, see more clearly than elsewhere the nature of the Shaykhī response to Bābī doctrines from the earliest period onward.

Karīm Khān's rejection and refutation of the Bāb, his identification of the latter as a heretic, and his continued efforts to emphasize the validity of the Shaykhī school as a legitimate teaching order within the framework of strictly orthodox Twelver Shiism, made it difficult for the followers of the Bāb to continue to describe themselves as Shaykhīs without a considerable measure of confusion. Although the term "Bābī" does not seem to have been used until a fairly late date,[148]

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[145] Ibid., f.36b.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid., f.37a.
[148] Ahl al-Bāb (the people of the Bāb) does occur, however, in as early a text as the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*.

and the distinction between Shaykhīs, Bābīs, or even Karīm Khānīs was blurred for quite some time in the mind of the public,[149] it soon became almost as desirable for the followers of the Bāb to dissociate themselves from the Shaykhī school as it was for the latter to disclaim any real link with Babism.

As early as 1846, in his commentary on the *Sūrat al-kawthar*, the Bāb, in reference to the Shaykhīs, 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 Kāẓim would agree that the Shaykhīs had gone astray. At the same time, he makes clear his relationship to his two predecessors when he writes that "all that Kāẓim 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 Kāẓim, 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 Shaykhī leadership seems to have hardened the Bāb's position with regard to the school. In his *Risāla dar radd-i Bāb-i murtāb*, written for Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh in 1283/1867, Karīm Khān (to make it clear to the king that the Bāb was actually opposed to Shaykhism) quotes a passage from the Bāb's writings on this topic. The passage in question, although not specifically identified as such, would appear from its self-description [that it concerned "the knowledge of the [divine] name 'the Holy' (*quddūs*), in the first stage (*martaba*)"] to be one of several sections missing from standard texts of the Bāb's *Kitāb al-asmāʾ*, 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 the *Kitāb al-asmāʾ* was written during the Bāb's confinement at Chihrīq.[151]

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[149] As late as 1307/1890, Hājī Muḥammad-Bāqir Hamadānī, the author of a little known but interesting work of Shaykhi polemic, the *Kitāb al-ijtināb*, was obliged to refute the claim that "the Bābī sect is accounted as belonging to the Shaykhī school." (*Kitāb al-Ijtināb*, 144)

[150] The Bāb, *Tafsīr*, f.6b, f.11b, f.24a, f.25a.

[151] I have been unable to locate this section in any of the texts of the *Kitāb al-Asmāʾ* available to me, all of which are incomplete. However, it may yet be possible to discover and verify it in another manuscript.

Kārim Khān begins by quoting the Bāb's statement that "we have forbidden you … [to read] the *Tafsīr al-ziyāra*,[152] or the *Sharḥ al-khuṭba*,[153] or anything written by either Aḥmad or Kāẓim.… 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 Bāb says that "Aḥmad and Kāẓim and the jurists (*al-fuqahā'*) 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 Bayān: we have prohibited unto you this day, even as we prohibited unto you the reading of the fairytales of Aḥmad and Kāẓim 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 Furqan and the Bayān, that you are, in this day, enemies unto those who have followed Aḥmad and Kāẓim, 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 Bāb's attitude to Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kāẓim did not change fundamentally. At quite a late date, for example, he wrote a *ziyārat-nama* or "tablet of visitation" for Shaykh Aḥmad.[155] But it is clear that, toward the end of his life, he came to regard the Shaykhī school, as represented by Karīm Khān and others, to be not only misguided, but positively inimical to the true faith. This hardening of the Bāb's attitude may well have been immediately occasioned by the actively hostile role of several leading Shaykhī ulama in his trial at Tabriz in 1848, but this would not, in itself, seem to be sufficient explanation for it. The Bāb, by this time, was clearly moving rapidly away from any semblance of Islamic orthodoxy. He was now proclaiming himself to be the promised Qā'im and

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[152] That is, the *Tafsir Ziyārat al-kubrā* of Shaykh Aḥmad.
[153] That is, the *Sharḥ al-Khuṭbat al-Ṭutunjiyya* of Sayyid Kāẓim.
[154] Kirmānī, *Risāla dar Radd-i Bāb*, pp. 45–46.
[155] This *ziyārat-nāma* can be found in the Cambridge University Library, Browne Or. Ms. F.20 f.85b–f.87b.

would soon adopt the role of an independent religious revelator. If it had been necessary for Karīm Khān and other Shaykhī leaders to disclaim any relationship with the Bāb or his ideas, it was now equally vital for the latter to dissociate himself from the Shaykhī school in order to avoid continued ambiguity concerning his role and station.

The subsequent abandonment of the Bāb by the ultra-Shaykhī element within his movement, in Marāgha 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 Bāb from Shaykhīsm, 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 Bābīsm and the Shaykhīs, 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 Shiʿism, but also, and perhaps more vividly still, the mechanics of the developments which transformed the Bābī religion from a tangential movement within the Shaykhī sect to a distinct sect of Shiʿism to, in the end, an independent religious movement in theory if not in practice.

# HIERARCHY, AUTHORITY AND ESCHATOLOGY IN EARLY BĀBĪ THOUGHT*,**

In recent years, the history of the early development of the Bābī movement has undergone extensive and often trenchant rewriting at the hands of several scholars, including the present writer.[1] There is still much work to be done, but there can be no doubt that a great deal of light has already been shed on areas not long ago regarded as impossibly dark. Problems have been usefully identified in topics long considered settled beyond any need for discussion. We now possess clear pictures, for example, of the main features in the transition from Shaykhism to early Babism, of the Bāb's early career and claims, of the progress of the Bābī uprisings after 1848, or of the writing and dissemination of the Bābī scriptural canon. Advances have been made not only in the realm of factual data, which has been greatly expanded by numerous discoveries,

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** This paper is an expanded version of a paper written for the Second Annual Los Angeles Bahā'ī History Conference, August 1984. It is only part of a larger study of authority claims in middle Babism (c. 1850–1866) that I have undertaken. [The second part, 'Divisions and Authority Claims in Babism' follows this article.] The purchase of many of the materials used in the preparation of this paper was made possible through a grant from the Research Committee of Newcastle University, to whom I wish to express my thanks.

[1] The following are among the more important recent studies of the subject: D. MacEoin, "From Shaykhism to Babism: A Study in Charismatic Renewal in Shi'i Islam" (Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge University, 1979); idem., "Early Shaykhi Reactions to the Bāb and His Claims," in M. Momen (ed.), *Studies in Bābī and Bahā'ī History* Vol. I (Los Angeles: Kalimāt Press, 1983); idem, "The Bābī Concept of Holy War," *Religion* (1982) 12: 93–129; M. Momen (ed.), *The Bābī and Bahā'ī Religions, 1844–1944: Some Contemporary Western Accounts* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1981); idem, "The Trial of Mullā ʿAlī Basṭāmī: A Combined Sunni-Shi'i Fatwa against the Bāb," *Iran* (1982) 20: 113–43; idem, "The Social Basis of the Bābī Upheavals in Iran (1848–53): A Preliminary Analysis" in *IJMES* (1953) 15:157–83; A. Amanat, "The Early Years of the Bābī Movement: Background and Development" (Ph.D. thesis, Oxford University 1981) [later published as *Resurrection and Renewal*]; P. Smith, "Millenarianism in the Bābī and Bahā'ī Religions," in R. Wallis (ed.), *Millennialism and Charisma* (Belfast: Queen's University, 1982); idem, "A Sociological Study of the Bābī and Bahā'ī Religions" (Ph.D. thesis, Lancaster University, 1982); Mangol Bayat, *Mysticism and Dissent: Socioreligious Thought in Qajar Iran* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1982) ch. 4 "The Politicization of Dissent in Shia Thought: Babism."

but, more importantly, in the field of interpretative historiography, with the fresh analysis of both familiar and unfamiliar material.

There can be little doubt, however, that one period of Bābī history continues to stand out as unrelievedly obscure, namely the years between the execution of the Bāb in 1850, and the emergence of distinct Bahā'ī and Azalī factions within the Bābī exile community in Edirne about 1866, and subsequently in Iran. This period has for a long time been all but passed over by historians as a time of confusion, anarchy, and deep doctrinal division within Babism for which virtually no documentary evidence exists that might enable us to reconstruct its essential details. Between 1848 and 1852, the Bābī community of Iran had suffered serious losses in the course of clashes between adherents of the sect and the population at large. Between two and three thousand Bābīs[2] died violently in this period, including the Bāb himself and all but a handful of the intellectual leadership of the movement. After the abortive attempt on Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh's life in August 1852, the survivors (a small number in terms of active affiliation with the movement) either recanted, went underground, practiced dissimulation (*taqiyya*), or chose to go into exile outside Iran.

The effects of this rapid disintegration of an already little-organized community (if community it can be called) were, from the point of view of the later historian, quite devastating. Numerous documents, particularly letters, were lost, destroyed, or stolen.[3] Among the most serious casualties were undoubtedly works by the leading figures of the Bābī hierarchy who perished in the uprisings at Shaykh Ṭabarsi, Nayrīz, and Zanjān. To make matters worse, fear of discovery led the Bābīs of this period to adopt a deliberately enigmatic and idiosyncratic style that now requires considerable effort and ingenuity to decipher, with the result that many materials that have survived the tribulations of those years may often present as many obfuscation as they do glimmers of light.

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[2] On this figure, much lower than that generally given in Bahā'ī sources, see D. MacEoin, "From Babism to Bahā'ism: Problems of Militancy, Quietism, and Conflation in the Construction of a Religion," *Religion* (1983) 13: 219–55, p. 236.

[3] See letter of Sayyid Ḥusayn Yazdī to Mullā ʿAbd al-Karīm Qazvīnī (dated possibly late 1850 or 1851) in [Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad Shirāzī, the Bāb and Sayyid Ḥusayn Yazdī] *Qismatī az alwāḥ-i khaṭṭ-i Nuqṭa-yi Ūlā wa Āqā Sayyid Ḥusayn Yazdī* (n.p. [Tehran], n.d.) p. 39; Mīrzā Ḥusayn ʿAlī Nūrī, Bahā'u'llāh, "Lawḥ-i varqā," in Abd al-Ḥamīd Ishrāq-Khāvarī (ed.), *Mā'ida-yi āsmānī*, 10 vols. (Tehran, 1971–72–1972–73) vol. 4, p. 150; idem, *Kitāb-i īqān* (Cairo, 1352/1933) pp. 168–69; Shoghi Effendi [Rabbani, *God Passes By* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahā'ī Publishing Trust, 1944)] pp. 90–91.

And yet this is without question a period of the most extreme importance, both as a postscript to the short-lived experiment of primitive Babism and as a preamble to the later reconstructions of the movement in its Azalī and Bahā'ī versions. Unfortunately, it is precisely the emergence of Azalī and Bahā'ī Babism that renders the task of the historian unusually arduous and confronts him with serious problems of research and interpretation. Both parties to the later dispute looked back to the earlier period, particularly the years immediately following the death of the Bāb and the transfer of the headquarters of the sect to Baghdad, with visions much clouded by the demands of contemporary polemic or ex-post facto justification of current theological positions and concepts of authority. The polarization of Azalīs and Bahā'īs resulted in the rapid displacement of any serious alternative definitions of Bābī orthodoxy. And, since we possess very few manuscript materials from the intermediate period, we are forced to rely almost exclusively on documents reflecting, usually quite strongly, the sectarian biases of the two opposing groups. It is, quite frankly, often impossible for the historian to choose between one or the other version of the same events. Very little corroboratory evidence is ever produced by either side, and there are almost no independent sources to which one may have recourse. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the main outline of events and, to a lesser extent, doctrines may be reconstructed without serious prejudice to either side of the dispute. If we are willing to ignore such questions as "who was right?" or "who was wrong?" we can, I think, state what happened during this period and, as far as is possible, suggest why. Before the main features of this period can be studied, however, there is a pressing need for a survey of certain doctrinal issues from the early years of the movement. It is the aim of this paper to provide such a survey, both for its own interest and as preparation for a future study of the later period.

## Early Theophanic and Quasi-Theophanic Claims to Authority

It will be useful to begin our investigations with a brief examination of the nature of religious claims in the early period and a survey of the later theories of the Bāb that can be shown to have influenced the tone and direction of subsequent speculations. Doctrinally speaking, Babism is a notoriously difficult movement to define. There were important shifts in belief and practice within the space of very few years, coupled with significant differences in the doctrines promulgated by various sections of the Bābī leadership, not to mention the innumerable obscurities and

vagueness of even the most reliable texts. I have discussed in detail elsewhere[4] the early claims of Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad, the Bāb himself and will not return to that question here. Suffice to say that there is ample evidence that for several years he regarded himself and was regarded by his followers as the *bāb*, or representative on earth of the hidden Twelfth Imām, whose appearance in 1845 was imminently expected by all the first Bābīs. Exactly how his claims developed after that is not entirely clear. Even at the earliest period, there is evidence that the Bāb claimed for himself and his writings a level of inspirational authority well above that normally associated with the role of *bāb al-Imām*. This is not to suggest that he entertained notions of a more exalted status for himself at this point, merely that the function of *bābiyya* (or *niyāba*) as he understood and expressed it involved the ability to reveal inspired verses and to possess innate knowledge. As I have indicated elsewhere,[5] it was the Bāb's status as a source of pure knowledge more than anything else that attracted followers to him at this time.

A Bahāʾī writer, Sayyid Mahdī Dahajī, basing his remarks somewhat loosely on an important passage of the *Dalāʾil-i-Sabʿa* (seven proofs), has put forward the idea that, in the first year, Sayyid Alī Muḥammad referred to himself as "the gate of God" (*bāb Allāh*), in the second year as "the remembrance" (*dhikr*), in the third as "the proof" (*ḥujja*), in the fourth as another name, and in the fifth as the Qāʾim in person.[6] Although based on the Bāb's own application of part of a tradition of the Imām ʿAlī (*hadīth Kumayl*) to each of the first five years of his career, such a picture of a gradual "unfoldment" of the Bāb's claims is, however, based largely on polemical considerations.[7] The simultaneous use

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[4] MacEoin, "Early Shaykhi Reactions"; idem, "From Shaykhism to Babism." ch. 5.

[5] See idem, "Nineteenth-century Bābī Talismans," paper delivered at the annual conference of the British Society for Middle East Studies, Cambridge, 1983, published in *Studia Iranica* (1985) 14:1, pp. 77–98 [and here].

[6] Sayyid Mahdī Dahajī, *Risāla-yi Sayyid Mahdī Dahajī*, MS F57. E. G. Browne Or. MSS, Cambridge University Library, p. 38.

[7] Dahajī is at this point attempting to prove that the phrase "the light that dawns from the morn of eternity upon the temples of unity" (*nūr ashraqa min ṣubḥ al-azal ʿalā hayākil al-tawḥīd*) refers to the Bāb's appearance as the Qāʾim and not to the emergence of Ṣubḥ-i Azal in the fifth year. There is in existence, however, a statement by the Bāb's contemporary, Mīrzā Muḥammad ʿAlī Zunūzī, to the effect that, in the beginning, the Bāb claimed to have been sent by the Hidden Imām and that his words were below those of the Imām but superior to those of al-Aḥsāʾī and Rashtī; after that he adopted the title *dhikr Allāh*, then Qāʾim, and finally the station of *rubūbiyyat* (lordship, divinity)—see text quoted Mīrzā Asad Allāh Fāḍil-i Māzandarānī, *Kitāb-i ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3 (n.p. [Tehran⁷, n.d.) pp. 31–33. On the later claim to *rubūbiyyat*, see the Bāb, *Bayān-i fārsī* (n.p. [Tehran], n.d.) exordium, p. 4 [translated in this volume].

of terms such as *bāb, dhikr*, and *ḥujja* is well attested from the earliest period,[8] and there is no evidence of major changes in emphasis (apart from a period of dissimulation [*taqiyyih*] in 1845, when he renounced all claims) during the first five years of his career.

The Bāb himself refers more than once to the radical shift that took place at the end of this period. In several passages of the *Kitāb-i panj shaʾn* (Book of five proofs), he states that he revealed himself (or God revealed him) in the station of "gate-hood" (*bābiyya*) (*fi ʾl-abwāb; bismi abwābiyyatika* [sic]) for four years, whereupon he appeared as the promised Qāʾim (*bismi Qāʾimiyyatika; bismiʾl-maqṣūdiyya al-mawʿūdiyya*).[9] We possess no exact date for the initial proclamation of *qāʾimiyya* by the Bāb, but there is sufficient evidence to place this event (which was marked by the issue of a letter sent to Mullā Shaykh ʿAlī Turshīzī, ʿAẓīm)[10] in the later part of his confinement in the fortress of Mākū, that is in the early months of 1848.[11] In the Persian *Bayān*, the Bāb states that when the return of all that had been created in the Qurʾān and the beginning of the creation of all things in the *Bayān* occurred, his dwelling-place was Mākū (*arḍ-i ism-i bāsiṭ*).[12] The Bāb's claim to be the *Qāʾim* was not, however, restricted to the adoption of the simple messianic role outlined for the Twelfth Imām in Shiʿi prophetic literature, but also involved the assumption of theophanic status coupled with prophetic

[8] See, for example, idem, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, MS Fli, E. G. Browne Or. MSS, Cambridge University Library, ff.2a, 19a, 32b, 36a, 69, 96a, 103b, 114a. In this and other early works, the term *hujja* is generally reserved for the Twelfth Imām and for the writings of his *bāb*, Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad. But for an apparently early description of the Bāb as *al-ḥujja al-kubrā* (the greatest proof), see Qurrat al-ʿAyn, *risāla* printed in Mīrzā Abū ʾl-Faḍl Gulpāyagānī and Mīrzā Mahdī Gulpāyagānī, *Kashf al-ghiṭāʾ ʿan ḥiyal al-aʿdāʾ* (Ashkhabad, n.d.) appendix, p. 2. The same writer refers to the Bāb as "the Proof of God." (*Risāla* printed in Māzandarānī, *ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 361)

[9] See the Bāb, *Kitāb-i panj shaʾn* (n.p. [Tehran], n.d.) pp. 11, 184, 256, 280. See also idem, *Dalāʾil-i sabʿa* (n.p. [Tehran], n.d.) p. 29.

[10] A passage quoted from this letter in the *Kitāb-i nuqṭat al-kāf* identifies it with that printed in the Bāb and Yazdī, *Qismatī az alwāḥ*, p. 14 (transcription pp. 13–12 [sic]); see Hājī Mīrzā Jānī Kāshānī, *Kitāb-i-nuqṭat al-kāf*, ed. by E. G. Browne (Leyden and London, 1910) p. 209. The text is also printed in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-haqq*, vol. 3, pp. 164–66.

[11] Two main facts point to this date: the first is the Bāb's own references to a period of four years elapsing before his elevation to the rank of Qāʾim, the second his explicit announcement of Qāʾimiyya in the pages of the *Dalāʾil-i sabʿa*, a book certainly written in Mākū (see the Bāb, *Dalāʾil*, pp. 25, 29, 30). The Bāb left Mākū on 9 April 1848 (see Mullā Muḥammad Nabil Zarandi, *The Dawn-Breakers*, ed. and trans. by Shoghi Effendi [Wilmette, Ill.: Bahāʾī Publishing Trust, 193$^2$ p. 259).

[12] The Bāb, *Bayān-i fārsī*, exordium, p. 4 (*bāsiṭ* =72= Māh-kū [a variant of Mākū]; the Bāb himself gives the spelling "Mākū"; ibid., 4:12, p. 136; idem, *Dalāʾil*, p. 67).

office as the inaugurator of a new religious dispensation abrogatory of Islam.[13] In developing the elaborate theory of theophanies and religious cycles around which all of his later thinking revolves, the Bāb made use of a series of metaphysical concepts common to the main Shiʿi sects. But while many of his ideas and the forms in which they are cast find important and sometimes detailed parallels in Ismāʿīlī and Ḥurūfī thought in particular, it is not, I think, necessary to look for direct influences from these sources.

The main themes and terms are all to be found in Twelver Shiʿi literature, including, of course, the works of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī. The root of the Bāb's doctrine lies in the belief that the divine or eternal essence (*dhāt-i ilāhi, dhāt-i azal*) is wholly unknowable and inaccessible to humans[14] but since the purpose of the creation is for men to know and love God,[15] it is necessary for the creator to reveal himself to them in a form appropriate to their condition: "in every dispensation, he makes himself known through his own creation."[16] Although the Bāb employs the conventional Islamic terminology of prophet and messenger (*nabī; rasūl* [frequently]; *payghāmbar*)[17] and adopts a schema of regularly-spaced prophetic revelations (among which those of Moses, David, Jesus, and Muḥammad stand out),[18] he is less concerned with the role of the prophets as divinely-inspired legislators than with their function as theophanic representations of the divinity on earth.

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[13] The link between *Qāʾimiyya* and the inauguration of a new dispensation (and not merely a new era) is to some extent indicated by a number of messianic traditions that state the Qāʾim will appear with a new day, a new religion, and a new creation," or "a new book" given to him by Muḥammad and ʿAlī, of "a new cause, a new book, a new *sunna*, and a new heaven." (See texts quoted by Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Zayn al-Dīn al-Aḥsāʾī in "Risāla fi 'l-ʿiṣma wa 'l-rajʿa," in idem, *Jawāmiʿ al-kilam*, 2 vols. [Tabriz, 1856, 1860], vol. 1, part 1, pp. 62, 64, 66.)

[14] The Bāb, *Bayān-i fārsī*, exordium, p. 1; 3:7, p. 81; 4:1, p. 105; 4:2, p. 110, and passim; idem, *Panj shaʾn*, pp. 31–32, 62, 114, 125–26, 155, 165–66, and passim; idem, *Dalāʾil*, pp. 1, 31; idem, *al-Bayān al-ʿarabī* (n.p. [Tehran], n.d.), section 1, p. 3; 3:7, p. 10.

[15] The Bāb, *Panj shaʾn*, p. 92.

[16] Ibid., p. 245.

[17] See ibid., pp. 23, 40, 102, 125, 161, 277; idem, *Dalāʾil*, pp. 2, 3, 20 (*payghāmbar*); idem, *Bayān-i fārsī* 2:1, p. 12 and passim.

[18] In an important passage of the *Kitāb-i panj shaʾn*, the Bāb states that "this revelation [*ẓuhūr*] is the fifth revelation in two thousand seven hundred and seventy (years)." (*Panj shaʾn*, p. 289) Elsewhere, he breaks this figure down into portions, as follows: from Moses to David: 500 years; from David to Jesus: 500 years; from Jesus to Muḥammad: 500 years more or less; and from Muḥammad to himself 1270 (or 1271) years. (See ibid., pp. 66, 199, 315, and cf. passage quoted by Mulla Rajab ʿAlī Qahīr Iṣfahānī, *Risāla-yi Mulla Rajab ʿAlī*, MS F24, E. G. Browne Or. MSS, Cambridge University Library, f78a–f78b.)

The Bāb's doctrine of theophanies is expressed chiefly through the Arabic root *ẓhr* (to become visible, manifest), which appears in a number of related technical terms.[19] *Ẓuhūr* (manifestation) is the self-revelation of God to his creation and also the period during which he is thus manifest. It is contrasted with *bāṭin* (concealment), the state of God's invisibility to men and the period between one prophet and the next, during which he is hidden to men. *Maẓhar* is the term most often used to describe the place of this revelation, the created being in whom the Divinity manifests himself to other created beings. This *maẓhar* is in one sense the locus in which God himself is manifested to men: "the hidden reality of the divine unity (*ghaybat al-tawḥīd*) is only affirmed through that which is revealed in the outward aspect (*ẓāhir*) of the messenger";[20]

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This calculation seems to be based largely on a tradition from the *Tafsīr* (Qurʾān commentary) of ʿAlī ibn Ibrāhīm [ibn Hāshim al-Qummī], in which it is stated that five hundred years passed between Moses and David, and one thousand between David and Jesus (quoted by Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Zayn al-Dīn al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ al-ziyāra al-jāmiʿa al-kabīra*, 4th. ed., 4 vols. [Kerman, 1355 sh./1976–77], vol. 1, p. 195).

The Bāb was not, however, wholly consistent in his use of this schema. In the passage just referred to as quoted in Rajab ʿAlī Qahīr's *Risāla*, for example, he places David before Moses. There is a well-known contradiction in the *Dalāʾil-i sabʿa* which at one point places Moses one thousand years before David, with the space between David and the Bāb as 2,270 years (p. 18), and at another puts Moses 2,270 years in the past, as in the *Panj shaʾn* (p. 38). In one passage of the *Panj shaʾn*, however, the Bāb speaks of Moses, Jesus, Muḥammad, and himself as coming together in a single succession without David (p. 335).

Elsewhere, the Bāb returns to a schema closer to that found in the Qurʾān, referring to the revelation of God in Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muḥammad. (See *Panj shaʾn*, pp. 384, 396–97; *Dalāʾil*, p. 66.) In one passage he speaks of prophets prior to Adam. (*Panj shaʾn*, p. 241) The notion of five dispensations seems, however, to be related (albeit idiosyncratically) to the well-known Islamic theory of five major prophets, the *ulūʾl-ʿaẓm* or "possessors of constancy," namely Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muḥammad. (See al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 2, p. 155.)

[19] The related verb *tajallā* (to become clear, manifest) and its derivatives (especially *tajallī*), with strong echoes of the theories of Ibn al-ʿArabi, are frequently used by the Bāb. (See, for example, *Panj shaʾn* pp. 31, 54, 195.) On Ibn al-ʿArabī's use of this term, see Muhyī ʾl-Dīn ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. by Abu ʾl-Alā ʿAfīfī (Cairo, 1946) pp. 12–21; idem, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, trans. by R. W. J. Austin (London, 1980) pp. 149–50; T. Izutzu, *A comparative study of the Key Philosophical Concepts in Sufism and Taoism: Ibn al-Arabi and Lao-Tzu, Chuang-Tzu* (Tokyo, 1966) pp. 37–38.

It is impossible to tell how far, if at all, the Bāb may have been directly influenced by the ideas of Ibn al-ʿArabī. There is no evidence that he had read any of the latter's works, although we do know that Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī was familiar with some of them, even though he strongly disapproved of Ibn al-ʿArabī (see Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Zayn al-Dīn al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ al-ʿArshiyya*, 2nd. ed., vol. 1 [Kerman, 1361/1982]. pp. 26–27; idem, *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 1, pp. 71, 219, vol. 3, p. 219).

[20] The Bāb, *Panj shaʾn*, p. 40.

"know that in each *ẓuhūr*, he has been and is the representative (*qāʾim maqām*) of the eternal and hidden essence (*dhāt-i ghayb-i azal*)";[21] "bear witness that God, may his praise be glorified, makes himself known to his creation in the place of manifestation (*maẓhar*) of his own self, for whenever men have recognized God, their Lord, their recognition of him has only been attained through what their prophet caused them to know."[22] In the Persian *Bayān*, the appearance of the Bāb (as the *Nuqṭa*, Point) is thus equated with the revelation of God himself: "the self-revelation of God (*ẓuhūr Allāh*), which is the self-revelation of the Point of the *Bayān*;[23] "the seat of the Point, who is the place of manifestation of Lordship."[24] It is emphasized by the Bāb, however, that the divine essence as such is not manifested directly to men.[25] What appears in the manifestations (*maẓāhir*) is the Primal Will (*al-mashiʾyya al-awwaliyya*), itself created by God *ex nihilo:* That command (i.e., the place of manifestation) is not the eternal and hidden essence, but is a Will that was created through and for himself out of nothing.[26] In the Persian *Bayān*, the Bāb writes that "there has never been nor will there ever be either revelation or concealment for the eternal Essence in himself, nor can any other thing either manifest or conceal him . . . instead, he created the Primal Will in the same way that he created all things by himself, creating it likewise by himself and all things (other than it) by it, and he related it to himself in its exaltation and sublimity. . . . From the beginning that has no beginning to the end that has no end, there has ever been but a single Will which has shone forth in every age in a manifestation (*ẓuhūr*)."[27]

Although the Primal Will is single, it appears in each age in a different person, whose physical form is variously expressed as its "throne" (*ʿarsh*),[28]

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[21] Ibid., p. 102.

[22] Ibid., p. 125.

[23] Idem., *Bayān-i fārsī*, exordium, p. 3.

[24] Ibid., p. 4.

[25] On the notion that God's *ẓuhūr* to his creation can only take place metaphorically, see al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ al-ʿArshiyya*, vol. 1, p. 61.

[26] The Bāb, *Panj shaʾn*, p. 31; cf. ibid., p. 390; idem, *Dalāʾil*, p. 2. On the Imāms as loci of the Primal Will, see al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 2, p. 192.

[27] The Bāb, *Bayān-i fārsī* 4:6, pp. 120–21.

[28] Idem, *Panj shaʾn*, p. 23 ("the *rusul* are the thrones of his manifestation"). For "thrones," see passim. *ʿArsh al-ḥaqīqa*, "the throne of reality," is often used (e.g., ibid., pp. 21, 31). On the primary application of *ʿarsh* to the "Reality of Muḥammad" (*al-ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya*) and "Absolute Guardianship" (*al-wilāya al-muṭlaqa*), of which the Imāms are the loci, see al-Aḥsāʾī *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 4, p. 245. On Bābī usage, see further, ʿAbd al-Ḥamid Ishrāq-Khāvarī, *Raḥīq-i makhtūm*, 2 vols. (Tehran, 130–131 *Badīʿ/1974–76*) vol. 2, pp. 157–60.

"seat" (*kursī*),[29] "temple" (*haykal*),[30] "mirror" (*mirʾāt* [the Will being described as the sun appearing in it],[31] or simple place of manifestation (*maẓhar*).[32] The Will itself in its manifest form is referred to by a variety of titles, including the Tree of Reality (*shajarat al-ḥaqīqa*),[33] or, most commonly, Primal Point (*nuqṭay-i ūlā*).[36] [sic: footnotes skip 34–35 in original, though these two notes do exist at the end, in between endnotes #33 and 36.] It is from this Point that all things have been originated[37] and all the prophets and revealed books sent down.[38]

As in the case of the Imāms in Shiʿi Islam, the exact status of the manifestation (*maẓhar*) is often blurred. Just as the Imāms are referred to as God's "outward form amidst his creation" (*zāhiruhu fī khalqihi*), so the Bāb speaks of the *maẓhar* as the "throne of God's revelation" (*ʿarsh ẓuhūri ʾllāh*),[40] the "representative of the divine essence,"[41] or the "locus of the manifestation of his self" (*maẓhar nafsihi*).[42] In the same way that knowledge of the Imāms is knowledge of God[43] (the latter being impossible without the former) the *maẓāhir* are, for the Bāb, the only means

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[29] The Bāb, *Panj shaʾn*, p. 24 and passim.

[30] Ibid., p. 423 and passim. This *haykal* is particularly described as "the temple of man": "The Will is in the temple of man (*ʿalā haykal al-insān)* from the beginning that has no beginning to the end that has no end" (ibid., p. 388) and, more interestingly: "For the Will has always been in the temple of God (*ʿala haykal allāh*, which is the temple of man, and all things have been created from it" (ibid., p. 389)). On the Imāms appearing in different *hayākil*, see al-Aḥsāʾī *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 2, p. 160. On the wider implications of the term *haykal* and its relationship to talismans and the science of letters, see my paper "Nineteenth-century Bābī talismans" [reprinted in this volume].

[31] The Bāb, *Panj shaʾn*, pp. 34, 132–33, 149–50, and passim. On the concept of the Imāms appearing in their bodies like images in mirrors, see al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 3, p. 128.

[32] The Bāb, *Panj shaʾn*, p. 23 and passim. On the Imāms as *maẓāhir*, see al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ al-ziyāra* , vol. 2, p. 48.

[33] The Bāb, *Bayān-i fārsī*, 2:8, p. 37 and passim. *Shajarat al-ẓuhūr* also occurs (*Panj shaʾn*, p. 42).

[34] Ibid., p. 104 and passim. In this context, the *maẓhar* of the Will is often referred to as the "horizon" (*mashriq*) or "dawning-point" (*maṭlaʿ*)—*see* ibid., p. 51.

[35] Idem., *Bayān-i fārsī*, 3:7, p. 81 and passim.

[36] Ibid., 1:1, p. 4 and passim. On the use of the titles "first point" and "last point" for the legendary saint Khiḍr by Abd al-Karīm Jīlī, see H. Corbin, *Terre célèste et corps de résurrection* (Paris, 1960), p. 244. For some other terms used for the Primal Will, see the Bāb, *Panj shaʾn.*

[37] Idem, *Bayān-i fārsī* 1:1, p. 4; 3:8, p. 84.

[38] Ibid., 2:8, p. 37.

[39] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 4, p. 269. Cf. ibid., vol. 2, p. 316.

[40] The Bāb, *Panj shaʾn*, p. 423.

[41] Ibid., p. 102.

[42] Ibid., p. 23.

[43] See al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 2, pp. 108 233; vol. 3, pp. 29, 242.

whereby men may know their creator." God has made the manifestation "the mirror of his self…, in which nothing is seen but God."[45]

The human locus of God's appearance is, therefore, an essentially ambivalent creature. Outwardly, he is merely a mortal man: "what your eyes behold of the outward form of the thrones is but a handful of clay…. If you did not look at what is (manifested) in them, there would be nothing (to see) but earth in its own place."[46] Inwardly, however, these beings are divine: "Do not behold the thrones in respect of what they are in themselves, for I have shown you that they originate as a drop of sperm and return as a handful of clay. Instead, look within them, inasmuch as God has manifested himself (*tajallā*) to them and through them."[47] Expressed differently, "the inward aspect (*bāṭin*) of the prophets is the words 'no god is there but God,' while their outward aspect (*ẓāhir*) is the mention of their own selves in each *ẓuhūr* through what is manifested from them."[48] It is because of this difference that the statements of the prophets differ one from the other, itself the main cause of religious disunity.[49] Otherwise, they are all one,[50] being compared frequently to a single sun that appears on different days or in different mirrors.[51] The number of these places of manifestation is incalculable,[52] nor can they be said to have any beginning or end.[53]

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[44] See the Bāb, *Panj shaʾn*, p. 195: "If he did not reveal himself to the prophets in their own selves, how could God be known?"; ibid., p. 313: "Bear witness that the knowledge of God is not made manifest save by the knowledge of the place in which his self is manifested."

[45] Ibid., p. 54; cf. idem, *Dalāʾil*, p. 65.

[46] Idem, *Panj shaʾn*, p. 242.

[47] Ibid. On the Imāms as both human and divine, see al-Ahsāʾī, *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 2, p. 200.

[48] The Bāb, *Panj shaʾn*, p. 40; cf. p. 314: "His inward aspect is the words "no god is there but God," while his outward aspect in the Qurʾān was Muḥammad, the messenger of God, and in the Bayān the Essence of the Seven Letters [i.e., ʿAlī Muḥammad], and in the Gospel Jesus, the Spirit of God, and in the Psalms David, the Friend of God, and in the Torah Moses, the Interlocutor of God, and after the Bayān he whom God shall manifest."

[49] Ibid., p. 391.

[50] Ibid., p. 31.

[51] See ibid., pp. 24, 31. 59, 63–64, 156, 162, 314, 320; cf. idem, *Dalāʾil*, p. 3.

[52] Idem. *Panj shaʾn*, p. 133.

[53] Ibid., pp. 141, 228, and passim. The idea that a single spirit manifests itself in an ever-changing variety of human forms is fundamental to Ismāʿīlī and Twelver (Imāmī) Shiʿism. For the Ismāʿīlīs, the Imāms "are like one and the same person, only appearing in different bodies and states although being in spirit one and the same all through the ages." (W. Ivanow, *Studies in Early Persian Ismailism* [London, 1948], p. 2) Al-Aḥsāʾī says of the Imāms that "although they have appeared in numerous forms (*hayākil*), despite their being a single entity, there is no multiplicity in this other than from the point of view of an alteration of place, time, direction, and station." (*Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 2, p. 160)

This much is, I think, relatively straightforward. But the Bāb's doctrine is, in fact, rather more complex than this and involves several important elements that were to influence markedly the development of the religion after his death. The existence of a problem can already be seen in the Shiʿi doctrine of the Imāms. Not only are the Imāms regarded as identical one with another,[54] they are also identical in essence with the major prophet figures of the past: "I," says ʿAlī in one tradition, "am Adam, I am Noah, I am Abraham, I am Moses, I am Jesus, I am Muḥammad; I move through the forms as I wish—whoso has seen me has seen them, and whoso has seen them has seen me."[55] I do not wish to enter here into a discussion of what became a subtle problem for later Shiʿi doctrine, namely the relationship between Imām and prophet, merely to draw attention to an apparent dichotomy between the status of the Imāms as successors of the prophet Muḥammad and their identification with the prophets of the past.[56] This dichotomy is to some extent resolved through the doctrine of *ḥujjiyya*, whereby it is maintained that there must always be on earth a proof (*Ḥujja*) from God to men, be it a prophet or Imām.[57]

Nevertheless something of a problem remains, for it is, on the one hand, an established Shiʿi doctrine that the pleroma of Muḥammad and the twelve Imāms was created before and is superior to all other beings, including earlier prophets, who were indeed created after them from the residue of their light[58] and who can only approach God through them. They are often described in terms that make them responsible for the inspiration and instruction of even the major prophets of the past: "The Commander of the Faithful said to Salmān and Abū Dharr: 'I am al-Khiḍr the teacher of Moses: I am the teacher of David and Solomon' "[60] or in terms that place them in a relationship to former prophets comparable

[54] See previous note.

[55] *Ḥadīth al-Sabāba*, quoted al-Aḥsāʾī, ibid., vol. 2, p. 54. Cf. ibid., p. 115, where the Imāms are said to have spread all the revealed religious systems (*sharāʾiʿ*). Al-Aḥsāʾi comments that, although the Imāms were created after Muḥammad, they are like him in their essences. Ibid., vol. 4, p. 173).

[56] For discussion of this complex problem, see Henri Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1971–72), vol. 1, chapter VI; idem, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1964), pp. 62–79. See comments of al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 4, p. 64.

[57] See A. A. Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism* (Albany, N.Y., 1981) p. 68 and passim.

[58] See, for example, al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 2, pp. 41, 56–57, 114, 200 ("God created one thousand thousand worlds and one thousand thousand Adams; in each one of these worlds he caused the Prophet of God [i.e., Muḥammad] to rise up, together with his offspring ʿAlī), 279; vol. 3, pp. 243, 257, 301–02, 361–62; vol. 4, pp. 173, 174.

[59] Ibid., vol. 4, p. 188.

[60] Ibid., vol. 2, p. 115; cf. ibid., p. 54.

to that of God: "He (ʿAlī) said: 'I am the one who carried Noah in the Ark at the command of my Lord; I am the one who brought Jonah out of the belly of the fish by the permission of my Lord; I am the one who caused Moses the son of ʿImrān to pass (over the Red Sea) at the command of my Lord; I am the one who brought Abraham from the fire by the permission of my Lord.[61]

On the other hand, they are identified, not only with these prophets, but also with their successors: "Whoso wishes to behold Adam and Seth, behold I am Adam and Seth; whoso wishes to behold Noah and his son Shem, behold I am Noah and Shem; whoso wishes to behold Abraham and Ishmael, behold I am Abraham and Ishmael; whoso wishes to behold Moses and Joshua, behold I am Moses and Joshua; whoso wishes to behold Jesus and Simon, behold I am Jesus and Simon."[62] To turn this equation around, Seth, Shem, Ishmael, Joshua, and Simon are (in this instance) the Twelfth Imām, who is, in turn, the teacher of the prophets and a locus of the Primal Will.

Now, this problem, like any other of its kind, can be and has been solved by the ingenuity of theologians, but I do not wish to enter into an account of that here. What is of interest in terms of the present paper is that the paradoxes involved in these concepts retained their basic dynamism throughout the early Bābī period and became critical causes of uncertainty in the Baghdad years. To begin with, there were the numerous tensions implicit in the varying statements of the Bāb, not only with respect to his changing status—from "a servant" chosen to be the gate and representative of the hidden Imām, to the Qāʾim, to the place of manifestation of the divinity and the promulgator of a new *sharīʿa* after that of Islam, but also with respect to each one of these roles in its different modes and emphases. Secondly, the Bāb sought to endow his immediate followers, primarily the eighteen "Letters of the Living" (*Ḥurūf al-Ḥayy*) or "precursors" (*sābiqūn*), with a status that made them more than mere saints or intercessors between him and other believers. The Letters of the Living were "precursors," not only in the literal sense of their being the first believers in the Bāb, but more importantly in their having been the first of mankind to respond to God's pre-eternal covenant in the "world of the first atom," that is, before the creation of the

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[61] Ibid., p. 54.

[62] *Ḥadīth* from Imām Jaʿfar Al-Ṣādiq relating to the Twelfth Imām, quoted in al-Aḥsāʾī, "Risāla fi ʾl-ʿiṣma wa ʾl-rajʿa," in *Jawāmiʿ*, vol. 1, part 1, p. 85; also quoted idem, *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 3, p. 92, and the Bāb, *Dalāʾil*, pp. 3–4.

world.[63] Shiʿi tradition identifies these *sābiqūn* with Muḥammad and the Imāms (and often Fāṭima),[64] and in his later works the Bāb describes the Letters of the Living explicitly as the return of the Prophet, the twelve Imāms, the four gates (*abwāb*) who succeeded the Twelfth Imām (later rejected in Bahāʾī theory), and Fāṭima.[65]

The question of the status of the Letters of the Living became a crucial one for early Babism and produced considerable controversy. In 1848, the central Bābī community of Karbala in Iraq was split down the middle by a fierce argument between two factions centered on the persons of Qurrat al-ʿAyn Ṭāhira and Mullā Aḥmad Khurāsānī respectively.[66] Khurāsānī's supporters objected particularly to the status accorded Mullā Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī and the Letters of the Living in general. Their opponents defended their position largely by extensive quotations from the Bāb's writings, in which the *Ḥurūf al-Ḥayy* were extolled.[67] The details of this highly interesting but little-known debate cannot be entered into here: it is enough for our purpose to note that the pro-*sābiqūn* faction, with its emphasis on hierarchy and obedience to charismatic authority, succeeded in forcing its opponents into the background, not only in Karbala, but throughout Iran as well.

As time went on, not only the original Letters of the Living, but later converts also were accorded exalted stations by the Bāb. As his own

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[63] For the use of *sābiqūn* in this context, see Sayyid Kāzim Rashtī, *Uṣūl al-ʿaqāʾid* (Iran Bahāʾī Archives, xerox collection, 4) pp. 57, 58.

[64] See ibid., pp. 90–91; Ḥājī Muḥammad Khān Kirmānī, *al-Kitāb al-mubīn*, 2nd. ed., 2 vols. (Kerman, n.d.), vol. 1, pp. 304–05; al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 2, pp. 53, 305 (pre-creation).

[65] The Bāb, *Bayān-i fārsi*, 1:2, pp. 6–7; 1:3, pp. 8–10; idem, letter to Hāji Sayyid ʿAlī Shirāzī, quoted Māzandarānī, *ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, pp. 223–24; idem, letter to ʿAlī [Mullā Shaykh ʿAlī Turshīzī, in the Bāb and Yazdī], *Qismatī az alwāḥ*, p. 14 (transcription, pp. 13–12 [sic]); idem, letter in ibid., p. 18 (transcription, p. 17); idem. *Panj shaʾn*, p. 88 (where Mullā Ḥusayn is identified as the "throne of the Point of the Qurʾān [i.e., Muḥammad]"). At a later period, the Bāb, while retaining this identification, stated that the Letters of the Living (*Ḥurūf-i wāḥid*) possess two stations: that in which they themselves are seen, in which they are but creatures of God, and that in which only God can be seen, in which they are the "letters of truth." (*Bayān-i fārsi, 5:17*, p. 180).

[66] For a discussion of the main details of this dispute, see MacEoin, "From Shaykhism to Babism," chapter 6, section "Division within the Bābī community," pp. 203–07.

[67] The main issues of this debate and some of the circumstances surrounding it have been fortuitously preserved for us in three manuscript *risālas*, one by Mullā Aḥmad (printed in ʿAlī al-Wardī, *Lamaḥāt ijtimāʿiyya min taʾrīkh al ʿIraq al-ḥadīth*, vol. 2 [Baghdad, 1969] pp. 159 *ff.*), another by Shaykh Sulṭān al-Karbalāʾī (ins. in *Sūrat-i nivishtijāt va āthār-i aṣḥāb-i awwaliyya-yi amr-i aʿlā ki dar ithbāt-i amr-i badīʿ nivishta-and*, [Iran Bahāʾī Archives, xerox collection, 80] pp. 310–32; printed in Māzandarānī, *ẓuhūr al-Haqq*, vol. 3, pp. 245–59), and one which can, I think, be attributed to Qurrat al-ʿAyn (ins. in *Nivishtijāt wa āthār*, pp. 212–82).

claims became more elevated, those given to his followers rose accordingly. This development is not easy to trace with any precision, but fortunately that is not essential for our present course of inquiry. According to Muḥammad ʿAlī Zunūzī, when the Báb abandoned the rank of *Bábiyya* to take that of *dhikr Allāh* (which on Dahajī's reckoning would have been in the second year of his career), he gave the title of *báb* to his earliest convert, Mullā Muḥammad Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī,[68] who had already been identified by him as the return to earth of the prophet Muḥammad. This transfer of station is corroborated by the earliest Bábī history, the *Nuqṭat al-kāf*.[69] The latter work also refers—with what degree of accuracy it is difficult to establish—to other shifts of status ascription between individual members of the Bábī hierarchy. Thus, the station of *Bábiyya* was passed on Bushrūʾī's death to his brother Muḥammad Ḥasan, also a Letter of the Living;[70] at Bidasht, Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī Bárfurūshī Quddūs, claimed to be the return of the prophet Muḥammad, adducing in evidence of this his ability to produce verses, prayers, and homilies;[71] later, at the shrine of Shaykh Ṭabarsi, Quddūs is said to have referred to Bushrūʾī (originally understood to be the return of Muḥammad) as the Imām Ḥusayn.[72] More controversially, the *Nuqṭat al-kāf* maintains that when, in the year 5, the Báb laid claim to the rank of Qāʾim, "the Point of *Qāʾimiyya* manifested itself in the temple of his holiness the Remembrance [i.e., the Báb], who became the heaven of the (Primal) Will (*samāʾ-i mashiyyatī*), while the earth of illumination and volition (*arḍ-i ishrāq wa irāda*) was his holiness Azal (i.e., Mírzā Yaḥyā Nūrī, Ṣubḥ-i Azal)."[73] In apparent—but not, as will be shown, necessarily

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[68] Text quoted Māzandarānī, *ẓuhūr aI-Ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 32. See also ibid., p. 121 and idem, (Māzandarānī), *Asrār al-āthār*, 5 vols. (Tehran, 1967/8–1972/73), vol. 2, p. 12.

[69] Kāshānī, *Nuqṭat al-kāf*, p. 181. I have discussed the vexing question of the authorship and authenticity of the *Nuqṭat al-kāf* (a point much contested by Bahāʾī authors) in an earlier work ("A Revised Survey of the Sources for Early Bábī History and Doctrine," unpublished dissertation, Cambridge, 1977, pp. 168–194) [expanded and published as *Sources for Early Babi Doctrine and History*] and will not return to it here. Suffice to note my conclusion that, although the bulk of this work is unlikely to be by the hand of Mírzā Jáni Kāshāni, it is undeniably early and, whatever its theological peculiarities from a later viewpoint, remarkably reliable. It is certainly not an Azalī "forgery." For issues such as those under discussion in the present paper, it is often much more useful than many later historical works.

[70] Kāshāni, *Nuqṭat al-kāf*, p. 181.

[71] Ibid., p. 152.

[72] Ibid., p. 169. This obviously had much to do with Mullā Ḥusayn's name, as in the case of some later claimants to the station of *ḥusayniyya*.

[73] Ibid., p. 208. On *irāda* as the origin of all worlds but itself created by the *mashiʾa*, see the Báb, *Bayān-i fārsi*, 2:16, p. 57; on the *irāda* as a mirror of the *mashiʾa*, see ibid., 3:7, p. 82.

real—contradiction to this, the same source elsewhere maintains that Quddūs was himself the Qāʾim and ʿAlī Muḥammad his *bāb*,[74] the former having advanced his claims in the fourth year after the period during which the latter had summoned men to God.[75] Quddūs, it is said, made his claims independently and became the heaven of will, with the Bāb the earth of volition.[76] Similarly, Quddūs is described as "the origin of the point" (*asl-i nuqta*), ʿAlī Muḥammad again being his *bāb.* And, more confusingly, it is stated that the Bāb and Quddūs were both the Qāʾim, in the same way that the Shiʿi Imāms may all be referred to by this title.[77]

Lest these statements seem wholly idiosyncratic and be attributed to the unreliability of the *Nuqṭat al-kāf* as a source (or indeed, be adduced as evidence of that work's unreliability), it will be worthwhile to note that there is independent corroboration of the fact that Quddūs was regarded by some at least as the Qāʾim (either independently of the Bāb or in tandem with him and/or Mullā Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī) and that he himself advanced claims of a messianic and theophanic nature. An important early history of the Shaykh Ṭabarsi siege, the *Waqāyiʿ-i mīmiyya* (Events of the letter *mīm*: i.e. Māzandarān), consistently refers to Quddūs as "the Qāʾim of Jīlān"[78] and cites a sermon by Mullā Ḥusayn in which he refers to Quddūs as "the one whose advent you have awaited for one thousand two hundred and sixty [sic] years,"[79] a claim the latter is said to have advanced in his own behalf.[80] Another early account of the events at Shaykh Ṭabarsī, Luṭf ʿAlī Mīrzā Shīrāzī's untitled history, notes, for example, that the Bābīs at the shrine regarded Quddūs as the point towards which prayers were to be directed and turned to him when they performed their devotions.[81]

The *Nuqṭat al-kāf* (and, following it, the later Bahāʾī *Tārīkh-i Jadīd*) applies a number of Shiʿi traditions to Quddūs in connection with his identification as Qāʾim. Among these are ʿAlī's reference to events

[74] Kāshāni, *Nuqṭat al-kāf*, p. 202; cf. ibid., p. 208.
[75] Ibid., p. 207.
[76] Ibid., p. 202.
[77] Ibid., p. 207. On this broader use of the term *Qāʾim*, see al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 3, p. 75, Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism*, p. 15.
[78] Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Zavāraʾī, *Waqāyiʿ-i mīmiyya* (Cambridge University Library, E. G. Browne Or. MSS, F.28, item 1) p. 3 and passim.
[79] Ibid., p. 54.
[80] Ibid., p. 70.
[81] Luṭf ʿAlī Mīrzā Shīrāzi, untitled history (Cambridge University Library, E. G. Browne Or. MSS, F.28, item 3) p. 71.

between the months Jumada and Rajab,[82] and the prophecy that the Qāʾim would be killed by a bearded Jewish woman named Saʿīda (who is identified with Quddūs's executioner, the Saʿīd al-ʿUlamāʾ Bārfurūshī)[83] The early attribution of this latter prophecy to Quddūs and Saʿīd al-ʿUlamāʾ is confirmed by its use in the same context in the *Waqāyiʿ-i mīmiyya*.[84] Even a much later Bahāʾī history, the *Tārīkh-i Nabīl*, relates Quddūs's arrival at the shrine of Shaykh Ṭabarsi to a well-known tradition concerning the Qāʾim's arrival in Mecca and his leaning his back against the Kaʿba,[85] (a tradition which is not, curiously enough, related by Nabīl or other Bahāʾī writers, as far as I know, to the Bāb's pilgrimage to Mecca in 1844–5), while the number of Bābī participants in the Māzandarān conflict is given as exactly 313, the number of the companions of the Qāʾim.[86]

Apart from Quddūs, of course, other members of the Bābī hierarchy continued to be accorded important positions, including even that of *Qāʾimiyya*. Mullā Ḥusayn, as we have seen, was referred to by Quddūs as the Imām Ḥusayn, an identification supported by Nabīl,[87] but is also described throughout the *Waqāyiʿ-i mīmiyya* as the "Qāʾim of Khurāsān,"[88] a messianic role much enhanced in several accounts by his bearing of a black banner from Mashhad.[89] The Bāb himself made it quite explicit that not only had the Prophet, the Imāms, and the *nawwāb* (*abwāb*) returned to earth in the persons of the Letters of the Living, but other prophets and saints had reappeared in other of his followers: "The

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[82] Kāshāni, *Nuqṭat al-kāf*, p. 208. For the original *hadith* and its relationship to the appearance of the Qāʾim, see al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 3, pp. 79, 88, and (in particular) 223.

[83] Kāshāni, *Nuqṭat al-kāf*, pp. 90; Mīrzā Ḥusayn Hamadānī,*The New History* (*Tārīkh-i-Jadīd*) *of Mirzā ʿAlī Muḥammad, the Bāb*, ed. by E. G. Browne (Cambridge University Press, 1893), p. 91 (where Quddūs is incidentally referred to as the "Lord of the Dispensation"). For the original prophecy, see *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 3, pp. 60, 75.

[84] Zavāraʾī, *Waqāyiʿ*, p. 48.

[85] Nabil, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 352. For the original prophecy, see al-Aḥsāʾī *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 3, pp. 84–85.

[86] Nabil, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 354. For the original prophecy, see al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 3, p. 48.

[87] Nabil, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 344.

[88] Zavāraʾī, *Waqāyiʿ*, p. 1 and passim.

[89] Nabil, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 324–25. References in the tradition literature to various banners are numerous and confused, but the most significant in this context is undoubtedly to the banner presented by the Prophet Muḥammad to the Qāʾim (see al-Aḥsāʾī *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 3, pp. 81, 82, 83). On the appearance of black banners from Khurasan (which is, of course, related to the Abbasid revolt of the eighth century), see ibid., p. 113.

first to swear allegiance to me was Muḥammad the Prophet of God, then ʿAlī, then those who were witnesses after him [i.e., the next eleven Imāms], then the Gates of Guidance, then those to whom God had accorded such grace of the prophets and holy ones and witnesses and those who believed in God and his verses."[90] This same view is expressed in a letter written by Mullā Shaykh ʿAlī Turshīzī, ʿAẓīm (to whom the letter from which the above quotation is taken was addressed): "The Letters of the Living are true and are the tombs in which they [Muḥammad, the Imāms, and the four bābs] have returned (*hum marāqid rujūʿihim*), and certain of the believers are the tombs of some of the prophets and saints and witnesses and holy ones; all have returned to the first life."[91] In the course of the Shaykh Ṭabarsī struggle, Quddūs is said to have written a number of letters addressed to his followers in which he identified each one of them with a prophet or saint of the past. One of them, for example, is described as the return of Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Abī Ṭālib Ṭabarsī, the saint buried at the shrine itself.[92] Similarly, Zawāraʾī refers to the 313 companions of Quddūs as *nuqabāʾ*,[93] evidently a reference to the "directors" who were expected to return with the Qāʾim.[94]

## Later Claims of Divinity

Nor was the extension of hierarchical status limited to the identification of individuals as the "return" (*rajʿa*) of a particular holy figure of the past. In the last years of his career, the Bāb bestowed on large numbers

[90] The Bāb, letter to Mullā Shaykh ʿAlī Turshīzī, in the Bāb and Yazdī, *Qismatī az alwāḥ*, p. 13. Cf. letter (also to Turshīzī?), ibid., p. 17; the Bāb, *Haykal al-dīn* (n.p. [Tehran], n.d. [with *al-Bayān al-ʿarabī*]), pp. 1–2. On the return of all former prophets and saints in the *rajʿa*, see al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 3, p. 69. On various meanings of *rajʿa*, see Kāshāni, *Nuqṭat al-kāf*, p. 170. The identification of the first and second to swear allegiance to the Qāʾim as Muḥammad and ʿAlī, followed by the other Imāms, is based on prophetic traditions to this effect (see, for example, text quoted al-Aḥsāʾī, "ʿIṣma wa rajʿa," in *Jawāmiʿ*, vol. 1, part 1, p. 66).

[91] Turshīzī, letter printed in Māzandarānī, *ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 166. Cf. generally letter from Qurrat al-ʿAyn to Turshīzī, printed in Hamadānī, *New History*, p. 436 (with facsimile, p. 435; this section of the letter is not translated by Browne). The "tomb" analogy is used later by Mullā Rajab ʿAlī Qahīr when he refers to Turshīzī as the tomb of Mullā Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī (*marqad-i awwal man āmana—Risāla*, f. 25a) and to Ṣubḥ-i Azal as the tomb of Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī Barfurūshī, Quddūs, (*marqad-i ḥarf-i ākhir*—ibid., f. 44a).

[92] Zavāraʾī, *Waqāyiʿ*, p. 47.

[93] Ibid., p. 55.

[94] On the *nuqabāʾ, nujabāʾ*, etc., see below.

of his followers individual names of God numerologically equivalent to their original names. Thus, Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī Bārfurūshī was called "Quddūs," Shaykh ʿAlī Turshīzī was "ʿAẓīm," Sayyid Yaḥyā Dārābī and Mīrzā Yaḥyā Nūri both "Waḥīd" (the former being known as "Waḥīd-i Aʿẓam," the "greater unity," the latter also being named "Azal"), Mīrzā Asad Allāh Khūʾī "Dayyān," Mullā Rajab ʿAlī Iṣfahānī "Qahīr," and so on.[95] Each such individual seems in some sense to have been understood as a manifestation of the particular attribute of God indicated by his name. It is in this sense, but with possibly wider implications, that Muḥammad ʿAlī Bārfurūshī Quddūs, was called by the Bāb "the last name of God" (*ism Allāh al-ākhir*).[96]

Beyond this, certain individuals were seen as manifestations of the divinity in a broader and more explicit sense. One of the most compelling examples of this is the following statement of the Bāb concerning Mullā Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī: "And make mention of the first to believe, for if you should travel upon the Sea of Names, you will behold him to be the Primal Will, and if you should travel on the Sea of the first creation, you will behold the one who was the first to believe in him; and know that he has ever been and always will be ʿAlīve. Whoever possesses might in the Bayān has become powerful through him, and whoever possesses knowledge in the Bayān has become knowledgeable through him. . . ."[97]

In an interesting passage of his "Lawḥ-i Sirāj", Mīrzā Ḥusayn ʿAlī Nūrī, Bahāʾ Allāh, quotes in part and paraphrases in part words of the Bāb concerning Ḥājī Sayyid Javād Karbalāʾī, in which he describes the latter as "the primal Mirror which has from all eternity reflected and will for all eternity reflect God," as "the Primal Cause" (*ʿillat-i awwaliyya*), and as "a prophet unto all the worlds." Bahāʾ Allāh himself comments on the reference to Sayyid Javād as the Primal Cause, saying that "this station is above all names, be they of the Essence of God (*dhāt Allāh*), or the Reality of God (*kaynūnat Allāh*), or the Remembrance of God (*dhikr Allāh*), or the Mirror of God (*miʾāt Allāh*), for previously anyone who attributed such a station to the Prophet of God would have been

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[95] See Dahajī, *Risāla*, pp. 32, 151–52. Cf. Mīrzā Yahyā Nūri, Ṣubḥ-i Azal, *Kitāb-i mustayqiẓ* (n.p. [Tehranl, n.d.) p. 17.

[96] Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad Shīrāzi, the Bāb, *Ziyāra* for Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī Bārfurūshī, in Muḥammad ʿAlī Malik Khusravī, *Tārīkh-i shuhadāʾ-i amr*, 3 vols. (Tehran, 1974) vol. 2, p. 412.

[97] The Bāb, *Panj shaʾn*, p. 104.

declared an unbeliever, inasmuch as men believed the Primal Cause to be God Himself."[99]

As in the case of claims of *Qāʾimiyya*, it seem to have been Muḥammad ʿAlī Bārfurūshī, Quddūs, who was the Bāb's chief rival in respect of claims to some form of divinity. Abbas Effendi ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ, maintains that Quddūs's commentary on the letter *ṣād* of the word *al-ṣamad* (Qurʾān 112:2) which he "revealed" (*nāzil farmūdand*) at Shaykh Ṭabarsī, was "from beginning to end… (filled with the words) "Verily, I am God."[100] There certainly appears to be confirmatory evidence that, in the course of the Shaykh Ṭabarsī siege, Quddūs did, in fact, make claims of this kind. Zawāraʾī refers to him as a "place of God's manifestation" (*maẓhar-i khudā*)[101] while a Bābī apostate who encountered him in Bārfurūsh after the end of the siege is said to have rebuked him with the words: "You claimed… that your voice was the voice of God."[102] Quddūs's own claims to divine status for himself are reinforced by many of the Bāb's statements about him. In a Tablet of visitation (*ziyārat*) written at some point after Quddūs's death in 1849, the Bāb writes:

> from all eternity you have existed in the exaltation of holiness and majesty, and unto all eternity you shall exist in the exaltation of holiness and majesty. You are the one who is manifested through the manifestation of your Lord (*anta ʾl-ẓāhir bi-ẓuhūri rabbika*) and the one who is concealed through the concealment of your Lord. In the beginning when there was no beginning but you, and in the end when there will be no end save you; you ascended through all creation to a horizon unto which none preceded

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[98] Ḥusayn ʿAlī Nūrī, Bahāʾ Allāh, "Lawḥ-i Sirāj," in Ishrāq-Khāvarī (ed.), *Māʾida*, vol. 7, p. 86.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Abbās Effendi, ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ, *Makātib-i Abd al-Bahāʾ*, vol. 2 (Cairo, 1330/1912), p. 254; cf. P. 252. No copy of the *tafsir* on the *ṣād* of *al-Ṣamad* is, to my knowledge, extant. According to Nabil, the original, along with other writings, was entrusted to a certain Mullā Muḥammad Ḥamza Sharīʿatmadār Bārfurūshī, an *ʿālīm* resident in Bārfurūsh (*Dawn-Breakers*, p. 409). Sharīʿatmadār (who was sympathetic to the Bābis and who lived until 1281/1864–65) wrote a work entitled *Asrār al-shahāda* in 1272/1856, in which he mentions having seen a *tafsīr* by Quddūs on the *Sūrat al-tawḥīd*, consisting of five thousand or six thousand verses (see Māzandarānī, *ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 438). This does not, of course, necessarily imply that this work remained in Sharīʿatmadār's possession, but it may prove a useful starting-point for the task of locating it. In 1977, I saw briefly what seemed to me to be an autograph copy of the *Asrār al-shahāda* which had recently come into the possession of the Iranian National Bahāʾī Archives in Tehran, but I have no way of knowing whether or not other materials belonging to Sharīʿatmadār also came into their possession at the same time.

[101] Zavāraʾī, *Waqāyiʿ*, p. 48.

[102] Nabil, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 412.

> you."[103] In a section of the *Kitāb-i Panj shaʾn* written for Mullā Shaykh ʿAlī Turshīzī, the Bāb explicitly declares that "the last name of God has shone forth and flashed and gleamed and become manifest; well is it with him who sees in him nothing but God.[104]

Within the context of such statements, it may be possible to suggest a fresh dimension to our understanding of the events which occurred at the Bābī assembly at Bidasht in 1848, which is generally associated with the abrogation of the Islamic laws (*sharīʿa*), the proclamation of the inauguration of a new age of inner truth (though not, I am inclined to think, at this stage the implementation of a Bābī *sharīʿa*), and the announcement of the imminent appearance of the Qāʾim. (A secondary objective of the meeting was to draw up plans for the release of the Bāb from prison in Azerbaijan.) In what is in some respects a curious letter, ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ states that "many have manifested divinity (*ulūhiyyat*) and lordship (*rubūbiyyat*).... At Bidasht, her excellency Ṭahirih [Qurrat al-ʿAyn] to the highest heaven the cry of "Verily, I am God," as did many of the friends at Bidasht."[105] Brief as it is and lacking in direct evidence, this theologically uncharacteristic statement is nonetheless extremely suggestive and may prove an important starting point for fresh inquiries into the significance of the Bidasht gathering. It may well be the case, for example, that the recorded divisions between the participants in the meeting, in particular that between Qurrat al-ʿAyn and Quddūs, relate in some way to the advancement of competing claims of this kind.

Certainly a number of Bābī texts of the post-Bidasht period contain what would only a few years previously have been regarded as pure blasphemy. Some of the Bāb's later writings, including numerous sections of the *Kitāb-i Panj shaʾn*, contain exordia such as "this is a letter from God, the Protector, the Self-subsisting, to God, the Protector, the

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[103] The Bāb, *ziyāra* for Bārfurūshī, in Malik Khusravī *Tārikh-i shuhadāʾ*, vol. 2, p. 413.

[104] Idem, *Panj shaʾn*, p. 280.

[105] Abbās Effendi, *Makātīb*, vol. 2, pp. 254–55. Unfortunately, the writer presents no documentary or testimonial evidence for this statement, although we may assume he had an eye-witness account from his father, Mīrzā Ḥusayn ʿAlī, Bahāʾ Allāh. What is interesting—and theologically controversial—is that Abbās Effendi goes on to refer to claims to divinity made in his father's *Qaṣīda ʿizz warqāʾiyya* without distinguishing these in any way from those made by Qurrat al-Ayn, Quddūs, or other Bābīs at Bidasht. On the use of the phrase "Verily, I am God" (*innanī anā ʾllāh*) by the mirrors of the divine Will, see the Bāb, *Panj shaʾn*, pp. 133–34.

Self-Subsisting,"[106] or 'this is a letter from God to him whom God shall manifest."[107] Even more direct is the following passage from a letter of the Báb to Mullá Ibráhim Qazvíní, Raḥím: "'Alí before Nabíl [i.e., 'Alí Muḥammad, the Báb] is the Self of God (*nafs Allāh*)... and the name of al-Azal, al-Waḥíd [i.e., Mírzá Yahyá Núrí, Ṣubḥ-i Azal] is the Essence of God (*dhāt Allāh*)."[108] In a letter also written to Qazvíní after the Báb's death, the latter's former amanuensis, Sayyid Ḥusayn Yazdí, declares "were it not for the existence of God in my beloved, the Eternal, the Ancient (*al-azal al-aqdam*) [i.e., Qazvíní],[109] I should not have addressed these words to you, my beloved," and goes on to refer to the Báb's death as "the disappearance of God" (*ghaybat Allāh*) and "the ascension of God" (*su'ūd Allāh*)."[110]

I am of necessity selecting passages in order to get across a rather neglected point, and I would not wish to suggest that I have exhausted the possibilities of late Bábí theophanic doctrine or that I have necessarily offered the most reliable picture of it. What I wish to do is to lay a basis for the study of subsequent developments by showing that there was general acceptance in the Bábí community of widespread claims to theophanic status and authority and that no very systematic or consistent doctrine had been either developed or promulgated to resolve the issues such claims inevitably brought to the surface. It is, I think, important to do this in order to balance somewhat the view put forward by the Bahá'í writer Balyuzi and others to the effect that the doctrines

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[106] (*Hādhā kitāb min 'inda 'llāhi 'l-muḥaymini 'l-qayyūm ilā 'llāhi 'l-muḥaymini 'l-qayyūm*), in a letter to Ṣubḥ-i Azal, in the Báb and Yazdí, *Qismatī az alwāḥ*, p. 1 (facsimile of original on previous unnumbered page); also printed in [Sayyid 'Alí Muḥammad Shirází, the Báb and Mírzá Yahyá Núrí, Ṣubḥ-i Azal, *Majmū'a'ī az āthār-i Nuqta yi Ūlā wa Ṣubḥ-i Azal* (n.p. [Tehran], n.d.) p. 38, and Hamadání, *New History*, p. 427 (hand of Ṣubḥ-i Azal).

[107] (*Hādhā Kitāb min allāh ilā man yuẓhiruhu 'llāh*), *Panj sha'n*, pp. 2, 24, 33, 57, 104, 207. Cf. Dahaji, *Risāla*, p. 113 ("the Point of the Bayán [i.e., the Báb] revealed the words "from God to God" in numerous tablets").

[108] The Báb and Ṣubḥ-i Azal, *Majmū'a'ī az āthār*, p. 37. On the application of the term *dhātu 'llāh* to both the Báb and his "mirrors," see [Mullá Muḥammad Ja'far Narāqí, *Tadhkirat al-ghāfilīn*] (Cambridge University Library, E. G. Browne Or. MSS, F.63), p. 32. (On the authorship of this work, see introduction to 'Izziyya Khánum, *Tanbīḥ al-nā'imīn* [n.p. (Tehran), n.d.] p. 3.) For the Báb as *dhātu 'llāh*, see the Báb, *Haykal al-dīn*, 1:18, p. 5).

[109] Qazvíní is known by a number of names: "Raḥím" (numerically equivalent to "Ibráhím"), "Khalíl" (the epithet of the prophet Abraham), and the codename "Mírzá Aḥmad." The divine name *al-qadīm* and its derivatives (especially *al-aqdam*) are used in the section of the *Panj sha'n* written for him. (See ibid., pp. 327ff.)

[110] Yazdí, letter in the Báb and Yazdí, *Qismatī az alwāḥ*, p. 38.

contained in the *Nuqṭat al-kāf* are merely "a reflection of the anarchy of the darkest days of the Bābī Faith" and that early Bābī leaders such as Dārābī, Zanjānī, Bushrūʾī, Quddūs, and Qurrat al-ʿAyn could not possibly have held such opinions.[111]

I am willing to accept the view that the doctrinal situation following the death of the Bāb and the core of the Bābī leadership was confused. But I think I have shown that the roots of later speculation lay incontrovertibly in theories and events close to the heart of the Bābī movement throughout its most coherent period. The notion of a united, doctrinally unobjectionable "Bābī Faith" is merely a reflection of the retrospective systematizing tendencies of modern Bahāʾīs.

## The Babi Hierarchical System

Of paramount importance for our understanding of subsequent events, among which the Bahāʾī/Azalī split is the most significant, is the hierarchical system of "mirrors" (*mirʾāt*), "glasses" (*bulūriyyāt*), "guides" (*adillāʾ*), and "witnesses" (*shuhadāʾ*) developed by the Bāb in his later writings. This is not, in the strict sense, an organized system of hierarchical grades since the terms involved are, to a large degree, mutually interchangeable and imprecisely used in the texts. Nevertheless, hierarchy is certainly involved in the concept, and there are indications that definite roles were envisaged for individuals exercising the functions associated with the titles. In this respect, Bābī doctrine offers a clear continuation of the Shiʿi theory of *Ḥujjiyya*, which is extended, not only to the prophet and the Imāms or their equivalents, but to other grades of a loose hierarchy as well.

In discussing the meaning of the term *nujabāʾ*, applied to the saints who will accompany the Qāʾim on his return, Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsāʾī refers to variants on the well-known Sūfī hierarchy which includes, according to one version, a single "pole" (*quṭb*), four "pillars" (*arkān*), forty "replacements" (*abdāl*), seventy "nobles" (*nuwwāb*), and three hundred and sixty "righteous" (*ṣālīḥūn*)[112] Such an arrangement,

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[111] H. M. Balyuzi, *Edward Granville Bowne and the Bahāʾī Faith* (London: George Ronald, 1970) p. 73.

[112] Al-Aḥsāʾī, "ʿ*Iṣma wa rajʿa*," in *Jawāmiʿ*, vol. 1, part 1, p. 59. For further details on the Sufi grades of *awliyāʾ*, see J. S. Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford, 1971) pp. 163–65; A. A. Nicholson, "Badal," *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, 1st ed.

al-Aḥsāʾī says, is not to be found in the works of Shiʿi tradition, except for a statement by the Imām ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn referring to "the recognition of the meanings (*al-maʿānī*) in the second, the recognition of the gates (*al-abwāb*) in the third, the recognition of the Imām in the fourth, the recognition of the pillars (*al-arkān*) in the fifth, the recognition of the directors (*al-nuqabāʾ*) in the sixth, and the recognition of the nobles (*al-nuwwāb*) in the seventh."[113] The first four of these (*al-tawḥīd*) [in a common variant, *al-bayān*], *al-maʿāni, al-abwāb*, and *al-imāma*) are generally regarded as referring to the Imāms: as the stations (*al-maqāmāt*) in which God is known to men; as the "meanings" of God's acts; as his knowledge, power, wisdom, and so forth; as the "gates of God"; and as Imāms in the visible realm.[114] In al-Ahsāʾī's opinion, the four *arkān* are equivalent to the four *nuwwāb* of the Twelfth Imām, the *nujabāʾ* (whom he equates with the *abdāl*) are the first ranks of the righteous in Shiʿi Islam (*khiyār al-shīʿa*), and the *nujabāʾ* are the second rank of these.[115]

This hierarchical grading is linked by al-Aḥsāʾī to the degree of spiritual knowledge available to each of its ranks. The *nuqabāʾ* (or *khaṣīṣūn*, "special ones"), for example, can know the Imāms in their highest stations of *māqāmāt, maʿāni*, and *abwāb*; whereas the *nujabāʾ* are capable only of knowing them in the rank of *imāma.*[116] From a different angle, it is said that the believers receive their knowledge of God from the prophets, who in turn receive theirs from Muḥammad and the Imāms, who are the first beings to whom God made himself known—a process which is compared to that of a series of mirrors reflecting the same original image in descending degrees (an analogy of importance in the present context).[117]

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[113] Al-Aḥsāʾī, "'*Iṣma wa rajʿa,*" *Jawāmiʿ*, vol. 1, part 1, p. 59. This tradition is also quoted by al-Aḥsāʾī in a similar context in *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 3, p. 215. The Bāb discusses these seven stages of *maʿrifa* in his *Saḥīfa-yi ʿadliyya* (n.p. [Tehran], n.d.; pp. 18–33), where the *arkān* are identified as the four *ūlū ʾl-ʿazm* before Muḥammad (i.e., Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus) and as four prophets who acted as pillars of God's grace after Muḥammad (Jesus, Khidr, Elias, and Idris).

[114] On this central concept, see al-Aḥsāʾī *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 1, pp. 20–27, 121; vol. 2, pp. 353, 363–64 (where he places *nubuwwa* before *maʿānī* and *afʿāl* after *imāma*); vol. 3, pp. 29–30, 38, 144, 149; vol. 4, pp. 171, 250, 269. For a much more detailed exposition, see Hājī Mullā Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī, *Irshād al-ʿawāmm*, 4th ed., 4 vols. in 2 (Kerman, 1380/1960) vol. 3, pp. 96–262.

[115] Al-Aḥsāʾī *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 3, p. 215.

[116] Ibid., p. 216.

[117] Ibid., p. 243. The knowledge of God vouchsafed to the Imāms themselves differs from one to the next, although all possess sufficient knowledge to perform the function of *ḥujja*, which requires fulfilling men's needs in respect to knowing God. (See ibid., vol. 2, pp. 311–12)

Implicit in this hierarchical system is the notion of intermediacy. The Imāms are, in the first place, the primary intermediaries between men and God, being the "gates" or "paths" that link the creation with the Creator.[118] There must, at the same time, be further intermediaries between the Imāms and the believers in general, since not all the latter possess the same capacity. Al-Aḥsāʾī speaks of these latter intermediaries in the context of a much-commented Quranic verse: "And we appointed, between them and the towns we blessed, manifest towns, and we measured the journey between them. Travel in them by night and by day securely." (34:18) According to a tradition related from the Imām Bāqir, the "towns we blessed" are the Imāms, while the "manifest towns" (*quran ẓāhira*) are the messengers and transmitters from the Imāms to the believers (*shīʿa*) and the scholars (*fuqahāʾ*)[119] of Shiʿi Islam.[120]

The Bābī leader Qurrat al-ʿAyn also makes use of this Quranic verse, referring to an alternative interpretation which identifies the "manifestations" with Shiʿis in general and the four "gates (*abwāb*) in particular.[121] She makes this identification in the course of a broader account of the continuing process of divine guidance through the ages, according to which God has sent a *maẓhar* and *ẓuhūr* in every age and period. Thus prophets were dispatched until the coming of Muḥammad (who is, of course, their seal). After Muḥammad, men were tested through the Imāms until the disappearance of the last of them, after which the "gates" were appointed so that humanity should not be left without guidance. Following the "gates", pious ʿulamāʾ guided the Shiʿis[122] until the appearance of wicked scholars who made exalted claims for themselves and corrupted the faith. Since, however, the Hidden Imām wished to distinguish the good from the wicked, he chose a perfect man to whom he taught his inner knowledge and whom he preserved from sin and error.[123] Although she does not give his name, it is clear from

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[118] See, for example, ibid., vol. 2, pp. 64, 201, 203, 364; vol. 3, p. 11.

[119] Assuming this to be a reasonably early tradition, *fuqahāʾ* here must be taken in its original wider sense of "scholars" (equivalent to *ʿulamāʾ*), rather than "jurisprudents."

[120] Ibid., vol. 2, p. 265.

[121] Qurrat al-ʿAyn, *Risāla* in Gulpāygāni and Gulpāygāni, *Kashf al-ghiṭāʾ*, appendix, pp. 5–6.

[122] Qurrat al-ʿAyn here quotes a version of a well-known tradition to the effect that in every age there is an arbiter (*ʿadāl*) who rejects from the faith the corruptions of the errant and thus preserves it from error. For other references, see MacEoin, "From Shaykhism to Babism," p. 14.

[123] Qurrat al-ʿAyn, *Risāla* in Gulpāygāni and Gulpāygāni, *Kashf al-ghiṭāʾ*, appendix, pp. 3–8.

subsequent references that Qurrat al-ʿAyn is here referring to Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsāʾī. On his death, she says, God appointed Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī to be the sign (*al-āya*) and proof (*al-ḥujja*) on behalf of the Imām to all men. After Rashtī, ʿAlī Muḥammad Shirāzī was made the *bāb* and *ḥujja*.[124] The Bāb himself, she concludes, will be followed in his turn by the open appearance of the Imām in person.[125]

In another treatise, Qurrat al-ʿAyn links the concept of the "manifest towns" to the Shaykhi theory of the "fourth support" (*al-rukn al-rābiʿ*). This later theory is fairly complex, and I do not propose to discuss it in detail here. Suffice it to say that, where traditional Shiʿi theology speaks of five "bases" (*uṣul*) of religion (i.e., the oneness of God, prophethood, resurrection, the justice of God, and Imāmate), Shaykhi doctrine reduces these to three: knowledge of God, prophethood, and Imāmate. Added to these is a "fourth support," which is knowledge of the "friends" (*awliyaʾ*) of the Imāms, a term which includes the *nuqabāʾ* and *nujabāʾ*, together with *mujtahids* and the ulama in general.[126] In the course of a defence of the concept of four supports, Qurrat al-ʿAyn states that the "fourth support" may be identified with the "manifest towns."[127] She further argues that the meaning of the messenger (*rasūl*) in every age is the "bearer of the hidden sign," a branch of the tree that gives the fruit of true knowledge. This fruit is renewed in every age in order to put men to the test. This bearer of God's hidden knowledge is revealed at whatever time the will of God deems it proper.[128] In this age, she says, God has revealed the "fourth support" and sent a messenger (*rasul*), who is the remembrance of the Imām—in other words, the Bāb. This individual she then identifies as "the manifest town,"[129] later describing him as the "special *shīʿa* (*shīʿa-yi khaṣīṣ az māqām-i ikhtiṣāṣ*) and one of the *nuqabāʾ* or (echoing al-Ahsāʾī) "special Shiʿa."[130] She also defends the Bāb's use of the words "I am he who manifested himself to Moses on Sinai" (*man-am mutajallī-yi Mūsā dar Ṭūr*) by referring to a well-known Shiʿi tradition to the effect

[124] Ibid., pp. 11–14.

[125] Ibid., p. 15. This reference indicates that the *Risāla* must predate the Bāb's claim to *Qāʾimiyya*.

[126] For fuller details, see MacEoin, "From Shaykhism to Babism," pp. 168–71.

[127] Qurrat al-ʿAyn, *Risāla* (MS in private hands, Tehran; copy in possession of author) pp. 8–9.

[128] Ibid., p. 12.

[129] Ibid., pp. 13–14. On the Bāb as the "fourth support," cf. p. 30.

[130] Ibid., pp. 18, 19. On the Bāb as one of the *nuqabāʾ*, cf. p. 30. The Bāb himself refers to al-Aḥsāʾī as a "pure Shīʿa" (*shīʿa-yi khāliṣ*) in his *Ṣaḥīfay-i ʿadliyya*. (p. 33)

that the one who appeared to Moses was a man from behind the throne of God, one of the *shiʿa* of the Imāms.[131] More widely, she states that, in this age, the *nuqabāʾ* are shining forth from the glory of the Imāms,[132] probably a reference to the Letters of the Living or other members of the Bābī hierarchy.[133] The Bāb himself makes use of the sevenfold concept of *tawḥīd, maʿānī, abwāb, imāma, arkān, nuqabāʾ*, and *nujabāʾ*. Although he does not identify them with any specific individuals, he does indicate that these last two groups exist on earth and go unrecognized by men.[134] He does, however, identify the Letters of the Living as the "manifest towns,"[135] an identification also made by Qurrat al-ʿAyn in a commentary on one of the Bāb's letters.[136] Qurrat al-ʿAyn significantly precedes her own reference to the *sābiqūn* as the "manifest towns" by describing them as "the paths and gates of the Remembrance" (*subūl al-dhikr wa abwābuhu*),[137] epithets which draw attention to the role of the *sābiqūn* as intermediaries between the primary manifestation of the Will and the rest of mankind.

Curiously enough, the Bāb makes little use of the terms *nuqabāʾ* and *nujabāʾ*, preferring instead to employ the terms already mentioned (*marāyāʾ adillāʾ*, and *shuhadāʾ*). In the *Panj shaʾn*, however, there occurs an important reference to the *nuqabāʾ* and *nujabāʾ*; in the context of an explanation of the Bāb's theory of secondary mirrors. We have already noted that he often refers to the place of manifestation of the Will as a mirror, in which the sun of God (or of the Will) may be seen.[138] But this original mirror, as the representative of the hidden Essence, marks only the inception of a descending hierarchy, the grades of which are themselves described as mirrors reflecting it in a manner identical to that

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[131] Qurrat al-ʿAyn, *Risāla* (in private hands) pp. 30–31. For details of this tradition, see al-Aḥsāʾī *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 3, pp. 361–62; vol. 4, pp. 195, 200–201; idem, *Sharḥ al-ʿArshiyya*, vol. 1, p. 21.

[132] Qurrat al-ʿAyn, *Risāla* (in private hands) p. 34.

[133] The later Bahāʾī writer Mullā Muḥammad Zarandī, Nabīl, appears to identify the Letters of the Living as *nuqabāʾ* under the looser title "Men of the Unseen" (presumably *rijāl al-ghayb*)—see *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 70.

[134] The Bāb, *Ṣaḥīfa-yi ʿadliyya*, pp. 20–33, especially pp. 29–31.

[135] Idem, quoted Qurrat al-ʿAyn (1), *Risāla*, in Māzandarānl, *Ẓuhūr al-Ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 250. (This *Risāla* is also reproduced in *Nivishtijāt*, pp. 310–332; this reference p. 317.)

[136] Quoted al-Karbalāʾī, *Risāla*, in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 248.

[137] Quoted ibid.

[138] See note 31. See further Rajab ʿAlī Qahīr, *Risāla*, f. 30b–31a. This theory may owe something to the frequent use of the mirror analogy by Ibn al-ʿArabī. See Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Bezels*, pp. 50–51, 233; cf. Austin's comments, ibid., p. 48.

outlined by al-Aḥsāʾī in his account of the hierarchy of knowledge.[139] "If," says the Bāb, "unnumbered mirrors were to be placed before him [i.e., the *maẓhar*] and he were to decree prophethood [for them], they would be prophets (*rasūl*); and if unnumbered mirrors were to stand in front of them and he were to decree guardianship [for them], they would be guardians (*awliyāʾ*); and if unnumbered mirrors were to stand before them and he were to decree directorship, the would be directors (*naqīb*); and if unnumbered mirrors were to stand before them and he were to decree nobility, they would be nobles (*najīb*); and likewise for every goodly name."[140]

This sequence of primary, secondary, tertiary, and other mirrors is, according to the Bāb, an actual characteristic of every revelationary cycle, not only in the lifetime of the prophet (who is the primary mirror) but throughout the subsequent period, leading up to the reappearance of the Primal Will in another prophet. "Consider," he says, "the revelation of the prophet Muḥammad, how many mirrors appeared up until the time when God manifested the Point of the Bayān.... Similarly, behold in the Bayān, from the first moment that God sent it down upon the Primal Point until the time of the next resurrection, wherein God shall manifest him whom God shall manifest ... all the pure glasses that have appeared, all the untouchable mirrors that have reflected ..."[141] In a lengthier passage, he describes the relationship between the primary and the other mirrors: God, he says, "has singled out from his creation a mirror indicating his firstness and his lastness, his appearance and his concealment, and has established it as his Will, inasmuch as it has only wished for that which he has wished.... In this mirror there is seen nothing but his most holy essence.... This mirror has appeared from the beginning that has no beginning in every revelation (*ẓuhūr*) with a (different) name, and in every period of concealment (*buṭūn*) it has manifested itself on (different) thrones."[142] Although they are innumerable, these mirrors are but a single mirror in which God alone can be seen.[143] All other mirrors exist in the shadow of this single mirror and are all manifestations (*tajalliyyāt*) of it.[144] This, however, raises the question of

[139] See note 117.
[140] The Bāb, *Panj shaʾn*, p. 102.
[141] Ibid., pp. 162–63.
[142] Ibid., p. 133. On God's singling out a mirror from all creation, see ibid., pp. 120, 132, 141, 149. On the significance of the *buṭūn*, see below.
[143] Ibid., p. 133.
[144] Ibid., p. 134.

how there can be a multiplicity of mirrors in any one dispensation—to which the Bāb replies that in each revelation the "speaker" (*nāṭiq*, the primary manifestation of the divine Will),[145] which is a mirror showing the "manifest exaltation" of the *ẓuhūr*, summons men to the revelation, while all the secondary mirrors to be illumined in that *ẓuhūr* summon others to the primary mirror.[146] God, indeed, wishes to see innumerable secondary mirrors placed beneath the shadow of the first, all of them remaining entirely dependent on it.[147]

This hierarchical principle is precisely observed in the Bābī dispensation. God, says the Bāb, created him and made him the mirror of his self, after which unlimited secondary mirrors were created from him. Out of these latter, God again selected a single mirror to be a mirror for himself, causing it to speak on his behalf and to act as a locus (*maqām*) for his revelation and concealment. From this secondary mirror in turn other mirrors are to be brought into existence, all of them calling men to God, informing them about him and guiding them to him.[148] This sequence is described in detail in a subsequent passage:

God, praised be he, has singled out in this revelation an untouchable mirror and an exalted glass in which the sun of reality is reflected, upon which the point of divinity has shone, and in which the real being of eternity is displayed.... This mirror shall be reflected in (another) mirror, which mirror shall be reflected in (another) mirror, which mirror shall be reflected in (another) mirror, which mirror shall be reflected in (another) mirror. Even were it to make mention (of these mirrors) to the end that has no end, the accounting of my heart would not be free of those shining reflections, those ascending manifestations. But until now only that (original) mirror has appeared with pure innate capacity (*fiṭra mahda*)."[149]

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[145] The term *nāṭiq*, together with its corollary *al-sāmiṭ*, ("the silent one"), is, of course, well known in Ismailism, although it finds a certain usage in Imāmi Shiʿism as well. Al-Ahsāʾī speaks of the appearance of a *nāṭiq* and *sāmiṭ* in each age (*Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 3, p. 151).

[146] The Bāb, *Panj shaʾn*, p. 134.

[147] Ibid., p. 135. On the dependence and indirectness of the secondary and subsequent mirrors, see ibid., p. 217 and idem, *Bayān-i fārsī*, 6:7, p. 208.

[148] Idem, *Panj shan*, pp. 149–50.

[149] Ibid., pp. 199–201. It is unclear from the context whether the first mirror here refers to the Bāb himself or to another individual, possibly Ṣubḥ-i Azal. There are certainly references elsewhere to the latter's possession of *fiṭra*.

This series of reflecting mirrors parallels and is in some ways closely linked to the better-known hierarchical system of Babism composed of "letters" (*ḥurūf*), "unities" (*wāḥid*), and "all things" (*kullu shayʾ*). Together with the Báb himself, the eighteen "Letters of the Living" formed the "first unity" (*al-wāḥid al-awwal*)[150] of the Bayān. It seems to have been the Báb's intention to establish a complete and identifiable hierarchy based on the multiplication of "unities" (*wāhid*), beginning with the Letters of the Living. According to Zarandī, the Báb instructed his first disciples to record the names of those whom they converted, lists of which were to be forwarded to him via his uncle in Shiraz. These lists were to be classified by the Báb into "eighteen sets of nineteen names each," each set constituting a single "unity" and the total, together with the first "unity" coming to 361, the number of "all things" (i.e., the numerical equivalent of the phrase *kullu shayʾ*).[151] Although the Báb's later writings continue to contain complex references to this overall concept, there is no evidence that his original object was ever attained or that the classification of "unities" proceeded as planned. Nevertheless, there are references to a "second unity" (*al-wāḥid al-thāni*), which included the Bábī leader Sayyid Yaḥyā Dārābī, Vahīd,[152] and to "unities" other than the first,[153] and it seems likely that the Báb retained hopes of ultimately organizing his followers according to this scheme.

A related but more complex concept, which I cannot claim to understand or be able to explain fully at this point, is that of mirrors reflecting the letters of the unities or the unities in general. This idea is expressed simply (but unfortunately without any reference) by the Bahāʾī writer Ishrāq-Khāvarī, who states that the Báb "established eighteen mirrors beneath the shadow of each of the Letters of the Living, in order that they might form the number of *wahīd* (19) together with the Letters of the Living."[154] This seems to be related to the progressive development

[150] On the use of *al-wāḥid al-awwal*, see the Báb, *al-Bayān al-ʿarabī*, 1:1, p. 3; idem, *Haykal al-dīn*, 1:12, p. 3.

[151] Nabil, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 123. Cf. A. L. M. Nicolas (trans.), *Le Béyan Persan*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1911–1914), vol. 1, pp. 7–9, f.n., 13, f.n. On the relationship of this system to the Bábī calendar, see the Báb, *Bayān-i fārsī*, 5:3, p. 153. There are parallels to the *kullu shayʾ* total in various Sufi theories, including Rūzbihān Baqlī Shirāzi's concept of 366 saints linked to the hearts of various prophets. (See H. Corbin, *L'homme de lumiere dans le Soufisme Iranien* [Paris, 1971]), p. 83.

[152] Rajab ʿAlī Qahīr, *Risāla*, f.43b.

[153] The Báb, *al-Bayān al-ʿarabi*, 8:16, p. 38.

[154] ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Ishrāq-Khāvarī, *Raḥīq-i makhtūm*, 2 vols. (Tehran, 1974–75), vol. 1, p. 338.

of the Bāb's claims, as he himself indicates in the *Panj shaʾn*: "I revealed myself in the gates for four years, and it is necessary that a mirror be found for each letter, that it may be a place of manifestation (*maẓhar*) for those letters.[155] This sense of progression is emphasized in the following passage:

> You revealed me in the name of your gates for that number [i.e., the number of years corresponding to them], 4; wherefore, create, O my God, for each unity an untouchable mirror that may reflect your essence, and an exalted glass that may guide (men) to your oneness. Then you removed the honour of that garment and raised me up from that inaccessible horizon and revealed me in the guides to your guardianship (*fī adillāʾ wilāyatika*) and the names of your unity. Wherefore, create, O my God, in each year for each unity an untouchable mirror and an exalted glass that will reflect from my self in all the grades of your power and the manifestations of your glory.[156]

Or again:

> I bear witness that God manifested me in the gates for the number of [the letter] *dāl* [i.e., 4], in which we remained speaking; and since my self has recognized all things, it is necessary that that mirror be reflected by (another) mirror…, indeed it is necessary that there be found in each year a mirror for each manifestation of the guides of the unity (*adillāʾ al-wāḥid*).[157]

What this appears to mean is that the Bāb hoped a fresh mirror would be found to reflect each of the original Letters of the Living every year, in this way creating new unities, leading ultimately to the creation of one or more *kullu shayʾ*. It would, however, take a total of three hundred and sixty-one years to reach the first *kullu shayʾ* in this way. If, on the other hand, we think of an exponential progression, with each new unity generating subsidiary unities every year, numerous *kullu shayʾ* would rapidly come into being.

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[155] The Bāb, *Panj shaʾn*, p. 280. The sentence following this seems to me extremely significant, but it is, I fear, very difficult to interpret owing to the vagueness of verbs and pronouns in it. A tentative translation would continue the passage as follows: "for after I stripped off that garment [i.e., *Bābiyya*] and revealed myself in the name of messiahhood (*al-maqṣūdiyya*) and the status of the promised one (*al-mawʿūdiyya*), it was necessary that one of its temples (*min hayākilihā* [reading *hā* as a pronoun, although it is written as if separate—"one of the temples of *hāʾ*?) should put it (*al-Bābiyya*?]) on." Mullā Rajab ʿAlī Qahr omits the *hā* (or *hāʾ*) in his quotation of this passage. (*Risāla*, f. 76b)

[156] The Bāb, *Panj shaʾn*, pp. 184–85.

[157] Ibid., pp. 256–57. Also quoted Rajab ʿAlī Qahīr, *Risāla*, f. 76b.

Possibly related to the above concept is that of the regular appearance throughout the Bābī dispensation of temples (*hayākil*, sg. *haykal*), apparently manifestations of each of the members of the first unity: "Nurture, O God, the tree of the Bayān until the day of him you will manifest; and cause to appear, O God, at the beginning of every (period of) sixty-six years a temple belonging to the temples of the unity, that they may raise up your paths in the Bayān [i.e., promulgate the Bābī laws] and take hold of what you decreed from your horizons in the Bayān until the day your heaven, your earth, and all that is between them shall be illumined by the appearance of him whom you will manifest"[158] The significance of this is somewhat clearer than that of the foregoing. In the course of his lengthy and complex discussion of the significance of "temples" in the last sections of the *Panj shaʾn*,[159] the Bāb says that every sixty-six years of the Qurʾānic era passed about one letter of the first "unity".[160] Significantly, the Bāb compares the first temple (the locus of the Primal Will) and the eighteen temples beneath it to the sun and the mirrors reflecting it.[161] It is unclear what the relationship between the two ideas must be, but in the *Haykal al-dīn* (Temple of religion), the Bāb orders the renewal of all books every sixty-six years.[162] Perhaps the idea is that fresh knowledge will be revealed every sixty-six years and that, therefore, all previous books will become worthless.

It is far from clear to what extent the Bāb wished to formalize this system. Many of the references to *adillāʾ, shuhadāʾ*, and *marāyāʾ* seem quite general and open-ended. At the same time, there are hints that some sort of organization was to be introduced. In the Arabic Bayān and the *Haykal al-dīn*, for example, the Bāb describes the division of the spoils of war to various groups, including "the first letters" (*al-ḥurūf al-ūlā*) and "the witnesses" (*al-shuhadāʾ*).[163] In the Persian and Arabic Bayāns

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[158] The Bāb, *Ṣalāt-i Hayākil*, quoted ibid., f. 58a; also quoted ʿIzziyya Khānum, *Tanbīḥ al-nāʾimīn*, p. 50. The number 66 equals the word *allāh*. There may be eschatological significance in the period of sixty-six years. Shiʿi tradition refers to the "year 66" in an eschatological context. (See al-Aḥsāʾī, "ʿIṣma wa rajʿa," *Jawāmiʿ*, vol. 1, part 1, p. 84.)

[159] On which see my paper, "Nineteenth-century Bābī talīsmans" [reprinted in this volume].

[160] The Bāb, *Panj shaʾn*, p. 408. The passage is obscure. Sixty-six years for each letter comes to only 1254, which does not seem to be a significant year.

[161] Ibid., p. 412. Cf. idem, *al-Bayān al-ʿarabī*, 5:10, p. 11, where the *hayākil al-ḥayy* (i.e., Letters of the Living) are described as mirrors before the "sun of the point" (*shams al-nuqṭa*).

[162] The Bāb, *Haykal al-dīn*, 7:1, p. 27.

[163] Ibid., 5:6, p. 6; idem, *al-Bayān al-ʿarabī*, 5:6, p. 19.

the Báb lays down general rules for the distribution of tax revenue to the members of the unities, as well as the descendants of the Letters of the Living.[164] In one place, he instructs future Bábí kings to select twenty-five individuals from the ulamá who are "horizons of the letters" (*maṭāliʿ al-ḥurūf* ) to teach the people.[165]

## Long-Term Eschatological Expectations

Whether organized or not, the concept of guides and witnesses is closely linked to the Báb's anticipation of the eschatological events related to the appearance of the next locus of the Primal Will, generally referred to in his writings as "he whom God shall manifest" (*man yuẓhiruhu 'llāh*). The Báb expected his laws and teachings to be preserved and promulgated in the long term by a succession of guides who would eventually lead men to the recognition of the next prophet. It is, as we have noted previously, a basic Shiʿi principle that there must always be a divine proof (*ḥujja*) for creation. The Báb himself emphasizes this doctrine in a highly important passage of the *Panj shaʾn*, which I shall quote almost in full:

> Know that [it is the case in each manifestation (*ẓuhūr*) that, until the creation of that manifestation has reached the limits of perfection, the divine Will and eternal Volition of the Living One will not return to men. From the beginning of each manifestation to the day of the next manifestation, all the guides that appear always have affirmed and always will affirm the acceptance of that revelation; and they have been and will be the ornaments embellishing that period of concealment [*buṭūn*; i.e., between revelations]. They are all mirrors reflecting the sun of oneness belonging to that manifestation and shining glasses displaying the Countenance of that concealment.
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> And know that there has always been and always will be a proof on the part of the God unto his creation, for all things exist through the Will of God; indeed, it cannot be imagined that there should at any time be a thing and the proof for it on the part of God not be complete.... Just as the Living One has always existed, so there has ever been established the existence of the throne of reality among created beings. Throughout eternity his station has always existed, except that in the day of resurrection (*yawm-i qiyāmat*) he is manifest and shining above the horizon (*mashriq*), while in the days of his setting ( *ghurūb*) he is knowing and hidden.

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[164] Ibid., 8:16, p. 38; idem, *Bayān-i fārsī*, 8:16, p. 300.
[165] Idem, *al-Bayān al-ʿarabī*, 11:2, p. 54.

> Yet during the period of his concealment, there have been and shall be guides to his cause in each manifestation who have preserved and shall preserve his religion. And there have been and shall be witnesses to creation on his part. These are the lights of guidance in the night of nights, through whom all (others) are guided.[166]

Referring to the questions of how long a period will elapse between his revelation and that of him whom God shall manifest, the Bāb states that, in every manifestation God chooses for the locus of manifestation guides, witnesses, preservers (*ḥuffāẓ*), and forerunners (*ruwwād*)[167] who preserve God's laws from manifestation to manifestation and summon men to God from concealment to concealment.[168] It is men's duty to recognize the "throne of revelation" in each manifestation and cling, in each concealment, "to the guides of the one veiled in that manifestation."[169]

It is clear that this principle is also to obtain in the period between the manifestation of the Bāb and that of him whom God shall manifest. "In the days of God," the Bāb writes, "every glass that rises up will be a guide to him whom God shall manifest and all shall reflect him."[170] "While the sun is shining [i.e., while the Bāb still lives], let you all obtain illumination from its light. But after that, he who recites[171] the verses of God in their true nature (*bi-fitratihā*), may you obtain illumination from their [the verses] light. And if after that there should shine forth one like him, then you shall be guided by one like him and shall shine with the light of God, until such time as the unity is complete, whereupon the affair shall return to God."[172]

This last passage seems to be made even clearer in the following lines from a letter of the Bāb's to Mīrzā Ibrāhīm Qazvīnī, to whom he writes: "The cause shall reach the Name *al-Waḥīd* [i.e., Mīrzā Yaḥyā Ṣubḥ-i Azal], for his appearance in himself is a proof; and after him, should God reveal one like him possessed of proof, it [the cause] shall reach him; otherwise the cause is in the hands of the witnesses in the Bayān, until

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[166] Idem, *Panj shaʾn*, p. 209. On the *ḥujja* as single with other *ḥujaj* in its shadow, see ibid., p. 136.

[167] He also mentions *qunnād*, the meaning of which is unclear.

[168] The Bāb, *Panj shaʾn*, p. 199. Cf. ibid., p. 247.

[169] Ibid., p. 381.

[170] Ibid., p. 258. Cf. ibid., p. 176.

[171] Reading the *nūn* of the verb as emphatic, in order to provide a singular for the imminent pronoun *hu*.

[172] Passage from untitled word of the Bāb, quoted Rajab ʿAlī, *Risāla*, f. 60a.

the day of him whom God shall manifest in the next resurrection."[173] It seems evident, then, that the Báb anticipated some form of continuing *ḥujjiyya*, mediated at first through single individuals and then, if necessary, through the "witnesses" in general. That this was so is emphasized by his statement to the effect that "the creation shall be in the night of nights just as it was after Muḥammad, until you [God] show beneficence towards them through the manifestation of your self in the day of resurrection."[174]

A crucial question, of course, was that of how long the period of concealment between the Báb's death and the appearance of him whom God shall manifest would be. Although it cannot be proved, I am of the opinion that this did not actually become an issue until the mid-1860s, when conflicting Azalī and Bahā'ī claims about the length or brevity of this period raised it to a central position in the debate between these two factions. The Báb's own writings, as we have seen, imply an interval similar to that between any two previous prophets. The reference to temples appearing every sixty-six years would seem to preclude any manifestation before at least one such period. More telling are the numerous passages that anticipate the appearance of Bábī kings,[175] ministers, governors, and ulamā;[176] or the conquest of the entire earth by the Bábīs;[177] or the general application of Bábī laws, including that of pilgrimage; or the construction of mosques and tombs; or the levying of taxes; or the regulation of trade—all of which necessitate the existence of a developed and stable Bábī state.

Indeed, some of the Báb's laws, such as the regulations that books must be renewed every 66 or 202 years[178] or that furniture must be replaced every 19 years,[179] of themselves imply a long-term outlook on his part. But perhaps the clearest indication of the minimum time-scale anticipated by the Báb is to be found in a passage of the *Haykal al-dīn*

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[173] Letter to Mírzá Ibráhim Qazvínī, in the Báb and Núrī, *Majmūʿa'ī az āthār*, p. 38. On the use of "al-wāḥid" as a title of Ṣubḥ-i Azal, see Browne, "The Babis of Persia. II," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 21 (1889) pp. 996–97.

[174] The Báb, passage from *Kitāb al-asmā'*, quoted Rajab ʿAlī Qahīr, *Risāla*, f. 20b.

[175] See, for example, the Báb, *Bayān-i fārsī*, 4:5, pp. 119–20; 5:5, pp. 157, 158; 7:16, p. 262; idem, *al-Bayān al-ʿarabī*, 9:3, p. 41; 11:2, p. 54; 11:13, p. 58; 11:16, p. 60; idem, *Haykal al-dīn*, 1:16, p. 4; 5:19, p. 9; 3:11, p. 11; 4:9, p. 15; 7:9, p. 29; 7:16, p. 31.

[176] See, for example, the Báb, *al-Bayān al-ʿarabī*, 10:16, p. 50; 10:17, p. 51; 11:2, p. 54; idem, *Haykal al-dīn*, 3:11, p. 11; t:16, p. 31.

[177] See, for example, ibid., 5:5, p. 6; 5:19, p. 9; 4:9, p. 15.

[178] Ibid., 7:1, p. 27.

[179] Idem, *al-Bayān al-ʿarabī*, 9:14, p. 43.

which, in spite of its obscurities, is quite explicit as to the number of years involved.

> If he [God] wished, he could decree more than a "unity"; and if he desires he is capable [of revealing] until the day of resurrection thrones of the living (*aʿrāsh ḥayy*, [sic]); and if he wishes he will command you (to obey/follow?) one whose knowledge encompasses the laws of the Bayān after the sun has set. After six hundred and sixty-two years have elapsed of the Bayān, present yourselves before your ruler (*malikikum*, God?) every eleven years (?, *fī iḥdā ashar sana*, [sic]), then praise [him?], that you may thus present yourselves before him whom God shall manifest.[180]

It is worth referring, even if only in passing, to the vexed question of the terms *aghyāth* (pl. of *ghiyāth*) and *mustaghāth*, which are used by the Bāb in the Persian *Bayān* in connection with the appearance of him whom God shall manifest.[181] The most important passage in which the terms are used is in the sixteenth *bāb* of the second *wāḥid*:

> I promise the people of the Bayān that if, at the time of the appearance of him whom God shall manifest, you should all attain to that mightier paradise [i.e., belief in him] and that greater meeting, you shall be blessed, you shall be blessed, you shall be blessed. Otherwise, should you hear that a revelation has appeared with the signs of the former (revelation), in the number of God the Most Succouring (*al-ghiyāth* = 1511), let you all enter in. If that should not take place and it has reached the number of the name of God the Beseeched (*al-mustaghāth* = 2001), and if you should hear that a Point has appeared yet you have not all been convinced, have mercy on yourselves and all in your entirety enter beneath the shadow of that manifest Point.... If you do not hear [that he has appeared], then abase yourself and offer up supplications that the grace of God may not be cut off from you until [the time of] *mustaghāth*. And if you hear between now and *mustaghāth* that he who is my beloved and your beloved, my sovereign and your sovereign, has appeared, do not hesitate even for a single second, but enter you all together beneath God's shadow.... O People of the Bayān, if anyone should hesitate even to take one breath after two thousand and one years, he shall without question no longer belong to the religion of the Bayān and shall enter hell.[182]

Bahāʾī writers have, I think, been correct in pointing out that the two figures of 1511 and 2001 years represent the latest date at which the

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[180] Idem, *Haykal al-dīn*, 1:16, p. 4.

[181] This topic has been discussed previously by several writers, including E. G. Browne (*Nuqṭat al-kāf*, pp. XXV–XXVI) *Ishrāq-Khāvarī* (*Raḥīq*, vol. 2, pp. 514–25) and Māzandarānī (*Asrār*, vol. 4, pp. 427–28).

[182] The Bāb, *Bayān-i fārsī*, 2:16, pp. 61–62. See also ibid., 2:17, p. 71; 3:15, p. 100; 7:10, p. 252.

next manifestation was to appear, and in stressing that the Báb himself held that only God knew the time of the revelation and that, whatever the date, all were obliged to recognize him whom God shall manifest when he came. At the same time, whatever later interpretations of these passages may suggest, it is highly unlikely that much or any early Bábí opinion anticipated the next manifestation before the passage of a considerable period of time, and certainly not as soon as the ninth or nineteenth year after the Báb's own appearance.[184]

It is also, I think, obvious that it is impossible to maintain that the Báb clearly foretold the year of the appearance of him whom God shall manifest or identified him with a living individual, and at the same time to hold that he set no time at all or, indeed, that he felt some need to refer to the latest date of the manifestation as 1511 or 2001 years in the future.

Early Bábí opinion as to the probable lateness of the next manifestation would have been reinforced by numerous statements of the Báb, particularly in the *Panj shaʾn*, to the effect that, unless the creation begun under one manifestation has reached a state of completion (or perfection), the next manifestation will not arrive.[185] Such statements are almost without exception accompanied by references to the guides or mirrors who will appear to preserve the faith throughout the time of concealment. This principle of completeness preceding the recreation of all things in a new revelation[186] is stated explicitly to apply to the Bábí dispensation:

> Unless the creation of the Bayān reaches perfection, God shall not manifest him—do you not see? All who shall appear before his appearance are guides to the fact that there is no God but him and that all are his servants."[187] "God knows the period (that will elapse) between the Point of the Bayān and him whom he shall manifest; but if the creation in any given manifestation does not reach perfection, God will not manifest the

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[183] Ibid., 3:15, p. 100; 7:10, p. 252.

[184] There is evidence that Bahāʾ Allāh himself may have originally held this view. In the *Lawḥ kull al-ṭaʿām* he writes "O Kamāl, were I to explain this verse to you from today until the days reach *al-mustaghāth*, the day when men shall stand before the face of the Living, the Creator, I would be able to do so through what God has given me of his grace and bounty." (In Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Māʾida*, vol. 4, pp. 272–73.) The implication seems to be that the time-span involved is one of great duration.

[185] The Báb, *Panj shaʾn*, pp. 162, 198, 208, 315.

[186] "In every *ẓuhūr* God renews the creation of all things." (Ibid., p. 352)

[187] Ibid., p. 176; cf. p. 194. Cf. idem, *Kitāb al-asmāʾ*, quoted by Rajab ʿAlī Qahīr, *Risāla*, f. 58b.

> locus of the revelation of himself in the next manifestation.[188] "Today," he says, "the Bayān is in a state of seed; but at the beginning of the revelation of him whom God shall manifest, there will be the final perfection of the Bayān.[189]

Related in some way to this notion of increased perfection (which has important analogies in other aspects of Bābī doctrine)[190] is the concept that, as a revelation progresses, time becomes increasingly thin or subtle to the point that a fresh locus of manifestation has to appear. This idea may have been derived by the Bāb from Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī, who employs it in relation to the appearance of the Twelfth Imām. According to al-Aḥsā'ī, the beginning and end of time are both subtle (*laṭīf*), while its middle is dense. As men draw closer to the time of the Imām's appearance, time becomes increasingly subtle until he finally returns.[191] This appears to be linked to the theory that the heavens move quickly during a time of injustice and slowly during a period of justice, so that, when the Qā'im appears, a year will equal ten normal years.[192] Al-Aḥsā'ī also believed that, when the Qā'im appeared, the heavens would return to their original position and commence their second revolution.[193]

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[188] The Bāb, *Panj sha'n*, p. 315.

[189] Idem, *Bayān-i fārsī*, 2:7, p. 31.

[190] Thus, he states that all things culminate in the form of man and that man progresses from level to level until he reaches perfection as a prophet (*Bayān-i fārsī*, 2:1, pp. 14–15); men are singled out from the rest of creation and purified by the prophets (*Panj sha'n*, p. 205); the Bāb himself has been raised through increasingly exalted stations (ibid., pp. 184–85); clay will progress to stages of increasing refinement through the alchemical process (ibid., p. 337); the inhabitants of hell in a subsequent revelation possess a station higher than those of paradise in the one before (ibid., p. 426—but cf. p. 403); divine knowledge is revealed progressively (ibid., p. 100); the words of the manifestation in each revelation are more exalted than in the previous one (*Bayān-i fārsī*, 3:1, p. 79); each revelation is the same as the one before, but nobler (ibid., 3:1, pp. 79–80; cf. 4:11, p. 136); the successive manifestations resemble a child at various states of its growth (ibid., 3:12, p. 95); the paradise of each thing lies in its perfection (ibid., 5:3, p. 155); each thing has its degree of perfection in which a divine name may be applied to it (ibid., 5:6, p. 164); as the ages progress, the time will come when nothing is named save by a divine name (ibid., 5:4, p. 155); if it be in anyone's power to do a thing to perfection, he must not leave any shortcomings in it (ibid., 6:3, p. 192.

[191] Al-Aḥsā'ī, "Al-Risāla al-Rashtīyya," in *Jawāmi'*, vol. 1, part 2, p. 103. Al-Ahsā'ī states elsewhere that time (*zamān*) may be subtle (*laṭif*), dense (*ghālī*;), simple (*bāsiṭ*), or compound (*murakkab*). (See *Sharh al-ziyāra*, vol. 3, p. 305.)

[192] Idem, "'Iṣma wa raj'a," in *Jawāmi'*, vol. 1, part 1, p. 82. This idea is in itself linked to Ibn Sinā's theory that the measurement of time depends upon motion, time being the quantity or measure of motion. (See Sayyed Hossein Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, [Cambridge, Mass., 1864], pp. 224–25.)

[193] Al-Ahsā'ī, "'Iṣma wa raj'a," in *Jawāmi'*, vol. 1, part 1, p. 62.

It certainly seems that al-Aḥsāʾī conceived of time as essentially single, beginning with the creation and culminating in the appearance of the Hidden Imām. The Bāb, however, while borrowing the idea that time becomes increasingly fine, sees this as a process that recommences with every fresh revelation of the Primal Will. "In every manifestation, when the era (*kūr*) has reached the extremity of fineness and the cycle (*tūr*) [has reached] the utmost degree of thinness, he [God] has manifested himself to his creation in the throne he has chosen from among men, the seat he has selected from among his servants."[194] Thus, time became increasingly subtle through the 1,270 years of the Islamic era until God revealed the Bāb,[195] so that time is now in a state of subtlety.[196] Since the Bāb elsewhere states that God nurtured men for 1,270 years,[197] it seems evident that the processes of temporal refinement and gradual perfecting are assumed to go hand in hand during the period of concealment.

Finally, it is worth noting in passing that the Bāb hinted more than once that the time of the appearance of him whom God shall manifest could, in fact, be calculated in advance: "The length of time from this revelation to the revelation of him whom God shall manifest is known to God. But it is possible for men to know it from what they deduce through the science of letters [gematria]. Should God give anyone that knowledge in its entirety, he will make his deduction just as those who deduced [the time of] the revelation of the Point of the Bayān from poems."[198] "The period separating one manifestation from another," he says, "is known only to God or to those to whom God has given the science of letters in its entirety ."[199] Among other things, the final sections of the *Panj shaʾn* are devoted to the revelation of the science of letters, with the aim of enabling men to recognize him whom God was to manifest on his appearance. And it seems to be the case that speculation employing gematria was used by many Bābīs in an attempt to "decipher" the rather abstruse statements found in these passages.[200]

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[194] The Bāb, *Panj shaʾn*, p. 248.

[195] Ibid., p. 319. The Bāb consistently dates the Islamic era, not from the *hijra* in 622, but to the prophet's *baʿtha*, ten years previously.

[196] Ibid., p. 215.

[197] Ibid., p. 311.

[198] Ibid., p. 199.

[199] Ibid., p. 315. Cf. idem, *Bayān-i fārsī*, 7:10, p. 252.

[200] See my paper "Nineteenth-century Bābī talismans." For examples of prophetic interpretation of some passages in this part of the *Panj shaʾn*, see Mīrzā Ḥusayn ʿAlī Nūrī, Bahāʾ Allāh, letter to Muballigh-i Shirāzi, Iran National Bahāʾī Archives, MS 3003C (incorrectly catalogued as a work of the Bāb).

## Short-Term Eschatological Expectations

If, as I think is correct, the vast majority (if not all) of the Bābīs in the period after the Bāb's death regarded the next manifestation as an event that would occur in the distant future, possibly as much as 2001 years away, what did they expect to happen in the immediate future—in the next ten or twenty years, let us say? I should like to look at one or two indications that there was some kind of messianic expectation in primitive Babism, even after the Bāb's own claims had reached their highest point. This was, as I propose to demonstrate, largely rooted in Shiʿi eschatological theory and in various allusions in the writings of the Bāb himself. But I think it can also be attributed in part to the actual conditions of Babism in the 1850s.

The sharp contrast between Shiʿi messianic expectations relating to the earthly triumph of the Qāʾim and the rapid establishment of a reign of justice under his government, on the one hand, and the physical destruction of the Bāb and his leading followers, on the other, must have been a tremendous shock to the large numbers who had put their faith in the Bāb as their messiah. In such a situation, the failure of prophecy will provoke a variety of responses: the abandonment of belief, more intense faith, or readjustment or rationalization of the content of the prophecy that has been deemed to have failed. Rather than simply resign themselves to the failure of their immediate hopes and patiently await the coming of him whom God shall manifest, it is probable that a large part of the Bābī community would have looked for further eschatological events and personages in the present. Shiʿi prophecy relating to the events surrounding the appearance of the Qāʾim, Muḥammad, and the other Imāms is extremely flexible and open to varying interpretation. Even such a devout believer in the validity of Shiʿi traditions as Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī was forced to admit that the prophetic traditions were full of irreconcilable contradictions.[201] It is, therefore, possible to create a variety of scenarios for events to come, each of which can be justified by reference to different prophecies. I do not wish to enter into a detailed discussion of these prophecies here—the interested reader may find adequate information in the standard works[202]—but instead to draw

[201] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 3, pp. 63, 87, 115, 120.

[202] See ibid., vol. 3, pp. 54–121; idem., "ʿIṣma wa rajʿa," in *Jawāmiʿ*, vol. 1, part 1, pp. 38–111; Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisi, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 102 vols. (Tehran, 1384/1964), vol. 53; Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism*, chapter 5.

attention to one or two that may be particularly relevant to our present discussion.

According to a number of traditions, the Qāʾim will be the first of the Imāms to return to earth,[203] after which he will rule for seven or nine years, each of which will be the equivalent of ten normal years.[204] Al-Aḥsāʾī expresses a definite preference for the figure seven (seventy).[205] After fifty-nine years of the Qāʾim's rule have passed, the Imām Ḥusayn will come forth; he will remain silent (*sāmiṭ*) for eleven years (i.e., until the year seventy), whereupon the Qāʾim will be killed and his place taken by Ḥusayn for nineteen years until the appearance of ʿAlī.[206]

Now, it was true that the Qāʾim (i.e., the Bāb) had been put to death in the sixth (thus, sixtieth) year of his "reign." The logical conclusion must, therefore, have been that the Imām Ḥusayn would now appear to take over the task he had begun. However, this did not tally very well with strict Bābī theory. The Bāb had, as we have seen, stated categorically that the Imām Ḥusayn had already returned to earth along with Muḥammad, Fāṭima, the other Imāms, and the four Gates. In at least one place, moreover, he had gone on to say that "whoever awaits, after this, the appearance of the Mahdī or the return (*rajʿa*) of Muḥammad or one of those who have believed in God or his verses, is of those who possess no knowledge—this shall be so until the day when God causes me and those who have believed in me to return. That shall be the day of resurrection, when all shall be in a new creation."[207] Since the letter in which this passage occurs is known to have been widely spread among the Bābis, we must assume that this clear rejection of further "returns" was reasonably well known within the community.

And yet it must have been tempting to ignore it or interpret it away, for the Shiʿi prophecies did not speak of all the sacred figures of Islam returning at once, and it was well known that ʿAlī in particular was expected to have "two returns."[208] There were, moreover, hints in the Bāb's writings that further eschatological events could after all be anticipated in the very near future. These hints are far from easy to disentangle, but I shall attempt to give some idea of what they involved.

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[203] Al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 3, p. 57.
[204] Ibid., pp. 57–58. Other figures are also given, including 203, 309, 19, and 70.
[205] Ibid., pp. 58, 60.
[206] Ibid., p. 60.
[207] The Bāb, letter to Mullā Shaykh ʿAlī Turshīzī, ʿAẓīm, in the Bāb and Yazdī, *Qismatī az alwāḥ*, p. 13.
[208] See, for example, al-Aḥsāʾī *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 3, p. 60.

Let me begin by looking at a passage of the *Dalāʾil-i sabʿa* where the Báb commences by quoting part of the well-known Shiʿi tradition, the "Ḥādīth Kumayl," interspersing his citations with references to each of the first five years of his prophetic mission. Thus, in the first year there occurred "the uncovering of the veils of glory, without any indication," in the second "the extinction of what was doubtful and the clarification of what was known," in the third "the rending of the veil through the overcoming of the mystery," in the fourth "the attraction of oneness to the attribute of singleness," and in the fifth "a light shone out of the morning of eternity (*ṣubḥ al-azal*) upon the tabernacles of oneness."[209] He concludes by telling his correspondent that he will indeed see the light from the morning of eternity if he does not despair.[210]

Immediately after this, the Báb turns to examine a phrase in a morning prayer (*duʿā al-saḥar*) written by the Imām Bāqir, which begins with the well-known words "O God, I beseech you by your beauty (*bahāʾika*) in its most beautiful [aspect], and by all your resplendent beauty. O God, I beseech you by all of your beauty."[211] According to the Báb's interpretation, this first section of the prayer refers to Muḥammad, the next to ʿAlī, up to the fifth section (which begins, "I beseech you, 0 my God, by your light [*nūrika*] in its most luminous aspect"), is a reference to the Imām Ḥusayn.[212] Identification of the word light (*nūr*) with Ḥusayn occurs elsewhere in the Báb's writings[213] and can, therefore, be regarded as entirely normal in the present context. Although he does not say so explicitly, it is clear that he is linking the light that occurs in the fifth phrase of the "Ḥadīth Kumayl" (and hence in the fifth year of his mission) with the light that is mentioned in the *duʿā al-saḥar* and which is identified with the Imām Ḥusayn. In other words, the Imām Ḥusayn is the light that "shone out of the morning of eternity."

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[209] The Báb, *Dalāʾil*, p. 58.

[210] Ibid.

[211] Ibid.

[212] Ibid. This is explained metaphorically in terms of light as a lamp burning itself in order to give illumination to others (just as Ḥusayn sacrificed himself), pp. 58–59. It also appears to be numerologically true, since "Ḥusayn" (128) when doubled equals *nār* (256). It is conceivable that the doubling in this case is an allusion to Ḥusayn's return. For the text of the *Duʿā al-sabāḥ* together with a commentary, see Ḥājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī, *Sharḥ duʿā al-sabāḥ* (Kerman, n.d.). Kirmāni identifies the *nūr* outwardly with the Fourth Support (*rukn al-rābiʿ*) and inwardly with the Qāʾim. (See ibid., pp. 61, 62.)

[213] See the Báb, *Panj shaʾn*, pp. 294, 321.

Following this, the Báb quotes a short passage from a letter written by Shaykh Ahmad al-Aḥsāʾī to Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, ending with the words: "You shall know his call after a time (*baʿda ḥīn*)."[214] This is not the first time the phrase *baʿda ḥīn* occurs in the *Dalāʾil-i sabʿa*: several pages earlier, the Báb cites two passages from the *Khuṭba al-tuṭunjiyya* attributed to the Imām ʿAlī, in the second of which the following words occur: "After a time you shall possess a new thing (*ṭurfa*) through which you shall know part of the explanation. Thereupon the regions shall be tongue-tied through men summoning others to every vanity. Beware, beware, and expect the appearance of the greatest relief."[215]

In spite of its obvious meaning of "after a while," *baʿda ḥīn* has been, interpreted numerologically, the word *ḥīn* being taken as a reference to the year 1268 A.H.[216] In other words, *baʿda ḥīn* may be read as "after 68," namely the year 69 or, within the context of the Bābī dispensation beginning in 1260, the year 9. In order to get a little closer to what the Báb is trying to say in the *Dalāʾil-i sabʿa*, let us look at a number of passages in the *Panj shaʾn*. Here, he refers to the year 9 and to what will precede and follow it. Thus, for example, he says: "This is what we promised you a time ago (*min qabli ḥīn* [lit. "from before a time"]), when we replied to you: "Wait until nine has elapsed of the Bayān, then say "blessed be God, the best of creators."[217] Immediately after this, he says (again, it appears, referring to an earlier reply) that "before nine (*al-ṭāʾ*), there must appear in six (*al-wāw*) two signs from God in the book from the early ones (*al-awwalīn*)."[218] I shall come back to these two signs in a moment, but first let me quote a later section of the *Panj shaʾn* addressed, like the first, to Mullā Shaykh ʿAlī Turshīzī ʿAẓīm: "Before the maturity (*bulūgh*) of the Primal Point in the wombs of existence 'before nine' (*qabla 'l-tisʿa*),

[214] Idem, *Dalāʾil*, p. 59. Although the text differs slightly, this is almost certainly the letter quoted in part by Rashtī himself in his *Dalīl al-mutaḥayyirīn* (np. [Tabrizl], 1276/1859–60), p. 37. The phrase quoted, with a slight variation, is from the Qurʾān (38:88).

[215] Quoted in the Báb, *Dalāʾil* p. 46.

[216] See Shoghi Effendi, in Nabil, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 18, f.n. 1.

[217] The Báb, *Panj shaʾn*, pp. 255–56. A garbled version of this passage is given by Mīrzā Ḥusayn ʿAlī Nūri, Bahāʾ Allāh in his *Lawh-i Shaykh* (Cairo, 1338/1920) pp. 104–05 (trans. by Shoghi Effendi, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* [Wilmette, Ill.: Bahāʾī Publishing Trust, 1941], p. 142); cf. ibid., pp. 113–14 (trans. *Epistle*, p. 152).

[218] The Báb, *Panj shaʾn*, p. 256.

[which is] the equivalent of 'before a time' (*qabla ḥīn*), it is necessary that two mirrors reflect God."[219]

It would seem that the 'two signs' and the 'two mirrors' mentioned in these passages are to be regarded as identical. But what are they references to? After the first of the passages quoted, the Bāb continues as follows: "Say: the first of them [i.e., the two signs] is Yaḥyā the prophet [i.e., John the Baptist], and the other is the son of ʿAlī."[220] After the second, he goes on: "for from the beginning of creation (*min badīʿ al-awwal*) until this time, no one was born after the passage of six months except Yaḥyā the prophet and Ḥusayn the son of ʿAlī."[221]

Both the second passages from the *Panj shaʾn* and a similar passage quoted by Bahāʾ Allāh in his *Lawḥ-i Shaykh*[222] speak in terms of "maturing" or of the development of an embryo (a common Islamic and Bābī image). The lines just quoted explicitly bring in the notion of an embryo reaching maturity in the brief period of six months. Could, therefore, the appearance of the "two signs" (or "two mirrors") in the year 6 (1266 A.H./1849–50 A.D.) be intended to indicate the actual birth of the Bābī revelation, which had previously been in a state of gestation? The Bāb may have anticipated that "before nine," which seems to mean "in the year six" (nine months being, of course, the normal period of gestation), the Bayān would reach maturity in the appearance of two mirrors representing Ḥusayn and John the Baptist. As far as Ḥusayn is concerned, this would certainly correspond to the prophecies referring to his appearance in the sixtieth (thus, the sixth) year of the reign of the Qāʾim.

But what of the "year nine" itself? There are clear references to it in some of the Bāb's writings. In the Arabic *Bayān*, for example, he writes: "When you hear the mention of the one we shall manifest in the name of the Qāʾim, anticipate the difference between *al-Qāʾim* and *al-qayyūm*. Then you shall attain to all good in the year nine."[223] This statement is

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[219] Ibid., p. 280. The term *qabla ḥīn* occurs frequently in the phrase "in every time and before a time and after a time' (*fī kulli ḥīn wa qabla ḥīn wa baʿda ḥīn*), much used in Bābī writing. See, for example, passages in Māzandarānī, *ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, pp. 70, 167 (last line), 168 (last two lines); Kāshāni, *Nuqṭat al-kāf*, pp. 429–30; the Bāb, *Dalāʾil*, p. 72; idem, letter in the Bāb and Yazdī, *Qismatī az alwāḥ*, p. 9, 35.

[220] Idem, *Panj shaʾn*, p. 256.

[221] Ibid., p. 280.

[222] Bahāʾ Allāh, *Lawḥ-i Shaykh*, pp. 113–14 (trans. *Epistle*, p. 152).

[223] The Bāb, *al-Bayān al-ʿarabī*, 6:15, p. 27.

echoed in somewhat different words in the *Haykal al-dīn:* "Rise up[224] when you hear the name of the Qāʾim and when you mention [it]. And you shall witness all good between the difference of *al-Qāʾim* and *al-qayyūm.* numerically (*ʿadadan*) in nine years."[225] One of the problems posed by the use of the terms *al-qayyūm.* (meaning something like "self-sufficient") in these passages is that it is not a normal eschatological term in Shiʿi literature and cannot readily be identified with an expected eschatological figure. Normally, in fact, the word occurs as a title of the divinity. In a letter to his uncle, Ḥājī Mīrzā Sayyid ʿAlī Shirāzī, the Bāb identifies it numerically with the name Yūsuf (= 156) and says that "it means the Qāʾim of the family of Muḥammad," which is, of course, himself.[226] Nor is the numerical difference between *al-Qāʾim* and *al-qayyūm.* of much help, since this may amount to 5, 9, or 14, depending on the value given to the third letter (either *yāʾ* or *hamza*) of *Qāʾim.*

The reader—if he has persevered this far—will by now have reached the conclusion that none of this is very clear. I suspect that many early Bābīs may have felt the same way. Nevertheless, it is apparent that references of this kind must have encouraged interest in the years around 1268, 1269, and 1270 A.H. (1851–54 A.D.) and suggested the possibility of the initial appearance of John the Baptist and Ḥusayn in 1266/1848–49, possibly followed by their later activity in 1269/1852–53. And the question of *Ḥusayniyya*—the claim to be the return of Ḥusayn—did indeed come to be of more than passing interest around this period.

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[224] Reading the opening verb as an imperative, by analogy with the corresponding passage in the *Bayān-i fārsī*, 6:15, p. 230.

[225] The Bāb, *Haykal al-dīn*, 6:15, p. 25.

[226] Letter quoted in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 223. Bahāʾī doctrine, however, explicitly identifies *al-qayyūm* as a prophetic title of Bahāʾ Allāh. (See Ishrāq-Khāvarī, *Raḥīq*, vol. 2, pp. 316–17; Māzandarāni, *Asrār*, vol. 4, pp. 259–31; Mīrzā Ḥusayn ʿAlī Nūrī, Bahāʾ Allāh, letter to Shaykh Kāzim Qazvīnī Samandar, in *Alwāḥ-i ḥaḍrat-i Bahāʾ Allāh…shāmil-i Iqtidārāt*….(n.p., n.d.), p. 61; idem, letter in Ishrāq-Khāvarī, *Māʾida*, vol. 4, pp. 173–74.) The term appears to be used for Ṣubḥ-i Azal in the *Nuqṭat al-kāf*, p. 253.

# DIVISIONS AND AUTHORITY CLAIMS IN BABISM (1850–1866)*

In a recently-published article ("Hierarchy, Authority and Eschatology in Early Bābī Thought," in P. Smith [ed.], *In Iran: Studies in Bābī and Bahaʾī History*, vol. 3, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 1986, pp. 95–155) [see here above], I have analysed the nature of charismatic authority within the early Bābī movement (from 1844 to about 1850) and shown how this was linked to both long- and short-term eschatological expectations, both in the thought of the Bāb and in more popular notions held by some of his followers.

In this article I propose to move on from the theoretical considerations of the early period to examine in some detail the events of the period following the Bāb's death.

## The question of succession

It will, I think, be best to begin with the controversial question of whether or not the Bāb appointed a successor and, if, so, what his intention in doing so may have been. The point is controversial precisely because it lies at the heart of the Bahāʾī/Azalī debate, but I have felt it better to take it, as far as possible, out of that context in order to treat it on its own merits. In order to clarify the issues involved, however, it will probably prove simplest to begin with a description of the Bahāʾī position—or, rather, positions, since there seem to be more than one—on the question of succession.

The earliest expression of the Bahāʾī attitude is, as far as I can tell, found in the writings of Mīrzā Ḥusayn ʿAlī Bahāʾ Allāh from the Edirne period (1864–68), such as the *Lawḥ-i sirāj*. Here, it is categorically stated that "my previous manifestation effaced the decree of succession (*ḥukm-i wiṣāyat*) all at once from the Book" and that the Bayān referred only to "letters" and "mirrors," the latter being unnumbered.[1]

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[1] Mīrzā Ḥusayn ʿAlī Nūrī Bahāʾ Allāh, "Lawḥ-i sirāj," in ʿAbd al-Ḥamld Ishrāq Khāvarī (ed.), *Māʾida-yi āsmānī* (Tehran, 1971–73), vol. 7, p. 40; cf. p. 70.

This is, of course, both the simplest and the most consistent Bahāʾī position. By ruling out from the start any possibility of a legitimate claim to *wiṣāya* on the part of Ḥusayn ʿAlī's half-brother Yaḥyā, it makes the former's own claim to the position of "him whom God shall manifest" [*man yuẓhiruhu 'llāh*: the Bābī messiah] more readily defensible and the latter's rejection of him less of a stumbling-block. It remains a standard Bahāʾī position down to the present,[2] though usually presented more by implication or omission than direct affirmation.

A modified version first appeared in ʿAbbās Effendi ʿAbd al-Bahā's *Maqāla-yi shakhsī sayyāḥ*, where it is stated that Bahāʾ Allāh and Mullā ʿAbd al-Karīm Qazvīnī (one of the Bāb's secretaries) devised a plan whereby Yaḥyā was to be made well known so that his brother could "remain protected from the interference of all men," an arrangement the Bāb himself is said to have approved.[3] Despite obvious ethical objections, this has remained a popular explanation of the affair for Bahāʾīs. The modern Bahāʾī writer Taherzadeh states that the original suggestion came from Bahāʾ Allāh himself and was known only to Qazvīnī and another brother of Ḥusayn ʿAlī and Yaḥyā, Mīrzā Mūsā.[4]

Both the above positions are combined and sanctioned by Shoghi Effendi in his official history, *God Passes By*, where he states that "a successor or vicegerent the Bāb never named, an interpreter of His teachings He refrained from appointing," before proceeding to accept ʿAbbās Effendi's notion of the nomination of Azal as a figure-head.[5]

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[2] See, for example, Sayyid Mahdī Dahajī, *Risāla-yi Sayyid Mahdī Dahajī*, MS F57, E. G. Browne Or. MSS, Cambridge University Library, pp. 97ff.

[3] ʿAbbās Effendi ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ, *Maqāla-yi shakhsī ṣayyāḥ*, ed. and trans. E. G. Browne as *A Traveller's Narrative written to illustrate the Episode of the Bāb*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1891), vol. 1, pp. 79–80; vol. 2, pp. 62–63.

[4] A. Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahāʾu'llāh*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1974), p. 53. The complicity of Mīrzā Mūsā and ʿAbd al-Karīm Qazvīnī may be based merely on a reference by Bahāʾ Allāh in his *Lawḥ-i Naṣīr* to the effect that these two individuals were "informed about the beginnings of this affair [or 'cause': *amr*]" (text in Mīrzā Ḥusayn ʿAlī Nūrī Bahāʾ Allāh, *Majmūʿa-yi alwāḥ-i mubāraka* [Cairo, 1920], p. 174). See also Dahajī, *Risāla*, p. 62.

[5] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* (Wilmette, 111, 1944), pp. 28–29. Shoghi Effendi's discussion of the question of *wiṣaya* in Babism involves a curious but important contradiction. Before the passage just referred to, he states that the Bāb's own appearance fulfilled a "Greater Covenant" made by God "from time immemorial" regarding the Bābī revelation. He then goes on to say that this was now supplemented by a "lesser Covenant," such as had existed in all previous religions, concerning the Bāb's successor, identified as Bahāʾ Allāh (ibid., pp. 27–28). Normally, however, Bahāʾī doctrine refers to the "Greater Covenant" as that involving the acceptance of each successive prophet by mankind and the "Lesser Covenant" as that securing the appointment of the

## Divisions and Authority Claims in Babism

It is highly unlikely that the Báb should have totally ignored the question of succession. The concept of *wiṣāya* is one of the most fundamental of Shīʿī doctrines, not only with regard to Islam, but in respect of every previous revelation.[6] In my earlier article (pp. 346ff.), I observed that the Báb spoke frequently of the need for guides in every period of *ẓuhūr* and *buṭūn* and anticipated such individuals in his own revelation. Nor was this simply a generalized reference to unnumbered mirrors and witnesses. The Báb was quite explicit as to the identity of individuals authorized to interpret his writings or answer questions on his behalf.

Such authority was certainly granted Mullā Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī, who received the title *báb* from Shīrāzī around the mid-point of the latter's career ("Hierarchy," pp. 105–106). According to Fāḍil-i Māzandarānī, during the period the Báb was under house-arrest in Shīrāz (1845–46), Bushrūʾī was appointed to take charge of all affairs on his behalf, and to reply to questions from believers and others.[7]

It is hard to say just how much direct authority was delegated in this way to later Bābī leaders such as Bārfurūshī, Dārābī, Zanjānī, or Qurrat al-ʿAyn, who taught and interpreted the Báb's writings and teachings in the provinces after 1846; but it is certain that, in the final stages of his career, Shīrāzī instructed his followers to ask about anything they did not understand from his secretary, Sayyid Ḥusayn Yazdī.

In the *Haykal al-dīn*, the Báb writes: "Ask of him who writes down the verses of God in his presence what we have taught him of the explanation of knowledge."[8] Although the precise range of matters about which Yazdī

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prophet's immediate successor, not the next manifestation. (See Anon [ed.], *The Covenant of Bahāʾuʾllāh* [London, 1063], Introduction, p. XXI; Anon [ed.]. *The Covenant and Administration* [Wilmette, 111, n.d.], pp. 7–12; Shoghi Effendi, quoted *Bahāʾī News* [January, 1934], 80:5; idem in ibid. [August, 1948], 210: 3.)

[6] See Shaykh Aḥmad al-Ahsāʾī, "Iṣma wa rajʿa," in idem, *Jawāmiʿ al-kilam*, 2 vols. (Tabriz, 1856, 1860), vol. 1, p. 77. This argument is followed by Mullā Rajab ʿAlī Iṣfahānī (*Risāla-yi Mullā Rajab ʿAlī Qahīr*, MS F24, E. G. Browne Or. MSS, Cambridge University Library, f. 19a). It is significant to observe that this is also the strict Bahāʾī doctrine although it is negated in the case of Babism. Thus, Shoghi Effendi, referring to the covenant between each prophet and his followers regarding his immediate successor, writes: "This is merely to establish and strengthen the succession of the series of Lights that appear after every Manifestation" (quoted *Bahāʾī News* [January, 1934], 80:5).

[7] Mīrzā Asad Allāh Fāḍil-i Māzandarānī, *Kitāb-i ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3 (n.p., n.d.), pp. 121, 388.

[8] Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad Shīrāzī, the Báb, *Haykal al-dīn* (n.p. [Tehran], n.d.; printed with idem, *al-Bayān al-ʿArabī*), 1: 12, p. 3.

was authorized to give answers is nowhere specified, it would appear to have included all questions relating to legislative and related topics, as is clear from the following passage from a letter to Mīrzā Ibrāhīm Qazvīnī: "Ask about the ways [*al-manāhij*, i.e. the laws and ordinances] from him who writes down the verses of God."[9]

At the very least, then, it seems that the Bāb did, in fact, appoint at least two "interpreters" of his laws and teachings, and there is evidence that he may have wished to formalize and perpetuate this system.

Evidence for this may be found in a late work entitled the *Kitāb-i panj shaʾn*. Having spoken about "a number of guides" and the appointment of the Imam ʿAlī by Muḥammad, the Bāb writes: "we have granted you [i.e. Shaykh ʿAlī Turshīzī] a mighty station on our part. Since neither the first to believe [i.e. Mullā Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī] nor any of the other initial guides [i.e. the Letters of the Living] had any offspring, God shall grant you what he ordained for a *wāḥid* [? *mā qadara li-wāḥid*] and (shall grant) to whom he wishes what he has ordained."[10]

Vague as it is, this passage provides sufficient evidence for the view that the Bāb had originally intended to continue leadership of his religion in lines of descent from Bushrūʾī and other Letters of the Living, but was prevented from doing so by an absence of descendants. A second generation of converts—among whom the most important were Yazdī, Turshīzī, Mīrzā Asad Allāh Khūʾī Dayyān, Sayyid Yaḥyā Dārabī Waḥīd, and, above all, Mīrzā Yaḥyā Nūrī Ṣubḥ-i Azal—to replace the *ḥurūf al-ḥayy* (who had either been killed or forced to opt for obscurity) as authorities and teachers.

The criterion for leadership was no longer simple priority of belief or even membership of the ʿulamāʾ class. It was now the possession of a pure, untarnished *fiṭra* or innate capacity for receiving divine knowledge. In the *Haykal al-dīn*, for example, the Bāb says: "Regard all who arise in the Bayān with innate knowledge [*ʿilm fiṭrī*] as being like the first mention [i.e. the Bāb] in the name of al-Waḥīd."[11]

It seems to have been on account of his supposed innate knowledge and ability to write divinely-revealed verses that Ṣubḥ-i Azal was

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[9] Shīrāzī, letter in idem and Mīrzā Yaḥyā Nūrī Ṣubḥ-i Azal, *Majmūʿaʾī az āthār-i Nuqṭa-yi Ūlā wa Ṣubḥ-i Azal* (n.p. [Tehran], n.d.), p. 38; quoted Rajab ʿAlī Qahīr, *Risāla*, f. 59b.

[10] Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad Shīrāzī, the Bāb, *Kitāb-i panj shaʾn* (n.p. [Tehran], n.d.), p. 278.

[11] Idem, *Haykal al-dīn*, 1: 17, p. 4.

appointed as principal authority next to the Báb himself, to whom affairs were to be referred after the latter's death. Around 1849, when he was about nineteen, Azal began to "speak with an unlettered tongue, (uttering) words from the heart and innate verses."[12] His writings were sent to the Báb, who is said to have been deeply impressed by them.[13]

The Báb's own subsequent references to the topic indicate that he regarded Azal's writings as inspired and wanted copies of them sent to him in prison. Particularly revealing in this context is a letter written by Yazdí, to Mullá ʿAbd al-Karím Qazvíní, who is described as "the amanuensis of the writings of Azal" (*kátib-i áthár-i azaliyya*). Yazdí says: "I have seen all that you sent with Salmán of red, yellow, and white paper, and what you penned of the writings of your lord, the lord of all things. I have read them many times to your lord [i.e. the Báb], who creates lordship in whomever he wills from among his servants. All that may be sent after this of the writings of that Eternity [*dhálika 'l-azal*], that peacock of the primal heaven, whether in your (own) hand or the hand of God [presumably Azal's hand] shall be much appreciated by his holiness the Loved One [i.e. the Báb]."[14] The Báb himself expressly asks in several places to be sent the works of Azal: "Send me whatever shines forth of the writings of Azal, for we love them."[15]

Regarded as directly inspired by God,[16] Azal was held by the Báb to be someone to whom his followers could turn for knowledge and

[12] Mírzá Áqá Khán Kirmání and Shaykh Aḥmad Rúhí Kirmání, *Hasht bihisht* (n.p. [Tehran], n.d.), p. 300, For statements of the Báb as to Azal's *fiṭra*, see ʿIzziyya Khánum, *Tanbíh al-náʾimín*, (n.p., [Tehran], n.d.), pp. 61–62.

[13] Kirmání and Kirmání, *Hasht bihisht*, p. 300. Cf. Hájí Mírzá Jání Káshání, *Kitáb-i nuqṭat al-káf*, ed. E. G. Browne (London and Leiden, 1910), p. 238.

[14] Yazdí, in Sayyid ʿAlí Muḥammad Shírází and Sayyid Ḥusayn Yazdí, *Qismatí az-alwáḥ-i khaṭṭ-i Nuqṭa-yi Úlá wa Áqá Sayyid Ḥusayn Yazdí* (n.p. [Tehran], n.d.), pp. 33–32 (sic). This letter is also of interest for its clear identification of several names with their titles. Thus, "Azal" and "al-Thamara al-Azaliyya" ("the Eternal Fruit") are identical; "Jámíl" is applied to ʿAzím (Mullá Shaykh ʿAlí Turshízí, who seems to be identified as the Imám ʿÁlí, "the Lord of the cycle and the return"); "al-Qawím" is applied to Karím (ʿAbd al-Karím Qazvíní, who is described as "the herald [*mubashshir*] of the Eternal Joy [*bihjat al-azaliyya*" sic—i.e. Ṣubh-i Azal]); "al-Ḥayy" belongs to Waḥíd (Sayyid Yaḥyá Dárábí, whose apearance [*ẓuhúr*] is described as "better than the worship of all created things"; "al-Bahá'" is given to Qurrat al-ʿAyn; "al-Dayyán" is the title of Asad (Asad Alláh Khuʾí); and "al-ʿAlí" belongs to Sayyid ʿAlí Shírází, an uncle of the Báb. It is, perhaps, significant that Yazdí makes no mention in this list of Mírzá Ḥusayn ʿAlí Bahá' Alláh.

[15] Sayyid Ḥusayn Yazdí, letter quoted Rajab ʿAlí Qahír, *Risála*, f. 56a.

[16] Shírází, *Panj shaʾn*, pp. 122, 185.

guidance on religious matters. In a letter to Mullā Ḥusayn Khurāsānī,[17] the Bāb tells his followers to "cling to the mirror" before the appearance of *man yuẓhiruhu ʾllāh*. This mirror (which is clearly meant to be Azal) "will command you (to observe) the paths of the eleven *wāḥids* (of the Bayān); whatever has not been explained of the verses of the paths [i.e. verses dealing with legal matters] will be explained by him.... Preserve that [this letter?] and send it to the mirror, then to all the guides of your lord, and command all of them not to spread abroad mention of the mirror, lest he should be saddened: until God sends to him all God's writings. He sends whom he wishes at his command and through his wisdom explains the decrees of what was sent down in the Bayān."[18]

In several passages, the Bāb instructs his followers to send his writings to Azal, who is commissioned with the task of preserving them. Thus, for example, in a letter to ʿAbd al-Karīm Qazvīnī, he gives instructions for the preservation of "all that has been sent down from God" and its despatch to "al-Wahīd" [i.e. Azal].[19] Elsewhere, he states that the Bayān (in this case probably a reference to his works as a whole) is to be presented to *man yuẓhiruhu ʾllāh* on his appearance; but first it is to be collected in its entirely so that not a letter may be omitted, after which it is to be given to Azal, who, it seems, is to act as its interpreter.[20]

Azal's role as a revealer of inspired verses and as preserver and interpreter of the Bāb's writings does not seem to have been envisaged as limited to the Bāb's lifetime. There are a number of passages that state or imply that the latter anticipated some kind of revelationary continuity centred on Azal. In one prayer, for example, he refers explicitly to the succession of prophets from Adam to Muḥammad, together with their immediate successors from Seth to ʿAlī, going on to say: "...and then him whom you manifested with verses in the Bayān [i.e. himself]. And you made him whose heart you opened a sign for him in the mother of the book, for the recitation of your verses and their protection by night and day as a decree [? *minhājan*] on your part."[21]

More directly, he writes in a letter to Azal: "O Azal [*yā ism al-azal*]... if this throne [i.e. himself] should be cut off, then recite of the verses of

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[17] On whom, see Muḥammad ʿAlī Malik Khusrawī, *Tārīkh-i shuhadāʾ-i amr*, vol. 3 (Tehran, 1973–74), p. 260.

[18] Shīrāzī, letter quoted Rajab ʿAlī Qahīr, *Risāla*, f. 57a–57b.

[19] Idem, letter in idem and Yazdī, *Qismatī az alwaḥ*, p. 1 (transcription, p. 2).

[20] Idem, passage quoted Rajab ʿAlī Qahīr, Risāla, f. 60a.

[21] Idem, passage quoted ibid., ff. 23b, 61a.

your lord what God shall cast upon your heart as a remembrance from him."[22] According to the *Nuqṭat al-kāf*, before his death the Bāb sent his pencase, papers, writings, clothing, seal, and other items to Azal and made a clear appointment [*naṣṣ*] of him as his *waṣī* and *walī*.[23]

Most explicit of all is the Bāb's letter to Mīrzā Ibrāhīm Qazvīnī, referred to previously, in which he says: "The affair shall return to God; and it shall reach the name of al-Waḥīd, for his appearance is in itself a proof. And after him if God should reveal one like him, possessed of proof, it shall go to him; otherwise the affair is in the hands of the witnesses."[24]

The Azalī writer Rajab ʿAlī Qahīr maintains that Ṣubḥ-i Azal was the effective leader of the Bābī community during the Bāb's lifetime (when the latter was in prison),[25] but there is no contemporary evidence to support this. It is clear that Azal's name did become well known around 1849/50; but his position then appears to have been simply that of a subordinate revealer of verses. There is, of course, little doubt that, after the Bāb's death, Azal came to be regarded as the central authority within the sect, to whom the majority of Bābīs turned for guidance and as a source of continued revelation.

This sense of continuity is expressed particularly clearly in a letter from Sayyid Ḥusayn Yazdī to ʿAbd al-Karīm Qazvīnī, in which he addresses a woman called Maryam:[26] "Be saddened at the setting of (the sun of) your lord, and weep for the disappearance of your master. But rejoice in his (re-)arising in the eternal Azal [*al-azal al-azīl*], for before his setting he had already risen in him. And be gladdened at the (re-)appearance of your lord in the ripe fruit [*al-thamar al-thamīr*—one of Azal's titles], for before his disappearance he had already appeared in him."[27]

Yazdī was particularly active in promoting Azal's succession. In a letter that seems to have been written from near Tabriz shortly after the

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[22] Idem, letter quoted ibid., f. 54a.

[23] Kāshānī, *Nuqṭat al-kāf*, p. 244. Bahāʾī sources make much the same statement about Bahāʾ Allāh (see, for example, Mullā Muḥammad Nabīl Zarandī, *The Dawn-Breakers*, ed. and trans. Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette, 111, 1932), pp. 504–05.

[24] Shīrāzī, letter in idem and Nūrī, *Majmūʿaʾī az āthār*, p. 38. The word *amr*, translated here as "affair," may, of course, be rendered differently (as, for example, by "cause").

[25] Rajab ʿAlī Qahīr, *Risāla*, f. 24b.

[26] The identity of this individual is unclear. She may have been Ṣubh-i Azal's cousin Maryam, who was married to his half-brother Ḥājī Mīrzā Riḍā Qulī Nūrī.

[27] Yazdī, letter in Shīrāzī and Yazdī, *Qismatī az alwah*, p. 23 (transcription, p. 24).

Báb's death in July 1850,[28] he gives the following instructions to Ḥājj Sulayman Khān Tabrīzī: "While you are in Tehran [*arḍ-i bahāʾ = ard-i ṭāʾ*], please inform this recluse living in the cell of remoteness and exile whenever you meet with your lord. And whenever verses are revealed from the heaven of *azaliyyat*, enclose them with your own letters."[29]

As we shall see presently, even Bahāʾī accounts acknowledge the fact that, in the early period of the Baghdad exile, Azal was very definitely regarded by the majority of Bābīs as the primary focus of their faith and obedience. Recognition of Ṣubḥ-i Azal was, however, only one of a number of doctrinal positions—some of them mutually contradictory—that were available to Bābīs in the 1850s and early 1860s, and it now remains for us to examine the course of events in Baghdad and elsewhere in this period in order to obtain a clearer perspective on the gradual fission of the Bābī community into Azalī and Bahāʾī factions.

## The *ẓuhūrāt* of the post-1850 period

The most striking feature of Babism during the 1850s is the proliferation of claims to some form of theophanic status on the part of individual members of the sect. ʿAbbās Effendi maintains that no fewer than twenty-five separate individuals claimed to be *man yuẓhiruhu ʾllāh* at this time.[30] Browne goes even further, saying that religious speculation "threatened, especially during the two or three years succeeding the Báb's martyrdom (1850–1853), to destroy all order and discipline in the young church by suffering each member to become a law unto himself, and by producing as many 'Manifestations' as there were Bābīs."[31] Both these statements are exaggerations: the real number of distinct ẓuhūrāt may indeed have been around twenty-five; but it would not seem that most of these actually claimed to be "he whom God shall manifest."

A number of works provide lists of the names of claimants during this period, from which the following represents a distillation:

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[28] The text reads: "I am burning with the fire of separation and dwelling near the place of martyrdom [*mashhad*]."

[29] Ibid., p. 37 (transcription, p. 38).

[30] ʿAbbās Effendi, cited Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 125

[31] E. G. Browne, introduction to M. H. Phelps, *The Life and Teachings of Abbas Effendi*, 2nd. ed. (New York, 1912), p. xxii.

1. An otherwise unidentified young man known only by the title "Dhabīḥ."[32]
2. Sayyid Baṣīr [alternatively, "Sayyid Aʿmā"] Hindī.[33]
3. Mullā Shaykh ʿAlī Turshīzī, "ʿAzīm."[34]
4. Mīrzā Asad Allāh Khuʾī "Dayyān."[35]
5. A certain "Sayyid ʿUluww" in Karbalāʾ.[36]
6. Āqā Muḥammad Karāwī.[37]
7. Hājī Mīrzā Mūsā Qummī.[38]
8. Mullā Muḥammad Nabīl Zarandī.[39]
9. Muḥammad Jaʿfar Kāshānī (Narāqī).[40]
10. Ḥusayn Mīlānī.[41]
11. ʿAbd al-Karīm Tabrīzī.[42]
12. Ismāʿīl Iṣfahānī.[43]
13. A certain Mahdī from near Iṣfahān.[44]
14. Mullā (or Sayyid) Ḥusayn Hindīyanī.[45]
15. ʿAlī Akbar Shīrāzī.[46]

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[32] Kāshānī, *Nuqṭat al-kāf*, pp. 252–55.

[33] Ibid., pp. 255–59; Dahajī, *Risāla*, p. 59; Mīrzā Yaḥyā Nūrī, Ṣubh-i Azal, *Kitāb-i Mustayqiẓ* (n.p. [Tehran,], n.d.), p. 28; Mullā Muḥammad Jaʿfar Narāqī, *Tadhkirat al-ghāfilīn*, MS F63, E. G. Browne Or. MSS, Cambridge University Library, pp. 14, 29, 95.

[34] Kāshānī, *Nuqṭat al-kāf*, p. 259.

[35] Dahajī, *Risāla*, pp. 59, 87; Nūrī, *Mustayqiẓ*, pp. 7ff. and passim; Kirmānī and Kirmānī, *Hasht bihisht*, pp. 302–303; Narāqī, *Tadhkira*, pp. 14, 29, 95. Dayyān may be the "individual in the land of *tāʾ* [Tabriz]" referred to by Kāshānī (*Nuqṭat al-kāf*, p. 260).

[36] Ibid., pp. 260–261; Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 593.

[37] Kāshānī, *Nuqṭat al-Kāf*, p. 261.

[38] Dahajī, *Risāla*, p. 59; Narāqī, *Tadhkira*, pp. 14, 29; H. M. Balyuzi, *Bahāʾuʾllāh* (Oxford, 1980), pp. 122, 131.

[39] Ibid., p. 128; idem, *Edward Granville Browne and the Bahāʾī Faith* (London, 1970), p. 44 Kirmānī and Kirmānī, *Hasht bihisht*, p. 303.

[40] Dahajī, Risāla, p. 69.

[41] Ibid., p. 95; Nūrī, *Mustayqiẓ*, p. 28; Narāqī, *Tadhkira*, pp. 14, 29, 95; Kirmānī and Kirmānī, *Hasht bihisht*, p. 303. Browne has surmised that Ḥusayn Mīlānī may be identied with the 'Sulṭān Manṣūr' referred to in the *Nuqṭat al-kāf* (p. 259)—see Mīrzā Ḥusayn Hamadānī, *The New History (Tārīkh-i-Jadīd) of Mīrzāʿ Alī Muḥammad the Bāb*, ed. and trans. E. G. Browne Cambridge, 1893), p. 392, fn. 4. But cf. Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Zawaraʾī, *Waqāyiʿ-i Mimiyya*, MS F28, item 1, E.G. Browne Or. MSS, Cambridge University Library, p. 17, where Bushruʾī is referred to by this title.

[42] Nūrī, *Mustayqiẓ*, p. 28 (he, and not Khūʾī, may be the "individual in the land of *rāʾ* referred to in Kāshānī, *Nuqṭat al-kāf*, p. 260).

[43] Nūrī, *Mustayqiẓ*, p. 28 (this may possibly be the Dhabīh referred to at length in the *Nuqṭat al-kāf*).

[44] Nūrī, *Mustayqiẓ*, p. 28.

[45] Dahajī, *Risāla*, p. 95.

[46] Nūrī, *Mustayqiẓ*, p. 28.

16. ʿAbd Allāh Ghawghā.[47]
17. Hājī Mullā Hāshim Kāshānī.[48]
18. Sayyid Ḥusayn Iṣfahānī.[49]
19. A certain "Shaykh Ismāʾīl."[50]
20. Unidentified individuals in Tabriz, Fārs (possibly Shīrāz), and Hamadān.[51]

Many of the above-mentioned are extremely obscure and are likely to remain so; for others we possess only the most rudimentary information. It is difficult to establish with any clarity or in any detail what sort of claims were made by them or what kind of doctrines they taught. Mullā Muḥammad Jaʿfar Nārāqī (at one time himself a claimant—see 9 above) identifies three levels of claim in the case of those individuals to whom he refers:

1. *Ḥusayniyyat* (i.e. the claim to be the return of the Imam Ḥusayn), which he says was advanced by Hājī Mullā Hāshim Kāshānī [17] and Ḥusayn Mīlānī [10].
2. The claim to be *man yuẓhiruhu ʾllāh*, which was claimed by Mīrzā Asad Allāh Khuʾī Dayyān [4] and Ḥājī Mīrzā Mūsā Qummī [7].
3. Both of these simultaneously, as claimed by Sayyid Baṣīr Hindī [2] and Mīrzā Ḥusayn ʿAlī Nūrī Bahāʾ Allāh.[52]

While there is independent confirmation of a number of the claims noted by Nārāqī (such as those of Ḥusayn Mīlānī and Bahāʾ Allāh to Ḥusayniyyat),[53] I am not convinced that all the claims advanced in this period were so precise or consistent. The author of the *Nuqṭat al-kāf* describes the claimants to whom he refers as "possessors of verses and

[47] Dahajī, *Risāla*, p. 95; Kirmānī and Kirmānī, *Hasht bihisht*, p. 303.
[48] Narāqī, *Tadhkira*, pp. 14, 29; Balyuzi, *Bahāʾuʾllāh*, p. 131. Is this the "Point of Kaf' [*nuqṭa-yi kāfī*] referred to in Kāshānī, *Nuqṭat al-kāf*, p. 259, and possibly related to the title of that work? He may be the "blind person from Kāshān" referred to by Kirmānī and Kirmānī, *Hasht bihisht*, p. 303.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Mīrzā Yaḥyā Nūrī, Ṣubh-i Azal, cited Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, vol. 2, p. 331.
[51] Kāshānī, *Nuqṭat al-kāf*, p. 260; Dahajī, *Risāla*, p. 88. Nūrī says there were such claimants "in every land" (*Mustayqiz*, p. 28).
[52] Narāqī, *Tadhkira*, p. 14.
[53] See Dahajī, *Risāla*, p. 95; Rajab ʿAlī Qahīr, *Risāla*, f. 43a; ʿAbd al-Hamīd Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Raḥīq-i makhtūm*, 2 vols. (Tehran, 1974–75), vol. 1, pp. 190–191.

mystical attractions [*jadhabāt*],"[54] which implies a rather generalized sense of divine inspiration, the numerous *ẓuhūrāt* being regarded as leaves and branches of the tree of Ṣubḥ-i Azal, the appearance of which ought to be considered a sign of the tree's perfection.[55]

The first of these *ẓuhūrāt* was, according to the *Nuqṭat al-kāf*, a young man of seventeen or eighteen known as "Dhabīḥ" (and therefore probably originally called Ismāʿīl), who appeared in the year seven (1850–51).[56] Dhabīḥ was a confectioner, and our sources describe him as "unlettered" [*ummī*]. I have elsewhere[57] advanced the hypothesis that he was actually Ḥājī Mīrzā Ismāʿīl Kāshānī, a brother of Mīrzā Jānī Kāshānī (the supposed author of the *Nuqṭat al-kāf*) and later a partisan of Mīrzā Ḥusayn ʿAlī Nūrī. In addition, I have suggested that he may have been in part responsible for the writing of the *Nuqṭat al-kāf*.[58] These hypotheses must remain extremely tentative; but if it could be demonstrated that Ismāʿīl was Dhabīḥ and that he had helped pen such an interesting work, we would be in a position to guess at some of the views he may have been putting forward around the mid-1850s.

According to the account given in the *Nuqṭat al-kāf* (which does, in fact, contain a lengthy apologia in the first person), Dhabīḥ began his activities when he met an unidentified young man, possibly Ṣubḥ-i Azal. After having been captivated by this youth, Dhabīḥ says that "the traces of his everlasting lordship appeared in the mirror of my existence, and my tongue was loosed with verses [*āyāt*] and prayers in his court. Constantly, from his presence unto his own self [*az haḍrat-i ū bi-jināb-i ū*] I spoke the words 'Truly, I am God; no god is there but me."[59]

The initial response of the other believers was to reject these claims and complain of Dhabīḥ to Azal. The latter, however, supported Dhabīḥ's claims in somewhat cryptic fashion, saying "I do not know him," words which, according to the author of the *Nuqṭat al-kāf*, meant that Azal himself was manifested in Dhabīḥ. Later, however, following further

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[54] Kāshānī, *Nuqṭat al-kāf*, p. 261.
[55] Ibid., p. 255.
[56] Ibid., p. 252.
[57] D. MacEoin, *Early Babi Doctrine and History: A Survey of Source Materials*, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1992.
[58] If this is correct, we must take this reference to his being *ummī* (as in the cases of both the Bāb and Ṣubh-i Azal) to mean that he was not an *ʿālim*—not that he was literally unlettered.
[59] Kāshānī, *Nuqṭat al-kāf*, p. 253.

complaints, Azal instructed Dhabīḥ not to speak, write, or associate with the other Bābīs.[60]

Of greater interest is the story of Sayyid Baṣīr Hindī [2] (referred to in some sources as "Sayyid-i Aʿmā," "the blind sayyid"),[61] a blind Indian regarded by the author of the *Nuqṭat al-kāf* as the second *ẓuhūr* to appear in the year seven. Born to an important Sufi family in India,[62] Sayyid Baṣīr was blinded by smallpox at the age of seven. On his way to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca at the age of twenty or twenty-one, he passed through Iran and, on his return journey, visited the Shīʿī shrines in Iraq, where he met the Shaykhī leader, Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī (d. Jan. 1844).

After his return to Bombay (or, according to one source, Multan), he heard about the appearance of the Bāb in Iran and returned in order to meet him. Finding on his arrival that Shīrāzī had gone on the *ḥajj*, he followed him to Mecca and finally encountered him in the Masjid al-Ḥarām. More probably, he may have met him in Shiraz after his return from the pilgrimage. What seems certain is that he remained in Iran for several years after that.

From about 1848, following an unsuccessful attempt to join the Bābī defenders at Shaykh Tabarsī, he stayed with Mullā Shaykh ʿAlī Turshīzī, in whom he is said to have recognized "the signs of lordship." After this, he visited Gīlān in the company of a certain Mīrzā Muṣṭafā the Kurd, a Qalandar given to the utterance of extreme statements [*shaṭḥiyāt*]—behaviour which led to the expulsion of both men from the port of Enzeli.

Travelling through Qazvīn, where they appear to have attracted much attention from the large Bābī community, they headed for Tehran to visit Ṣubḥ-i Azal and his brother Mīrzā Ḥusayn ʿAlī. Bahāʾ Allāh in particular seems to have formed a very close attachment to Baṣīr (possibly because of his own continuing predilection for Sufism) and to have exercised considerable influence over him. In the words of the *Nuqṭat al-kāf*, "the effulgences [*tajalliyāt*] of the lordship of that splendour

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[60] Ibid., pp. 252–55.

[61] "Baṣīr" ("sharp-sighted") is not, of course, his real name, but a reference to his physical condition. According to Kāshānī, the title was given him by Ṣubh-i Azal (ibid., p. 255).

[62] Kāshānī says this was the family of Sayyid Jalāl Hindī, which had for a long time provided leaders for the Dāghdārī order (ibid., p. 255).

of paradise [i.e. Bahāʾ Allāh] shone forth in the temple of his [Baṣīr's] servitude."[63]

The major influence on Sayyid Baṣīr, however, seems to have been Dhabīḥ, who associated closely with him in Tehran. The *Nuqṭat al-kāf* speaks of the reflection of Dhabīḥ's divinity in the sayyid, in terms reminiscent of Ṣufi theophanology (particularly the concepts of *fanāʾ fi 'l-shaykh* or the contemplation of young men).[64] In evidence of his status, Sayyid Baṣīr began to reveal verses, sermons, and prayers. He then set out his claims in a letter addressed to both Ṣubḥ-i Azal and Bahāʾ Allāh, with whom he spent four months at their home in Nūr. Some time after this, he travelled to Qazvīn (or, according to some sources, Qum) and Kāshān. In this latter town he stayed in the house of someone referred to as "the point of Kāf" [*nuqṭa-yi kāfi*]—very possibly Mīrzā Ismāʿīl Dhabīḥ. It appears that this "point of Kāf" acknowledged the sayyid's spiritual superiority in the course of this visit.

Such was not the case with Mullā Shaykh ʿAlī Turshīzī. A serious disagreement occurred between him and Sayyid Baṣīr, with each claiming spiritual superiority. This led to a breach within the community (particularly in Iṣfahān), which lasted six months. Sayyid Baṣīr finally left for Persian Iraq where he preached the Bābī gospel until his arrest and execution on the orders of the governor of Burujird.[65]

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[63] Ibid., p. 258. This section is of considerable importance with respect to the problem of authorship of the *Nuqṭat al-kāf*. The author here (as elsewhere) displays an attitude of reverence towards Bahāʾ Allāh that would seem to discount the theory that this work is a later Azalī production (a theory that is, in any case, readily dismissable on other grounds).

[64] Although such an approach runs the danger of reductionism (not that reductionism is such a bad thing), there are grounds for supposing that some of the ecstatic phenomena exhibited in the cases under discussion may be traced back to repressed emotions. On the role of such emotions in trance states and related phenomena, see I. M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion* (London, 1971), pp. 58–63, 73–74, 91–92, 100–101. It is equally important to note the relation shown by Lewis between social marginality and spirit possession. A brief summary of this practice is given in 'Nazar ila'l-murd', Wikipedia, at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazar_ila'l-murd.

[65] Details of Sayyid Baṣīr are given in Kāshānī, *Nuqṭat al-kāf*, pp. 255–60; Hamadānī, New History, pp. 244–47; Zarandī, Dawn-Breakers, pp. 588–90. For further details, see Sepehr Manuchehri, 'Historical Accounts of two Indian Babis: Saʾin Hindi and Sayyid Basir Hindiʾ, in *Research Notes in Shaykhi, Babi and Bahaʾi Studies*, vol. 5:2 (April 2001) at: http://www.h-net.org/~bahai/notes/vol5/hunud.htm. According to Zarandī, another Indian dervish, named Qahr Allāh, visited the Bāb in Chahrīq, whence he was ordered to return to India; this man was, it seems, at one point regarded as "an exponent of Divine Revelation," but is said to have "disclaimed such pretensions" (ibid., pp. 305–06). I am not altogether sure that this is not Sayyid Baṣīr and that Qahr Allāh was not his original name.

It is difficult to determine what the claims of Sayyid Baṣīr entailed. He certainly appears to have regarded himself as a receptacle for spiritual manifestations [*ẓuhūrāt*] mediated to him by other individuals such as Bahāʾ Allāh and Dhabīḥ, and to have stressed his ability to reveal inspired verses. More specifically, the *Nuqṭat al-kāf* indicates that he claimed at one point to be the return of the Imam Ḥasan or (by another, more plausible, reading) Ḥusayn.[66] Nārāqī suggests that he claimed *wisāya mirʾātiyya*, presumably in tandem or competition with Ṣubḥ-i Azal.[67]

In describing the brief careers of Dhabīḥ and Sayyid Baṣīr, we have uncovered a much wider network of theophanic activity during this period. It is striking to observe the links that seem to have been forged between so many of the leading claimants, each of whom appears to have been in contact with the others. Dhabīḥ, Sayyid Baṣīr, Ṣubḥ-i Azal, Bahāʾ Allāh, and ʿAzīm (Turshīzī) all seem to have been members of a loosely-knit group centred, as far as can be determined, on the Nūrī household in Tehran.

Possibly connected with this group was a certain Mīrzā Ḥusayn Mīlānī [10], who, while in Teheran, claimed to be the return of Ḥusayn and possibly *man yuẓhiruhu ʾllāh*.[68] According to Azal, Mīlānī was "at once the most turbulent and eager for mischief and yet the most pusillanimous of those who professed to follow the Bāb."[69] A weaver by trade, it was to his workshop in Tabriz that Ḥājj Sulayman Khān Tabrīzī transferred the corpses of the Bāb and Muḥammad ʿAlī Zunūzī after their execution.[70] He later lived in Tehran with Sulaymān Khān, whose house in the Sarchashma quarter became an important meeting-place for the city's Bābīs.[71]

It was here that Mīlānī first advanced spiritual claims,[72] and it must also have been in Sulayman Khān's house that he held the meetings

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[66] Kāshānī, *Nuqṭat al-kāf*, p. 258 reads *rajʿat-i Ḥusaynī*, but Browne (Hamadānī, New History, Appendix II, p. 390) translates "Huseyn" without indicating the reason for this variant. The point will have to be checked against the full text used by Browne (Suppl. Pers. 1071 in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris).

[67] Narāqī, *Tadhkira*, p. 95.

[68] Dahajī, *Risāla*, p. 95; Browne, in ʿAbbās Effendi, *Traveller's Narrative*, vol. 2, p. 331. Dahajī denies that he ever claimed to be *man yuẓhiruhu ʾllāh*.

[69] Browne, in ibid., vol. 2, Note T, pp. 330–331.

[70] Malik Khusrawī, *Tārīkh-i shuhadāʾ*, vol. 3, p. 259.

[71] Ibid., pp. 227, 238; Māzandarānī, *ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 26.

[72] Browne, in ʿAbbās Effendi, *Traveller's Narrative*, vol. 2, Note T, p. 331.

which, according to Dahajī, were attended by large numbers of Bābīs.[73] These meetings probably included some at least of the individuals just referred to: Sulaymān Khān is known to have been extremely close to ʿAzīm,[74] Bahāʾ Allāh[75] and, presumably, the latter's brother, Azal—all of whom belonged like him to families connected to the court.[76]

Other links join the Tehran Bābī groups with a number of possible claimants resident in the Nūrī family's ancestral village of Tākur, situated to the north of the city. Although our evidence for the theophanic claims made by individuals in Tākur is tenuous, it is sufficient to suggest further lines of enquiry.

About the time of the Bābī attempt on the life of Naṣīr al-Dīn Shāh (August 1852), Shaykh ʿAzīz Allāh Nūrī, an uncle of the brothers Yaḥyā and Ḥusayn ʿAlī, sent two letters to the king. In these, he supplied the names of several Bābīs (both nobles [*buzurgān*] and commoners [*razāyān*] living in or connected with Tākur, whom he considered dangerous and deserving of arrest and punishment. These included his nephews Yaḥyā and Ḥusayn ʿAlī, several mullās, and a few individuals clearly belonging to high-ranking families.

What is of chief interest about Shaykh ʿAzīz Allāh's list is that, according to the accompanying letters, several of the men named in it had claimed to be manifestations [*maẓāhir*] of various figures from the past, including Muḥammad, ʿAlī, Ḥusayn, the Imam Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, Salmān, and Abū Dharr.[77] Such identifications must, of course, be treated with

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[73] Dahajī, *Risāla*, p. 95. Ḥājī Sulayman Khān's house was, in fact, the first to be raided by government officials following the attempt on Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh's life in 1852; some eighty-one Bābīs were arrested on that occasion (Balyuzi, *Bahāʾuʾllāh*, p. 77; Malik Khusravī, *Tārīkh-i shuhadāʾ* vol. 3, pp. 238–39).

[74] Ibid., pp. 227–28.

[75] Ibid., p. 228.

[76] Sulaymān Khān's father, Yaḥyā Khān, was in the service of ʿAbbās Mīrzā Nāʾib al-Salṭana, and other members of his family held government posts. He was related to Mahd-i ʿUlyā, Naṣir al-Dīn Shāh's mother (see ibid., pp. 226, 233).

[77] The full list of *mazāhir* runs as follows (titles or personae in parentheses):

1. Mīrzā Yaḥyā [Ṣubh-i Azal]
2. Mīrzā Ḥusayn ʿAlī [Bahāʾ]
3. Mīrzā Muḥammad Ḥasan [Mālik-i Ashtar]
4. Mīrzā Ghulām ʿAlī [Ibrāhīm ibn Mālik (al-Ashtar)]
5. Mullā Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn [Imām Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn or Imām Ḥusayn]
6. Muḥammad Taqī Khān [Imām ʿAlī]
7. Mullā ʿAlī Bābā Buzurg Tākurī [Salmān al-Fārisī]
8. Mullā ʿAlī Bābā Kūchik Shīrāzī [Abū Dharr al-Ghiffārī]
9. Mullā (ʿAbd al-) Faṭṭāḥ [Muḥammad]
10. Muḥammad Taqī, a son of Ismāʿīl Khān [al-Mukhtār]

caution, since they appear in what is, after all, an accusation of heresy: they may be no more than Shaykh ʿAzīz Allāh's own attempt to darken yet further the names of his intended victims. Indeed, some of the supposed identifications do seem on the face of it to be improbable, notably those of al-Mukhtār and the angel Gabriel. And it is significant that there are so many apparent claims to be manifestations of men whose names were associated in some form or another with rebellion or assassination, such as Mālik al-Ashtar, Ibrāhīm ibn Mālik al-Ashtar, and Abū Luʾluʾ.

At the same time, there is evidence that there may have been a modicum of truth in these allegations. According to Balyuzi, Ṣubḥ-i Azal attempted to organize an uprising in Nūr to coincide with the activities in Tehran of Turshīzī and ḥusayn Mīlānī (presumably those which led to the attempt on the Shāh's life).[78] A certain Mullā ʿAlī Bābā (Buzurg) (who, according to Shaykh ʿAzīz Allāh, claimed to be Salmān), Muḥammad Taqī Khān (who claimed to be ʿAlī), and several others armed themselves and prepared for an uprising, only to abandon their plans when news of the abortive assassination attempt reached them.[79]

When Mīrzā Abū Tālib Khān's troops sacked Tākur in the autumn of 1852, among those arrested were several of the claimants named in the accusatory letter, including Mullā ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ, Mullā ʿAlī Bābā Buzurg, Mullā ʿAlī Bābā Kūchik, and Muḥammad Taqī Big (the son of Ismāʿīl Khān?), all of whom died later in prison.[80]

Whatever the truth behind these events in Nūr and Tehran, the arrests and executions that followed the attempt on the Shāh's life seem to have put an effective end to the Bābī network in that region. Mullā Shaykh ʿAlī Turshīzī ʿAzīm, ḥusayn Mīlānī, Ḥājj Sulaymān Khān Tabrīzī, Mīrzā Rafīʿ Nūrī, and the four men from Tākur mentioned above, all perished in the period immediately following the attempt. Ṣubḥ-i Azal succeeded in escaping to Baghdad, where he was followed in 1853 by his brother

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11. Ḥājī Ismāʿīl, (another) son of Ismāʿīl Khān [ʿAlī Akbar]
12. Mullā Ṣāliḥ Nārīdī [Abū Luʾluʾ]
13. Muḥsin, a brother of Mīrzā Rafīʿ [the angel Gabriel]
14. Mīrzā Rafīʿ [ʿAbbās ʿAlī].

The texts of the letters are given in Mīrzā Faḍl Allāh Niẓām al-Mamālik, *Tārīkh-i amrī-yi Nūr*, Iran National Bahāʾī Archives (INBA) MS (copy in possession of present author), pp. 6, 7.

[78] Balyuzi *Bahāʾuʾllāh*, p. 90. This is, in itself, important evidence that the plot against the king was far from as limited or haphazard as Bahāʾī sources maintain.

[79] Ibid., Nizām al-Mamālik, *Tārīkh-i amrī*, pp. 6, 7.

[80] Balyuzi, *Bahāʾuʾllāh*, p. 91.

Ḥusayn ʿAlī, who chose to go there after he had been released from prison in Tehran on the intervention of the Russian Minister. Before long, Baghdad became the new centre of Bābī activity, attracting a sizeable community seeking to live there in proximity to Azal.

There is ample evidence that it was Azal and not Bahāʾ Allāh who, in the first instance, drew large numbers of Bābīs to Iraq. Sayyid Mahdī Dahajī, a Bahāʾī writer generally concerned to play down Azal's role at this period, states that "everyone who came to Baghdad [Dār al-Salām] did so in order to meet with that person Azal."[81] He himself, he says, originally went there with that same intention but, like others before him, was unable to obtain permission to see Azal in person.[82]

A similar account is given by another Bahāʾī writer, the Qājār princess Shams-i Jahān (Fitna-yi Qājār), whose autobiographical *mathnavī* is of much interest for the history of Babism prior to the Bahāʾī/Azalī period. Towards the end of the Bāb's life, she asked other Bābīs who was to be regarded as their leader while Shīrāzī was in prison. They recommended her to Ṣubḥ-i Azal, whom she subsequently met and accepted with evident esteem and affection. During the period of the Baghdad exile, however, she—like Dahajī and others—was refused access to him and eventually shifted her allegiance to his brother.[83]

Mullā Muḥammad Nabīl Zarandī [8], an early claimant who later became well known as a Bahāʾī poet and chronicler, also went to Baghdad in order to meet Azal and was refused admission to his presence, being advised instead to leave the city for Karbala.[84]

Azal's inaccessibility was, in fact, a major factor in precipitating changes in the orientation of the Bābī community at Baghdad. According to Dahajī, Azal lived with his three wives in a house apart from the other Bābīs, under the name of Hajī ʿAlī Lāshfurūsh.[85] Only Mīrzā Āqā Jān Kāshānī, a servant in Bahāʾ Allāh's employ, enjoyed regular access to him; no-one else even knew where his house was situated. On more than one occasion, it seems, he moved house when knowledge of his whereabouts leaked out. Kāshānī acted as a go-between for Ṣubḥ-i Azal

[81] Dahajī, *Risāla*, p. 149.
[82] Ibid., p. 45.
[83] Niʿmat Allāh Dhukāʾī Baydāʾī, *Tadhkira-yi shuʿāra-yi qarn-i awwal-i Bahāʾī*, vol. 3 (Tehran, 1970–71) pp. 170–72, 180–83.
[84] Balyuzi, *Bahāʾuʾllāh*, pp. 128–29.
[85] This house was situated in the street of the charcoal vendors [*dhughāl-furūshān*]—see ibid., p. 107.

and his brother, and it appears that the former visited Bahāʾ Allāh every few days, making his way to his house after nightfall.[86]

This account may, however, be a little exaggerated. The Azalī authors of the *Hasht bihisht* do not conceal the fact that "in accordance with the instructions given him by his holiness the Point of the Bayān [the Bāb], his excellency [Azal] spent his days and nights behind the tabernacle of concealment from the believers and others"; but they add that "only his brothers and the elite among the believers had access to him,"[87] suggesting that Azal was rather more accessible than Dahajī makes out.

Bahāʾī polemic has made much capital out of Azal's behaviour at this period, attributing it to a mixture of incompetence and cowardice.[88] But it is clear that he actually continued to identify himself as head of the Bābīs, to write books, reply to letters, and on occasion meet with other leaders of the community. His behaviour seems, therefore, to have been dictated less by cowardice than by the adoption of a policy of *taqiyya*. Not only was this an approved practice in Shiʿism, but there was particular sanction for it in the seclusionist policies of the last Imams and, in particular, the original *ghayba* of the twelfth Imam, who went into hiding out of fear of his enemies.

The notion of a *walī* who chose to remain in occultation would not, therefore, have surprised or disturbed most Bābīs at this juncture. The Bahāʾī missionary, Ḥājī Mīrzā Haydar ʿAlī Iṣfahānī, writing at a much later date, states that he explicitly drew this parallel at this time, asking "What is difference between the 'hidden Azal' and the Hidden Imām of Islam?"[89]

In keeping himself hidden, Azal was, in fact, merely acting on the Bāb's instructions to him. Those who had access to him, including his brother, Ḥusayn ʿAlī, clearly regarded it as their duty to keep him out of the reach of the community at large. In a letter to Azal, the Bāb says: "Preserve yourself, then preserve yourself [sic], then what has been sent down in the Bayān, then what is sent from you."[90]

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[86] Dahajī, *Risāla*, pp. 45–46.

[87] Kirmānī and Kirmānī, *Hasht bihisht*, p. 301.

[88] For examples, see: Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 112; Balyuzi, *Bahāʾuʾllāh*, pp. 119, 226; Marzieh Gail, foreword to Ustād Muḥammad-ʿAlīy-i-Salmānī, *My Memories of Bahāʾuʾllāh*, trans. M. Gail (Los Angeles, 1982, p. xi.

[89] Hājī Mīrzā Haydar ʿAlī [Iṣfahānī], *Stories from the Delight of Hearts*, trans, and abridged A. Q. Faizi (Los Angeles, 1980), p. 8.

[90] Letter quoted Rajab ʿAlī Qahīr, *Risāla*, f. 55a.

In a passage of the *Kitāb-i panj shaʾn* referring to Azal as "the Fruit that ripened in the year six [1850]" and the return of the Imām Ḥusayn, the Bāb writes: "Protect that Fruit lest there approach him what may cause his heart to be saddened."[91] In a letter to ʿAbd al-Karīm Qazvīnī, he refers to Azal as "the Eternal Mirror" and tells Qazvīnī to "take the greatest care, in the first place to protect him and in the second to make him happy and joyful, so that not even the least trace of sadness may come upon his blessed heart."[92] The Bāb also wrote in similar terms to Bahāʾ Allāh, instructing him to "take the greatest care of his [Azal's] spirit and his contentment [reading *irtwāḥ* as a variant for *irtyāḥ*], lest fierce [?] winds [*aryāḥ-i mushriqa*] should blow upon his heart; and supply him in the best manner with what will cause him to be eager for writing and composition, that he may behold no sadness whatever, whether inwardly or outwardly. And do your utmost to protect him and the verses treasured up within him until your own time comes."[93]

The *ghayba* motif was underlined by Azal's use of various individuals as intermediaries between himself and the community at large, echoing the *wikāla* system of the later Shīʿī Imams and, more particularly, the supposed appointment of agents by the twelfth Imam during the lesser occultation. According to the Bahāʾī writer Taherzadeh, he 'employed a Persian merchant named Abu 'l-Qāsim and used him as a link between himself and the believers in Baghdad. Being nominally the leader of the Bābī community, he now began to disseminate his misguided ideas to them, using Abu 'l-Qāsim as his intermediary."[94]

Of unquestionably greater importance as a representative of Azal in the Baghdad region was Sayyid Muḥammad Iṣfahānī, who was appointed one of the "witnesses of the Bayān."[95] Shoghi Effendi states that he was, indeed, given the rank of first among these witnesses.[96] Resident in Karbala, Iṣfahānī appears to have been extremely active on Azal's behalf, although later Bahāʾī accounts tend to portray him as a baneful influence on his master rather than his mouthpiece or agent.

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[91] Idem, *Panj shaʾn*, pp. 255–56.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Idem, letter quoted ʿIzziyya Khānum, *Tanbīh al-nāʾimīn*, p. 32.
[94] Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahāʾuʾllāh*, vol. 1, p. 247.
[95] Dahajī, *Risāla*, p. 76.
[96] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 114.

According to Dahajī, Azal wrote to seven individuals, naming them all "witnesses of the Bayān."[97] These included (apart from Iṣfahānī) Mullā Muḥammad Jaʿfar Nārāqī and his brother, Mullā Muḥammad Taqī, both resident in Kāshān.[98] Mullā Muḥammad Jaʿfar himself gives the names of a number of leading Azalī Bābīs, most of whom were, he says, "appointed witnesses by his holiness Azal." These were Ḥajī Sayyid Muḥammad (Iṣfahānī), Ḥājī Sayyid Jawād (al-Karbalāʾī), Mīrzā Muḥammad Ḥusayn Mutawallī-bashī Qummī, and Mullā Rajab ʿAlī Qahīr.[99]

It is, however, hard to establish just what the functions of these witnesses were. Like the *wukalāʾ* of the Imams and later Bahāʾī trustees, they collected funds (*ḥuqūq*—a Shīʿī term) from the believers to send to the headquarters of the sect.[100] From a comment of Dahajī's, it would seem that each witness was appointed as Azal's agent for the community of a particular town or region. Mullā Muḥammad Jaʿfar Nārāqī, for example, was the *shahīd* for Kāshān, while his brother Muḥammad Taqī was *shahīd* for Nārāq.[101] If this was the case—and it follows Shīʿī precedent—it would imply that the network of *shuhadāʾ* was fairly extensive, although it is not clear how Azal actually exercised control over it or, indeed, how much real authority he possessed. Shoghi Effendi says he appointed a total of eighteen witnesses (presumably on the pattern of the Bāb's eighteen *ḥurūf al-ḥayy*), eleven of whom later rejected him in favour of Bahāʾ Allāh.[102]

The appointment of witnesses by Azal was certainly a major step towards routinization of charismatic authority within early Babism; but there is evidence that the move did not meet with widespread acceptance and that considerable tension still existed between such routinizing tendencies and the appeal of original charisma. According to Dahajī, Mullā Muḥammad Jaʿfar Nārāqī, one of the witnesses, himself laid claim to the position of *man yuẓhiruhuʾllāh*, apparently during the Baghdad period.[103] At the same time, other individuals began or continued to

[97] Dahajī, *Risāla*, p. 72.
[98] Ibid., p. 61.
[99] Narāqī, *Tadhkirat al-ghāfilīn*, p. 38.
[100] Dahajī, *Risāla*, pp. 70, 72.
[101] Ibid., p. 61. There was, says Dahajī, a disagreement between these two as to which was the more learned.
[102] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 233.
[103] Dahajī, *Risāla*, p. 69.

advance similar claims, including at least one other of the probable witnesses, Ḥājī Mīrzā Mūsā Qummī, who later sided with Bahāʾ Allāh.[104]

## The Episode of Dayyān

By far the most serious challenge to Azal's authority came from Mīrzā Asad Allāh Khuʾī "Dayyān," whose activities provoked him to pen his lengthy refutation entitled *Kitāb al-mustayqiẓ*. Mīrzā Asad Allāh was a native of Khūy in Ādharbāyjān. His father had been a state auditor [*mustawfī*] under Muḥammad Shāh, and he himself is said to have held a government position as a secretary for taxes in Khūy. He was, it is said, a learned and cultured man who knew several languages, including Persian, Turkish, Arabic, Hebrew, and Syriac.[105] Zarandī gives an account of his conversion to Babism during the period of the Bāb's confinement in Chihrīq, and refers to his having composed a treatise in defence of his new faith which received particular praise from the prophet.[106] Soon after the Bāb's death, Dayyān—who seems to have been deeply interested in occult sciences such as alchemy and gematria[107]—began to advance claims on his own behalf.[108] The precise nature of these claims is, as usual, hard to establish. Most sources say he gave himself out to be *man yuẓhiruhuʾllāh*,[109] but Azal adds that he claimed to be the Qāʾim, apparently in the sense that he was the fulfilment of all previous scriptural prophecy, his name appearing in the Torah, Psalms, Gospel, Qurʾān, and Bayān.[110]

It certainly seems that Dayyān claimed to be more than just another *ẓuhūr* beneath the Bāb's shadow. A passage from a letter of his quoted in *al-Mustayqiẓ* declares that "the heavens of the Bayān have been rolled

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[104] Ibid., p. 59; Balyuzi, *BahāʾuHlāh*, pp. 122, 131.

[105] Muḥammad ʿAlī Fayḍī, *Kitāb-i laʿālī-yi dirakhshān* (Shīrāz, 1967), p. 367.

[106] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 303–04.

[107] My evidence for this statement is the content of those sections of the *Kitāb-i panj shaʾn* addressed to him (see pp. 68–105, 405 to end). On the identity of this final section, see D. MacEoin, "The Identity of the Bāb's Lawḥ-i ḥurūfāt," *Bahāʾī Studies Bulletin* 2: 1 (June, 1983), pp. 78–79. And see MacEoin, *Sources*.

[108] Narāqī, *Tadhkira*, p. 95; Dahajī, *Risāla*, p. 59.

[109] Narāqī, *Tadhkira*, p. 95; Kirmānī and Kirmānī, *Hasht bihisht*, pp. 302–03; Fayḍī, *Laʾālī*, p. 369; Balyuzi, *Edward Granville Browne*, p. 43.

[110] Nūrī, *Mustayqiẓ*, p. 8. It is conceivable that this latter claim of Dayyān influenced Bahāʾ Allāh in his later allusions to prophecies of his appearance in scripture, a recurring theme in later Bahāʾī apologia.

up; regard not its verses also [sic], and regard not its words also [sic]."[111] Later, he claims to be able to raise the dead and calls on the Bābīs to reveal Azal's whereabouts and to challenge him to do the same, something he maintains the latter will be unable to do.[112]

In her well-known *risāla* written in reply to a letter from ʿAbbās Effendi, ʿIzziyya Khānum (Sulṭān Khānum), a sister of Ṣubḥ-i Azal, states that Dayyān "openly and in public apostatized from the faith of the Bayān, and in numerous gatherings spoke without concealment in refutation of his holiness the Primal Point" and says that he even burned a large quantity of the Bāb's writings.[113] Beginning with his chief representative, Mīrzā Ibrāhīm Tabrīzī,[114] Dayyān acquired a following in Azerbaijan and possibly elsewhere, who came to call themselves, not Bābīs but Asadīs.[115] How large this group was is not clear, but Dayyān's activities seem to have continued without interruption until about 1856, when he appeared in Baghdad, possibly in response to Azal's attack on him in the *Kitāb al-mustayqiẓ*.[116] How long Dayyān spent in Baghdad is not known, but it would not seem to have been more than a few months. Azal's refutation of him had contained passages that implied that he wanted both Dayyān and Mīrzā Ibrāhīm (whom he named Abu 'l-Shurūr [Father of Evils] and Abu 'l-Dawahī [Father of calamities] respectively) put to death.[117]

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[111] Ibid., p. 7.

[112] Ibid., pp. 8, 9.

[113] ʿIzziyya Khānum, *Tanbīh*, p. 89.

[114] Kirmānī and Kirmānī, *Hasht bihisht*, p. 302. Azal considered Qazvīnī as the real force behind Dayyān, much as later Bahāʾī writing was to consider Sayyid Muḥammad Iṣfahanī as the instigator of Azal's activities (Nūrī, *Mustayqiẓ*, p. 16).

[115] Ibid., p. 5; H. M. Balyuzi, *The Báb* (Oxford, 1973), p. 239.

[116] On the dating of Dayyān's stay in Baghdad and his murder, see Kirmānī and Kirmānī, *Hasht bihisht*, p. 302; Dahajī, *Risāla*, p. 88; Mīrzā Ḥusayn ʿAlī Nūrī Bahāʾ Allāh, *Kitāb-i badīʿ* (n.p., n.d.), pp. 102ff. (and quoted ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Raḥīq-i makhtūm*, 2 vols. [Tehran, 1973–75], vol. 1, p. 498). Ishrāq Khāvarī quotes from a book entitled *al-Fāriq*, by ʿAbd al-Raḥīm Big (p. 629), describing a dust-storm in Baghdad, which is taken to correspond to the dust said to have arisen after Dayyān's murder. The date for this event is given as 27 Ramadan 1274/11 May 1858, which would make it much later than I have suggested. Ishrāq Khāvarī's dating, however, contradicts that of Dahajī, which seems more reliable.

[117] E. G. Browne, *Materials for the Study of the Bābī Religion* (Cambridge, 1918), p. 218. It must be borne in mind that, although the Bāb had prohibited the execution of believers (ʿAlī Muḥammad Shīrāzī, the Bāb, *Bayān-i Fārsī* [n.p. (Tehran), n.d.], 4: 5, p. 118), it may have been assumed that the law of apostasy was much the same as that in Islam, permitting the passing of a death sentence on Dayyān.

According to Bahāʾ Allāh, Azal actually wrote a *fatwā* for Dayyān's execution during the period of his (Bahāʾ Allāh's) retirement in Kurdistan (1854–56).[118] When Dayyān came to Baghdad, the Bābī community was, therefore, determined to have him killed, but Bahāʾ Allāh—who had recently returned to the city and assumed a position of considerable authority—spoke individually with each of them and forbade them in strong terms to harm him. Two days after this, Dayyān spoke with Bahāʾ Allāh, denying the "lies" that had been ascribed to him. A few days later, however, he was found murdered.[119] The killer, Mīrzā Muḥammad Māzandarānī, had acted in pursuance of Azal's *fatwā*.

## Bahaʾ Allāh's rise to ascendancy

With Dayyān thus disposed of, his followers appear to have dispersed rapidly, for nothing more is heard of them. His deputy, Mīrzā Ibrāhīm Tabrīzī, was also put to death, and the entire Asadī movement either reintegrated itself with mainstream Babism or was abandoned for a return to Islam.

No other serious claimants survived. Sayyid Ḥusayn Hindīyānī remained in touch with the Bābī leadership in Baghdad, but is said to have had no more than forty followers in his home town of Hindīyān near Muḥammara, and cannot be said to have constituted anything of a threat.[120] Others are said to have retracted their claims, usually—according to Bahāʾī sources—in personal disavowals made to Bahāʾ Allāh.[121] The stage was now set for what was to prove the most serious and, in

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[118] Nūrī, *Kitāb-i badīʿ* (quoted Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Raḥīq*, vol. I, p. 498).

[119] Ibid. It is, however, worth noting a reference in a work of Bahāʾ Allāh's from the Baghdad period, in which he briefly mentions Dayyān as "Abu 'l-Shurūr" (quoted ʿIzziyya Khānum, *Tanbīh*, p. 86). It has never been entirely clear to me why Bahāʾ Allāh should later have tried as he did to defend Dayyān's reputation, unless it was because of the importance of linking the latter to himself in order to benefit from the Bāb's description of Dayyān as "the third letter to believe in him whom God shall manifest." It is possible that later approbatory passages concerning Dayyān in works such as the *Kitāb-i badīʿ*, *Lawḥ-i Sirāj*, or *Lawḥ-i Shaykh* represent a retrospective opinion contradicting Bahāʾ Allāh's original view.

For details of Dayyān's murder, see Dahajī, *Risāla*, pp. 87–88. Narāqī maintains that Bahāʾ Allāh originally protected Dayyān's killer (*Tadhkira*, p. 48); but this would appear to be contradicted by Māzandarānī's own account, assuming that Dahajī's version of it is correct

[120] See Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, vol. 2, p. 331, note T.

[121] See Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 131.

the end, the most successful challenge to Ṣubḥ-i Azal's authority—that posed by the emergence of his half-brother Mīrzā Ḥusayn ʿAlī as an effective claimant to the status, not merely of head of the sect, but of *man yuẓhiruhu 'llāh*.

The appearance of Bahāʾ Allāh as principal contender for leadership of the Bābī community represents the clearest expression of a theme already obversable in many of the earlier *ẓuhūrāt*, namely the emergence of a non-clerical (or even anti-clerical) leader as the bearer of the values and purposes of the movement, and, indeed, of charismatic authority within it.

The outstanding claimants to divine afflatus in this period belonged with few exceptions to classes other than that of the Shīʾī hierocracy. Even individuals like Sayyid Baṣīr Hindī or Dayyān, who are described as well read and even, in a sense, learned, had not followed conventional madrasa educations and were unversed in the type of learning associated with the professional religious elite. Those ʿulamāʾ who do figure in this group—such as Mullā Shaykh ʿAlī Turshīzī, Mullā Muḥammad Jaʿfar Narāqī, or Ḥājī Mīrzā Mūsā Qummī were far from eminent among that class. Others, significantly, were merchants or tradesmen, such as Dhabīḥ or Ḥusayn Mīlānī.

This stands in marked contrast to the situation in early Babism where, with the important exception of the Bāb himself, all the movement's leading figures, including individuals such as Qurrat al-ʿAyn, Mullā Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī, or Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī Bārfurūshī, who advanced theophanic claims for themselves, belonged to the hierocracy and in some cases held important positions within it.

With claimants such as Dhabīḥ, Sayyid Baṣīr, and even, as we have noted, Azal himself, the theme of the unlettered man [*ummī*] who is capable of revealing verses from his *fiṭra* or innate essence (as did the Bāb), comes to the fore again, notably in connection with extreme claims to divine or semi-divine status.

There seems no good reason to doubt that, during the early Baghdad period, Mīrzā Ḥusayn ʿAlī occupied a position subordinate to his half-brother. We possess evidence that Bahāʾ Allāh himself, whatever his personal thoughts on the subject, was prepared to acknowledge publicly a superior status for Azal and to define his own role as that of protector and intermediary between him and the community at large.

Bahāʾ Allāh's half-sister ʿIzziyya Khānum seems to have had access to several texts written by him in the early part of the Baghdad exile, some of which she quotes in *Tanbīh al-nāʾimīn*. If these are authentic, they

would indicate that Bahāʾ Allāh's veneration for and submission to Azal were more than the mere front they have been described as in Bahāʾī histories.

For example, in a letter from Bahāʾ Allāh written in the hand of Mīrzā Jawad Khurāsānī, he writes: "He [God] removed the covering of glory from the face of beauty, whereupon the holy and eternal Mirror [*mirʾāt-i qudsiyya-yi azaliyya*], the everlasting glass of light [*nūr*], the essence of existence and the pure reality of outward appearance raised up the banner of being and removed the veil of divine light from his unique countenance."[122] In a marginal note to the same letter, written in Bahāʾ Allāh's own hand, there is a reference to the *Kitāb-i nūr*, one of the early works of Azal: "The *Kitāb-i nūr* has not been sent, although I insisted and pressed (for it). Do not neglect it, for it is extremely necessary for all the people of the Bayān. His excellency Mullā Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn must make great efforts to finish (copying) it. By the Lord of the heavens and the earth, it is the book of a glorious and loved one, and (consists of) the verses of the Protector, the Self-Subsisting. Write it in the best handwriting with the greatest perfection of which you are capable."[123]

Of even greater interest are marginal comments in Bahāʾ Allāh's hand attached to a letter written to Mīrzā Muḥammad Hādī Qazvīnī. Here, he refers to a statement that had been made to Muḥammad Hādī by a certain Hājī Ḥasan regarding himself [Bahāʾ Allāh] and someone called Mīrzā Riḍā Qulī—possibly Bahāʾ Allāh's brother of that name. Although Ḥājī Ḥasan's views appear to have been considerably compressed, it seems that he regarded Bahāʾ Allāh as a divine attribute [*ṣifat*] and Riḍā Qulī as a manifestation of the divine names [*az maẓāhir-i asmāʾ*]; the Bayān, the Bāb, and the "Guides" of the Bayān all, seemingly, existed beneath his shadow in the stations as the meanings [*maʿānī*] and the external aspects of the names and attributes.[124]

Bahāʾ Allāh does not seem to regard these claims as unduly disturbing. He goes on to refer to statements he himself is said to have made concerning Ṣubḥ-i Azal:

> You have written that it appears from statements of mine that the eternal sun [*shams-i azalī*] has shone forth in the everlasting glass [*zajāja-yi*

[122] Quoted ʿIzziyya Khānum, *Tanbīh*, p. 38.
[123] Ibid., p. 40. The letter runs from p. 37 to p. 41. See also passages from Bahāʾ Allāh's *Khuṭba-yi salawāt*, quoted ibid., pp. 36–37.
[124] Quoted ibid., pp. 85–86.

> *ṣamadī*]. This is true, there can be no doubt of it. First of all, the eternal essence [*jawhar-i azal*] and the point of pre-existence has been and is the Lord, the Most Exalted [*rabb-i aʿlā* i.e. the Báb]; the Eternal Mirror [*miʾāt-i azal*, i.e. Azal] is known to have been and to be his holiness the Living, the Self-Subsisting. The Eternal Sun, which is the mention of real existence, has appeared and become manifest in the glass [*zajāja*], which is "they" [*īshān*, i.e. himself].[125] Apart from this, the glass is a thousand times lower and more humble than the Mirror—it does not matter to whom you may ascribe it [i.e. the term "glass"].[126]

Parallel statements occur in an Arabic testament [*kitāb wiṣāyatī min baʿdī*] written by Bahāʾ Allāh in Baghdad,[127] in which he declares that "the remnant of God" [*baqiyyat Allāh*—originally a term for the hidden Imam] is "the Face of Light" [*ṭalʿat al-nūr*, i.e. Azal] and that he himself is "a servant who has believed in God and in the Face of Light."[128] He maintains that he has spoken no more than "a word of servitude" and that it is other people who have exaggerated his position. These latter he condemns, asking "is the Face of Light not enough for you?"[129]

In acting as the chief promoter and defender of his brother's role as supreme authority within the movement, Bahāʾ Allāh easily and effectively acquired the position of leading intermediary between Azal and his followers. This function also involved the general management of the community's affairs and responsibility for relations with the outside world.

In the testament just quoted, Bahāʾ Allāh indicates his ready acceptance of Azal's *ghayba* when he states that the "Face of Light" issues his decrees "from behind the veil,"[130] something to which he also alludes in his letter to Muḥammad Hādī Qazvīnī.[131] ʿIziyya Khānum relates a story from an early Bābī who went to see Azal at the time when he was "hidden and concealed" in Baghdad. This man first came to Bahāʾ Allāh and was informed that it would be impossible to meet Azal. When asked

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[125] On the use of *īshān* as a title for Bahāʾ Allāh in this period, see Mīrzā Ḥusayn Āvāra, *al-Kawākib al-durriyya*, 2 vols. (Cairo, n.d.), vol. 1, part 2, pp. 271–81, including the text of a letter of Qurrat al-ʿAyn which appears to provide contemporary evidence for this.

[126] Letter quoted ʿIzziyya Khānum, *Tanbīh*, pp. 85–86.

[127] This dating seems clear from a subscription in the hand of Bahāʾ Allāh which refers to the possible erasure of the text "in the river", *fi 'l-shaṭṭ*)—see fascimile printed at end of ibid., p. [144].

[128] Ibid., pp. [143–44].

[129] Ibid., p. [144].

[130] *Wiṣāya*, quoted ibid., p. [144].

[131] Quoted ibid., p. 87.

about his own station in the movement, Bahāʾ Allāh said he was "a lantern that protects that candle of guidance [Azal] from the hurricanes of events."[132]

Ḥusayn ʿAlī's role as manager of the affairs of the Bābī community is freely acknowledged by the authors of the *Hasht Bihisht*, who go on to say that he associated with all types and classes of people, including *lūṭīs*, dervishes, government officials, and poets.[133] It was, indeed, his custom to spend part of every day in the coffee-house of a certain Sayyid Ḥabīb in the old city, where he would meet other sect members as well as notables, ʿulamāʾ and others.[134]

External evidence for Bahāʾ Allāh's role exists in a report from the British Consul in Baghdad, Capt. Arnold Burrowes Kemball, who in 1859 described him (under the name "Meerza Hassan Ali") as "the Chief of the Babees" and said that "though the ostensible agent [he] is not the real representative of Bāb."[135] Burrowes goes on to say that the secret of Azal's whereabouts was "mysteriously perserved" but that Bahāʾ Allāh enjoyed "a consideration which partakes of absolute devotion and reverence on the part of his followers" and was recognized as "the Director and Guide" of the Bābīs of Iran.[136]

It is obvious that such a situation was bound to provoke and sustain tension. The first attempt to resolve that tension seems to have been Bahāʾ Allāh's departure from Baghdad on 10 April 1854. Writing later about this in the *Kitāb-i īqān* (c. 1858), he stated that "since I became aware of events that had not as yet ocurred, I chose in advance to go into exile [*muhājirat*]…. I swear by God that there was no thought of return in this exile, nor did my journeying hold any hope of reunion. My only object was that I should not become a centre for dissension between the friends, nor a source of disturbance among my companions, nor the cause of harm to anyone, nor a reason for the sadness of any heart."[137]

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[132] Ibid., p. 112.

[133] Kirmānī and Kirmānī, *Hasht bihisht*, p. 301. Similar remarks are made by Dahajī (*Risāla*, pp. 93, 148).

[134] Salmānī, *Memories of Bahaʾuʾllāh*, pp. 16–17; cf. Dahajī, Risāla, p. 148.

[135] Report from Kemball to Bulwer, no. 51, 28 September 1859: F.O. 195624, quoted M. Momen (ed.), *The Bābī and Bahāʾī Religions 1844–1944*, Oxford, 1981, p. 182.

[136] Ibid.

[137] Mīrzā ʿAlī Nūrī Bahāʾ Allāh's, *Kitāb-i mustatāb-i īqān* (Cairo, 1352/1933), p. 194; cf. Bahāʾuʾllāh, *The Kitāb-i-lqān: The Book of Certitude*, trans. Shoghi Effendi, London, 1961, p. 160. Note that Shoghi Effendi's use of capitalized "We" and "Our" for the Persian first person singular gives a misleading impression of Bahāʾ Allāh own view of his status at the time of writing. In the later *Lawḥ-i Sirāj*, written in Edirne, Bahāʾ Allāh

There seems no reason why we should not take Bahāʾ Allāh at his word and accept that he genuinely intended to separate himself permanently from the Bābī community, being content to live the life of a Sufi dervish in the mountains of Kurdistan. The details of his two-year self-imposed exile and the circumstances of his return at the express request of some of the Bābīs in Baghdad have been adequately discussed elsewhere.[138] On only one point does there seem to be any serious controversy, namely the question of whether or not he returned in obedience to the wishes of Ṣubḥ-i Azal.

The origins of this controversy lie in a phrase used by Bahāʾ Allāh in the *Kitāb-i īqān*, where, writing of his decision to go back to Baghdad, he says: "(Matters were thus) until the decree of return issued forth from the source of command [*maṣdar-i amr*]. Of necessity, I submitted myself and returned."[139] The words I have here translated "source of command" (and which might conceivably be equally well be conveyed by the phrase "centre of the cause [sc. of God]") have been rendered in the official Bahāʾī translation of Shoghi Effendi as "the Mystic Source"[140]—an interpretation which has been defended on the uncertain grounds that the *maṣdar-i amr* "is obviously the Godhead."[141]

This has led to much confusion. There are no very good grounds for translating the phrase in question as "the Mystic Source" nor for identifying it unequivocally with the Godhead. Nonetheless, several passages in the writings of Bahāʾ Allāh employ this phrase (or others very like it), indicating that the term, however unusual, was much used by him.[142]

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attributes his departure to the behaviour of Azal and Sayyid Muḥammad Iṣfahānī (in Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Māʾida*, vol. 7, pp. 72–73).

[138] See Balyuzi, *Bahāʾuʾllāh*, pp. 115–122; Dahajī, *Risāla*, pp. 47–48. Dahaji supports the view that Bahāʾ Allāh had no intention of returning to Baghdad (ibid., p. 47).

[139] Nūrī, *Īqān*, p. 195.

[140] Bahāʾuʾllāh, *The Kitāb-i-īqān*, p. 160.

[141] Balyuzi, *Edward Granville Browne*, p. 79. The Bahāʾī argument against the view that *maṣdar-i amr* refers to Azal seems to have begun with Dahajī's attempt to refute Browne's statement to that effect (*Nuqṭat al-kāf*, Persian introduction, pp. 39–40) in his *risāla* (pp. 43–44).

[142] I am grateful to Mr [now Dr.] Stephen Lambden for drawing my attention to these passages. Apart from those referred to in the text here, the following may be noted: "Untitled letter," in *Ishrāqāt*, p. 227 [*maṣdar-i aʿlā:* cf. *qalam-i aʿlā* for Bahaʾ Allāh]*;* "Untitled letter," in uncatalogued INBA ms [*wa baʿḍī (bayānāt)-i dīgar az maṣdar-i amr wa maṭlaʿi waḥy ʿalā mā arāda ʾllāh bi-lisān-i Pārsī nāzil*]; Āthār, vol. 6, pp. 299 [*maṣdar-i awāmir wa aḥkām*], 314–15, 327 [*nayyir-i amr*]*;* letter in INBA, MS 73, p. 561; Nūrī, "Kull al-ṭaʿām," in Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Māʾida*, vol. 4, p. 274 [*maẓhar al-amr*].

Although a few of these passages are ambiguous as to whether God or his manifestation is intended by the *maṣdar-i amr*, most are readily interpreted as referring to the latter. In the *Lawḥ-i Jināb-i Amīn* (dated 23 Ṣafar 1304/21 November 1887), for example, he writes 'Greetings and peace be upon him whom he [God] has made the horizon of his names, the dawning-place of his attributes, the repository of his knowledge, and the source of his command [*maṣdar amrihi*]."[143] In the *Lawḥ-i Mānakjī*, he refers to "whatsoever is revealed today from the source of command and the manifestation of God's self."[144] Similarly, in the *Lawḥ-i bismillāh* he speaks of the prophets as "the manifestations of the commands [*maẓāhir-i awāmir*] and sources of the divine decrees [*maṣādir-i aḥkām-i rabbānī*]"[145] Finally, in an explicit statement couched in the words of his amanuensis, he writes: "One day a letter was revealed from the source of command, while this servant was before him, writing it down."[146]

Taken together, these and similar passages lend considerable support to the view, first put forward by E. G Browne, that the term *maṣdar-i amr* in the *Kitāb-i īqān* is to be interpreted as a reference, not to the divinity, but to Azal, as the locus of revelation at that time.[147] If this is so, it would seem that, even after his return to Baghdad, Bahāʾ Allāh remained subordinate to his brother. There is, of course, ample evidence that he continued to act as the effective head of the community and that his prestige was even greater than before. Rumours about his "station" seem to have persisted, possibly enhanced by his period of seclusion and his association with numerous important ṢSufis, some of whom came to visit him in Baghdad.

## The claim to Ḥusayniyyat

According to Dahajī, some individuals in Baghdad began to say that Bahāʾ Allāh was the sun and Azal merely the mirror reflecting it.[148] At

[143] INBA, uncatalogued Ms, p. 163.
[144] "Lawḥ-i Mānakjī," in *Māʾida*, vol. 7, p. 154.
[145] *Majmūʿa*, p. 277.
[146] "Lawḥ-i istintāq," in *Māʾida*, vol. 4, p. 228.
[147] Browne seems to have first advanced this theory in "The Bābīs of Persia" II, JRAS 21 (1889), p. 946.
[148] Ibid., p. 68. Others regarded him as the "promulgator" [*murawwij*] of the Bābī religion (ibid.).

some point, the opinion spread that he was the return of the Imām Ḥusayn, and there is some evidence that he may have held this opinion himself.

In my earlier article (pp. 367–68), I mentioned several references made by the Bāb to the appearance of John the Baptist and the Imām Ḥusayn—a concept somehow linked to the maturing of the Bāb's revelation. Although the relevant passages (*Kitāb-i panj shaʾn*, pp. 256, 280) are far from clear, it does appear from nearby references to "the two waḥīds" that Sayyid Yaḥyā Dārābī and Ṣubḥ-i Azal (both of whom were titled Waḥīd) are intended by the "two signs" expected to make their appearance in the year six[149]—a view that seems to have given rise to a later Azalī belief that the present age is that of the return of Ḥusayn following the appearance of the Bāb.[150] Hence various references to Azal as *al-nūr* (or simply *nūr*), *ṭalʿat al-nūr*, or *wijhat al-nūr* (sic), or to his writings as *āyāt al-nūr, saḥāʾif al-nūr*, and so on, all of which relate back to the identification of the word *nūr* with Ḥusayn (see "Hierarchy," pp. 132–33).

At some date, however, the *Panj shaʾn* text appears to have been applied directly to Bahāʾ Allāh, as is clear from subsequent use of it in Bahāʾī apologetics.[151] According to Narāqī, Bahāʾ Allāh's first claim was to be the return of Ḥusayn,[152] although no date is assigned to it. The point is not, in fact, contentious, since later Bahāʾī writers have put forward the view that Bahāʾ Allāh was the return of Ḥusayn, even if this is subsumed by wider notions of messianic fulfillment.[153]

Bahāʾ Allāh explicitly identified himself as the return of Ḥusayn, although normally in the context of a more varied identification with a succession of prophetic and saintly figures from the past. In the *Lawḥ-i Naṣīr*, written in Edirne [1864–68], he says: "By God. this is he who appeared at one time in the name of the Spirit [*al-rūḥ.* i.e. Jesus Christ], then in the name of the Friend [*al-ḥabīb*, i.e. Muḥammad], then in the name of ʿAlī [i.e. the Bāb, ʿAlī Muḥammad], then in this blessed, exalted, inaccessible, lofty, and beloved name [i.e. Ḥusayn (ʿAlī)]. This is Ḥusayn

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[149] Shīrāzī, *Panj shaʾn*, pp. 258, 259. This point is argued by Rajab ʿAlī Qahīr (*Risāla*, ff. 43b–44a).

[150] See Narāqī, *Tadhkira*, pp. 11–12.

[151] See Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 97.

[152] Narāqī, *Tadhkira*, p. 14; cf. Rajab ʿAlī Qahīr, *Risāla*, f. 43b.

[153] See Mīrzā Abu 'l-Faḍl Gulpāygānī, *Kitāb al-farāʾid*, (Cairo, n.d.), p. 16; Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Raḥīq*, vol. 1, pp. 190–191; Shoghi Efendi, *God Passes By*, p. 94; idem, *Directives from the Guardian*, compiled by G. Garrida (New Delhi, 1973), p. 58; Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 593–94.

in truth, who has appeared with grace in the kingdom of justice, against whom the unbelievers have arisen with what they possess of rebellion and wickedness."[154]

In one place, he specifically refers to his advent as Ḥusayn in fulfilment of Shiʿite prophecy concerning the period after the reappearance of the twelfth Imam: "This is Ḥusayn in truth, who has come to you with verses, not a word of which can be matched by all that is in heaven and earth, if you are of those that understand. Say, this is he whom you were promised after the Qāʾim."[155]

## The widening of Bahaʾ Allāh's claims

So far, there is nothing particularly remarkable about Bahāʾ Allāh's claims. He was only one of a number of individuals claiming *Ḥusayniyyat* or a variety of other roles as personifications of figures from the past. In this respect, his claims represent a direct continuation of Bābī theophanic theory. At some point, however—certainly by the time he was living in Edirne [1864–68]—he began to extend the claim to *Ḥusayniyyat* to a wider identification with other important figures of religious history, especially those who had undergone severe tribulations or suffered a martyr's death.

In the *Sūrat al-damm* (Edirne), for example, he identified himself successively with Abraham, Moses, Joseph, John the Baptist, Jesus, Ḥusayn, and the Bāb, indicating the various sufferings he had undergone in their persons.[156] Similarly, in a *ziyāra* written for Mullā Ḥusayn Bushrūʿī (date unknown, but seemingly late), he refers to his sufferings as Abel, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muḥammad, Ḥusayn, and the Bāb.[157]

It seems evident that we have here a clear development of a Shīʿī theme noted in my earlier article (pp. 103–105), namely the identification of both major and minor figures as, in some sense, one being. The subsequent development of Bahāʾ Allāh's claims and the elaboration of

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[154] Mīrzā Ḥusayn ʿAlī Nūrī Bahāʾ Allāh, "Lawḥ-i Naṣīr," in *Majmūʿa-yi alwāḥ-i mubāraka* (Cairo, 1920), p. 196.

[155] Idem, untitled work quoted Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Rahīq*, vol. 1, p. 191.

[156] Idem, "Sūrat al-damm," in idem, *Āthār-i qalam-i aʿlā*, 2nd. rev. ed., ed. National [Bahāʾī] Committe for Publication and Research (Tehran, 1977), pp. 64–65. See translation in Bahāʾuʾllāh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahāʾuʾllāh*, ed. and trans. Shoghi Effendi (London, 1949), pp. 88–89. These identifications are confirmed by the Bahāʾī leader, Shoghi Effendi (*Directives*, p. 58).

[157] Nūrī, *ziyāra* in Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Māʾida*, vol. 8, pp. 82–83.

a scheme of "major prophets" (represented by the founders of the great religions) and "minor prophets" or other individuals in their shadow, makes these and similar passages in Bahāʾ Allāh's writings problematic for modern Bahāʾīs, as is evident from Shoghi Effendi's attempt to resolve the obvious contradictions involved.[158]

It is difficult to determine with any precision the stages through which Bahāʾ Allāh shifted from his claim to be the return of Ḥusayn to that of being *man yuẓhiruhu ʾllāh* and an independent *maẓhar* of the divinity. The chief reason for this difficulty is the uncertainty and lack of precision in those of our sources which attempt to date or identify the works of Bahāʾ Allāh attributable to the Baghdad period as a whole or its later years in particular.[159]

There are grounds for arguing that, in many cases, works have been dated on the basis of internal references which have in their turn been interpreted as expressions of doctrinal positions located in the period in question by other criteria. Thus, for example, the Bahāʾī writer Ishraq Khāvarī states in reference to the *Sūrat al-dhikr* that "it appears from references in it to have been revealed in Baghdad."[160] There are, however,

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[158] Shoghi Effendi, *Directives*, p. 58.

[159] The two principal works devoted to this topic are: Taherzadeh, *Revelation*, vol. 1, and ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Ganj-i shāyigān* (Tehran, 1968–69), pp. 7–67. Neither author indicates in all cases his reasons or authority for ascribing any particular work to a specific period, and in several instances they contradict one another or contain obviously questionable datings. Texts of Bahāʾ Allāh's principal Baghdad works are available as follows: *Īqān* (trans. *The Kitāb-i-Iqān*). *Kalimāt-i maknūna* (numerous editions, including Tehran. 1972–73; trans. as Bahāʾuʾlläh, *The Hidden Words of Bahāʾuʾllāh*, trans. Shoghi Effendi [Wilmette, 111, 1932]; an illuminated edition was published by S. Motamed in Frankurt [n.d. (c. 1974)]; the text is also available in compilations, including Mīrzā Ḥusayn ʿAlī Nūrī Bahāʾ Allāh, *Adʿīa-yi haḍrat-i maḥbūb* [Cairo, 1339/1920–21], pp. 421–76 [Persian section only], and idem, *Majmūʿa-yi alwāḥ*, pp. 17–32, 373–98). *Haft vādī*, in idem, *Āthār-i qalam-i aʿlā*, vol. 3 (Tehran, 1973–74), pp. 90–137. *Chahār vādī*, in ibid., pp. 138–57. *Lawḥ-i mallāḥ al- quds*, in Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Māʾida*, vol. 4, pp. 335–41, and in Mīrzā Ḥusayn ʿAlī Nūrī Bahāʾ Allāh, *Āthār-i qalam-i aʿlā*, vol. 5 (Tehran, 1975–76), pp. 176–85. *Lawḥ-i hūriyya* in ibid., pp. 342–50. *Lawḥ bulbul al-firāq*, in ibid., p. 324. *Sūrat Allāh*, in ibid., pp. 68–72. *Lawḥ madīnat al-riḍāʾ* in idid., 1st. ed. only (Tehran, 1969–70), pp. 135–49, *Lawḥ madīnat al-tawḥīd*, in Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Māʾida*, vol. 4, pp. 313–29. *Ṣahīfa-yi shaṭṭiyya*, in ibid., pp. 142–49. *Lawḥ-i fitna*, in ibid., pp. 261–65. *Tafsīr āyat al-nūr*, in ibid., pp. 49–86. *Ṣūrat al-ṣabr (Lawḥ-i Ayyūb)*, in ibid., pp. 282–313. *Bāz-ā va bidih jāmī*, in ibid., pp. 186–87. *Lawḥ al-ḥaqq*, in ibid., *Ganj-i shāyigān*, pp. 37–40, *Lawḥ-i ṣubḥāna rabbī al-aʿlā*, in ibid., pp. 61–64. *Hāla, hāla, yā bishārat*, in ibid., pp. 33–35 (trans. S. Lambden, *Bahāʾī Studies Bulletin*, 2: 3 [December. 1983], pp. 105–110). *Lawḥ-i ghulām al-khuld*, in ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Ishrāq Khāvarī (ed.), *Ayyām-i tisʿa*, 9th. printing (Tehran, 1973–74), pp. 92–99. *Lawḥ-i shikar shikan*, in *Star of the West*, 11:1 (March 21, 1920), pp. 24–21 (sic).

[160] Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Ganj-i shāyigān*, p. 60.

several internal indications in this work that argue in favour of a dating to the late Edirne period (1866–68).[161]

This often results in circular reasoning, running something like this: "Bahāʾ Allāh made such-and-such a claim while in Baghdad. This work contains references to that claim, therefore it must have been written in Baghdad. The fact that this work, known to have been written in Baghdad, refers to this claim is evidence that Bahāʾ Allāh advanced that claim during that period."

Now, this is manifestly unsatisfactory, as would be a reverse argument running: "Bahāʾ Allāh cannot have made such-and-such a claim while in Baghdad. There is a reference to that claim in this work, therefore it cannot have been written in Baghdad (and must have been written in Edirne/Acre). The fact that all works referring to this claim have been dated by me to Edirne or Acre and that, therefore, no works alluding to it are from the Baghdad period, is evidence that the claim was not made there."

Either way, we have a problem. This is not to say that we cannot discuss the later Baghdad period sensibly, just to point out that it is, as often as not, precisely those works that contain statements of real interest that pose the most intractable problems at this stage of our knowledge. Add to this the fact that, in spite of an impressive array of individual titles, the works of Bahāʾ Allāh thought to have been produced in the later Baghdad period are far from substantial. Many consist of little more than a couple of pages, whose contents are often exceptionally vague and circumlocutious (many being written in poetry or poetic prose). This leaves the reader with very little from which to extract doctrinal or biographical material.

The best-known of Bahāʾ Allāh's Baghdad works, such as the *Kitāb-i īqān, Jawāhir al-asrār, Kalimāt-i maknūna, Haft wādī*—all of which can be dated with a high degree of certainty—are, unfortunately, of restricted usefulness as sources for a serious discussion of his developing claims. Along with several other works written either in Kurdistan or in the years after his return from there (such as the *Qaṣīda ʿizz warqāʾiyya, Lawḥ-i ḥūriyya*, or *Lawḥ-i ghulām al-khuld*) these writings show strong

[161] See Nūrī, *Sūrat al-dhikr*, in Āthār, vol. 4, pp. 236–45, especially p. 239 (where he speaks of the Bābīs referring to *wiṣāya* for "one of his enemies" [presumably Azal], and p. 244 (where he mentions a certain Aḥmad who met him in Iraq).

traces of Sufi influence, employing language and concepts that need not have attracted undue attention at the time of their composition.

The Ṣūfī traditions of *shaṭḥiyyāt* (ecstatic utterances often voiced in the first person as though spoken by the divinity)[162] and visionary experiences are so well established that it would be unwise to lay undue stress on similar statements in Bahāʾ Allāh's writings, let alone use them as evidence of unusual or unique claims. It is, of course, conceivable that the repeated use of *shaṭḥiyyāt* may have worked its influence on Nūrī's mind and facilitated the subsequent shift to theophanic utterance of a more personal kind.

Nevertheless, a progression can be observed in the Baghdad writings as a whole. This involves several shifts of consciousness that lead to a fully-fledged conviction of divine status around 1863. As we have seen, in some of his earliest Baghdad works, such as the *Lawḥ kull al-ṭaʿām* or *Sūrat al-kifāya*, he denied advancing any claim for himself and instead directed his fellow-Babīs to turn to Ṣubḥ-i Azal.

In the *Lawḥ madīnat al-tawḥīd* (a work written in Baghdad[163] after his return from Kurdistan), he maintains that both *tawḥīd* [divine unity] and *tajrīd* [independent existence] are above his station and that he is no more than a humble servant to whom God has taught certain things.[164] There are no obvious references in this work to Azal, but the Bāb still holds a pivotal position in the prophetic schema, being described as the point round which all the prophets circle.[165]

A similar position is urged in the *Ṣahīfa-yi shaṭṭiyya* (a work of approximately the same period), in which he protests that miracles have been falsely attributed to him, although those ascribed to the Bāb and the mirrors emanating from him are to be regarded as authentic.[166] Later, he insists that he is not prepared to advance any cause [*hīch iqbāl bi-amrī nadāram*].[167] Here again, the focus of attention is the Bāb ("ʿAlī Muḥammad"], who is described as "God's essence" or God in person" [*dhāt Allāh*] and his "eternal reality" [*kaynūniyyatuhu 'l-bāqiyya*]. There

[162] For details, see J. S. Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford, 1971), p. 150 and fn. 2.

[163] The text refers to how "the dove of al-Hijāz [i.e. himself] warbles in the land of Iraq": see Nūrī, *Lawḥ madīnat al-tawḥīd*, in Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Māʾida*, vol. 4, p. 327.

[164] Ibid., pp. 317–18, 318.

[165] Ibid., p. 323.

[166] Idem, *Ṣahīfa-yi shaṭṭiyya*, in ibid., p. 142.

[167] Ibid., p. 146.

is also what appears to be a reference to Azal as the "throne" after the Bāb ("the most exalted countenance").[168]

The theme of continuing divine activity as an extension of the Bāb's original revelation is pursued in the *Tafsīr āyat al-nūr* (also known as the *Tafsīr al-ḥurūf al-muqaṭṭaʿa*). Here, the Bāb is referred to as the manifestation of the divine essence and attributes [*maẓhar al-dhāt wa maẓhar al-ṣifāt*], through whom all things were created, beginning with the mirrors and letters that have proceeded from him.[169] These mirrors and letters are the sources of authority [*marjaʿ/pl. marājiʿ*] for mankind in the "day of dispersal" [*yawm al-tanādd*][170]—presumably the period following the Bāb's death.

In what seems to be a reference to Azal, he speaks of the present age as "the days of the Face" [*ayyām al-wajh*], in which men are to be guided by "the lights of guidance in the manifestation of power."[171] Somewhat later, he urges his readers to be "among those who have entered beneath the shadow of the Face in this day."[172] His own status is again played down, being limited to a reference to "what God has taught me out of his grace"[173] as in the *Lawḥ madīnat al-tawhīd.*

Contemporary with some at least of these texts, there are others in which Bahāʾ Allāh displays a growing preoccupation with visions of a heavenly maiden who seems to have first appeared to him in Kurdistan. The earliest contemporary reference to such a vision is probably that in the *Qaṣīda ʿizz warqāʾiyya*, written in the Khālidī-Naqshbandī *takiyya* in Sulaymaniyya. Later texts containing passages of this type include the *Lawḥ-i ghulām al-khuld, Lawḥ mallāḥ al-quds*, and *Lawḥ al-hūriyya.*

The last-named is by far the most extensive and evocative, detailing a fascinating colloquy in which the angel demands to know the cause of the writer's sadness and probes his mental and physical being in search of the truth, asking at last whether he is "the beloved of all worlds."[174]

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[168] Ibid., p. 147.

[169] Idem, *Tafsīr āyat al-nūr*, in ibid., p. 51. The Bāb's appearance is also described as the "meeting with God" promised in the Qurʾān (ibid., p. 65).

[170] Ibid., p. 51.

[171] Ibid., p. 52. Just before this, he refers to the "establishment of the temple of eternality [*haykal al-azaliyya*] upon the throne of lights."

[172] Ibid., p. 66.

[173] Ibid., p. 76. This may even be intended to refer specifically to knowledge of the sciences of gematria and alchemy, on which he has just been writing.

[174] Idem, *Lawḥ al-hūriyya* in idem, *Āthār*, vol. 4, pp. 342–50, especially pp. 346–47, 349.

The idea is not, of course, original. It has existed as a theme in Iranian religion since pre-Islamic times[175] and occurs in later Sufi writing, notably in the *Naẓm al-sulūk* (*al-ṭāʾiyya al-kubrā*) of the Egyptian poet Sharaf al-Dīn ʿUmar ibn al-Fārid, which seems to have provided Bahāʾ Allāh with his principal source of inspiration.[176] That Bahāʾ Allāh remained under Sūfī influence even after his return from Kurdistan is implied by his continued association with two leading Sūfīs resident in Baghdad, Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī and Sayyid Dāwūdī al-Naqshbandī al-Khālidī.[177]

Visions of this heavenly maiden seem to have been linked in Bahāʾ Allāh's mind with a growing sense of personal distress and feelings of disquiet about the conduct and future of the Bābī community. In 1859, he was aged forty, and it is arguable that, in common with other religious personalities throughout history, he underwent a life crisis whose perplexities became inextricably interwoven with external difficulties. Out of this emerged a sense of personal mission that came to be interpreted increasingly in terms of the appearance of a new revelation; but public expression of such themes seems to have occurred very late.

According to Zarandī, it was only in the period leading up to the year 1280/early 1863 that visible changes showed themselves in Bahāʾ Allāh's appearance and behaviour.[178] During this period, several short works were composed by him, a number in the form of poems, all expressive of a sense of excitement and anticipation.[179] There is enough evidence in the *Lawḥ al-ṣabr*, which was definitely written at a point close to his departure from Baghdad (May 1863), that he had begun to lay open claim (if only within a limited circle) to a status which was bound to conflict with that of his brother unless such claims could be controlled with the overall structure of a successfully routinized Babism.

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[175] For numerous references to angelic beings of this type and their function, see Henry Corbin, *Terre céleste et corps de résurrection* (Paris, 1960).

[176] The *Qaṣīda ʿizz warqāʾiyya* was written in imitation of this work (see Balyuzi, *Bahāʾuʾllāh*, p. 118; J. R. Cole, "Bahāʾūʾllāh and the Naqshbandi Sufis in Iraq, 1854–1856," in J. R. Cole and M. Momen [eds.], *From Iran East and West: Studies in Bābī and Bahāʾī History*, vol. 2 [Los Angeles, 1984]). An English translation of the *Naẓm al-sulūk* was made by A. J. Arberry: The Poem of the Way (London, 1952). For a transcribed text of the original, see idem. *The Mystical Poems of Ibn al-Fārid* (London, 1952), pp. 63–112.

[177] Balyuzi, *Bahāʾuʾllāh*, p. 124.

[178] Zarandī, quoted Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Ayyām-i tisʿa*, p. 332.

[179] Ibid. The works referred to are: *Ṣubḥāna rabbī al-aʿlā, Ḥūr-i ʿujāb, Lawḥ-i ghulām al-khuld, Az bāgh-i ilāhī, Bāz-ā va bidih jāmī*, and *Hāla, hāla yā bishārat.*

In this work, he states clearly that he has been sent by God and that verses have been revealed to him,[180] and indicates that he will issue his claims openly in the near future ("you shall know a call in a time which is certainly coming").[181]

## Conclusion

A full discussion of the claims eventually advanced by Bahā Allāh in Edirne and Acre would take us far beyond the dates assigned to this survey and would involve a lengthy and complex analysis of the abundant scriptural materials available. I shall instead conclude by drawing attention once more to a point I have mentioned elsewhere,[182] namely that Bahāʾ Allāh's developed claims represent the most extreme expression of Shīʿī and Bābī theories of theophany. With his mature writings, the themes discussed in this article and its predecessor reach their apogee in claims that come very close to assertion of out and out divinity or even incarnation.

One of the most striking references to this idea occurs in the undated (probably Acre—1868–92) *Lawḥ-i mīlād-i ism-i aʿẓam*, in which he declares that "he has been born who neither begets nor is begotten"[183]—a direct allusion to and contradiction of Qurʾān 112. Similarly, in the *Sūrat al-ḥajj*, written in Edirne after the split with Azal, he declares that "the educator of all beings and their Creator has appeared in the garment of humanity, but you were not pleased with that, until he was imprisoned in this prison."[184]

That at least some of Bahāʾ Allāh's followers endorsed a radical interpretation of such claims is evident from a number of sources. Ḥājī Mīrzā Haydar ʿAlī Iṣfahānī, a prominent Bahāʾī missionary in late 19th-century Iran, describes a discussion he held with an Iranian ʿālim following a visit to Bahāʾ Allāh in Acre. In the course of their conversation, he stated: "He

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[180] Nūrī, *Sūrat al-ṣabr*, in Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Māʾida*, vol. 4, p. 290. See also p. 310, where he says he met God and was inspired by him with verses.

[181] Ibid., p. 312.

[182] MacEoin, "From Babism to Bahaʾism," note 16, pp. 245–46; idem, "Changes in charismatic authority in Qajar Shiʿism," in E. Bosworth and C. Hillenbrand (eds.), *Qajar Iran: Political, Social and Cultural Change 1800–1925* (Edinburgh, 1984), p. 168. Both these sources contain references to relevant texts.

[183] Nūrī, *Lawḥ-i mīlād-i ism-i aʿẓam*, in Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Māʾida*, vol. 4, p. 344.

[184] Idem, *Sūrat al-ḥajj*, in *Āthār*, vol. 4, p. 203.

is unique by Himself. No one in the world can ever compare to Him. He is the One Whom the Qur'ān has declared to have neither father nor son [i.e. God]."[185] The same writer also narrates an anecdote concerning Bahā' Allāh to the effect that, when told that Shaykh Muḥammad Bāqir Iṣfahānī asked for a translation of sūra 112 to be made and sent to him, retorted that "Moses had heard the call of 'I am your God' from a burning bush. Why not from a man?"[186]

The authors of the *Hasht bihisht* quote two verses from the poetry of Mullā Muḥammad Nabīl Zarandī that indicate a strong tendency to the use of extreme hyperbole in reference to Bahā' Allāh:

> Lordship has entered the plain of his majesty with lacerated chest. Divinity has become like a trembling willow in the garden of his exaltation.[187]
> And:
> Men call you God, and I grow angry.
> Draw aside the veil, and do not accept the shame of Godhood.[188]

While in Kermān, E. G. Browne encountered a number of Bahā'īs who entertained similarly exaggerated ideas about their prophet, among them a certain Shaykh Ibrāhīm, who told him: "God is something real, visible, tangible, definite. Go to Acre and see God!"[189]

It would be unfair to suggest that such views were typical or that the majority of Bahā'īs accepted them. Had that been the case, it is unlikely that the later, more restrained doctrine would have established itself. But it should be obvious that such responses on the part of Bahā' Allāh's own followers are the best possible indication of the immediate impact of claims of this kind.

Such claims, however they be interpreted, are neither casual nor fortuitous, but are expressions of views that could not have been advanced in other contexts or by other writers (orthodox Jews or Sunnī Muslims, for example). Accepted in their own right as conscious and intended

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[185] Iṣfahānī, *Delight of Hearts*, p. 19.

[186] Ibid., p. 104. Confirmation that Bahā' Allāh knew of Muḥammad Taqī's remark is to be found in his *Lawḥ-i Shaykh* (Cairo, 1920), p. 31 (trans. Shoghi Effendi, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, Wilmette, 111, 1941], p. 41) and in an untitled letter in idem, *Alwāḥ-i mubāraka-yi ḥaḍrat-i Bahā' Allāh, shāmil-i Ishrāqāt* (n.p. [Tehran], n.d.), p. 40.

[187] Quoted Kirmānī and Kirmānī, *Hasht bihisht*, p. 315. E. G. Browne quotes a variant of this from another text of the *Hasht bihisht* in Hamadānī, *New History*, p. 395.

[188] Quoted Kirmānī and Kirmānī, *Hasht bihisht*, p. 315; see also Browne, in Hamadānī, *New History*, p. 395.

[189] E. G. Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians*, 3rd. ed. (London, 1950), p. 537.

expressions of religious truths that must be taken into account in the formulation of more rounded doctrinal positions, they possess an undoubted historical validity and serve as a faithful affirmation of what must be regarded as the final phases of Bābī theophanic speculation.

# TRIAL OF THE BĀB: SHIʿITE ORTHODOXY CONFRONTS ITS MIRROR IMAGE*

Trials of religious heretics have always assumed a central importance in religious history, and have frequently been the subject of close scrutiny in the modern period. The trials of Jesus Christ,[1] al-Ḥallāj,[2] Galileo,[3]

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* First published in Carole Hillenbrand (ed.) *Studies in Honour of Clifford Edmund Bosworth 2 The Sultan's Turret* (Brill, 2000), pp. 272–317.

[1] The literature on this subject is, not surprisingly, large. The following should be noted: E. Bammel (ed.), *The Trial of Jesus: Cambridge Studies in Honour of C. F. D. Moule*, London, 1970; J. Blinzler, *Der Prozess Jesu*, rev. ed., 1969 (Eng. trans. of 1st. ed. as *The Trial of Jesus*, Cork, 1959) S. G. F. Brandon, *The Trial of Jesus of Nazareth*, London, 1968; T. A. Burkill, 'The Trial of Jesus', *Vigiliae Christianae*, XII (1958); S. Buss, *The Trial of Jesus, Ilustrated from Talmud and Roman Law*, 1906; D. Catchpole, *The Trial of Jesus: a study in the Gospels and Jewish historiography from 1770 to the present day*, Leiden, 1971; J. Carmichael, *The Death of Jesus*, London, 1962; H. Cohn, *The Trial and Death of Jesus*, New York, 1967; J. Duncan Derrett, *An Oriental Lawyer Looks at the Trial of Jesus and the Doctrine of Redemption*, London, 1966; G. Di Miscio, *Il Processo di Cristo*, Milan, 1967; J. Isorin, *Le vrai proces de Jeåsus*, Paris, 1967; K. Kartelge (ed.), *Der Prozess gegen Jesus: Historische Ru[[dieresis]]ckfrage und theologische Deutung*, Freiberg, 1989; G. D. Kilpatrick, *The Trial of Jesus*, London, 1953; J. Knowlton, *The Trial of Jesus: A Study in Jewish Jurisprudence*, Washington, D.C., 1900; W. Koch (ed.), *Zum Prozess Jesu*, Weiden, 1967; H. Lietzmann, *Der Prozess Jesu*, repr. in *Kleine Schriften II: Studien zum Neuen Testament*, Berlin, 1958, pp. 251–63; C. Nordi, *Il processo di Gesu, re dei Guidei*, Bari, 1966; H. Rimmer, *Outlines for Study in the Trial and Death of Jesus*, Los Angeles, 1928; G. Rosadi, *The Trial of Jesus*, 3rd. ed., 1905; J. Stalker, *The Trial and Death of Jesus Christ*, 1897; A. Strobel, *Die Stunde der Wahrheit: Untersuchungen zum Strafverfahren gegen Jesus*, Tübingen, 1980; P. Winter, *On the Trial of Jesus*, Berlin, 1961.

[2] See Louis Massignon, *La Passion de Husayn Ibn Mansur Hallaj: martyre mystique de l'Islam executé a Baghdad le 26 mars 922: étude d'histoire religieuse*, 2 vols., Paris, 1922; new ed., Paris, 1975 (Eng. trans. by H. Mason as *The Passion of al-Hallaj, Mystic and Martyr of Islam*, 4 vols., Bollingen Series XCVIII, Princeton, 1982). The section covering the trials constitutes chapter VI of volume 1.

[3] See R. Blackwell, *Galileo, Bellarmine, and the Bible*, Notre Dame, 1991; R. Feldhay, *Galileo and the Chuirch: political inquisition or critical dialogue?*, Cambridge, 1995; M. A. Finocchio (ed. and trans.), *The Galileo Affair: A Documentary History*, University of California Press, 1989; G. De Santillana, *The crime of Galileo*, New York, 1953; R. S. Westfall, *Essays on the Trial of Galileo*, Notre Dame, 1989; H. Vedrine, *Censure et pouvoir: trois procès: Savonarole, Bruno, Galilée*, Paris, 1976.

Giordano Bruno,[4] Joan of Arc,[5] Michael Servetus,[6] and others have drawn the attention of scholars for a wide variety of reasons. More broadly, and for similar reasons, we have seen studies of the Inquisition,[7] witchcraft trials (often linked to the inquisition),[8] the Albigensians,[9]

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[4] See A. Mercati, *Il sommario del processo di Giordano Bruno, con appendice di documenti sull' eresia e l'inquisizione a Modena nel secolo 16*, Vatican City, 1942; G. Aquilecchia, *Giordano Bruno*, Rome, 1971; W. Boulting, *Giordano Bruno: His Life, Thought and Martyrdom*, London, 1914.

[5] See *The Trial of Joan of Arc: Being the Verbatim Report of the Proceedings from the Orleans Manuscript*, Westport, Conn., 1956; L. Morice, *Joan of Arc: a Recreation of her 1431 trial for treason*, Lakeside, Ca., 1991; R. Pernoud, *The retrial of Joan of Arc: the evidence at the trial for her rehabilitation, 1450–1456*, London, 1955; W. S. Scott, *The Trial of Joan of Arc*, 1968; J. Quicherat, *Procès de condamnation et de reéhabilitation de Jeanne d'Arc*, New York, 1960; K. Sullivan, *Inquiry and Inquisition in Late Medieval Culture: the Questioning of Joan of Arc and Christine de Pisan*, Ph.D., University of California, 1993.

[6] See R. H. Bainton, *Hunted Heretic: The Life and Death of Michael Servetus, 1511–1553*, Boston, 1953; J. Friedman, *Michael Servetus: A Case Study in Total Heresy*, Geneva, 1978.

[7] See A. Dondaine, *Les hérésies et l'Inquisition XII^e–XIII^e siecles: documents et eåtudes*, London, 1990; C. T. Gorham, *The Medieval Inquisition: A Study in Religious Persecution*, London, 1918; B. Hamilton, *The Medieval Inquisition*, London, 1981; H. Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, New York, 1956; G. Henningsen, *Inquisition and Interdisciplinary History: Report from an International Symposium on the Medieval and Modern Inquisition*, Copenhagen, 1979; H. C. Lea, *The Inquisition of the Middle Ages: Its Organization and Operation*, New York, 1900; W. Monter, *Frontiers of Heresy: the Spanish Inquisition from the Basque Lands to Sicily*, Cambridge, 1990; B. Netanyahu, *The Origins of the Inquisition in Fifteenth Century Spain*, New York, 1995; C. Roth, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 1964; R. Sabatini, *Torquemada and the Spanish Inquisition*, rev. ed., Boston, 1930; *Domenico Scandella known as Menocchio: His Trials before the Inquisition (1583–1599)*, Binghampton, N.Y., 1996; S. Seidel Manchi, *Erasmus als Ketzer: Reformation und Inquisition im Italien des 16 Jahrhunderts*, Leiden, New York, 1993; A. C. Shannon, *The Medieval Inquisition*, Washington, D.C., 1983; Symposium Internacional sobre la Inquisizion Espanola, *The Spanish Inquisition and the Inquisitorial Mind*, Boulder, Colo., 1987; J. Tedeschi, *The Prosecution of Heresy: Collected Studies on the Inquisition in Early Modern Italy*, Binghampton, NY, 1991; A. S. Turberville, *Medieval Heresy and the Inquisition*, London, 1920; W. C. Wakefield, *Heresy, Crusade and Inquisition in Southern France 1100–1250*, London, 1974.

[8] See Association of Social Anthropologists of the Commonwealth, *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations*, London & New York, 1970; H. Boguet, *An Examen of Witches Drawn from Various Trials of Many of this Sect in the District of Saint Oyen de Joux Commonly known as Sainte Claude in... Burgundy*, trans. E. A. Ashwin, ed. M. Summers, [London], 1929; C. H. L. Ewen, *Witch Hunting and Witch Trials: the Indictments for Witchcraft from the Records of 1373 assizes held for the Home Circuits AD 1559–1736*, London, 1929; J. Hansen, *Zauberwahn, Inquisition und Hexenprozess im Mittelalter, und die Entstehung der grossen Hexenverfolgung*, 1964; G. Henningsen, *The Witches' Advocate: Basque Witchcraft and the Spanish Inquisition, 1609–1614*, 1980; R. Martin, *Witchcraft and the Inquisition in Venice 1550–1650*, Oxford, 1989.

[9] See Z. Oldenbourg, *Massacre at Montsegur: A History of the Albigensian Crusade*, New York, 1961; J. R. Strayer, *The Albigensian Crusades*, Ann Arbor, 1971; B. Ham-

the persecution of heresy in general,[10] and, for the modern West, the Scopes 'Monkey trial',[11] and the activities of anti-cult organizations and 'de-programmers'.[12] The treatment of heretics, both religious and secular,[13] is central to the self-identification of all orthodoxies, and to study how any given establishment seeks to define and control heresy is a crucial task for the understanding of any dominant belief system. The heresy trial is clearly the showpiece within which self-definition takes place, the moment when orthodoxy maps out the perimeters of belief and unbelief, and for this reason the content of actual trials is of

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ilton, *The Albigensian Crusade*, 1974; H. T. Warner, *The Albigensian Heresy*, London & New York, 2 vols., 1922.

[10] See E. Peters, *Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe*; London, 1980; N. P. Tanner (ed.), *Heresy Trials in the Diocese of Norwich, 1428–31*, London, 1977; R. Kieckhefer, *Repression of Heresy in Medieval Germany*, Ph. D., University of Texas at Austin, 1972.

[11] See *Monkey trial: the State of Tennessee vs. John Thomas Scopes*, Boston, 1960; L. Sprague De Camp, *The Great Monkey Trial*, [New York], 1967; R. Halliburton, *The Scopes "Monkey Trial" and its thirty-fifth anniversary celebration*, [n.p.], 1964, Reprinted from the Proceedings of the Oklahoma Academy of Science, vol. 44, 1964; Marvin N. Olasky, *When world views collide: journalists and the great monkey trial: paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication* (69th, Normou, OK, August 3–6, 1986), Alexandria, VA., 1986; Tom McGowen, *The great monkey trial: science versus fundamentalism in America*, New York, 1990; W. C. Bledsoe, 'Scopes "Monkey" trial', in *Tennessee's role in U.S. constitutional development: a series of essays,* Murfreesboro, TN, 1991; S. L. Harrison, *The Scopes "monkey trial", revisited: Mencken and the editorial art of Edmund Duffy*, [USA], 1993.

[12] See A. D. Shupe Jr. and D. G. Bromley, *The New Vigilantes: Deprogrammers, Anti-Cultists and the New Religions*, Veverley Hills, London, 1980; T. Rabbino, *Cults, Culture, and the Law*, Chico, Ca., 1985; D. Bromley and J. Richardson (eds.), *The Brainwashing/Deprogramming Controversy: Sociological, Psychological, Legal, and Historical Perspectives*, New York, 1983; D. M. Kelley, 'Deprogramming and Religious Liberty', *The Civil Liberties Review*, July/August 1977, pp. 23–33; J. T. Biermans, *The Odyssey of New Religious Movements: A Case Study of the Unification Church*, Lewsiton, NY, 1986.

[13] Though insufficiently studied, the definition of heresy within science (particularly medicine) is of immense importance. Thomas Kuhn's study of paradigm shifts (*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd. ed., Chicago, 1970) and Harry Collins's work on replication (*Changing Order: Replication and Induction in Scientific Practice*, London, 1985) both indicate the broad context within which such studies can shed light on the creation and maintenance of scientific orthodoxy. Thomas Szasz's controversial but lucid studies of the links between psychiatry and the law are equally illuminating (*Law, Liberty, and Psychiatry*, London, 1974; *The Therapeutic State*, Buffalo, NY, 1984; *The Manufacture of Madness: A Comparative Study of the Inquisition and the Mental Health Movement*, New York, 1970). See also R. Wallis (ed.), *On the Margins of Science: The Social Construction of Rejected Knowledge*, Keele, 1979; R. Wallis and P. Morley (eds.) *Marginal Medicine*, London, 1976.

immense importance, not just at the theological level, but also at the social and political.[14]

In the modern period, Islamic heresy trials have achieved a large degree of notoriety in the Western media, the best known being the semi-formal condemnation and demonization of Salman Rushdie. Other widely-reported cases include the trials in Bangladesh of the writer Taslima Nasreen, in Egypt of the writer ʿAlā Ḥamīd and others, and in Saudi Arabia of the surviving participants in the 1979 seizure of the Great Mosque in Mecca. Less publicized in the West have been numerous trials or *fatwās* concerning Ahmadis and Bahāʾīs.[15]

Even if the modern period has seen more than its fair share of such trials, they have not been uncommon in the past. The *takfīr* formula has been used repeatedly by both Sunni and Shīʿī ʿulamāʾ to condemn those—very often Sufis—whose beliefs or actions were deemed injurious to the sharīʿa.

Surprisingly, however, there are not many cases of heresiarchs being formally arraigned before tribunals, whether religious or civil (or both combined). Though condemned by *fatwā* and sermon, almost none of the major leaders of heretical or semi-heretical movements in modern Islam—Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, Aḥmad al-Tijānī, Mīrzā Ghulām Aḥmad Qadiānī, Muḥammad Aḥmad al-Sayyid ʿAbd Allāh the Sudanese Mahdī, Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī, and Mīrzā Ḥusayn ʿAlī Bahāʾ Allāh—was publicly tried on account of what they had personally written or preached.[16]

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[14] For an examination of the links between social normalization, punishment, tutelage, torture, and the political and social realms, see Darius M. Rejali, *Torture and Modernity: Self, Society, and State in Modern Iran*, Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford, Westview Press, 1994.

[15] The Ahmadī/Qādiyānī issue is mainly restricted to Pakistan, although ʿulamāʾ and newspapers in other Muslim countries do issue condemnations from time to time. Trials of Bahāʾīs in Iran are well known, but there have been several important judgements in cases throughout the Islamic world, including Morocco (1962), Egypt (1985), and even Turkey (1928, 1933). The literature on this subject is immense. (In recent years, several studies have been done of Egyptian law as regards the Bahāʾīs, whose situation there, as in Iran, has become notorious.)

[16] There were some inquisitions of leaders of the Niʿmat Allāhī Sufi revival in late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century Iran (William Royce, 'Mīr Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh and the Niʿmat Allāhī Revival 1776–77 to 1796–97', Ph. D., Princeton University, 1979, p. 173. We have details of the inquisition of Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh, but only in an anti-Sufi treatise by the ʿālim who organized the trial and issued the death sentence, Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī Bihbahānī (see ibid., p. 170, cited Bihbahānī's *Risāla-yi Khayratiyya* as cited in other works).

## The Trial of Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad Shīrāzī

In general, the condemnation of heresy has tended to remain an informal matter, dependent very much on the whims of individual ʿulamāʾ. There are, however, two important exceptions to this, both of them related. In January 1845, Mulla ʿAlī Basṭāmī, one of the first converts to Bābīsm, and the sect's first exponent in Iraq, was tried before a combined panel of Sunni and Shīʿī ʿulamāʾ, whose verdict was issued in an unusual fatwā signed by clerics of both communities. This fatwā and the circumstances surrounding Basṭāmī's trial have been well studied by Momen and Amanat.[17]

A few years later, in Shaʿbān 1264/July 1848,[18] the Bāb himself (Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad Shīrāzī) was brought before a consistory (variously described as a *majlis, majlis-i muḥāvarat, majlis-i khāṣṣ-i valī-ʿahd, majlis-i guftugū, jalasa-yi guft u shunūd, munāẓara, maḥẓar, hayʾat*, and *majmaʿ*, but seldom as *maḥkama, bar-rasī*, etc.)[19] of ʿulamāʾ and state officials, presided over by the Crown Prince, Nāṣir al-Dīn Mīrzā.[20] The tribunal was held in the provincial capital Tabriz, then the seat of the heir to the throne. Most sources indicate that the gathering was held on the direct instructions of Muḥammad Shāh.[21] In its course, the Bāb

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Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, al-Aḥsāʾī's successor as head of the Shaykhī school, was summoned to more than one inquisitorial gathering; but these seem to have been more in the nature of debates than formal trials (see D. MacEoin, 'From Shaykhism to Bābīsm', in this volume, p. 121 ff.). Our record of these meetings is extremely limited.

Bahāʾ Allāh was briefly detained and interrogated by the civil authorities during his exile to Acre, following the murder of three Azalī Bābīs by seven of his followers. This interrogation was part of the investigation of the crime and does not seem to have touched on his religious claims or beliefs (see H. M. Balyuzi, *Bahaʾuʾllaáh The King of Glory*, Oxford, 1980, pp. 326–30).

[17] Moojan Momen, 'The Trial of Mullā ʿAlī Basṭāmī: A Combined Sunnī-Shīʿī *Fatwā* against the Bāb', *Iran* 20 (1982): pp. 113–43; Abbas Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal: The Making of the Bābī Movement in Iran, 1844–1850*, Ithaca and London, 1989, pp. 220–238.

[18] The *Nāsikh al-tawārīkh* mistakenly places this event under the year 1263.

[19] Māzandarānī uses, among others, the terms *majlis-i mukālima*, *bāz-khwāst,* and *muḥākama*. Mīrzā Asad Allāh Faḍil-i Māzandarānī, *Kitāb-i ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3, Tehran, n.d., p. 14.

[20] Zaʿīm al-Dawla describes it as *hayʾatī az ʿulamāʾ va fuqahāʾ va fuḍalāʾ va umarāʾ va shakhsiyyathā-yi buzurg az aʿyān va sarān-i shahr, bi-riyāsat-i khudash* [i.e. the Crown Prince] (Mīrzā Mahdī Khān Zaʿīm al-Dawla, *Miftāḥ Bāb al-abwāb yā tārīkh-i Bāb va Bahāʾ*, Persian trans. by Ḥājj Shaykh Ḥasan Farīd-i Gulpāygānī, 3rd. ed., Tehran, 1328 sh./1968, p. 137.

[21] It is not impossible that the idea of confronting the Bāb with a tribunal made of chiefly of clerics came from the prophet himself. In one of his letters to Muḥammad

was questioned and given the opportunity to reply and, if he wished, recant. A *fatwā* condemning him was written by two *ʿulamāʾ*, Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Ḥasanī al-Ḥusaynī and ʿAlī Aṣghar al-Ḥasanī al-Ḥusaynī, two leading Shaykhī ʿulamāʾ of the city.[22] A separate report of the trial, described by some authors[23] as having been penned by Nāṣir al-Dīn Mīrzā, but in the text ascribed to his uncle, Amīr Aslan Khān, was written and almost certainly sent to the king, Muḥammad Shāh.[24] We also possess a document, supposedly written shortly after this arraignment, and apparently in the Bāb's handwriting, in which the young prophet recants any claim to a divine mission.[25]

Two days later, the Bāb was bastinadoed in the presence of the Shaykh al-Islām. It was after this that he was treated for his wounds by the British doctor, William Cormick, who left a brief account of their meetings over a few days.[26]

Although the *fatwā* recommended the sentence of death (unless the Bāb could be found to be mad), the prisoner was returned to prison in Chihrīq, where he remained for almost exactly two years. In July 1850, he was again brought to Tabriz, briefly re-examined by individual ʿulamāʾ, and executed.

The 1848 trial is important, not least because it was conducted by a court which included, not only regionally-prominent clergy, but also nationally-eminent men of state, and presided over by the future king. The event, though short in duration, was clearly accorded more than

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Shāh, dated 1264, he writes: 'Why do you not summon the ʿulamāʾ of the land and then summon me, so that I may confound them just as I did with others before them, from among the deniers?' (*Muntakhabatī az āyāt az āthār-i Ḥaḍrat-i Nuqṭa-yi Ūlā*, [Tehran], 134 badiʾ/1977–8, p. 11).

[22] A facsimile, text, and translation of this *fatwā* were published by Browne (E. G. Browne, *Materials for the Study of the Bábí Religion*, Cambridge, 1918, pp. 258–59. Browne suggests that ʿAlī Aṣghar was Mīrzā ʿAlī Aṣghar Shaykh al-Islām, but is unable to identify Abu 'l-Qāsim. The latter was, in all probability, the Shaykh al-Islām's son, Shaykh Abu 'l-Qāsim. Curiously enough, it is likely that neither of these men was actually present at the tribunal. Abu 'l-Qāsim later wrote an attack on the Bāb entitled *Qalʿ al-Bāb*, which has not been published. Amanat (p. 388) describes him as ʿAlī Aṣghar's 'nephew' and finds references to him in Zarandī and Muʿīn al-Salṭana which are not there.

[23] See, for example, Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhur al-ḥaqq*, p. 15; ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Navāʾī (ed.), *Fitna-yi Bāb*, 2nd. printing, Tehran, 1351/1973, p. 127.

[24] For facsimile, text, and translation, see Browne, *Materials*, pp. 248–55.

[25] For facsimile, text, and translation, see ibid., pp. 256–58.

[26] See ibid., pp. 260–62.

ordinary significance, for reasons that are obvious, given the very real threat to public order posed by the Bāb's growing popularity.

## The Sources

The problem for the historian is how to disentangle the numerous contradictory accounts of the trial itself. There are about nine of these, although several may originate in a single, earlier source. Six are by Muslim writers: Riḍā Qulī Khān Hidāyat's *Rawḍat al-ṣafā-yi Nāṣirī*[27] Lisān al-Mulk Sipihr's *Nāsikh al-tawārīkh*;[28] ʿAlī Qulī Khān Iʿtiḍād al-Salṭana's *al-Mutanabbiʾīn*;[29] Mīrzā Mahdī Khān Zaʿīm al-Dawla's *Miftāḥ Bāb al-abwāb*; Mīrzā Muḥammad Taqī Mamaqānī's *Nāmūs-i Nāṣirī*; and the above-mentioned report of Amīr Aslan Khān. The other three are the work of Bābī or Bahāʾī historians: Mullā Muḥammad Taqī Hashtrūdī's *Abwāb al-hudā*, quoted in the much later historical narrative of Muʿīn al-Salṭana Tabrīzī; Mīrzā Muḥammad Nabīl Zarandī's narrative;[30] and Mīrzā Jānī Kāshānī's *Nuqṭat al-Kāf*.[31]

Browne, Amanat, and others have treated Mīrzā Muḥammad Tunakābunī's *Qiṣaṣ al-ʿulamāʾ* as a separate source, but I prefer not to do so, on the grounds that it is almost a verbatim (but unattributed) transcription of the text in *Rawḍat al-ṣafā*. Either Tunukābunī copied his account directly from Hidāyat or also made us of the report by Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ. In either case, he provides no significant variants.

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[27] Riḍā Qulī Khān Hidāyat, *Tārīkh-i Rawḍat al-ṣafā-yi Nāṣirī*, vol. 10, Qum, 1339 sh./1961, pp. 423–28. A translation of this account, with additions and adjustments, is provided by E. G. Browne in *A Traveller's Narrative Written to Illustrate the History of the Báb*, Cambridge, 1891, vol. 2, pp. 277–90. Volume 10 of the *Rawḍat al-ṣafā* was first published in 1274/1857.

[28] Mīrzā Muḥammad Taqī Lisān al-Mulk Sipihr, *Nāsikh al-tawārīkh: Salāṭīn-i Qājār*, Tehran, 1385/1965, 4 vols. in 2, vol. 3, pp. 126–30. Sipihr finished the Qājār volumes of his history in 1274/1857–58, and the first edition was probably a continuation of the 1273 edition of the entire history.

[29] Published as *Fitna-yi Bāb*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Navāʾī, 2nd. printing, Tehran, 1351/1973, pp. 20–28. An earlier edition is recorded in the Russian version of Storey: vol. 1, ed. Qāsim Rāḍī, Tehran, 1343/1964. Navāʾī is coy about the manuscript which forms the basis of his text. There appears to be a manuscript in the Majlis library.

[30] So far published only in English translation, or in translations based on it: [Mullā Muḥammad Nabīl Zarandī], *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabíl's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá'í Revelation*, ed. and trans. Shoghi Effendi, Wilmette, Ill., 1932, pp. 314–19. For comments on this source, see MacEoin, *Sources,* pp. 166–69.

[31] Ḥājī Mīrzā Jānī Kāshānī, *Kitáb-i-Nuqṭatu'l-Káf*, ed. E. G. Browne, London & Leiden, 1910, pp. 133–36. For details of this source, see MacEoin, *Sources*, pp. 134–52.

Most commentators have remarked on the noticeable differences between these texts, drawing the conclusion that it is hard to place much reliance on any of them. Certainly, we possess no single account which commands our unreserved respect. But that is not to say that something useful cannot be done to reconstruct some of the main features of the trial and from there to analyse the chief concerns of those involved. If there are striking differences between the narratives, there are also significant resemblances, some substantial, some trivial, and it seems likely that the surviving accounts reflect with varying degrees of distortion the general content of the questions and (much less dependably) the Bāb's answers to them.

The relationship between the Muslim accounts can be roughly estimated on the basis of their chronological order. The earliest must, by any reckoning, be Amīr Aslan Khān's 'official report', probably written to Muḥammad Shāh soon after the trial, and certainly before the king's death on 6 Shawwāl/4 September.

Māmaqānī[32] refers to an account of the trial in the hand of Ḥājī Mullā Maḥmūd Tabrīzī, Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ, the crown prince's tutor, and the leading cleric present at the trial, whose questions form the bulk of the inquisitorial text in most versions. Riḍā Qulī Khān states that his version of the trial is a direct transcript from Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ's autograph,[33] It is possible that, in terms of content, this account also formed the basis for the versions in *Nāsikh al-tawārīkh, al-Mutanabbiʾīn*, and the *Qiṣaṣ al-ʿulamāʾ*. It is, however, more likely that the *Nāsikh al-tawārīkh* account is built around that of the *Rawḍat al-ṣafā*,[34] and that both the *al-Mutanabbiʾīn* and *Qiṣaṣ al-ʿulamāʾ* narratives are lifted straight from it.

Māmaqānī's account was written for Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh in Ramaḍān-Shawwāl 1306/June–July 1889, and is described by the author as a corrective to the versions given in the *Nāsikh al-tawārīkh* and *Rawḍat al-ṣafā*. For all that, there are numerous parallels between the three accounts. Māmaqānī argues that Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ's account was writ-

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[32] Mīrzā Muḥammad Taqī Māmaqānī, *Nāmūs-i Nāṣirī*, published as *Guft-u-shunūd-i Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad Bāb bā rawḥānīyūn-i Tabrīz*, ed. Ḥasan Mursilvand, Tehran, 1374 sh./1996, p. 26.

[33] Riḍā Qulī Khān Hidāyat, *Tārīkh-i Rawḍat al-ṣafā-yi Nāṣirī*, vol. 10, Qum, 1339 sh./1961. Navāʾī (*Fitna* p. 127) states that Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾs son compiled a file (*daftar*) from which Hidāyat and Sipihr took their accounts.

[34] This is difficult to establish. Both books were finished and published around 1273/1274, but it does seem to be the case that Sipihr borrowed from his contemporary.

ten when the author was getting on in years and growing forgetful, and that his own account, based on his father's eye-witness rendition, is a much closer approximation to the truth. His father, Mullā Muḥammad Māmaqānī[35] took a leading part in the trial and was later one of the ʿulamāʾ who signed *fatwās* for the Bāb's execution in 1850.

Iʿtiḍād al-Salṭana's history of the Bābī insurrections, which forms part of a longer work entitled *al-Mutanabbiʾīn*, is rather odd. Most of it constitutes a verbatim re-write, either of the *Rawḍat al-ṣafā* or the account by Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ, but at one point the text breaks off, leaving out material which is introduced in very different form before the quoted material begins (and without any indication of what comes from where). One very odd thing about this is that, where Hidayat clearly attributes the quotation of a verse to Nāẓir al-Dīn Mīrzā, Iʿtiḍād al-Salṭana (who has been following that account very closely to this point) only says it was spoken by 'one of those present'. Quite what one is to make of this jumble is not yet clear. Did Iʿtiḍād al-Salṭana have a different source, or did something just go wrong with his transcription?

Mīrzā Mahdī Khān Zaʾim al-Dawla published his book on the Bābīs and Bahāʾīs in Cairo in 1321/1903–4, which makes it by far the latest of the Muslim accounts. Its claim to accuracy rests on the fact that the author's father, Mīrzā Taqī Tabrīzī, and grandfather, Muḥammad Jaʿfar, were both present at the trial and supplied him with details of it. It does, however, have numerous exact parallels with and some verbal resemblances[36] to the *Rawḍat al-ṣafā* and *Nāsikh al-tawārīkh*, and it is hard to believe that Zaʿīm al-Dawla did not make use of them.

The Bābī/Bahāʾī accounts are much less detailed, although that of Hashtrūdī lays claim to some degree of first-handedness, and does contain small details that suggest the presence of an eye-witness. It is, for example, the only account to note that lamps were lit and tea served mid-way through the proceedings. I have not been able to establish a date for the writing of the *Abwāb al-hudā* (which apparently is no longer extant); but Muʿīn al-Salṭana's history, which quotes from it, was completed around 1340/1921–22.[37]

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[35] Or Māmaqānī.

[36] These are more difficult to be sure of. The original text was published in Arabic, and the Persian version is a translation.

[37] See MacEoin, *Sources*, p. 175. My text for the section dealing with the trial of the Bāb (p. 201 ff.) is a photocopy of poor quality, which adds to the difficulties posed by bad handwriting. Access to the original manuscript is presently impossible.

The *Nuqṭat al-Kāf* is a much earlier text, possibly written in the early 1850s in Baghdad,[38] but it has no particular claim to authenticity in respect of the trial. There are, however, enough similarities between it and other reports to suggest, if not a common source, a reliable informant. Kāshānī's account has enough parallels to the main Muslim reports that it seems likely he had access to one of these. If not, his description of the trial provides strong corroboration for many of the details found in those texts.

The brief account in Zarandi's narrative has fewer resemblances to other descriptions of the trial, but is recorded as being based on the evidence of Shaykh Ḥasan Zunūzī, who was one of a number of people outside the hall where the arraignment was held, but who claimed that he could follow the conversation inside. This, again, is a late composition, having been written between 1888 and 1890.

Taking all these texts together, it is difficult (and intriguing) to see that no simple pattern of plagiarism emerges. Some texts are very closely linked, but in other cases questions and statements occur in different places with no discernible system (as will be demonstrated below). In many ways this is encouraging to the historian, since it suggests a definite core of information which has managed to survive in spite of the forgetfulness or bias of any one source or group of sources. It will require a lot of work to piece the jigsaw together properly, but the following attempt provides a starting-point.

## The Questions

A proper attempt to restructure the trial is beyond the resources of this article, and should await the publication of the complete texts of all the accounts, along with translations. In the meantime, it will be worth trying to tabulate the main themes pursued in the interrogation and how far these occur in the different versions. The attached tables show the occurrence of questions and answers across the sources. Since we are obviously dealing with attempts to reconstruct statements from memory, in some cases long after the event, I have created simplified versions of questions and answers that cover as many different wordings as seems justifiable. In some cases it might have made sense to conflate

[38] See MacEoin, *Sources*, p. 151.

even more: for example, it seems clear that at some point the Bāb said he would 'reveal a verse' concerning his staff, or that he responded to a request to do so: our variants might very well be subsumed into a single heading 'recites verses concerning his staff'. The same is true for several other entries.

In order to give a more coherent sense of the proceedings, however, also I append a translation of Māmaqānī's account in the *Nāmūs-i Nāṣirī*, which can be read in conjunction with the versions given by Browne.

Of the sixty-two questions listed, eighteen occur in only one source, fifteen in two, eight in three, five in four, thirteen in five, and three in six. Of the thirty-five answers (omitting numerous citations of 'yes' and 'he did not answer'), ten occur in one source, eight in two, six in three, three in four, two in five, five in six, and one—quite outstandingly—in all nine.

Mere numerical frequency is a poor indicator of reliability, bearing in mind the interdependence of the five main Muslim sources, which together account for the bulk of all the information we possess. The really interesting questions and answers are those which occur across unlikely combinations, particularly, of course, Bābī and Muslim accounts.

One of the most significant of these is question number one, 'Are these your writings?', which occurs in all the Muslim texts and also in the *Nuqṭat al-Kāf*. It seems immediately apparent from this and from other references to writings of the Bāb shown or referred to in the course of the hearing, that the tribunal had not been hastily assembled, and that some effort had been made to bring together writings of the heresiarch and to use them as the basis for some of the questioning. The *Rawḍat al-ṣafā* indicates that Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ showed these documents to the Bāb and asked him to admit to their authorship.

Further evidence that works of the Bāb were referred to occurs in a number of passages in which questions are framed around pericopes selected for their heretical content. These questions are mostly put to the Bāb by Ḥājī Murtaḍā-Quli Marandī ʿAlam al-Hudā, a wealthy mujtahid who seems to have taken the trouble to study some of the texts in question. With two exceptions, these questions (numbers 20, 22, 23, 26, 27, 34, 36, 37) occur in one source only, the *Nāmūs-i Nāṣirī*; but precisely because they can in theory be cross-checked against known

writings of the Bāb,[39] they are more open to external authentication than most of the trial material.

Three of the questions (26, 34 and 36) have definite analogues in the Bāb's writings. The first, which quotes the Bāb as saying 'The first to believe in me (*awwal man āmana bī*) was Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh' (or 'The first to believe in me was the Light of Muḥammad, and ʿAli'), which parallels a couple of passages in late letters of the Bāb.[40] The second is put by ʿAlam al-Hudā as follows: 'In your book you have said that you dreamed that they had killed the Prince of Martyrs (Ḥusayn), and that you drank a few drops of his blood and that the gates of heavenly grace were thereupon opened to you.' This is close to a statement in the early *Ṣaḥīfa-yi ʿadliyya*,[41] where the Bāb describes a vision of the head of Ḥusayn and his drinking seven drops of blood from it, and that, as a result, his breast was filled with 'convincing verses and mighty prayers'.

The third asserts that 'In your book, you have said that if jinn and men were to assemble together, they could not produce the like of half a word from your book.' This is close, in spirit, if not precisely in wording, to two pericopes from the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*: 'O assembly of jinn and men. If you are able, bring forth a book like this'[42] and 'O people of the earth. Even if you were to gather together to produce a word like a single word of my knowledge, you would be unable to do so.'[43]

I am less sure about the authenticity of another pericope cited by ʿAlam al-Hudā, who states that, in his 'Qurʾān', the Bāb had indicated that one-third of any booty was to be given to 'the Remembrance' (i.e. the Bāb). It should be relatively easy to find such a statement. The reference to 'the Remembrance' (*al-Dhikr*) would date this as coming from an early work of the Bāb's, while the description of the book as the Bāb's 'Qurʾān' makes it tempting to identify it as a passage from the

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[39] For a comprehensive review of these, see MacEoin, *Sources*.

[40] See [Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad the Bāb] and [Sayyid Ḥusayn Kātib-i Yazdī], *Qismatī az alwāḥ-i khaṭṭ-i Nuqṭa-yi Ūla wa Sayyid Ḥusayn-i Kātib*, [Tehran], n.d., p. 13 (*awwal man bāyaʿa bi Muḥammad Rasūl Allāh, thumma ʿAlī*) and p. 17 (*awwal man bāyaʿa bi ʾl-Qāʾim Muḥammad Rasūl Allāh*). The first of the Bāb's disciples, Mullā Muḥammad Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī, is often referred to in Bābī texts as *Awwal man āmana*. For a little more on this theme, see D. MacEoin, 'Hierarchy, Authority, and Eschatology in Early Bābī Thought', in P. Smith (ed.), *In Iran: Studies in Bābī and Bahāʾī History 3*, Los Angeles, 1986, pp. 105–105. Reproduced here.

[41] [Tehran], n.d., p. 14. See also Zarandī, *Dawnbreakers*, p. 253.

[42] *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, Cambridge University Library, Browne Or. Ms. F.11, f. 66b.

[43] Ibid., f. 99a.

*Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, the prophet's first major work, which is described in its own text as 'this Qurʾān',[44] was referred to at the trial of Mullā ʿAlī Basṭāmī in the same terms.[45] The temptation is greater because the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* is the main source for the Bāb's thoughts about *jihād* in the earliest period;[46] but there really does not seem to be a verse alluding to the division of booty anywhere there or, as far as I know, in other early works. References to booty in later works such as the Persian *Bayān* are quite different.

Another passage that has a strong air of authenticity is one in which Nāṣir al-Dīn Mīrzā confronts the Bāb with a sphere of the heavens and asks him to explain the circles and figures on it, which the Bāb says he is unable or unwilling to do. It occurs in the *Nāmūs-i Nāṣirī* and two Bābī texts, the *Nuqṭat al-Kāf* and *Abwāb al-hudā*, an unlikely conjunction. Its presence in the *Nāmūs* is compelling, in that the work was submitted to Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh in person. One must assume that Māmaqānī would not have risked fabricating an incident that the king could so easily have said never happened. But quite why the other sources omit such a vivid sequence is hard to explain.

## The Answers

As noted above, one of the Bāb's answers (number 6: 'I am that person you have been awaiting for one thousand years') occurs in some form in all nine sources, and I think we must conclude that it is the most authentic statement recorded from the trial. It seems highly plausible that he should have made such an egregious claim at this point. In 1263/1847, while in prison in Mākū, the Bāb had made an open claim to Mahdihood, a claim which he was now developing in his writings while in Chihrīq.[47]

There are three other passages which have analogues in the Bāb's writings, although (with two exceptions) they occur in a form which does not imply quotation. One ('question' 5) occurs in two sources, in the first as a question ('In these books of yours, have you not called

[44] Ibid., f. 65a. Cf. ff. 35a, 67b, 72b, 75a, 141b, 167b.

[45] A copy of the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* was used in that trial as a point of reference for the charges against the Bāb's emissary.

[46] See D. MacEoin, 'The Bābī Concept of Holy War', *Religion* (1982) 12:93–129.

[47] See Amanat, *Resurrection*, p. 375 ff. On the development of the Bāb's claims and other Bābī theophanic ideas, see MacEoin, 'Hierarchy', pp. 97–113.

yourself the Tree of Sinai [*shajara-yi Ṭūr*]?',[48] in the second as a statement ('What you mean when you say "My words are from God" is that your tongue is like the Tree on Sinai').[49] In our other sources (see answer 4), the Bāb himself states that his writings are 'like the revelation of words from the Tree on Sinai'. Question 61 is put by Māmaqānī: 'You have said in your books that the light that shone on Moses out of the Burning Bush was your light: is that correct?' Answer 35 attributes the statement directly to the Bāb. The *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* contains several short passages which parallel this, and which may have been the basis for the questions.[50]

Passing from the terse to the prolix, we can be reasonably sure that the passage cited by Hashtrūdī, listing grammatical inaccuracies in the text of the Qurʾān, apart from being off the mark more than once, is highly unlikely to be genuine. The likelihood of the Bāb being allowed to expatiate on the grammatical inadequacies of holy writ is very small indeed.

In four sources, the Bāb claims to be able to write 1000 (or 2000, or 10000) verses in a single day. A similar claim appears in several passages of the Bāb's writings,[51] and several histories give details of incidents when a public demonstration was made of the prophet's ability to reveal verses of speed, which, it is said, had the effect of convincing onlookers of his divine power.[52] In fact, this is exactly what several sources say happened during the trial, and there is every reason to regard those descriptions as broadly accurate, certainly in respect of the Bāb's own insistence on providing proof of his claims by these means.

In general, however, the Bāb's answers are much more difficult to evaluate than the questions attributed to his accusers. Not unsurprisingly, the Muslim accounts do not portray the villain of their piece in a very favourable light. But so unintelligent are the answers they do attribute to him that it is very hard to believe he was ever capable of

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[48] *Miftāḥ*, p. 138.

[49] *Rawḍat al-ṣafā*, p. 424.

[50] *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* ff. 40a, 89b, 133a ('I am he who spoke from the fire'), 147b ('I am the fire that spoke on Mount Ṭūr').

[51] See *Bayān-i Fārsī*, 2:1, p. 13 and p. 17 (1000 verses in 5 hours); *Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar*, CUL, Browne Or. Ms. F.10, f.5a (1000 verses in 6 hours); letter to Manūchihr Khān, Browne Or. Ms. F.2w1, p. 91 (ditto); *Risāla-yi dhahabiyya II*, Iran National Bahāʾī Manuscript Collection 53, p. 164 (a complete *ṣaḥīfa* in 1 hour).

[52] Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 61, 202; *Nuqṭat al-Kāf*, pp. 108, 121.

making a favourable impression on anyone, let alone the many ʿulamāʾ who became his followers.

This is particularly noticeable in the jibes directed at the young prophet's Arabic. No-one who has read his books and letters in that language will deny that the Bāb's Arabic was idiosyncratic; nonetheless, they are very far from being the products of someone who could not decline *qāla* (or even says '*qāla*? What *qāla*?') or vocalizes *al-samawāti* as *al-samawāta*. The Bāb had a relatively sophisticated grasp of Arabic, and it is hard to imagine him mumbling and stumbling his way through a series of easy questions on grammar.

But it is equally easy to see that we are, in fact, witnessing the acting-out of a sort of unrehearsed play, or the playing of an elaborate game. The Bāb's behaviour, even as reported by the hostile accounts, may have been deliberately designed to convey a range of symbolic meanings. Here, for example, is someone claiming to be the Mahdi, yet his opponents insist on his declining Arabic verbs or answering questions about veterinary medicine. A dignified silence, or perhaps a statement to the effect that he had studied some grammar as a child but since forgotten it might well be seen as responses designed to point up the inappropriateness of the line of questioning being taken. And we should not forget that the Bāb himself, taking his cue from popular notions of the Prophet Muḥammad's illiteracy, made a point of saying he was a merchant by training, not a divine.[53] Hence the difficulty of interpreting almost anything the Bāb is reported to have said and done during this session.

Finally, it is worth remarking on the presence of several incidental features that lend some of the narratives a degree of credibility just by being there. Hashtrūdī's references to the time of day, the lighting of lamps and candles, and the serving of tea and *qalyāns* all suggest an eye-witness account, even if the bulk of his narrative is sparse. Zarandī's description of the throng gathered outside the assembly hall and the statement that they remained there, listening through the doors again has the smell of first-hand knowledge on the part of his informant, Shaykh ʿAlī Zunūzī. Similarly, more than one source (and, tellingly, his son's in particular) refers to Mulla Muḥammad Māmaqānī growing angry at repeated intervals. By contrast, Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ is reputed to have possessed a sense of humour, and this comes through in more

[53] See, for example, his letter to Muḥammad Shāh in *Muntakhabāt-i āyāt*, p. 14.

than one remark attributed to him. Small details like these may tell us very little in themselves, but they do tend to suggest genuine knowledge of what went on during the trial.

In one instance, however, there is a serious discrepancy between our sources. According to some (*Rawḍat al-ṣafā, Miftāḥ*), the Bāb was seated in a place of honour near the Walī-ʿAhd; Māmaqānī says he was placed to one side; two Bābī accounts (Hashtrūdī and the *Nuqṭat al-Kāf*) say he was not offered a seat and had to sit in a corner; and the other Bābī source (Zarandī) says he actually took the seat that had been reserved for the Crown Prince.

## Conclusions

There is no space here for a full analysis of the trial and its wider significance. Amanat's account is perceptive, drawing particular attention to the conflicting aims of the government (who wanted to humiliate the Bāb, but to avoid a death sentence that might have aroused resentment among the populace at a time when the prophet was enjoying considerable popularity) and the ʿulamāʾ (many of whom wanted to put the apostate to death).

The affair is undeniably peculiar. Although the questioning is conducted in the main by ʿulamāʾ, state officials are not only present, but take part in the interrogation. Most of the city's ʿulamāʾ are absent, leaving the questioning almost wholly in the hands of Shaykhīs such as Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ and Māmaqānī. A *fatwā* for the Bāb's death (subject to his being found sane) is issued after the event by two ʿulamāʾ (Shaykh ʿAlī Aṣghar Shaykh al-Islām and Shaykh Abū 'l-Qāsim) who were not present at the trial. That is outmanoeuvred by presenting the Bāb to Dr. William Cormick, a British physician, who naturally complies with a letter recommending clemency.

The questioning itself has an almost Weberian quality (Lloyd, not Max). The innocent prophet, assailed by the forces of church and state, faced with a barrage of at times ridiculous questions which have little or no bearing on his claims, offers an almost classic contrast to his sarcastic, pedantic, irritable interlocutors. One senses almost that the ʿulamāʾ fell into an avoidable trap. A modern PR agent would have torn his hair out in despair.

But perhaps that is too facile a reading of events. Granted that human nature butts its head in repeatedly, there is still plenty of evidence that the basic line of questioning had been pre-meditated and adhered to with some degree of rigour. We have to remember that the Shīʿī ʿulamāʾ (and this includes the Shaykhīs, particularly those of Ādharbāyjān, as much as the regular Uṣūlīs) during this period were consolidating their authority within the developing Qājār state.[54] That authority was, as much as anything, built on the claim of the ʿulamāʾ to superior learning, particularly in areas like *fiqh*; but it also rested increasingly on the routinized charisma of senior mujtahids and, above all, *marājiʿ al-taqlīd*.[55] As the 19th century progressed, there was a growing tendency to focus the charismatic pole of religious authority within an increasingly tiny number of individuals or a single individual.

The problem with charismatic authority is, of course, its instability. The Uṣūlī establishment had already fought off a major challenge in the form of revived Niʿmat Allāhī Sufism in the late 18th century and (ironically, given the allegiance of the Bāb's accusers) Shaykhism in the 1830s and early 1840s. Other challenges of a less pressing nature hovered about on the periphery of religious life,[56] but none had the same resonance as Bābīsm, which demonstrated an ability to attract not only the masses, but also substantial numbers of ʿulamāʾ.

At the heart of the original Bābī summons to repentance and expectation of the millennium lay an insistence on the superiority of intuition over learning, the heart over the mind, the divinely aroused over the book-laden. It was hardly an original theme, but it is certainly marked in the accounts of the Bāb's trial. By parading their knowledge of grammar, jurisprudence, astronomy, mathematics, and all the rest before the representatives of the state, the ʿulamāʾ were not only trying to face down the Bāb, but to stake their claim to whole areas of public life.

The real implications of what was going on here can best be seen in the development of Bābism after about 1850, when the Bāb was executed in Tabriz. Prior to that date, with the exception of the Bāb himself,

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[54] For general accounts of state-ʿulamāʾ relations in this period, consult Hamid Algar, *Religion and State in Iran 1785–1906*, Berkeley/Los Angeles, 1969; Said Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imām*, Chicago, 1984, Part Three.

[55] On this theme in general, see MacEoin, 'From Shaykhism to Bābīsm', chapter 1.

[56] For a very good account of some of these alternatives to orthodoxy, see Amanat, *Resurrection*, chapter 2.

leadership of the movement lay exclusively in the hands of young ʿulamāʾ like Mullā Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī and Muḥammad ʿAlī Bārfurūshī. After the virtual eradication of that leadership in the Bābī-state struggles of 1848–50, a new cadre emerged from among the lay following. Both Azalī and Bahāʾī Bābīsm produced inspired claimants to divine authority, and an entirely fresh interpretation of the criteria for hierarchy.[57]

The trial of the Bāb may, therefore, be seen as something of a watershed, a moment when the representatives of knowledge-based hierarchy confronted the representative of what was coming. This was, in many ways, precisely what the clergy had awaited for over one thousand years: an unlearned man capable of subverting the very basis of their authority. Azalī Bābīsm produced secular reformers like Āqā Khān Kirmānī and Shaykh Aḥmad Rūḥī. Not quite what the Bāb had in mind, perhaps, but part of the vanguard of an army of educated challengers who came close to sweeping the old hierarchy away entirely.

## Appendix 1

### *The Trial of the Bāb in Māmaqānī's* Nāmūs-i Nāṣirī

(p. 42 ff.)
Then the late Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ said to my father [Mullā Muḥammad Māmaqānī]: 'Before we move on to a discussion of scholarly matters, I have some questions I'd like to put to him, with your permission.'

Then he faced the Bāb and asked: 'These writings, some of which are in the style of the Qurʾān, and others in the style of sermons and prayers, and which have been distributed among the people by your followers—are they yours, or have they just been attributed to you?'

Bāb: 'They are from God.'

NU: 'Be that as it may, did you write them?'

Bāb: 'Yes, like the revelation of words from the Tree on Sinai.'

NU: 'Now, here's something I don't understand. Who gave you this title of "Bāb"?'

Bāb: 'God.'

NU: 'That's very presumptuous of you. Exactly when did God bestow this "Goodnight" on you?'

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[57] For details, see D. MacEoin, 'Divisions and Authority Claims in the Bābī Community, 1850–1866', *Studia Iranica*, 18 (1989): 93–129. [57] Reproduced here.

The Bāb grew angry and said: 'You're making fun of me.'

NU: 'Well, let's leave it there. What are you the Gate of?'

Bāb: '"I am the City of Knowledge and ʿAlī is its Gate."'

NU: 'You are the Gate of the City of Knowledge?'

Bāb: 'Yes. "And pass through the Gate, prostrating yourselves."'

NU: 'Are you also the Bāb of prostration?'

Bāb: 'Yes.'

NU: 'Since you are the Gate of the City of Knowledge, will you answer any question people may put to you?'

Bāb: 'Yes. You do not recognize me. I am that very person you have been awaiting for over one thousand years.'

Whereupon my father said: 'Sayyid—you started by claiming to be the Gate of the Imām. Have you now become the hidden Lord of the Command in person?'

Bāb: 'Yes. I am he for whom you have been waiting since the very beginning of the Islamic revelation.'

My father grew very angry at these vain words, and said: 'Sayyid, why aren't you ashamed of yourself? What sort of foolishness is this you're mouthing? If we're waiting, we're waiting for that Imām whose father was Imām Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī, and whose mother was Narjis the daughter of Yashūʿa, son of the king of Byzantium, who was born of his mother in the year 256 in Samarra, and who will appear in Mecca with the sword. Since when have we ever waited for Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad, the son of Sayyid Riḍāʾ the Shirazi grocer, who only left his mother's womb yesterday? In any case, when the Lord of the Age appears, he will bring with him all the inheritance of the prophets, from Adam to the Seal. Why don't you produce one of those heirlooms so we can see it?'

Bāb: 'I am not permitted to at this moment.'

My father grew angry and said: 'If you didn't get permission, you made a big mistake coming here and nailing your head to the wall. Off you go and get permission, then you can come back. A Lord of the Command who comes without permission is jumping the gun. In any case, the Lord of Command can perform miracles. In the name of God, turn your staff into a dragon so we will all believe.'

Bāb: 'I shall cause a verse to descend upon this staff.'

The onlookers laughed loudly and said: 'What verse will you reveal?'

With his hand placed behind his ear like a singer, he chanted in a singing voice: 'Praise be to God Who created this staff and made it a sign among His signs, that you may fear Him.'

They said, 'Is this your verse?'

Bāb: 'Yes.'

The late Amīr Aslan Khān Majd al-Dawla, who was present, said: 'If your being an Imām can be established by such a verse, I can reveal a better one than you. "Praise be to God Who created this staff and made the morning and the evening that you may give Him thanks." What is there to choose between your verse and mine?'

The sayyid could not come up with an answer. Then he faced my late father and said: 'Indeed, you have the right to reject me. It has come down in the traditions that when the Lord of the Age, may God hasten his advent, appears, forty thousand clerics will issue fatwas for his death.'

My late father said: 'Sayyid, why do you invent traditions, and why do you talk nonsense? To begin with, it would be a miracle if forty thousand muftis gathered together at a single time. Secondly, the Lord of the Command won't come as such a miserable creature as you, that anyone would dare issue a sentence for his death. The sword Dhū 'l-Fiqār will be in his hand, and if anybody resists him he will strike his neck like a dog. Tell me the truth, in which book did you find this tradition, and from which Imām did it come?'

Bāb: 'It may not be forty thousand, but the forty that are here.'

The onlookers laughed loudly at this exaggeration and its sudden playing down.

Māmaqānī: That isn't even a tradition. What book is it in, which Imām is it from?

Bāb: 'Well, it's certainly written that some of the ʿulamāʾ will turn against him.'

Māmaqānī: 'Nor is that a tradition. It's something that was said by Muhyī 'l-Dīn ibn ʿArabī—that when the promised Mahdī comes, the majority of those who reject him will be the outwardly learned (*ʿulamā-yi ẓāhira*). Since you are so seriously ill-informed about the texts and traditions, you lay claim to the Imāmate with idle talk, and say you are the Gate of the City of Knowledge. *He who disbelieves speaks slander*.'

Then the late Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ said: 'Yes, your statements in regard to this tradition are exactly the same as those which an unlettered man asked of a learned one: "Which Imām was it who was eaten by a jackal in Basra?" He meant his holiness Joseph. [The scholar] replied: 'He wasn't an Imām, he was a prophet; it wasn't Basra, it was Egypt; it wasn't a jackal, it was a wolf; and it didn't eat him.'

The onlookers laughed loudly.

Then Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ said: 'Since you lay claim to the Imāmate, we won't ask you to perform another miracle. Our king is suffering from gout. Please pray for his ailment to be healed. If it is, we shall all believe in you.'

His Excellency the Shadow of God[58] said: 'Why travel so far? Let him restore you to youth in this very assembly, and we shall all believe.'

There was no response. Then the Bāb turned to my late father and said: 'You consider the *Ṣaḥīfa-yi Sajjādiyya* to be among the miracles of his holiness (Imām) Sajjād, and to be a proof of his Imāmate. I have written ten times that number of prayers. Are they not sufficient as a miracle for me?'

Māmaqānī: '"Praise be to Thee, this is a great calumny." In the first place, when did we ever say that the *Ṣaḥīfa-yi Sajjādiyya* is one of the miracles of his holiness? Why do you have to make things up? The most we say is that those prayers stand among the words of human kind in the highest degree of eloquence and elegance. In the second place, what relationship can there be between your words, which are filled with mistakes from beginning to end, and the *Ṣaḥīfa-yi Sajjādiyya*? What link is there between the earth and the pure world (*ʿālam-i pāk*)? And how can incorrect and stumbling words be considered miraculous?'

NU: 'Jināb-i Āqā! One of the prayers from the *Ṣaḥīfa* reads: "O Thou through Whom the knot of the deceiver is untied." Do you write a prayer like it and we shall believe in you.'

There was no reply.

Māmaqānī: 'In His Book, God says in respect of Jesus, using the words of his followers: "They said, 'How can we speak with one who is in his cradle, a Bābe?'" Such a distancing and expression of amazement is perfectly understandable, since conversing with a Bāby while still in the cradle would be a miracle. Now, you put yourself on a level with this verse in your own book. You say: "How can one speak the words of God when he is in truth only twenty-five years old?" Leaving aside the mistakes in the words themselves, what would be a cause for bewilderment and pulling back in a twenty-five-year-old man speaking on behalf of God that you should take the trouble to defend yourself against it? What fool would say such a thing for you to feel it necessary

[58] I.e. Nāṣir al-Dīn Mīrzā.

to refute him? You who have still to learn how to put a few words together. *He who disbelieves slanders.*'

Then the late ʿĀlam al-Hudā said: 'Sir, God has said in His Book: "Know that whenever you have taken booty, a fifth of it belongs to God." Has the decree laid down in this verse been abrogated, or does it still stand?'

Bāb: 'It still stands.'

A.H.: 'In that case, on what grounds do you in your book say: "Know that whenever you have taken booty, a third of it belongs to the Remembrance"? Doesn't this decree abrogate the Word of God?'

Bāb: 'Well, the share of the Imām belongs to me.'

A.H.: 'The Imām's share is one half of a fifth, and half a fifth is a tenth, not a third.'

Bāb: 'No, it is a third.'

All the onlookers laughed. In the end, ʿĀlam al-Hudā, with a thousand perhapses and maybes and calculations on the finger showed him that half a fifth is a tenth. Once he had been convinced, he said: 'It was a slip.'

Then my late father said: 'You who possess such skill in counting, will you tell me how many fractions there are in arithmetic?'

Bāb: 'I have never studied arithmetic.'

Then ʿĀlam al-Hudā said: 'Jināb-i Sayyid. It is an essential tenet of our faith that the gate of original revelation has been closed since the days of the Prophet. Even Gabriel said at the time when the Prophet died that this was his final descent to the earth. What he meant was his coming down to bring an original revelation.'

Bāb: 'Yes, that is the case.'

ʿĀlam al-Hudā: 'But then you say in your book: "Truly, we have sent a revelation down to you even as we sent it down to Muḥammad before you." What is the meaning of this? Especially since, in your style of writing, a likeness is identical to what it is likened to.'

Bāb: 'It was closed then, and now it has been opened again. What's the harm in that?'

ʿĀlam al-Hudā: 'No harm, but it does mean that the Prophet [Muḥammad] is not the Seal of the Prophets, and that the words: "There shall be no prophet after me" are a lie.'

There was no reply. Then ʿĀlam al-Hudā said: 'In your book you have said: "We have caused you to be raised up above a station, or to a nearer place". Is that so?'

Bāb: 'Yes.'

ʿĀlam al-Hudā: 'To begin with, what's the purpose in using the transitive in the verb "*arfaʿnaka*" [We have caused you to be raised up]?, bearing in mind that God, when He says concerning Idrīs in His Book, "And We raised him up to a high place" does not use the transitive. Secondly, the furthest limit travelled to by the Prophet during his ascension to heaven was the station of "or nearer", for there is nothing higher than that world in the realm of creation. You who have gone five stops beyond Mecca and placed your foot above the station of prophethood [reading *nubuwwat* for *nawbat*], where do you plan to go now? On this basis, your rank must be higher than that of the Prophet. *He who has disbelieved slanders*.'

Then my late father said: 'You have said in your books that the light that shone on Moses out of the Burning Bush was your light: is that correct?'

Bāb: 'Yes.'

Māmaqānī: 'What's your proof for that?'

Bāb: 'Well, there is a tradition that the light which shone forth upon Moses was the light of one of the followers (Shīʿīān) of the Prince of Believers. Isn't that so?'

His excellency the Shadow of God, who was at that time seventeen years old, asked out of his understanding and sagacity: 'What makes you think that's you? How does that prove your claim? The Prince of Believers has plenty of followers.'

My late father said: 'The criticism is correct. Apart from that, "You have remembered something, and you have forgotten many things". You have heard something, but you haven't understood its meaning in the least. The light of one person does not shine on another, when they are separated by a distance of isolation (*nūr-i dīgarī bi-dīgarī ka mīān-i ānhā baynūnat-i ʿuzlatīst, tajallī namī-kunad*). Rather, it shone for it and upon it (*tajallā la-hā bi-hā*) and through it it was kept apart from it; this meaning is perfectly clear in the philosophy of the Imāms. The meaning of this light is the light of the reality of Moses himself, who is one of the followers of the Prince of the Believers; for the Imām has made this clear in another tradition, in which the transmitter asked his holiness about the cherubim. His holiness declared "They are a people from among the followers of the Prince of Believers, from the first creation, [dwelling] behind the throne; if the light of any one of them were to be split up among all the people of the earth, there would be enough

to go round. When his holiness Moses asked his God what he asked Him, God commanded one of those cherubim, *And he shone forth upon the mountain, and laid it level with the earth, and Moses fainted away.*"[59] The transmitter asked "What are their names?" He answered: "Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus." The transmitter asked: "Whose light was it that shone forth on Moses?" He said: "The light of Moses."

'You, you poor wretch, who know nothing about the traditions and possess no insight into the rules governing philosophy, what sort of ridiculous claims are you making?'

Then he said: 'Let's leave these abstruse questions, and let me ask you a question concerning religious law. Tell me, in our law, how many types of divorce are there? Which type constitutes "innovative divorce"? Which one is "legitimate divorce"? And within legitimate divorce, which is irrevocable, which revocable, and which healthy (? *ʿadha*)?'

He said: 'I have not studied religious law.'

After this, my late father asked a question regarding medicine, which I do not remember.

He said: 'I have not studied medicine.'

Then he (Māmaqānī) said: 'In a letter you wrote to me, in which you invited me to join you, [you have written]: "The first to believe in me was Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh". Was this letter written by you?'

Bāb: 'Yes.'

Māmaqānī: 'Well, in that case your rank is above that of the Prophet, since it is the follower who believes in him whom he follows, and not the other way round.'

There was no reply from that Gate of the City.

Then the late ʿĀlam al-Hudā asked: 'You have referred to yourself as "Lord"? Why is that?'

Bāb: 'Well, my name is numerically equivalent to the word "Lord".'

My late father said: 'Your name isn't unique to you. On the strength of what you say, shouldn't anybody called ʿAlī Muḥammad or Muḥammad ʿAlī be considered a Lord apart from God?'

No reply could be heard. Then he put his hand to his ear and said: 'Listen. I shall reveal a verse: "Praise be to God Who created the heavens

[59] The Qurʾānic part-verse (7:143) quoted here is not cited accurately.

and the earth"', putting the vowel "a" at the end of the word "heavens" (*samawat*).[60]

His majesty said: 'You don't even know the rules of Arabic grammar. "Whatever takes its plural in *tāʾ* and *alif* is vocalized with 'i' in both accusative and genitive".'

Bāb: 'Listen: "And he made the sun and the moon"', vocalizing the *shīn* of *shams* [the sun] with 'i'.

The onlookers exclaimed: 'You've made a mistake. Why do you put the vowel "a" where you should have "i"?'

Bāb: 'Now, listen. . . .'

My late father grew angry and said: 'Who wants to listen to words with mistakes in them?'

His (the Bāb's?) breath was cut short. By chance there happened to be a sphere of the heavens in the room. His excellency the Shadow of God said: 'Bring that sphere over and show us the figures and circles on it.'

Bāb: 'I have not studied astrology (*nujūm*).'

My late father grew angry and said: 'You donkey! This isn't astrology, it's astronomy!'

Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ said: 'You, sir—what's the meaning of these words of ʿAllāma:[61] 'If a man should have intercourse with a hermaphrodite, or a hermaphrodite with a woman, ablutions are obligatory for the hermaphrodite, but not for either the man or the woman'. Explain the mode of this ruling, and what was ʿAllāma's thinking.'

Bāb: 'I've already said that I have not studied religious law.'

Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ: Maʾmūn asked his holiness Riḍāʾ the following: "Where is your proof for the caliphate of your grandfather [ʿAlī]?" His holiness replied: "The Qurʾānic verse 'Ourselves'". Maʾmūn said: "But for our wives". His holiness made the rejoinder: "But for our sons". What is the character of the proof cited by the Imām, and the nature of Maʾmūn's objection, and the sense of Riḍāʾs response to it in this tradition?'

Bāb: 'Is it really a tradition?'

Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ: 'Yes.'

Bāb: 'I can't think of anything.'

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[60] Thus, *al-samawāt*$^{a}$ instead of *al-samawāt*$^{i}$.

[61] ʿAllāma Jamāl al-Dīn Abū Mansūr Ḥasan al-Hillī, Ibn al-Muṭahhar (648/1250–726/1325).

Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ: 'God says: "He it is Who causes you to behold the lightning, for fear and for hope".[62] How are the phrases "for fear" and "for hope" construed according to the rules of grammar?'

Bāb: 'I haven't studied grammar.'

Nizam: 'Tell me the meaning of this tradition: *May God curse the eyes, for they have behaved unjustly towards the one eye.*'

He hesitated for a moment, then said: 'I don't know.'

Then the late ʿĀlam al-Hudā said: 'Sir! In your book, you have said that if jinn and men were to assemble together, they could not produce the like of half a word from your book. Is this true?'

Bāb: 'Yes.'

ʿĀlam al-Hudā: 'In His Book, God has challenged men to (produce) a single sura, saying: "Produce a sura like it". How did your book come to be elevated above the Book of God? Secondly, half a word cannot be pronounced, in order for this to be a permissible challenge. To impose what is impossible is reprehensible. Secondly [sic], fine speech and eloquence are attributes of words and combined letters; in the case of separate letters, both eloquent and ineloquent are reduced to the same level. Look—if I were to utter an *alif*, how would it differ from an *alif* in your book? If you should say that the *alif* in your book is divine (*lāhūtī*) and my *alif* earthly (*nāsūtī*), it seems to me that I could turn the whole thing round the other way. For what I say and what you say are both claims unsubstantiated by any proof. What is the point in this sort of challenge?'

His excellency the Bāb remained astonished, and said nothing. But after that he showed no shame, and said: 'This Qurʾān that I have brought—no-one else could produce one like it. This proof is sufficient as testimony to the truth of my claims.'

My father grew angry and said: 'Sayyid, how long will you keep singing this nonsense? Your book is full of mistakes from beginning to end, and all it says is foolishness. We consider ourselves more dignified than to descend to competing with your nonsense. And unlike you we are not lacking in shame, first of all to desecrate God's Qurʾān, and then to make remarks about how it has been put together and make ourselves fit to be reviled. If you insist on this matter, here is one of our ʿulamāʾ. His name is Mīrzā Ḥasan, and he is one of the ʿulamāʾ of Khūy. For the sake of proving the point to you, he will compose a few pages in

[62] Qurʾān 13:12; cf. 30:24.

the style of your writings, and if you like they will be brought to you so you can see that in respect of accuracy, eloquence, and refinement of style his words will not bear the slightest resemblance to these jumbled scribblings of yours.'

The sayyid remained silent, and did not reply. Then the Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ said: 'It has been reported with respect to the revelation of the Sūra of Kawthar that his holiness the Prophet was walking through an alleyway, when ʿAs the father of ʿAmr said: "This man has no children. He'll soon die, leaving no descendants." His holiness the Prophet grew sad, and to comfort him the sūra in question was revealed. In what way did it comfort him?'

Bāb: 'Was the occasion for the revelation of the sura really as you have said?'

Niẓām: 'Yes.'

He thought for a bit, then said: 'Nothing springs to mind.'

Then the late ʿĀlam al-Hudā said: 'Sir! In your book you have said that you dreamed that they had killed the Prince of Martyrs (Ḥusayn), and that you drank a few drops of his blood and that the gates of heavenly grace were thereupon opened to you. Is that correct?'

Bāb: 'Yes.'

My late father said: 'Sayyid, what enmity do you hold for the Prince of Martyrs, that you should eat him after they put him to death?'

Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ said in jest: 'Well, after all, Hind was a liver-eater.'

There was no reply from the Bāb. Then, my late father, having been angered, indeed incensed by these nonsensical words, said: 'Very well, you Shirazi rascal, what sort of hypocrisy and double-dealing is this? When the followers of the Shaykh-i Aḥsāʾī ask you, you write: "Aḥmad and Kāẓim, may God bless them both". But what about Sayyid Yaḥyā, the son of Sayyid Jaʿfar Dārābī? The father disagrees with the opinions of the late Shaykh-i Aḥsāʾī about the resurrection. But when the son asks you, you write in reply that the shaykh was wrong about the resurrection, and you openly declare him a heretic, and you write: "In truth, Sayyid Jaʿfar Dārābī was correct in what he wrote concerning the words: "His lightning flashed forth, encompassing the eastern and western horizons". So what was all that "may God bless them" of yours about? And what's this condemnation and excommunication? If you're an honest man, why can't you just stick to one position?'

The sayyid hung his head and made no reply. The late Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ said: 'Let's leave these questions. If a man should be

uncertain [in the ritual prayer] between two and three, how should he begin?'

Bāb: 'He should begin with two.'

My late father grew angry, and the sayyid immediately said, 'No, I made a mistake. He should begin with three.'

The onlookers laughed. My father said: 'Since it wasn't two, it had to be three.'

Niẓām al-ʿUlamā": 'You wretch! If you'd stuck to your first remark and not said anything about having made a mistake, it would have been better for you, since that position used to be held by some in the past. You could at least have maintained that it was your legal ruling, since engaging in an indubitable duty demands fulfillment of that indubitable duty.[63] But why didn't you ask whether the doubt was in the case of ritual prayer of two, three, or four prostrations? Or whether it was before or after the two prostrations? Or before or after completion?'

The Bāb hung his head down and said nothing.

NU: 'Since you don't know the answer to any of these questions, let me ask you a simple question. What tense is the verb *qulnā*[64] in, and how does its weak letter mutate?

Bāb: 'I haven't studied syntax.'

My late father grew angry again and said: 'You donkey! This is morphology, not syntax. And you lay claim to the Imāmate with an intelligence like yours.'

Then the late Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ saw that the Bāb wasn't up to a learned debate, so he started to deride him, saying: 'You, sir! When did I send you as an Imām? Why did you come talking such nonsense?'

Bāb: 'Are you claiming to be God?'

NU: 'Yes. An Imām like you deserves a God like me.'

When the discussion reached this point, and the degrees of the Bāb's ignorance and dullness were made obvious to everyone, there was no need to proceed further. His Excellence the Shadow of God spoke to the Farrāshbāshī, saying: 'This idiot isn't fit to debate with the ʿulamāʾ. Take him away.'

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[63] This last phrase taken from Browne's translation of *Rawḍat al-ṣafā* (*Traveller's Narrative* p. 286).

[64] Ar. 'We said.'

They took him away from that place swiftly and placed him in the house of Kāẓim Khān the Farrāshbāshī. And so the meeting came to an end. *Take heed, ye that have eyes to see.*

## Appendix 2

### *The Trial of the Bāb in Hashtrūdī's* Abwāb al-hudā

From Muʿīn al-Salṭana p. 201 ff.

There is also the account of ʿĀlim-i Hashtrūdī, who was in Tabriz at that time; and the narratives of some others from the early period, both believers and non-believers, agree with Hashtrūdī's account.…

Hashtrūdī says: it was near sunset when they brought the Bāb, who had just emerged from the public bath, to that assembly of misery. When he entered, the ʿulamāʾ, who had arrived early, had already occupied the main seats, sitting to the left and right of the heir to the throne, and there was no room left for anyone to sit. His holiness entered the assembly and greeted those present, but no-one returned his greeting, nor did they show him a place to sit. For a moment, the Bāb remained standing, like someone who awaits a welcome and expects to be shown a seat by the owner of the house or his host, but no-one paid any heed. But on the faces of those present could be clearly seen the signs of imposture and meanness, of hatred and enmity, of obstinacy and opposition.

So his holiness went to a corner, with that polite and dignified manner which he always possessed, and removing his hands from his sleeves, sat down in the posture of oneness. The ʿulamāʾ had been conversing a little together in private, and had asked the heir to the throne about the health of the king and his wife, and he had answered them. And they had uttered prayers and murmured 'Amen' in the most abjectly flattering manner.

When they turned their attention to his holiness the Bāb, they asked: 'What is this affair of yours, and what is the truth of the matter, and what is the nature of your claim?'

His holiness the exalted, without the least change in his manner, and with the utmost firmness and dignity, declared: 'I am the Qāʾim for whom you have been waiting' (*Ana ʾl-Qāʾim alladhī kuntum bihi muntaẓirūn*).

No sooner had they heard these words, it was as if an earthquake had struck and had cast the inhabitants of the place into a state of fear and confusion. A strange murmuring passed among those present at the assembly. One said: 'I ask God's forgiveness, and repent to Him. What audacity has this man shown!' Another said: 'There is no god but God.' Another said from the bottom of his heart: 'May God protect us from it. Amen.' [Another] said: 'No strength or power is there save in God, the Exalted, the Great. Why hasn't the ground opened up and why haven't the heavens fallen?'

At that time, the ʿulamāʾ and clerics of the Muslims and the judges of the holy law considered themselves to be God's representatives and the pillars of heaven and earth, inasmuch as the ʿulamāʾ interfered greatly through their legal rulings and their sentencing in the affairs of the nation and the important matters of state. The dominance of the ʿulamāʾ of those days cannot be compared to what it is today. . . .

After a great murmuring and much talking, they demanded evidence, and started to ask academic questions. First of all, the heir to the throne took a silver ball on which had been drawn circles and lines [showing] the form of the heavens, corresponding to the heavenly bodies of Ptolemy, and which the astronomers and astrologers call a globe. Nāṣir al-Dīn Mīrzā held it in his hand, then rolled it in the direction of his holiness, asking a question concerning the stars and planets. His holiness replied: 'I have not studied astronomy or astrology, and am unlettered and bereft in the acquisition of such sciences.'[65]

The fuqahāʾ and ʿulamāʾ said: 'What is the proof of the truth and the evidence for the rightness of your claim?'[66] His holiness the Most Mighty Gate replied, saying: 'The verses of God [possess?] a divine spirit, inasmuch as they descended upon a beloved and honoured servant [illegible]. [Illegible] is a [confirmation?] of this, inasmuch as he has said: "He shall appear with verses like the Qurʾān". [Such verses] descend upon and flow from my tongue and pen. The lasting proof is the verses of God.'

They said: [illegible]

Without hesitation, his holiness the most exalted began to recite verses, and continued to do so for a little time. The ʿulamāʾ criticized

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[65] Reading end of sentence as: *va az tahsil-i in qabil ʿulum bi bahr va ummi hastam*].

[66] Reading this section as: *fuqahāʾ wa ʿulamaʾ guftand* [illegible] *dalīl-i ḥaqiqat wa burhān-i ṣidq-i idiʾa-yi shumā chīst*?

the verses of his holiness on the grounds of [illegible], and said: 'They do not comply with the rules of grammar and syntax, and are replete with errors.'

[Text reverts abruptly to Muʿīn al-Salṭana here.] But none of the historians, including ʿĀlim-i Hashtrūdī himself, who is the narrator of this account and the author of the *Abwāb al-hudā*, have recorded the verses that were revealed at that time. I myself have taken much trouble and asked both believers and non-believers, but have never obtained a text of those verses. I would also hesitate to square this with the text[67] of the verses cited by Nāṣir al-Dīn Mīrzā in his letter,[68] as I shall soon explain in my account of my own opinion.

[Returning to Hashtrūdī's narrative?] Then his holiness the most exalted [said?]: 'I am unlettered [*man ummī hastam*] and have studied none of your sciences. These verses flow forth upon my tongue and mind, but you divines, who hold the rules of grammar and syntax in such high esteem, will you please tell me which rules of grammar does the following passage, which was revealed in the noble Qurʾān, conform to? *And a word from Him, his name is the Messiah*.[69] "A word" [*kalima*], which is [grammatically] feminine is referred to by a masculine pronoun. He should have said "from it".[70] And [in the case of] the words *It is only a reminder to men*,[71] which were revealed in respect of the Qurʾān itself, the [masculine form] *huwa* should have been used, since the pronoun refers back to the Qurʾān or the Book of God, which is masculine, not feminine.[72] And [in the case of] the verse: *It is one of the greatest things, as a warning to men*,[73] which refers to the Prophet

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[67] Reading *matn*.

[68] This is presumably a reference to the letter (now in the Majlis Library) assumed to be by Nāṣir al-Dīn Mīrzā, but which Browne believed to have been written by Amīr Aslan Khān (see Browne *Materials*, pp. 248–255 for notes with the text and translation of this letter, and a reproduction of the original.)

[69] The passage is quoted incorrectly and incompletely here, reading *wa kalimatun minhu ismuhu 'l-Masīḥ*. The correct quotation reads [Qurʾān 3:45] (*inna 'llāha yubashshiruki) bi-kalimatin minhu ismuhu 'l-Māsihu ('Isā ibn Maryam)*.

[70] The argument presented here is confused. The problematic pronoun in this passage is not the *hu* in *minhu*, but the *hu* in *ismuhu* (which is in fact not problematic, since it refers forward to Jesus, not back to the word *kalima*.

[71] Qurʾān 74:31.

[72] The original reads: *wa mā hiya illā dhikrā li 'l-bashar*. The pronoun *hiya* must be assumed to take its gender from the word *dhikra*, which is feminine. 'It' is generally taken to refer to the Qurʾān.

[73] Qurʾān 74:35–36.

himself,[74] it should have read "He", since the Prophet is not feminine. And [in the case of] this noble verse, where He has said *These two men are sorcerers*,[75] the scholars of grammar say that (the particle) *in* [illegible] is a "word resembling the verb", whose noun should be in the accusative. The accusative case is indicated by the letter *yāʾ* [?], so it should read: *These two men are indeed sorcerers*.[76]

'Similarly you ʿulamāʾ say that nunation is a form peculiar to the noun, and is never used for a verb, yet in the noble Qurʾān He has said: *We shall drag him by the forelock*.[77] 'We shall drag' is an imperfect verb in the first person (plural) which has been altered [? *maʿa ʾl-ghayr*] and given nunation. Likewise, in the Qurʾān the feminine has been mentioned in the masculine form: *Some women in the city said*.[78] This should have read: '[they (fem.)] said [*qālat*]. Likewise, He has mentioned the pronoun before the [noun?], when He says: *Say, He is God, One*.[79]

When the speech reached this point, the ʿulamāʾ were unable to give a reply. Whereupon, Mīrzā Aḥmad[80] the Imām-Jumʿa, who was recognized as the leading mujtahid of Tabriz, said to his holiness the exalted: 'You say you have studied no branches of learning, so where did you pick up all this?' His holiness the Herald said in reply: 'These things flow forth upon my tongue just like those verses. I have not studied them.'

At this point, Ḥājī Mullā Maḥmud, Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ, the teacher and Mullābāshī of the Walī-ʿAhd, asked his holiness: 'Will you reveal a verse suitable to the circumstances and appropriate to this gathering?' But just then the sun had gone down and night had started to fall, and

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[74] This is by no means an obvious reading of the text.

[75] Qurʾān 20:63. The Arabic reads: *In hādhāni la-sāḥirāni*.

[76] The emendation in Arabic reads: *Inna hādhāyni la-sāḥirāyni*. This is strictly incorrect, since the last word should still read *la-sāḥirān*. In fact, the argument put forward here misses the point. Where the particle *in* is used as the 'lightened' form (*al-mukhaffafa min al-thaqīla*) of *inna*, it requires a following *la*, which is provided in the Qurʾānic text. (See W. Wright, *A Grammar of the Arabic Language*, 3rd. ed., Cambridge, CUP, 1971, vol. 2, p. 81 D).

[77] Qurʾān 96:15. The original reads: *la-nasfaʾan bi ʾl-nāṣiya*, where the verb is written, not with the suffixed *nūn* of the energetic, but with a *fatḥa* and *tanwīn*. This affects only the written form, not the spoken.

[78] Qurʾān 12:30. The original reads: *wa qāla niswa fi ʾl-madīna*.

[79] Qurʾān 112:1. The original reads: *Qul: huwa ʾllāhu aḥadun*. Presumably, the argument that would have followed here is that this passage should have read: *Allāhu, huwa aḥadun*.

[80] Amanat argues that Hashtrudi is in error in including Mīrza Ahmad among the participants (*Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 388, f.n. 64).

the servants had lit magnificent lamps such as various kinds of candelabra (*chil-chirāgh, jār, mīrdanak*?), and gold and silver and crystal candlesticks, such as were fit for a king's court, and the gathering was lit up anew by pure [reading *sāda*] light and illumination.

In accordance with the request of Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ, verses resembling the Light Verse[81] were revealed, but neither Hashtrūdī nor any other historian has recorded the precise words of these verses. So, just as I have written, they too have written that verses like the Light Verse of the Qurʾān were sent down. Although I have searched hard, I have not been able to obtain an accurate record of those verses.

In the end, Ḥājī Mullā Maḥmūd wrote down those revealed verses, and kept them for himself. At this point, the Walī-ʿAhd asked for tea to be served. The servants and butlers served to those present. After the tea and hookahs had been served, Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ said to the Bāb that he wanted him to reveal the same verses a second time. The Bāb began to write down the verses and [*several words illegible*, Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ?] also wrote down [*illegible* these verses?].

The text of these new verses differed slightly from that of the first. [Ḥajī?] Mullā Maḥmūd turned to those present and said: '[word unclear] Look, these [two?] (sets of) verses are different [*illegible*—from one another?].'

[A digression follows concerning thoughts expressed in a Bahāʾī gathering 'fifty years ago' about this incident.]

After these discussions and remarks, Ḥājī Mīrzā ʿAlī, the son of Mīrzā Masʿud, the Foreign Minister,[82] who [*illegible*] was someone well-versed in Arabic, and who had been accounted among the invitees in order to help distinguish between truth and falsehood, asked the Bāb: 'What grammatical form [*sīgha*] does the phrase *qawluhu*[83] take?' His holiness the exalted did not reply. He got up and left the gathering. The oppressors returned the Bāb to his prison in the Citadel.

[81] Qurʾān 24:35.

[82] Ḥājj Mīrzā Masʿūd Anṣārī Ishlīqī Garmrūdī became Foreign Minister in 1251/1835–36. His eldest son, Hajj Mirza ʿAli, was a calligrapher and poet.

[83] [19] Ar. 'His word'.

## Appendix 3

*Questions, rebukes, statements etc. made during the interrogation of the Bāb*

Key to sources:

NN: Nāmūs-i Nāṣirī (Māmaqānī) RS: Rawḍat al-ṣafā-yi Nāṣirī (Hidāyat) NT: Nāsikh al-tawārīkh (Sipihr) MBA: Miftāḥ bāb al-abwāb (Zaʿīm al-Dawla) FB: Fitna-yi Bāb/al-Mutanabbiʿīn (Iʿtiḍād al-Salṭana) AKh: Letter of Mīrzā Aslan Khān NK: Nuqṭat al-kāf (Kāshānī) AH: Abwāb al-hudā (Hashtrūdī in Muʿīn al-Salṭana) DB: Nabīl's Narrative/Dawn-breakers (Zarandī)

| Question etc. | | Source | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| NN | RS | NT | MBA | FB | AKh | NK | AH | DB | Total |
| 1 | 'Are these your writings?' | x | x | x | x | x | | x | 6 |
| 2 | 'Who gave you the title Bāb?' | x | x | x | x | x | | x | 6 |
| 3 | 'When did God bestow this title?' | x | x[84] | | x[85] | | | | 3 |
| 4 | 'What are you the gate of?' | x | x[86] | x | | | | | 3 |
| 5 | 'Did you call yourself/ your tongue is like Tree of Sinai?'[87] | | x | x | | | | | 2 |
| 6 | Quotes 'Ask me before I am gone…' | x | | | x | | | | 2 |
| 7 | 'Are you the hidden Imam in person?' | x | x[88] | x[89] | x[90] | x | | | 5 |
| 8 | 'The Imam we await is so-and-so. You are someone else.' | x | x | x | x | x | | | 5 |

[84] 'Where?'
[85] 'Where?'
[86] 'What is the meaning of "Bāb"?'
[87] Some other sources have the reference to the Tree on Sinai as a statement of the Bāb's.
[88] 'In person or in type?' (*shakhsī ya nawʿī*).
[89] 'In person or in type?' (*nawʿī būdaʾī yā shakhsī mībāshī*).
[90] 'In person or in type?'

Table (*cont.*)

| Question etc. | | Source | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| NN | RS | NT | MBA | FB | AKh | NK | AH | DB | Total |
| 9 | 'Why did you not bring the heirlooms of the Prophet?' | x | x | | | | | | 2 |
| 10 | 'Go and get permission (to bring heirlooms)' | x | x | | | | | | 2 |
| 11 | 'Turn your staff into a dragon' | x | | | | | | | 1 |
| 12 | 'Do you have a verse for your staff?' | x | x | x | | | | | 3 |
| 13 | 'I can reveal a better verse than that' (Aslan Khān) | x | x | x | x | | | | 4 |
| 14 | 'It is not a tradition, but from Ibn al-ʿArabi' | x | | | | | | | 1 |
| 15 | 'A jackal in Basra' | x | | | | | | | 1 |
| 16 | 'Pray for Muḥammad Shāh's health' | x | x | x | x | x | | | 5 |
| 17 | 'Restore Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ to youth' | x | x | x | x | x | | | 5 |
| 18 | 'O Thou through Whom the knot of the deceiver is untied' | x | | | | | | | 1 |
| 19 | 'How can we speak with one in his cradle?'[91] | x | | | | | | | 1 |
| 20 | 'Does the Qurʾānic decree on booty still stand?' | x | x | x | x[92] | x | | | 5 |
| 21 | 'How many fractions are there in arithmetic?'[93] | x | | | | | | | 1 |
| 22 | 'We have sent a revelation to you as to Muḥammad'[94] | x | | | | | | | 1 |

[91] Asked by Māmāqānī.
[92] This is the only source to attribute this question to a certain Mīrzā ʾAbd al-Karīm Mullābāshī. The others say it was asked by ʾAlam al-Hudā.
[93] Asked by Māmāqānī.
[94] Asked by ʾAlam al-Hudā.

Table (*cont.*)

| Question etc. | | Source | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| NN | RS | NT | MBA | FB | AKh | NK | AH | DB | Total |
| 23 | 'We have caused you to be raised up a station…'[95] | x | | | | | | | 1 |
| 24 | 'How many kinds of divorce are there in fiqh?' | x | | | | | | | 1 |
| 25 | 'A question on medicine' | x[96] | x[97] | x[98] | x[99] | x[100] | | | 5 |
| 26 | 'Queries claim that first to believe in Bāb was Muḥammad' | x | x[101] | x[102] | x[103] | x | | | 5 |
| 27 | 'You refer to yourself as "Lord". Why?' | x | | | | | | | 1 |
| 28 | 'Whatever takes its plural in *tā*' and *alif*.…'[104] | x | x | x | x | x[105] | | | 5 |
| 29 | 'Explain the figures on this sphere of the heavens'[106] | x | x | x | | | | | 3 |
| 30 | Quotes ʿAllamā al-Hillī on hermaphrodite | x | x | x | x | x | | | 5 |
| 31 | Quotes question of Maʾmūn to Imām Riḍā | x | x | x | x | x | x | | 6 |
| 32 | 'He it is Who causes you to behold the lightning.…' | x | x | x | x | x | | | 5 |
| 33 | 'May God curse the eyes.…' | x | x | x | x | x | | | 5 |

[95] Asked by ʾAlam al-Hudā.
[96] Asked by Māmāqānī. Māmāqānī's son did not remember what this was.
[97] Asked by Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ.
[98] Asked by Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ.
[99] Asked by Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ.
[100] Asked by Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ.
[101] 'The Light of Muḥammad'.
[102] 'The Light of Muḥammad'.
[103] 'The Light of Muḥammad'.
[104] Quoted by Nāṣir al-Din Mirza.
[105] Attributed to 'one of those present'.
[106] Said by Nāṣir al-Din Mirza.

Table (*cont.*)

| Question etc. | | Source | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| NN | RS | NT | MBA | FB | AKh | NK | AH | DB | Total |
| 34 | 'You claim that men and jinn cannot produce a word…'[107] | x | | | | | | | 1 |
| 35 | On remark of the father of ʿAmr | x | x | x | x | | | | 5 |
| 36 | Claim to have drunk drops of blood of Ḥusayn[108] | x | | | | | | | 1 |
| 37 | Bāb's hypocrisy regarding al-Aḥsāʾī and Rashtī | x | | | | | | | 1 |
| 38 | 'If a man is uncertain between two and three (rakʿas) | x | x | x | x | x | | | 5 |
| 39 | 'What tense is *qulnā*?/ Decline *qāla*' | x | x[109] | x | | | | | 3 |
| 40 | 'When did I send you as an Imam?' | x | x | x | | | | | 3 |
| 41 | Quotes 'If it is allowed for a tree to say "I am the Truth"' | x | x | x | | | | | 3 |
| 42 | 'Are you content with this name?' | x | | | | | | | 2 |
| 43 | 'Are you the Gate of the City of Knowledge?' | x | x | | | | | | 2 |
| 44 | 'I have waited 40 years to meet one of the *abwāb*' | x | x | | | | | | 2 |
| 45 | 'I shall give this throne to you'[110] | x | x | x | x | | | | 4 |
| 46 | 'Are knowledge, hearing etc. of the Essence?' | x | | x | | | | | 2 |
| 47 | 'Religious sciences depend on *ṣarf* etc.' | x | x | x | x | | | | 4 |
| 48 | 'Show the mutation of the defective letter in *qāla*' | x | x | | | | | | 2 |

[107] Said by ʾAlam al-Huda.
[108] Said by ʾAlam al-Huda.
[109] The Bāb is asked to decline qala and cannot. Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ declines as far as qulna and asks him to finish.
[110] Said by Nasir al-Din Mirza.

Table (*cont.*)

| Question etc. | | Source | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| NN | RS | NT | MBA | FB | AKh | NK | AH | DB | Total |
| 49 | 'What is grammatical form of *qawluhu*?' | x | x | | | | | | 2 |
| 50 | '*Iʿjāz, faṣāḥa*, and *balagha*' | x | x | x | x | | | | 4 |
| 51 | 'Engaging in an indubitable duty…' | x | x[111] | | | | | | 2 |
| 52 | 'What are the fractions of nine?' | x | x | | | | | | 2 |
| 53 | Quotes 'How long these words…?' | x | x | | | | | | 2 |
| 54 | 'Show me a miracle' | x | x | x | x | | | | 4 |
| 55 | 'What needs improving in Islam? How do you improve it?' | x[112] | | | | | | | 1 |
| 56 | 'On the true nature of Christ's ascension to heaven.' | x[113] | | | | | | | 1 |
| 57 | 'Be quiet, be quiet'[114] | x | | | | | | | 1 |
| 58 | 'What were the names of your father and mother…?' | x | | | | | | | 1 |
| 59 | Trouble in Khurasan etc. on account of writings | x | x | | | | | | 2 |
| 60 | 'What is this affair… truth of matter… nature of claim?' | x | | | | | | | 2 |
| 61 | 'Light from Burning Bush was your light—is that so?' | x | | | | | | | 1 |
| 62 | 'Why should that Shīʿī be you?' | x[115] | x[116] | x[117] | | | | | 3 |

[111] This comment is dropped in the text of al-Mutanabbiʿīn.
[112] Asked by Zaʿīm al-Dawla's grandfather.
[113] Ditto.
[114] Said by Nāṣir al-Dīn Mīrzā.
[115] Attributed to Nāṣir al-Dīn Mīrzā.
[116] Attributed to unnamed individual(s).
[117] Attributed to Amīr Aslan Khān.

## Appendix 4

*Answers given during the interrogation of the Bāb*

Key to sources:

NN: Nāmūs-i Nāṣirī (Māmāqānī) RS: Rawḍat al-ṣafā-yi Nāṣirī (Hidāyat) NT: Nāsikh al-tawārīkh (Sipihr) MBA: Miftāḥ bāb al-abwāb (Zaʾīm al-Dawla) FB: Fitna-yi Bāb/al-Mutanabbiyyīn (Iʾtiḍād al-Salṭana) AKh: Letter of Mīrzā Aslan Khān NK: Nuqṭat al-kāf (Kāshānī) AH: Abwāb al-hudā (Hashtrūdī in Muʾīn al-Salṭana) DB: Nabīl's Narrative/Dawn-breakers (Zarandī)

| # | Answer | NN | RS | NT | MBA | FB | AKh | NK | AH | D | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 'God [gave me this title]' | x | x | x | x | x | | | | | 5 |
| 2 | 'These verses are from God' | x | x | x | x | x | x | | | | 6 |
| 3 | 'They are my writings' | x | x | x | x | x | x | | | | 6 |
| 4 | 'Like the revelation of words from the Tree on Sinai' | x | x | x | x[118] | x[119] | x[120] | | | | 6 |
| 5 | Quotes 'I am the City of Knowledge, ʾAli is its Gate' | x | x | x | x[121] | x | x | | | | 6 |
| 6 | 'I am that person you have awaited for 1000 years' | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x[122] | x | 9 |
| 7 | 'I am not permitted [to produce heirlooms]' | x | x | | | | | | | | 2 |
| 8 | 'I am the Gate of adoration' | x | x | | | | | | | | 2 |
| 9 | 'I shall cause a verse to descend on this staff' | x | | | | | | | | | 1 |

[118] Appears as a question (see questions table).
[119] Said by Bāb and Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ.
[120] Differs.
[121] *Bāb al-ʾilm*.
[122] In Arabic as: *Ana ʾl-Qāʿim alladhī kuntum bihi muntaẓirūn*.

Table (*cont.*)

| # | Answer | NN | RS | NT | MBA | FB | AKh | NK | AH | D | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 | Verse about staff | x | x | x | | | | | | | 3 |
| 11 | '40,000 *ʿulamāʾ* will reject him' | x | x | | | | | | | | 2 |
| 12 | 'Or 4,000' | x | x | | | | | | | | 2 |
| 13 | 'Light from Burning Bush that of one of Shīʿa' | x | x | x | | | | | | | 3 |
| 14 | 'I have not studied *fiqh*' | x | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| 15 | 'I have not studied medicine' | x | x | x | x | x | | | | | 5 |
| 16 | 'My name is numerically equivalent to *rabb*' | x | x | x | | | | | | | 3 |
| 17 | 'Praise be to God.…' (with *fatḥa* on *samawāt*) | x | x | x | x | x[123] | x[124] | | | | 6 |
| 18 | 'And he made the sun and moon' (with *kasra* on *shin*) | x | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| 19 | 'I have not studied astrology' | x | x | x | | | | | | | 3 |
| 20 | 'I have not studied grammar' | x | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| 21 | 'I studied grammar as a child but have forgotten it' | x | x | x | x | | | | | | 4 |
| 22 | 'He should begin with two (*rakʿas*) | x | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| 23 | 'I have not studied *nahw*' | x | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| 24 | 'I have written ten times the bulk of the *Ṣaḥīfa*…' | x | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| 25 | 'I can write 1,000/ 2,000/10,000 verses per day' | x | x | x | x | x[125] | | | | | 5 |

[123] Differs.
[124] Differs.
[125] Expressed as 'Within the space of two days and two nights, I declare Myself able to reveal verses of such magnitiude as will equal the whole of the Qurʾān' (p. 317).

Table (*cont.*)

| # | Answer | NN | RS | NT | MBA | FB | AKh | NK | AH | D | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 26 | 'Blessings be upon you'[126] | x | x | x | | | | | | | 3 |
| 27 | 'You are Ḥājī Mullā Maḥmūd' | x | x | | | | | | | | 2 |
| 28 | 'Identical with the Essence' | x | x | | | | | | | | 2 |
| 29 | 'I have not studied *ḥikmat*' | x | x | | | | | | | | 2 |
| 30 | 'One third is half of a fifth' | x[127] | x | x | x | | | | | | 4 |
| 31 | 'I have not studied arithmetic | x | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| 32 | 'My name is ʿAlī[128] Muḥammad etc.' | x | x | x | | | | | | | 3 |
| 33 | 'To reply to such questions needs another time & place' | x | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| 34 | 'You are well[129] informed about different religions' | x | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| 35 | 'Light on Sinai was my light' | x | x | | | | | | | | 2 |

[126] To Niẓām al-ʿUlamāʾ.
[127] Different wording.
[128] The Bāb's age as given in this passage is 35, which is about six years out. This passage is omitted in al-Mutanabbiʾīn.
[129] To the grandfather of Zaʿīm al-Dawla.

# THE BABI CONCEPT OF HOLY WAR*

The religious movement known as Babism appeared in mid-nineteenth-century Iran following the promulgation of charismatic claims by a young merchant, Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad Shīrāzī, in 1844. In its earliest phase (to 1848), Babism grew rapidly among the Shīʿī populations of Iran and Iraq as an expression of extreme Islamic pietism animated by urgent expectation of the return of the Hidden Imām in his messianic persona as the Imām Mahdi, Sayyid ʿAli Muḥammad being his agent or 'gate' (*bāb*) on earth. In its brief second phase (1848–49), the movement achieved a tremendous charismatic breakthrough when a gathering of Bābīs announced the abrogation of the Islamic legal code while the Bāb (by now in prison in the north west of Iran) proclaimed himself the promised Mahdi in person. A third phase followed, initiated by the Bāb's rapid assumption of the role of an independent prophet or divine 'manifestation' directly empowered by God to open a new religious dispensation after Islam, to reveal new scriptures and to ordain a new legal system. Between 1848 and 1850, some four or five thousand Bābīs died in fierce clashes with state troops, while the Bāb himself was executed by firing squad in July 1850.[1]

The following article seeks to clarify the background to the Bābī-state clashes in the form of a discussion of the theory of holy war as presented in early Bābī writings and to analyse these conflicts themselves within the context of that theory. It is hoped that this analysis will also provide a basis for a later discussion of the dynamics of the transformation which took place from the 1860s from Babism to Bahaʾism.

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* First published in *Religion* (1982) 12, 93–129.

[1] Much has been written on Babism, much of it unreliable. An up-to-date account of the background and history to 1848 may be found in my 'From Shaykhism to Babism: a study in charismatic renewal in Shīʿī Islam' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1979; University Microfilms 81–70,043) [i.e. the work to which this is now an appendix]. [The best overall account is still that of Abbas Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal: the making of the Babi Movement in Iran*, Cornell University Press, 1989.] For more general surveys, see Alessandro Bausani 'Bāb' and 'Babism' in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd. ed.) and my articles 'Bāb' and 'Babism' in the *Encylopaedia lranica* [republished here]. A recent valuable addition to the literature on the subject is Moojan Momen (ed.) *The Babi and Baha'i Religions, 1844–1944: Some Contemporary Western Accounts*, Oxford, 1981.

Although some form of holy war has been recognized at various times and in different places in most religions, it is a concept most typically associated with Islam, a religion in which it has played a central role and where it has developed what is probably its most distinctive form as well as its most elaborate theological justification. It is not surprising, therefore, that holy war or *jihād* came to be a major feature of Babism, particularly in its early 'Islamic' phase, and that a response to the problems raised by *jihād* in the contemporary period, as well as to the complications engendered by Babi militancy, became a dominant element in the early development of the doctrines of the derivative Bahā'ī movement. Until now, however, the role of *jihād* in Bābī theory and practice has been largely ignored by scholars, and no serious attempt has as yet been made to define or analyse its relationship to the Islamic concept of religious warfare.

It has, for example, been common to speak of 'Bābī uprisings',[2] of 'Bābī-inspired revolt' and 'rebellion',[3] of a Bābī 'rebellion against the state' and of 'Bābī insurrection.[4] Later Bahā'ī writers have, on the other hand, consistently characterized the military activities of the Bābīs as defensive measures taken in response to religious persecution and have rejected all suggestions of rebellion or, indeed, of militancy. Thus, one writer states that 'when they (the Bābīs) defended themselves, as they did in a few places where a large number of Bābīs had congregated, their enemies misrepresented them as rebelling',[5] and speaks of 'prolonged Bābī resistance to the attacks of vastly superior forces' and the 'heroic defence' of the Bābīs.[6] Each of the struggles in Māzandarān, Nayrîz and Zanjān is generally described as an 'upheaval',[7] 'conflagration',[8] or 'commotion',[9] and the participants in them as 'the victims of an intense and systematic persecution on the part of both civil and ecclesiastical

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[2] M. Ivanov *Babidskie Vosstaniya vv Irane* 'The Bābī Uprisings in Iran', Leningrad, 1939.

[3] Peter Avery *Modem Iran*, London 1965, pp. 54, 58.

[4] Hamid Algar *Religion and State in Iran 1785–1906*, Berkeley and Los Angeles.

[5] John Ferraby *All Things Made New*, London 1957, p. 195.

[6] Ibid., p. 196.

[7] See (Mullā Muḥammad Nabīl Zarandī) *The Dawn-breakers: Nabīl's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahā'ī Revelation* trans. and ed. Shoghi Effendi, Wilmette 1932, titles of chapters, 19, 22 and 24; Shoghi Effendi *God Passes By* (Wilmette 1944), title of chapter 3.

[8] Shoghi Effendi *God Passes By*, p. 42.

[9] Ibid.

authorities',[10] as 'martyrs',[11] and as 'the scattered disciples of a persecuted community'.[12] Emphasis is laid on the 'categorical repudiation, on the part of the Bābīs, of any intention of interfering with the civil jurisdiction of the realm, or of undermining the legitimate authority of its sovereign',[13] and on the denial by the Bābī leadership that they had sought to 'direct any offensive' against their opponents.[14]

Both these views—'rebellion' on the one hand and 'self-defence' and 'persecution' on the other—obscure the more fundamental issue of the nature, status, and function of *jihād* within the Bābī movement, as derived from Islam, from the writings of the Bāb, and from the expressed attitudes of the Bābī leadership in those localities where trouble broke out. A careful consideration of the doctrine of holy war is a vital factor in the study of the Bābī-Bahāʾī movement, for a number of reasons. Firstly, it provides us with an important focus for the consideration of the Bāb's attitude and the attitudes of his followers to Islam and to the Qajar state. Secondly, it enables us to carry out a reappraisal of the political and ethical issues involved in the struggles of Shaykh Tabarsi, Nayrīz and Zanjān, as well as in other outbreaks of violence on a smaller scale between Bābīs and Muslim civilians or military forces. Thirdly, it leads us directly to one of the most central questions around which the development of Bahaʾism out of Babism revolves, and clarifies for us what is perhaps the most distinctive feature of early Bahāʾī doctrine.

## The Islamic Concept of Jihād

From the beginning, *jihād* has played a vital role in the expansion and consolidation of Islam and in the structuring of its world view.[15]

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[10] Hasan Balyuzi, *The Báb*, Oxford, 1973, p. 177.
[11] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 38.
[12] Ibid., p. 37.
[13] Ibid., p. 43.
[14] Zarandi *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 396.
[15] On the Islamic institution of *jihād* in general, see D. B. Macdonald 'Djihād' *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (1st. ed.), E. Tyan 'Djihād' Ibid (2nd. ed.), M. Khadduri *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*, Baltimore 1955. [More recent studies include: Reuven Firestone, *Jihād: The Origin of Holy War in Islam*, Oxford University Press, 2000; R. Bonney, *Jihād: from Qurʾān to Bin Laden*, Palgrave MacMillan, 2006; D. Cook, *Understanding Jihad*, University of California Press, 2005; M. Bonner, *Jihād in Islamic History*, Princeton University Press, 2006; Rudolph Peters *Islam and Colonialism: The*

M.M. Bravmann has convincingly demonstrated the close connections between the concepts of *islām* (submission, surrender) and those of holy war ( *jihād*), war in general (*ḥarb*) and fighting (*qitāl*) in the earliest period.[16] More perhaps than the other major teachings of Islam, *jihād* bears a deep relationship to its image and function as a universal religion to which, in the end, all men must submit, and whose legal and political system must ultimately embrace the planet. Muḥammad is the last of the prophets[17] and, as such, commissioned by God with a message, not for one people or race, but for all mankind: 'We have not sent you save as a bringer of universal tidings and a warner unto men'.[18] Muḥammad's function as a bringer of tidings and a warner (primarily concerning the Day of Judgment) included the obligation to proclaim the message given him by God[19] and to summon men to God and to submission to Him (*al-islām*).[20] Although the duty of inviting men to Islam fell primarily on the shoulders of the Prophet (particularly in the early period when access to him was always feasible), and although the ultimate work of guidance was left in the hands of God, there gradually developed in both theory and practice an obligation for the believers to assist God and His apostle in the universal *daʿwa*, the summons to Islam.[21] The nature of this *daʿwa* was necessarily closely linked to the actual circumstances in which the Prophet and his followers found themselves and to the character of the response which it evoked.

During the Meccan period (about 610–622 A.D.), Muḥammad and his companions found themselves in a position of extreme weakness *vis à vis* the possible or actual physical sanctions of the society in which they lived. Summoning to Islam was to be carried out wisely and in a spirit of loving persuasion: 'Summon to the path of your Lord with wisdom and goodly counsel; dispute with them in the most suitable manner'.[22] The punishment of unbelievers lay outside the sphere of action of the small Islamic community; it would be taken care of in due course by

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*Doctrine of Jihād in Modern History*, Mouton, 1979; idem, *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam*, Princeton University Press, 2005.]

[16] M. M. Bravmann *The Spiritual Background of Early Islam*, Leiden 1972, pp. 7–26.

[17] Qurʾān 33:40.

[18] Ibid., 34:28.

[19] See ibid., 3:20, 5:67, 7:62, 68, 79, 46:24.

[20] See ibid., 12:108, 13:36, 40:41, 42.

[21] See ibid., 47:7, 59:8.

[22] Ibid., 16:125. The next verse, which refers to reprisals equivalent to the degree of injury, was revealed later in Medina.

God—in the meantime, men were to be warned of the imminence of such punishment and invited to salvation through embracing the true faith.

The first sign of a marked change in policy coincided with the accession of some real strength to the Islamic community by the conversion of large numbers in the city of Medina between the summer of 621 and June 622. In this latter month, a party of seventy-five Medinan Muslims came to Mecca, met Muḥammad by night, and pledged themselves to accept him as their prophet, to avoid the commission of sins, and to fight on behalf of God and His messenger. This 'Second Pledge of al-ʿAqabaʾ came to be known as 'the Pledge of War'.[23] According to some Muslim authorities, it was not long after this that the first revelation concerning fighting was given to Muḥammad, in a passage which now constitutes verses 30 to 40 of the eighth chapter of the Qurʾān: 'Say to those that have disbelieved in God that if they should cease (from persecuting the believers), that which has gone before shall be forgiven them; but should they begin once more, then the example of those who went before them has already been given. Wherefore, fight them until persecution shall be no more and religion shall belong in its entirety to God. But if they should cease, God beholds all that they do'.[24]

In Medina, Muḥammad's role changed gradually from that of prophet pure and simple to that of divinely-inspired legislator and de facto leader of a city state comprising Meccan and Medinan Muslims, pagan Arabs of Medina, and three allied Jewish tribes. In 623, having sufficiently consolidated his position in Medina, Muḥammad initiated the practice of sending out expeditions against Meccan caravans. These raids soon began to acquire something of the character of a holy war: the Qurʾānic injunctions to take part in them emphasized the virtue of striving (*jihād*) in the way of God and were eventually addressed to the community of believers as a whole, rather than specifically to the Meccan emigrants originally involved in this activity. The term for thus striving on behalf of God and His prophet against the unbelievers came, before long, to be the technical term for the holy war waged by Islam against the world of infidelity. 'The change from the razzia (expedition) to the *jihād* writes Montgomery Watt, 'may seem to be

[23] See Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq *The Life of Muḥammad*, trans. A. Guillaume, Oxford University Press, Pakistan 1955, pp. 201–4.

[24] Qurʾān 8:38–9.

no more than a change of name, the giving of an aura of religion to what was essentially the same activity. Yet this was not so. There was a change in the activity which came to be of the utmost importance as time went on. A razzia was the action of a tribe against another tribe… *Jihad*, however, was the action of a religious community against non-members of the community, and the community was expanding. If the members of the pagan tribes raided by the Muslims professed Islam, they at once became exempt from further Muslim raids. Consequently, as the Islamic community grew, the raiding propensities of the Muslims had to be directed ever further outwards.'[25]

The open outbreak of hostilities between the fledgling Islamic state and the city of Mecca and the subsequent escalation of the conflict in the battles of Badr (624) and Uhud (625), leading to the Siege of the Trench in 627 and culminating in the final capitulation of the Meccans in January 630, must all be studied in the standard histories. There is, similarly, no room here to enter in any detail into the discussion as to the dating of those passages of the Qurʾān which elaborate the rationale and method of the holy war.

In general, there would appear to have been a gradual movement from injunctions to light on a defensive basis to more explicitly aggressive ordinances in the later years of the Prophet's life. The early period seems to have been characterized by a certain distinction between the military role of *jihād* on the one hand and religious conversion by peaceful means on the other: 'there is no compulsion in religion'.[26] Nevertheless, even if it was recognized that conscience could not be compelled by force (at least in days when the techniques of brain-washing had not been thought of), Islam was a system in which church and state, religion and politics formed a unity. To spread the faith, it was necessary to spread the Pax Islamica within which the law and polity of Islam might hold sway. To engage in *jihād* was a religious act of the greatest piety in a world divided in almost Manichaean fashion between God and the devil, belief and unbelief: 'Those who believe do battle for the cause of God, while the unbelievers wage war on behalf of idols'.[27] Following the capture of Mecca, an unremitting war against all idolaters was enjoined on the Muslim community: 'When the sacred

[25] *Muḥammad, Prophet and Statesman*, Oxford 1961, pp. 108–9.
[26] Qurʾān 2:256.
[27] Ibid., 4:76.

months are past, slay the idolaters wherever you may come upon them, and seize them, and lay siege to them, and prepare ambushes for them; but if they are converted and perform the obligatory prayer and pay the alms-tax, then leave their way open'.[28] Jews and Christians, who had previously been looked on with some favour, were regarded now as, for the most part, unbelievers (*kuffār*) and enemies of Islam,[29] and war against them was prescribed, until they would pay a submission tax or impost known as *jizya*.[30] Islam was to be the universal religion, before which all others were to give way: 'He (God) it is Who has sent His messenger with guidance and with the true religion, that He may make it supreme over all religions, even though the unbelievers may be averse to it';[31] 'fight then until mischief is at an end and all religion may belong to God'.[32]

As is well known, *jihād* played a fundamental role in the physical expansion of Islam after the death of the Prophet in 632. The doctrine of the abrogation of earlier Qur'ānic texts by later ones meant that, in practice, *jihād* was waged in accordance with those scriptural injunctions which reflected an intransigent, uncompromising attitude towards pagans and 'people of the Book' (Jews, Christians and, later, Zoroastrians). The former were normally given a simple choice between conversion and death; the latter were given three choices: they could submit to the authority of the Islamic state, pay the poll-tax and land-tax, and be treated as protected but definitely inferior subjects of the Islamic state (whose only true citizens were Muslims); they could fight but, if defeated, might be enslaved and their property be taken as booty, four-fifths of it belonging to the Muslim army; or they could embrace Islam and become full citizens.

Over the centuries, *jihād* has remained a duty binding on the community of believers, rather than an individual duty. In theory, this duty cannot be relaxed until the faith of Islam holds universal sway or 'until the Day of Resurrection'. Traditionally, the world is divided into two sections: the *dār al-ḥarb* (realm of war) and *dār al-islām* (realm of Islam),[33] and it is the function of *jihād* to transform the former

[28] Ibid., 9:5.
[29] See ibid., 5:17, 72, 81–2.
[30] Ibid., 9:29.
[31] Ibid., 9:33, 48:29.
[32] Ibid., 8:39.
[33] Some schools recognize a third division known as *dār al-ṣulḥ*, territory in tributary relationship to Islam.

into the latter; theoretically, therefore, a state of perpetual war exists between the Islamic world and the rest of mankind, although it has not always proved possible in practice to maintain this position in an active sense, particularly in the modern period. Nevertheless, any war between a Muslim and a non-Muslim state, whether offensive or, as has occurred more frequently in recent centuries, defensive, has the status of *jihād*, and those who die while waging such a war are accounted martyrs. In principle, war between Muslim states is prohibited; where it does occur, however, it is referred to as 'war', 'fighting' or 'conflict', but never as *jihād*. In general, this principle also applies in the case of conflict between an army of an orthodox Islamic state and the members of a heretical group, within or without the state, although on more than one occasion *jihād* has been invoked as a means of sanctioning a struggle against sectaries and rebels, defined as 'people of rebellion' (*ahl al-baghy*).

The Twelver Shīʿī doctrine of *jihād* is, for the most part, identical with the Sunni theory, but the peculiar conditions under which Shiʿism developed created a number of differences, some of which are of considerable importance.[34] The Shīʿī theory presents two features of particular interest, namely: the identity of the individual empowered to lead the faithful in the prosecution of such a struggle, and that of the enemies against whom it may be waged. With respect to the first of these, Shīʿī theory limits the leadership of the holy war to one of the twelve Imāms or to his lieutenant designate. In practice, only the Imāms ʿAlī and Ḥusayn ever led an army into battle, and the failure of the latter's rising against the Ummayad state resulted in the adoption of a quietist position by his successors. *Jihād* came to be regarded as being held in abeyance until the moment arrived for its revival—that is, on the return of the twelfth Imām as the divinely-guided Mahdī who would conquer the world for Islam. Since the hidden Imām did not delegate his authority directly to anyone except the four 'gates' (*abwāb,*

[34] Much of the information in the following section is based on Etan Kohlberg's excellent article 'The Development of the Imāmī Shīʿī Doctrine of *jihād*', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft* 126 (1976): 64–86. Apart from the sources cited there, the following may be regarded as among the fullest and most authoritative presentations of the law concerning *jihād* in works of Shīʿī *fiqh:* Shaykh Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī *al-Mabsūt* ed. Muḥammad Taqī al-Kashfī, 7 vols. in 4 (Tehran, 1387/1967–8) vol. 2 pp. 2–32; Shaykh Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil al-Shīʿa* ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Rabbānī al-Shīrāzī, 20 vols. (2nd. ed., Tehran 1383/1963) vol. 6 pp. 4–392.

sing, *bāb*) who followed him during his 'lesser occultation', *jihād* could no longer be declared, since for anyone to do so would be for him to usurp the prerogative of the Imām of the age. In practice, however, this theory required modification in cases where the survival of a Shīʿī state might depend on its ability to launch a legitimate holy war against its enemies. Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭūsī argued that *jihād* of a defensive nature might be waged in the absence of the Imām, a view that had a powerful influence on later theorists. Certain jurists of the Ilkhānī period stated that the believers could be summoned to *jihād* by the Imām or by a person appointed by him to do so, in a context implying that the duty of issuing such a summons rested with the *ʿulamā*, the religious scholars, as representatives of the Imām.[35]

In the Ṣafavī period, the establishment of a powerful, centralized Shīʿī state capable of waging both offensive and defensive warfare, was combined with the claim by the monarchs of the dynasty to be descended from the Imāms and to possess the authority needed to assume many of their prerogatives, including that of leading *jihād*. The situation changed somewhat under the Qājārs in the nineteenth century; in this case, the ruling dynasty was considered illegitimate by much of the religious establishment, while the latter waxed considerably in their influence, particularly during the first part of the nineteenth century.[36] Individual *ʿulamāʾ* such as Shaykh Jaʿfar al-Najafī, Mullā Muḥammad Bāqir Ḥujjat al-lslām Shaftī, and Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥasan al-Najafī possessed personal power to a degree unmatched by even the greatest of their Ṣafavī predecessors. The newly-powerful *mujtahids* and, in particular, those of them who could lay claim to the function of *marjaʿiyyat* (acting as a model and authority for the behaviour of others), came to be regarded as the de facto representatives of the Imām. Coinciding with this novel situation came the threat of Russian aggression on the northern borders of Iran, leading directly to the outbreak of the Russo-Persian wars in 1804–13 and 1826–28. In 1809, five years after the start of the first of these wars, Mīrzā Buzurg Farāhānī Qāʾim Maqām, the vazir of crown prince ʿAbbās Mīrzā, either on his own initiative[37] or on the instructions of Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh,[38] obtained decrees from several of

[35] Kohlberg 'Shīʿī Doctrine of *jihād*', p. 80.
[36] Ibid., p. 81.
[37] Thus Algar *Religion and State*, p. 79.
[38] Thus Ḥasan-e Fasāʾī *History of Persia under Qajar Rule* trans. Heribert Busse, New York and London 1972, p. 127.

the leading *ʿulamā* at the Shīʿī shrines in Iraq, declaring the war against Russia to be a *jihād*. These decrees were collected by Mīrzā Buzurg in a volume entitled *Risāla-yi jihādiyya*, which was one of the first books ever printed in Iran.[39] In 1826, Russian atrocities committed against the Muslim population of the Caucasus stirred the religious authorities in Iraq and Iran, led by Āqā Sayyid Muḥammad Iṣfahānī, to declare a second *jihād*. Reluctant to declare war on Russia, Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh was, in the end, forced to do so by religious pressure from the *ʿulamā*, which included the issuing of a decree to the effect that opposition to *jihād* was a sign of unbelief.[40] In 1836, an attempt was made to preach holy war against the Sunnī Afghans and Turkomans;[41] in 1843, following the sack of Karbalāʾ by Najīb Pāshā, a similar attempt was made to wage a Shīʿī *jihād* against the Ottomans;[42] and in 1856/57 a more intensive effort was made by the state itself to launch a full-scale *jihād* against the British, who had declared war on Iran after the sack of Herat in 1856.[43] Among those impelled by the British attack on Iran to advocate the launching of a holy war was Ḥājj Mullā Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī, the leader of the Shaykhī sect in Kirmān, who wrote a lengthy treatise entitled *Risāla-yi Naṣiriyya*, in which he outlined the nature of *jihād* and its varieties and called on Naṣir al-Dīn Shāh and the people of Iran to defend the faith of Iran against the incursions of the unbelievers.[44]

*Jihād* has also been invoked on occasion during the present century. In 1912, for example, following the Italian invasion of Libya, some of the Iranian *ʿulamā* of lraq called, somewhat quixotically, for a holy war against the invaders, as much to stir up feelings against the British and Russians then occupying parts of Iran as to offer real support to the people of Libya.[45] In 1914, during the British occupation of Iraq, the Shīʿī *ʿulamā* there declared *jihād* in reinforcement of a call to holy war made by the Shaykh al-Islām of the Ottoman Empire,[46] and their

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[39] For passages from an abridged version, see Kohlberg 'Shīʿī Doctrine of *jihād*' p. 82.

[40] Algar *Religion and State*, pp. 87–89.

[41] VV.K. Stuart *Journal of a Residence in Northern Persia and the Adjacent Provinces of Turkey*, London 1854, p. 296.

[42] Algar *Religion and State*, p. 116.

[43] Ibid., pp. 154–5.

[44] *Risāla-yi Nāṣiriyya* printed in Karīm Khān Kirmānī *Majmūʿ al-rasāʾil Fārsī I* (Kirmān 1386/1966–7), pp. 296–398.

[45] Abdul-Hadi Hairi *Shiʿism and Constitutionalism in Iran*, Leiden 1977, p. 121.

[46] Ibid., p. 124.

opposition to non-Muslim rule continued during the period of the British mandate in Iraq.

The second distinguishing feature of the Shīʿī view of *jihād* is the problem of identifying those who may be regarded as legitimate enemies in a religious war. Both Sunnis and Shiʿīs are agreed that *jihād* may be waged against polytheists, apostates, scriptuaries (Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians), and dissenters. But, whereas Sunni theory defined the latter as those who rebelled against the legitimate religious or secular ruler and regarded it necessary to fight only when the state was actually threatened by such elements, Shīʿī doctrine applied the term without discrimination to all those who opposed the twelve Imāms—in other words, to all non-Twelver Muslims. The duty to fight against these dissenters was not dependent on any specific threatening circumstances, but remained a constant element of doctrine. '…while the Imāmis concurred in the need to fight the infidels, they regarded as an essential step the conversion of all Muslims into true believers (i.e. Imāmī Shīʿīs).'[47] This belief is closely related to the distinction drawn in Shiʿism between *islām* (which is professed by all Muslims) and *īmān* (true faith, professed only by the Shīʿa).[48] In this way, the world is divided for the Shīʿa, not between infidelity and Islam, but into three areas: the realms of faith, Islam and unbelief.[49] So important is the idea of *jihād* against dissenters for Shīʿī thinkers that references to it in their writings 'probably outnumber references to other kinds of *jihād*'.[50] The wars between the Imām ʿAlī and his enemies are regarded by Shīʿī theorists as *jihād*, as is the subsequent rising of his son Ḥusayn against the Umayyad caliphate. Justification has, therefore, always existed within Shīʿī doctrine, not only for war against non-Shīʿī Muslims of another state, but for any rising against a state which is deemed to have usurped the rights of the Imām and his people. A novel development of this attitude has

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[47] Kohlberg 'Shīʿī Doctrine of *jihād*', p. 69.

[48] On this distinction, see traditions cited in Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī* ed. Muḥammad al-Bihbūdī and ʿAlī Akbar al-Ghaffārī, with Persian trans, and commentary by Āyat Allāh Ḥājj Shaykh Muḥammad Bāqir al-Kamraʾī, 4 vols. (Tehran, 1392/1972) vol. 3, pp. 44–50, 89–90; see also traditions cited in Ḥājj Muḥammad Khān Kirmānī *al-Kitāb al-mubīn* 2 vols. (2nd. ed., Kirmān, 1354 Sh/1975–6) vol. 1, pp. 363–72 (esp. 371–2). On *islām, īmān* and *kufr*, see Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī *Al-shihāb al-thāqib* (Kirmān 1353 Sh/1974–5), pp. 3–22.

[49] Thus al-Shaykh al-Mufid *Awāʾil al maqālāt*, pp. 70–71, cited Kohlberg 'Shīʿī Doctrine *of jihād*', p. 69.

[50] Kohlberg 'Shīʿī Doctrine *of jihād*', p. 70.

occurred in the last two centuries under the ostensibly Shīʿī rule of the Qājār and Pahlavī dynasties in Iran. In the course of the agitation which led to the granting of a constitution in 1906, the Qājārs were sometimes compared to or even identified with the hated Umayyads,[51] while the struggle for a constitution was decreed as being 'like a Holy War under the command of the Hidden Imām'.[52] The recent Iranian revolution against the Pahlavi regime serves as the most telling example of the power of the *jihād* concept as a factor in political opposition within a Shīʿī state, nor is it insignificant that the opposition to the revolutionary authorities continues to style its members *mujāhidīn*, 'fighters in the holy war'.

We may, then, identify in Shīʿī theory several factors which, as will be seen, are relevant to the formulation of the Bābī *jihād* doctrine. There is, firstly, the traditional view that *jihād* is illegitimate during the period of the Imām's concealment and that, conversely, the waging of a universal holy war to purify the earth from unbelief and 'to fill the earth with justice after it has been filled with injustice' was one of the central acts to be performed by the Mahdi in his parousia. Side by side with this, there is the apparently contradictory nineteenth-century experience of the issue of decrees for the waging of *jihād* against Christian enemies and a growing tendency to legitimize internal revolutionary struggles by classing them *as jihād.* There is, secondly, the notion of a tripartite division of the world into the realms of faith, Islam and unbelief coupled with the duty of *jihād* not only to bring the world of infidelity within the realm of Islam, but to transform the world of rebellious, 'covenant-breaking' Islam into that of true faith through allegiance to the Imām and his representatives.

## The Doctrine of Jihād in the Bābī Writings

The writings of the Bāb, with which we shall concern ourselves here, may conveniently be divided into two periods: from 1843 to 1848, during the time of the Bāb's claim to be the 'gate' (*bāb*) and 'remembrance' (*dhikr*) of the Hidden Imām, and his insistence on the observance of Islamic law and practice in preparation for the parousia of the 'Lord of

[51] Algar *Religion and State*, p. 252.
[52] Shaykh ʿAbd Allāh Māzandarānī, quoted Hairi *Shiʿism and Constitutionalism*, p. 99.

the Age', the Imām as Mahdī and universal saviour; from 1848 to 1850, the period of the Bāb's claims to be the Hidden Imām in person and an independent prophet, his instruction to abrogate the Islamic legal code, and his elaboration of a Bābī code to replace it. The first period, in which the *jihād* element figures largely in written doctrine, coincided with the early development of Babism as a schismatic movement within the Shaykhī school of Shiʿism and was characterized by extreme pietism and orthodoxy, numerical weakness, and mild persecution in one or two isolated instances; the second period, in which *jihād* plays a less significant role, corresponds to the open abandonment of Islam (notably at the enclave of some eighty Bābīs at Bidasht (Badasht) in July 1848) by large numbers of the Bāb's followers, considerable numerical strength in some areas, and outbreaks of large-scale struggles between Bābī fanatics and Muslim troops and civilians leading to the execution of the Bāb (July 1850), a Bābī attempt on the life of Nāsir al-Dīn Shāh (August 1852), and the subsequent repression of the movement within Iran.

The first reasonably systematic elaboration of Islamic law by the Bāb in an extant work occurs in his early 'commentary' on the twelfth chapter of the Qurʾān, known as the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*. This work was, apparently, commenced on the evening of the Bāb's announcement of his first claims (May 22, 1844),[53] and, according to some sources, was completed within forty days of that date,[54] although the present writer would maintain, on the basis of internal evidence, that it may have been completed in the course of the Bāb's pilgrimage to Mecca in the winter of 1844–45. This work contains fuller references to *jihād* than any other of the Bāb's writings; these are, for the most part, concentrated in the later section of the work, but several earlier allusions to the subject occur in passing. A study of the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* provides us, then, with a clear picture of the Bāb's attitude *to jihād at* this early stage of his career.

The gate and representative of the Imām, the Bāb was also, in a sense, the Imām himself 'in the worlds of command and creation',[55] and, as such, was entrusted with a mission on behalf of the Imām

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[53] Zarandī *Dawn-breakers*, p. 61.

[54] Mīrzā Asad Allāh Fāḍil Māzandarānī *Kitāb-i ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3 (Cairo, n.d.), p. 285.

[55] *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, Cambridge University Library, Browne Or. Ms. F.11, f. 76b; cf. ff. 89a, 142b.

to all mankind.[56] He himself constantly addresses 'the peoples of the earth'[57] and 'the peoples of East and West',[58] and calls on his followers to 'spread the cause to all lands'.[59] Towards the very beginning of the book, he summons 'the concourse of kings' to take his verses to the Turks and Indians and to lands beyond in the East and West.[60] God Himself had assured him of sovereignty over all lands and the peoples in them,[61] had written down 'the dominion of the earth' for him,[62] and, indeed, already ruled the world through him.[63] The Báb, clearly, did not conceive of his message as limited to Iran or to the Shí'í or even the Muslim world, but envisioned a universal role for himself complementary to that of Muḥammad and the Imáms. Since the laws of Muḥammad and the decrees of the Imáms were to remain binding 'until the Day of Resurrection',[64] there was no question but that *jihád* was to be the principal means of bringing men to the true faith.

The first explicit reference to *jihád* occurs about a quarter of the way through the book, when the Báb speaks of those who have 'repented and turned to God, followed the Remembrance (i.e. the Báb) and the Book, and aided the most great Remembrance of God in *jihád*'.[65] This passage is followed several lines later by what is significantly, the first reference to the notion that 'the victory of God and His days are, in the Mother Book, near at hand'.[66] Messianic expectation and exhortation to *jihád* were clearly linked for the Báb in the role of the Imám as the victorious leader of the holy war of the last days. On the one hand, it is clear that aiding God *(naṣr*—a term widely used in the Qur'án to mean fighting in the path of God) was seen by the Báb as a means of anticipating the Day of Judgment and of helping to hasten its advent—of 'immanentizing the eschaton' as it has been fascetiously expressed in a recent novel. He speaks of the man who has submitted himself to God and who aids our cause and anticipates the dominion of God in the Remembrance of God, the Exalted, through and by God,

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[56] Ibid., 11.26a, 46b.
[57] Ibid., f. 3a, etc.
[58] Ibid., f. 49b, etc.
[59] Ibid., f. 41a; cf. f. 68b.
[60] Ibid., f. 3a.
[61] Ibid., f. 89b.
[62] Ibid., f. 102a.
[63] Ibid., ff. 26a, 121b.
[64] Ibid., f. 185b.
[65] Ibid., f. 41b.
[66] Ibid.

the Almighty, as drawing near'.[67] Elsewhere, he calls on 'the peoples of the East and the West' to 'issue forth from your lands in order to come to the assistance of God through the truth, for, truly, God's victory is, in the Mother Book, near at hand'.[68] More explicitly, the Báb links the waging of holy war with the necessary preparations for the advent of the promised Imám: 'O armies of God!', he writes, 'when you wage war with the infidels (*al-mushrikín*), do not fear their numbers… Slay those who have joined partners with God and leave not a single one of the unbelievers (*al-káfirín*) alive upon the earth, so that the earth and all that are upon it may be purified for the Remnant of God, the Expected One'.[69]

On the other hand, the Báb anticipated *jihád* as one of the events prophesied in the traditions relating to the appearance of the Mahdí.[70] In a relatively early passage of the *Qayyúm al-asmá'* the Imáms prophesy that they will wage war on behalf of the Báb: 'We shall, God willing, descend upon the Day of the Remembrance, upon crimson thrones, and shall slay you, by the permission of God, with our swords, in truth—just as you have disbelieved and turned aside from our mighty word (i.e. the Báb)'.[71] The *Qayyúm al-asmá'* itself was 'revealed', it states in one passage, 'in order that men might believe and assist him (the Báb) on the day of slaughter'.[72] The Báb himself was, it seems, awaiting permission from the Imám to 'rise up in the cause' when the time came.[73]

The regulations governing the conduct of *jihád* are set out in a number of places in the *Qayyúm al-asmá'*, principally in *súras* 96 to 101. For the most part these consist, like a great many passages of the book (notably those dealing with legislation), of verbatim or near-verbatim reproductions of existing Qur'ánic passages or echoes of such passages, with only occasionally novel features introduced by the Báb himself. It is obviously outside the scope of this paper to illustrate all of the Qur'ánic parallels, but we shall attempt to outline the main features of the Báb's

[67] Ibid., f. 74b.
[68] Ibid., f. 169b.
[69] Ibid., f. 172b.
[70] For a useful summary of traditions relating to the role of the Qá'im as holy warrior, in a pre-Bábí Shaykhí context, see Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsá'í *Ḥayát al-nafs* trans. Sayyid Káẓim Rashtí (2nd. ed., Kirman 1353 Sh/1974–5)' pp. 116–126.
[71] *Qayyúm al-asmá'* f. 55a.
[72] Ibid., f. 84b.
[73] Ibid., f. 99b.

directions concerning *jihād*, with brief references in the notes to what seem to be the Qurʾānic originals, where appropriate.

Sūra 96 opens with the words: 'O believers! God has written down for you warfare (*al-qitāl*) in the path of this mighty Remembrance'.[74] If the believers should encounter a party of the unbelievers, they should make their hearts firm for meeting God in the hereafter and for its benefits.[75] The Bāb himself is told by the Imām to spur the believers on in fighting,[76] and he accordingly addresses them, telling them not to fear to be slain.[77] There is to be no fighting in the four sacred months (i.e. Shawwāl, Dhū 'l-Qaʿda, Dhū 'l-Ḥijja, and Muḥarram),[78] and it is expressly forbidden to slay the unbelievers in the month of Muḥarram or in the house of the Kaʿba.[79] The peoples of East and West are to issue forth from their countries in order to assist God, Whose victory is stated to be near at hand.[80] Those who fight for God are superior to those who sit at home,[81] and those who die as martyrs will receive their due reward.[82] The unbelievers have made no compact with the followers (*shīʿa*) of the Imām and are not to be permitted entry to the sacred territory (around Mecca).[83] The believers are to pray, give alms and fight with the unbelievers,[84] and are enjoined to 'conquer the countries and their people for the pure faith of God', while being forbidden to accept a submission-tax from the unbelievers.[85] The armies of God are not to fear in battle nor are they to leave a single unbeliever alive, in order to purify the earth for the coming of the Imām.[86] Weak men, boys, women, the sick, the blind and the deaf are all exempted from fighting

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[74] Ibid., f. 168b; cf. Qurʾān 2:216.
[75] Ibid., cf. Qurʾān 8:45.
[76] Ibid., ff. 169a, 170b; cf. Qurʾān 4:84.
[77] Ibid., f. 169a.
[78] Ibid., and f. 170b; cf. Qurʾān 9:5. These four months were originally held sacred by the pagan Arabs, by whom fighting in them had been prohibited.
[79] Ibid., and f. 179b; cf. Qurʾān 5:2, 2:21 7.
[80] Ibid., f. 169b.
[81] Ibid., f. 170a; cf. Qurʾān 4:95.
[82] Ibid., cf. Qurʾān 4:100.
[83] Ibid., f. 170b; cf. Qurʾān 9:28.
[84] Ibid., f. 171a; cf., in a somewhat different sense, Qurʾān 2:43 and 4:77. In the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* f. 89a, it is specifically the hidden Imām who thus associates these three ordinances; in this way, *jihād* appears to be formally elevated to the position of a pillar of the faith (see later discussion *Risāla-yi furūʿ al-ʿAdliyya*).
[85] Ibid., f. 172a. By contrast, the Qurʾān enjoins the acceptance of *jizya* (9:29).
[86] Ibid., f. 172b.

in the *jihād*.[87] The infidels are to be slain anywhere except in the Ḥarām Mosque (of Mecca).[88] The believers are called on to purify their clothing for the day of war and are to issue forth when the trumpet sounds.[89] They are, specifically, told to purify the 'holy land' (i.e. Karbalāʾ) from foulness,[90] and are instructed to 'purchase arms for yourselves for the day of gathering together'.[91] Angels will be sent to aid them in battle,[92] and they are assured that God, not they, shall slay the unbelievers.[93]

Two major questions occur at this point in our discussion: against whom did the Bāb envisage waging holy war? And who was to lead the *jihad?* It is clear from the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* that, as in orthodox Shiʿism, war could be waged against several distinct categories of people, although these groups are not at all times defined precisely—the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* is not, after all, a work of jurisprudence. In general, the terms *kuffār* and *mushrikīn*, which occur throughout the passages *on jihād*, may certainly be taken to have their obvious meanings of 'unbelievers' or 'polytheists'; strictly speaking, a *kāfir* is one who denies the favours or even the existence of God, a *mushrik* one who 'joins partners' with Him. Taken in this sense, these terms would apply, as they normally do in Islam, to pagans, Buddhists, Hindus and any others not accounted 'people of the book'. These latter, whom the Bāb seems to limit to Jews and Christians, are certainly condemned in the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*,[94] but it is not until a later date, as we shall see, that the Bāb makes clear his intentions with regard to them. On the basis of this later attitude, however, we may assume that they were regarded in the early period as automatically subject to the declaration of *jihād*, particularly in the absence of any specific command abrogating the Islamic injunction to that effect. It is clear from several references, however, that the Bāb by no means restricted the terms *kāfir* and *mushrik* to atheists or polytheists, but applied them to Muslims, whether Sunni or Shīʿī, who held what he regarded as heretical doctrines or more particularly, who

[87] Ibid., 173b; cf. Qurʾān 4:75, 98, 9:91, 48:17 (from which this is, approximately, a composite).
[88] Ibid., I. 175a; cf. Qurʾān 2:191.
[89] Ibid., f. 175b. This is possibly a reference to the imminence of the Mahdī's advent.
[90] Ibid., f. 176a.
[91] Ibid., 176b.
[92] Ibid., 177a.
[93] Ibid., f. 177b; cf. Qurʾān 8:17.
[94] E.g. ibid., f. 29a.

refused to recognize him.[95] In one place, he refers to the 'polytheists' (*al-mushrikūn*) from among the people of the Qurʾān.[96] He himself is the 'pure faith' and those who wish to accept Islam must do so by embracing his cause, while the deeds of those who disbelieve in Islam will not be accepted by God.[97] To disbelieve in him is to disbelieve in Muḥammad and the Qurʾān (and, accordingly, to be considered a non-Muslim)[98] This same idea occurs in an earlier work of the Bāb's, his commentary on the second *sūra* of the Qurʾān (*Sūrat al-baqara*), where he states that not every Muslim is a believer (*muʾmin*)', and speaks of the tripartite division of the world into the realms of faith, Islam and unbelief.[99]

Leadership of the *jihād* appears to rest with the Bāb himself or with a king who fights on his behalf. The believers are to 'assist the mighty Remembrance of God in the *jihād*.[100] As indicated above, the Bāb was awaiting permission from the Imām to 'rise up in the cause'. In the course of the directions on the waging of *jihād*, men are called on to 'gather together about the mighty Word, around the Remembrance',[101] and the Bāb is instructed by the Imām to 'urge the believers to fight in your presence'.[102] As I have noted elsewhere,[103] news reached the early followers of the Bāb in the Karbalāʾ region of Iraq that, on leaving for Mecca in September 1844, he had promised to reveal his cause in the holy city, after which he would enter Karbalāʾ and fulfill the prophecies. In various letters, he summoned his disciples to gather together in Karbalāʾ in order to aid the Mahdī when he would appear,[104] and, accordingly, large numbers of Bābīs headed for Karbalāʾ—where there was already a heightened sense of messianic expectation and considerable tension—to await the Bāb's arrival. Many, very possibly in accordance with the Bāb's instructions in the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* (which was being distributed in the region) to 'purchase arms for the day of gather-

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[95] For passages illustrating this attitude, see ibid. ff. 2a–2b, 7b, 104b, 106b, 123a, 158a.
[96] Ibid., f. 158a.
[97] Ibid., ff. 2a, 2b.
[98] Ibid., f. 7b.
[99] Cambridge University Library, Browne Or. Ms. F. 8, f. 55b. See further *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ ff.* 79b, 88b, 90b, 159b, 169a.
[100] *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* f. 41 b; cf. f. 84b.
[101] Ibid., f. 170b.
[102] Ibid., f. 179a.
[103] 'From Shaykhism to Babism', p. 190.
[104] Māzandarānī *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 235.

ing together', bought weapons with which to wage the anticipated last *jihād*. In the event, the Bāb was unable or unwilling to go to Karbalāʾ; many of his followers there dispersed, some to await a later summons *to jihād*, others to abandon the Bāb as an imposter.

On almost the first page of the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, the Imām calls on the reigning monarch of Iran, Muḥammad Shāh (to whom he refers as 'king of the Muslims') to come to the aid of the Bāb, warns him not to oppose him, asks him to purify Karbalāʾ of those who have rejected the previous book 'on the day when the Remembrance shall come suddenly', and urges him to 'submit to the Remembrance and his cause and to conquer the countries of the earth for the truth, by God's permission'.[105] When the Bāb's first disciple, Mullā Muḥammad Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī, travelled to Tehran on the Bāb's behalf in 1844, he attempted to deliver a copy of the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* and other works of the Bāb to Muḥammad Shāh. Also in his possession was a letter from the Bāb to the king: Iʿtiḍād al-Salṭana, a state official, writes that this letter contained a passage stating 'if you pledge allegiance to me and regard obedience to me as obligatory, then shall I make your sovereignty great and bring the foreign powers under your command'.[106] In a further letter, written to Muḥammad Shāh from Būshihr in 1845, the Bāb writes that 'God, your Lord, has willed that the Turks (*al-Rūm*) and most of the peoples of the earth should believe in the verses; aid, then, the faith of God, that you may be of those who are triumphant on the Day of Resurrection'.[107] The Bāb continued to write letters to the Shāh, but later examples of these, written from prison in Ādharbāyjān, indicate that the king's consistent rejection of the Bāb and his instructions to have him imprisoned had dashed any hopes the latter might have entertained that he would adopt the role of royal warrior on behalf of the Bābī cause, Nevertheless, as we shall see shortly, the Bāb's later views on *jihād* centred very much on the hope that a Bābī monarch would arise to carry out the task of converting mankind to his religion.

The Bāb's views about military assistance for the *jihād* from the state seem to have been somewhat ambiguous, however. When in Iṣfahān, for example, he is said to have turned down an offer of military aid or the arrangement of a marriage with one of the Shāh's daughters or

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[105] *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, f. 2b.

[106] *Kitāb al-mutanabbīyūn*, section published as *Fitna-yi Bāb* ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Navāʾī (2nd. ed. Tehran 1351 Sh/1972–3), p. 35.

[107] Letter in Cambridge University Library, Brown Or. Ms. F. 28, item 7, p. 5.

sisters—an offer made by the governor of the city, Manūchihr Khān Muʿtamad al-Dawla, with whom he had entered into close and cordial relations.[108] On the other hand, it is recorded that, when on his way to prison in Ādharbāyjān, he sent one of his followers to Zanjān to enlist the support of Sulaymān Khān Afshār Ṣāḥib-i Ikhtiyār, one of the country's leading military men and an admirer of the late Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī (the second head of the Shaykhi school out of which Babism had emerged), to one of whose daughters his son was married.[109]The request was turned down and Sulayman Khan, who later became a follower of Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī, the then head of the Shaykhī school and the Bāb's chief rival, soon played a major role in the defeat of the Bābī defendants at the shrine of Shaykh Ṭabarsī.

The Bāb next attempted a fairly systematic discussion of the regulations concerning *jihād* in his *Risāla furūʿ al-ʿAdliyya*, written in late 1261/1845 or 1262/1846, while he was living in Shīrāz after his return from the pilgrimage to Mecca. The sixth chapter of this work is devoted entirely to *jihād*; brief as it is, it provides several details as to the early Bābī doctrine *of jihād* which do not appear in the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*. At the beginning—and most significantly—he states that *jihād* is one of the branches (*furūʿ*) of religion and that it resembles formal prayer.[110] This is important in that it indicates that the Bāb explicitly raised *jihād* to the rank of a sixth pillar of the faith. He then refers to the idea that, when God sent Muḥammad, it was with five swords, and that three of these would not be returned to their scabbards until war came to an end. This would not happen until the sun rose from the west. The first of these swords was that drawn against the pagan Arabs, who were given a choice between death and conversion.[111] The second sword was that drawn against the Jews and Christians; the Bāb quotes a Qurʾānic verse (9:29) in this connection: 'fight those who do not believe in God nor in the Last Day, who do not make unlawful what God and His Prophet have made unlawful and who do not practice the true religion, yet are of those to whom the Book has been given—until they pay the tribute out of hand and are brought low'. He then states that the Imām or his

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[108] Zarandī *Dawn-breakers*, pp. 209–14; Ḥājī Mīrzā Jānī Kāshānl (?) *Kitāb-i-Nuqṭatu'l-Kāf*, E. G. Browne (ed.) London and Leiden 1910, pp. 118–19.

[109] Māzandarānī *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 75.

[110] *Risāla furūʿ al-Adliyya*, Tehran Bahāʾī Archives Ms. 5010. C, p. 114; cf. *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, If. 89a. 171a.

[111] Ibid.

representatives have the authority to accept this tribute from the rich but not the poor, the stupid or the insane.[112] The third sword is that drawn against the peoples of the earth; the Bāb again quotes a Qurʾānic verse (47:4): '(when you meet the unbelievers) smite their necks until, when you have made a great slaughter among them, make fast the bonds; then either act with liberality afterwards or take a ransom (until the war comes to an end)'. These too have a choice only between conversion and death.[113]

The Bāb then goes on to say that, after these three swords, there is that drawn against 'the people of dissent'. This position is supported, like the others, by a Qurʾānic verse (49:9) 'If two groups among the believers fall to fighting one another, make peace between them; but if one should act unjustly [from the same root as the term here translated 'dissenter'] against the other then fight the unjust one until it returns to the cause of God'. ʿAli and the Imāms fought according to the decree in this verse and the hidden Imām shall slay the dissenters on the strength of it when he appears.[114] *Jihād* is not permitted to anyone except the Imām, unless he gives permission.[115] The fifth sword is sheathed for the purpose of punishment, as indicated in the Qurʾānic verse (5:45): 'We wrote down for them in it (the Torah): "a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a nose for a nose, an ear for an ear, a tooth for a tooth, and retaliation for wounds"—but whoever remits it as alms shall have it as an expiation. They who do not judge according to what God has sent down are unbelievers'.[116] The decree on this matter rests with the Imām. Whoever denies these swords is an unbeliever; the decrees concerning them show that the ordinance on *jihād* is binding on whoever believes in God and His verses.[117]

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[112] Ibid., p. 115.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid., p. 1 16; the last word here, 'unbelievers' (*kāfirūn*) differs from the original text, which reads 'evildoers' (*ẓālimūn*).
[117] Ibid. In the preceding chapter, devoted to *khums* (a one-fifth levy imposed on booty, treasure, mines, pearl-fishing, trading profits, land belonging to protected peoples, and things combining what is legally allowable with what is forbidden), the Bāb adopts an orthodox Islamic position. Three points stand out here insofar as this regulation concerns *jihād:* firstly *khums* must be levied on property taken by the Muslims from unbelievers by the sword. Secondly, it is a duty to take the property of enemies of the Imāms—that is, 'dissenters'—and to pay *khums* on this property. Thirdly, the *khums* which is levied on booty taken in war belongs to the Imām and consists of spoils and land. (*Risāla furūʿ al-ʿAdliyya*, pp. 110–13). For summaries of the orthodox Shīʿī

Up to 1264/1848, 'Bābī' doctrine was essentially that of orthodox Shiʿism with differences only in some subsidiary matters and then only to a limitée degree. From 1848, however, following the Bāb's assumption of the office of Qāʾim (i.e. the Mahdī) and his announcement of the inauguration of the Resurrection, the entire system of Islamic revealed law had to be dismantled and a new Bābī structure erected in its place. As far as, *jihād* is concerned, the proclamation of Resurrection and the substitution of a new code of laws for those of the Qurʾān and traditions meant a sharp change in practice together with various doctrinal changes which remained theoretical. We shall discus the practical consequences of the announcement that the Qāʾim had appeared in the next section of this article; let us continue for the moment with our survey of the doctrinal basis for *jihād* in the Bābī writings. The main laws of Babism following the break with Islam are contained in the Persian *Bayān*; (*Bayān-i-Fārsī*), the much shorter, telescoped Arabic *Bayān* (*al-Bayān al ʿArabī*), both written during the Bāb's imprisonment in Mākū between 1847 and 1848, and the *Haykal al-dīn*, an extremely late work which effectively represents the Bāb's final thoughts on these matters. Since neither of the latter two works adds anything particularly remarkable on this subject, however, we shall refer the reader in the footnotes to passages in them paralleling those of the Persian *Bayān*.

In keeping with the discursive, allusive, even rambling style of this work, no particular section of the Persian *Bayān* is exclusively devoted to *jihād*, nor is there, indeed, any specific injunction to *wage jihād*, in terms comparable to those found in the Qurʾān or the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*. Nevertheless, several passages exist which rest on the assumption that *jihād* may be waged, while others command it in a form very different to that of the Qurʾānic injunctions. The later Bābī doctrine of *jihād* rests largely on a passage in section 5 chapter 5, in which it states that 'the possessors of power (i.e. kings) must not wait for something to descend from heaven in order to bring all that are on earth into the faith of God, but it should be as all entered the faith in Islam, by reason of what was shown forth at the command of the Prophet of God; in every dispensation this must be shown forth in this way'.[118] Had the kings of Islam acted on the commandments of the Qurʾān, the whole

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position on *khums*, see Shaykh Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Ḥillī, *al-Mukhtaṣar al-nāfiʿ* (Tehran, 1387/1967–8) pp. 87–88; Muḥammad al-Husayn Āl Kāshif al-Ghiṭāʾ *Aṣl al-Shīʿa wa uṣūluhā*, 9th. ed., Najaf, 1381/1962, pp. 112–3.

[118] *Bayān-i Fārsī* (n.p., n.d.) 5:5, p. 158.

earth would have been converted.[119] It is made a duty for every king who believes in the *Bayān* not to allow any unbeliever to live in his country, with the exception of traders, who bring benefits.[120] This duty is also incumbent on all men.[121] Elsewhere, the Bāb asks how a king can drink water while there still remains on earth one person who is an unbeliever?[122] Permission is given to conquer other countries in order to bring men into the faith, although, if possible, other means should be used to convert people, such as giving them the goods of the world.[123] It is, nevertheless, made clear that the prohibition on killing which is laid down in the *Bayān* applies only to the murder of believers.[124] In every dispensation, it is said, no-one has the right to anything, not even his own life, if he does not believe, and the same applies in the Bābī dispensation. As a result, the property of unbelievers may be taken by the Bābīs and only returned to them if they convert. This decree is only to be carried out by the kings.[125] Detailed instructions are given concerning the distribution of property taken from unbelievers, as follows: whatever is unique belongs to the Bāb, while he lives; on his death, it is to be kept by traders 'until the rising of the sun' (the appearance of the messianic figure whose advent at a distant date the Bāb alluded to); one fifth of the total value of other goods must be given to the Letters of the Living (i.e. the body of the Bāb's chief disciples, originally eighteen in number) to spend on the believers; the remainder goes to the general of the victorious army and to those who have assisted him, each according to his station and needs; if there is any left, it is to be spent on the holy shrines, or else all the believers are to be given a share, this latter course being preferable unless a given shrine has not yet been erected, in which case its construction has priority.[126] One important regulation must also be noted here, if only because it forms the basis for later Bahāʾī legislation with somewhat wider implications: believers are forbidden to have arms or armour except in time of need

[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid., 7:16. p. 262; cf. *Haykal al-dīn*, published with *al-Bayān al-ʿArabī* (n.p., n.d.) p. 15.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid., 4:5, pp. 119–20.
[123] Ibid., p. 120.
[124] Ibid., p. 118; cf. *Haykal al-dīn*, p. 2.
[125] Ibid., 5:5, p. 157; cf. *al-Bayān al-ʿArabī*, pp. 18, 18–19, *Haykal al-dīn*, p. 6.
[126] Ibid., 5:6, pp. 159–60.

or holy war (*mujāhada*), unless, of course, they are engaged in their manufacture.[127]

*Jihād*, it would seem, could be waged against any group who did not believe in the *Bayān*; the questions of unbelief, Islam, faith, dissidence, and so forth no longer apply here since the entire non-Bābī world is now the 'realm of unbelief. In the *Haykal al-dīn*, the Bābī monarch of the future is exhorted 'not to leave upon the earth, if possible, anyone save the Bābīs',[128] while in the *Dalāʾil-i sabʿa*, written in Mākū, the Bāb states with regard to the Jews and Christians that 'unless a powerful king shall cause them to enter the faith of God, there shall be no way for their salvation'.[129] The Shīʿī population of Iran was now regarded as subject to the decree of holy war: in the Persian and Arabic *Bayāns*, the Bāb explicitly states that God has forbidden non-Bābīs to live in the five central provinces of Iran (Fārs, ʿIrāq, Ādharbāyjān, Khurāsān and Māzandarān), since it was from these areas that the faith spread to other lands.[130] Obviously, the Shīʿī inhabitants of these regions would either have to be expelled by force from their homes or converted.

The regulations in the *Bayān* and elsewhere are part of a generally harsh policy on the part of the Bāb towards all that did not belong to the true faith. Thus, for example, the shrines and holy places of previous religions must be demolished, including the Shīʿī shrines in Kūfa and elsewhere,[131] all books except those written on the Bābī religion are to be destroyed,[132] the believers are to sever all relations with those not of the people of the *Bayān*, in order to avoid contamination,[133] they are not to sit in their company,[134] and they are not to marry them.[135]

We see, then, that the Bāb had, by the end of his short life, moved beyond even the harshest Islamic measures against unbelievers. A Bābī *jihād* was to be an ongoing process, each Bābī monarch striving to eliminate all traces of infidelity from his dominions and, ultimately, from the earth in order to establish a totalitarian Bābī state. Such a monarch

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[127] Ibid., 7:6, p. 245; cf. *al-Bayān al-ʿArabī*. 30, *Haykal al-dīn*, p. 28.
[128] *Haykal al-dīn*, p. 15.
[129] *Dalāʾil-i sabʿa* (n.p., n.d.), p. 43.
[130] *Bayān-i Fārsī* 6:4, p. 193; *al-Bayān al-ʿArabī*, p. 24.
[131] *Bayān-i Fārsī* 4:12, pp. 135–6.
[132] Ibid., 6:6, pp. 198–9. Cf. the burning of all books but the Bible by the Anabaptists of Münster under the leadership of John Matthys in 1534.
[133] Ibid., 5:14, p. 174.
[134] Ibid., 7:16, p. 263.
[135] Ibid., 8:15, p. 298.

was, above all, to be a holy warrior fighting for the victory of his faith and awaiting the opportunity to *wage jihād on* behalf of' him whom God shall make manifest', the future Bābī Messiah.[136] The role of the king here is significant in view of the Bāb's earlier disappointment with Muḥammad Shāh; clearly, he still looked forward to gaining military support from such a source. God, it was anticipated, would 'send' one or more kings to fight on behalf of the Bābī cause.[137]

## The Jihād Element in the Bābī-State Struggles after 1848

Despite the exhortations to *jihād* in the *Qayyūm al-asmā'* and the abortive attempt to initiate what may have been intended as an armed rising in Karbalā' in 1845, it soon became clear to both the Bāb and the Bābī leadership in the provinces that the movement was numerically and, following the arrest of the former, psychologically weak. Between 1844 and 1848, there were no incidents of serious persecution directed against the Bābīs which might, of themselves, have sparked off a conflict, nor did any Bābīs initiate direct action—although, as we shall see, tension between them and non-believers was slowly building up and many of the faithful were actively preparing themselves both mentally and physically for an imminent struggle. In the meantime, the Bāb instructed his followers to confront their opponents in *mubāhala*, a form of trial by faith in which two parties would call down the wrath of God on each other.[138] This practice was not uncommon in Shi'ism and had been used by the Shaykhī leader Sayyid Kāzim Rashtī as, in his view, the only valid means of putting claims to the truth to the test.[139] The Islamic practice was ratified early in *Qayyūm al-asmā'*, where the Imām instructs the Bāb to challenge the unbelievers to *mubāhala* if things should become difficult for him.[140]

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[136] Ibid., 4:5, p. 119.
[137] Ibid., 7:16, p. 262.
[138] The concept *of mubāhala* in Islam reverts to the Qur'ānic verse 3:61, supposed to relate to a challenge issued by Muḥammad to a Christian delegation from Najrān. For the significance *of mubāhala* in Shi'ism, see Henry Corbin *En Islam iranien* 4 vols., Paris 1971–2, vol. 3, pp. 210–3.
[139] *Dalīl al-mutaḥayyirīn* (n.p., 1276/1859–60), p. 72.
[140] *Qayyūm al-asmā'*, (f. 6b–7a).

The earliest recorded instance of a challenge issued on the directions of the Bāb took place when his emissary, Mullā ʿAlī Bastāmī, arrived in Iraq in the autumn of 1844. According to one source, Mullā ʿAlī had been instructed by the Bāb to summon a meeting of the religious leaders in Karbalāʾ and to issue such a challenge to them.[141] While in Mecca on pilgrimage, the Bāb himself issued a *mubāhala* challenge to two leading Shaykhī scholars from Karbalāʾ who were also on pilgrimage at that time.[142] In 1262/1846 in Iṣfahān, the Bāb challenged the religious leaders of the city to present themselves for *mubāhala* on the day of ʿArafa (9 Dhū ʾl-Ḥijja/28 November), although they did not, in fact, respond.[143] It seems probable that, when he wrote to the clergy of Qazvīn during his stay at the nearby village of Siyāh-dihān in 1847, calling on them to meet with him, he had in mind the possibility of engaging in *mubāhala* with them.[144] This may also have been his purpose in requesting Muḥammad Shāh in 1264/1848 to summon the clergy of the country to meet with him so that he might 'confound' them.[145]

The Bāb encouraged his followers to adopt the same course of action as a means of seeking non-violent confrontation with a numerically and psychologically more powerful opposition. He himself refers to a *mubāhala* challenge issued on his behalf, probably sometime in 1845, by Mullā Muḥammad Mahdī Khūʾī to Mullā ʿAbd al-ʿAlī Harātī, an early apostate from Babism.[146] In 1846, following instructions from the Bāb, Qurrat al-ʿAyn (one of his leading disciples, a woman noted for her intransigence and irascibility) called a meeting of the religious scholars and leading divines of Karbalāʾ in order to challenge them either to produce verses like those of the Bāb or to engage in *mubāhala*;[147] although the meeting never took place, she remained eager for such

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[141] Shaykh Kāẓim Samandar Qazvīnī *Tārīkh-i Samandar*, Tehran, 131 badīʾ 71974–5, p. 347.

[142] Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad Shīrāzī *Saḥīfa bayna ʾl-ḥaramayn*, Cambridge University Library, Browne Or. Ms. F. 7 pp. 14–15; prayer of the Bāb's quoted Māzandarānī *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 271.

[143] See letter of the Bāb dated 7 Dhū ʾl-Ḥijja 1262/26 November 1846, printed in ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Āvāra *al-Kawākib al-duriyya* (n.p., n.d.) pp. 105–6; cf. *Nuqṭat al-kāf*, p. 118.

[144] Samandar *Tārīkh*, pp. 97–8.

[145] Letter to Muḥammad Shāh in *Muntakhabāt-i āyāt az Ḥaḍrat-i Nuqṭa-yi Ūlā*, Tehran 134/1977–8, p. 11; trans. in *Selections from the Writings of the Bāb*, trans. Habib Taherzadeh, Haifa 1976, p. 21.

[146] Letter quoted Māzandarānī *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 274.

[147] Samandar *Tārīkh*, p. 347; letter of Qurrat al-ʿAyn printed in Māzandarānī *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 352.

a direct confrontation and, in 1847, while in Baghdad, wrote a letter to the Shīʿī clergy there, in which she said 'if you are not satisfied with these conclusive proofs, I challenge you to *mubāhala*.[148] Again, in Kirmanshāh in the same year, she issued a challenge to the *ʿulamāʾ* of the city to meet with her for *mubāhala*—'and let the curse of God fall on those who speak falsely'.[149]

Although *mubāhala* functioned in theory as a means of avoiding unnecessary physical conflict in situations of religious disagreement, relying for its effectiveness on psychological and social pressure, it did not always succeed in its aim. Relations between Shaykhīs and other Shiʿis had, for a period of about twenty years, been extremely tense and occasional violence had broken out when feelings ran high. Now, the introduction of a new and even more apparently heretical element into the situation added fuel to the fire. The Bābīs themselves pulled few punches in their letters and sermons and, in some cases even threatened physical violence against those who would not accept their message. Thus, for example, Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī Qazvīnī, one of the Bāb's original hierarchy of 'Letters of the Living' and a brother-in-law of the fiery Qurrat al-ʿAyn, wrote to his aged father that, if he did not accept the Bāb's message, he would break his neck 'like a dog'.[150]

The preaching of Babism sometimes led to physical assaults being made on individual Bābī propagandists, either spontaneously by their audience or on the instructions of the civil or religious authorities. Thus, Mullā ʿAlî Bastāmī, the Bāb's legate to Iraq, was handled roughly by the followers of the outstanding scholar Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥasan al-Najafī,[151] arrested by the civil authorities in Karbalā, imprisoned and tried in Baghdad, and finally sent to Istanbul, where he was sentenced to labour in the docks.[152] Mullā Muḥammad Ṣādiq Khurāsānī, Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī Bārfurūshī and Mullā ʿAlî Akbar Ardistānī caused an uproar in one of the mosques of Shīrāz in 1845, were arrested on the instigation of some of the local clergy, punished and expelled from the city by the governor.[153] In 1847, Mullā Ibrāhīm Mahallātī was

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[148] ʿAbbās Effendi ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ, *Tadhkirat al-wafāʾ*, Haifa, 1924, p. 297; cf. Mīrzā Muḥammad Muṣṭafā al-Baghdādī, *Risāla amriyya*, Cairo, 1919, p. 110.

[149] Al-Baghdādī, *Risāla*, p. 113.

[150] Mullā Muḥammad Jaʿfar Qazvīnī *Tārīkh-i Mullā Muḥammad Jaʿfar Qazvīnī*, published with Samandar *Tārīkh*, pp. 494–5.

[151] Zarandī, *Dawn-breakers*, pp. 90–91.

[152] Balyuzi, *The Báb*, chapter 4; Momen *Bābī and Bahā'ī Religions*, pp. 83–90.

[153] Zarandī, *Dawn-breakers*, pp. 144–8.

badly beaten by the pupils of the leading cleric of Hamadān, on the latter's instructions.[154] In the same year, Mullā Jalīl Urūmī, a 'Letter of the Living' who had been teaching Babism secretly for some years in Qazvīn, was taken by a mob to the house of Mullā Muḥammad Taqī Baraghānī, where he was bastinadoed.[155] In 1846 in Karbalā', Qurrat al-ʿAyn was arrested and her house looted by a mob acting on the orders of the governor, in order to prevent an outbreak of more serious trouble by reason of her open expression of what were regarded as unusually extreme views.[156] In Kirmānshāh, despite the favourable attitude of the governor, she and her followers were attacked, beaten and expelled from the town by a force independently organized by the local military commander, who appears to have been bribed to act by relatives of Qurrat al-ʿAyn from Oazvīn.[157] During the *mubāhala* period, therefore, outbreaks of limited violence between Bābīs and non-Bābīs began to grow in frequency and seriousness—although no-one actually died before 1847—while the numbers involved on both sides steadily increased. Whereas early violence tended to be 'legal' violence' directed by the civil authorities against potentially seditious elements, the later trend is towards mob violence, controlled to some extent by the religious leadership and, less often, the civil authorities.

In the meantime, numbers of Bābīs in various regions were engaged in making preparations for the *jihād* that must inevitably come. We know that many early Bābīs possessed and carried arms. The Arab and Iranian Bābīs who escorted Qurrat al-ʿAyn from Baghdad to Iran in 1847 were armed,[158] and those who stayed with her in Qazvīn appear to have remained so. While the Bāb was staying at the village of Siyāh-dihān, en route to prison in Māku in Ādharbāyjān, Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī Zanjānī Ḥujjat sent an armed force of Bābīs from Zanjān in the hope of effecting his rescue; this force was joined by others from Qazvīn and Tehran.[159] In Mashhad in 1848, when a group of seventy-two Bābīs set out to rescue a young co-religionist who had been imprisoned by the

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[154] Al-Baghdādī, *Risāla*, p. 117.
[155] Samandar *Tārīkh*, p. 352.
[156] Mullā Aḥmad Khurāsānī, letter quoted in ʿAlī al-Wardī *Lamaḥāt ijtimāʿiyya min taʾrīkh al-ʿIrāq al-ḥadīth*, at least 2 vols., Baghdad, 1969, vol. 2 p. 1562; ʿAbbās Effendi *Tadhkira*, pp. 271–2, 296; Qurrat al-ʿAyn, letter published in Māzandarānī *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq* pp. 354–5; cf letter published in ibid., p. 350.
[157] Al-Baghdādī, *Risāla*, pp. 113–4.
[158] ʿAbbas Effendi, *Tadhkira*, p. 299.
[159] Zarandī, *Dawn-breakers*, pp. 235–6.

chief constable of the city, they all carried arms in readiness for a clash with anyone who might seek to oppose them (which would, clearly, have included the forces of law and order).[160] Most significantly, in Qazvīn Āqā Muḥammad Hādī Farhādī, a member of a wealthy family of Bābī merchants, constructed sword-making apparatus in the basement of his home, where he made weapons for himself and his fellow-believers for the purpose of engaging in a holy war in the company of the Bāb.[161]

Not surprisingly, perhaps, it was in Qazvīn that the increasing tension finally erupted into serious violence. The leading figure of the religious establishment in the city, Mullā Muḥammad Taqī Baraghānī, an uncle of Qurrat al-ʿAyn and the man responsible for initiating the excommunication of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī (the founder of the Shaykhī school), identified himself quite early as an opponent of the Bābīs and preached against them in his mosque. The Bābī community of Qazvīn continued to grow, however, and numbered among its members both clergy and influential merchants. The arrival of Qurrat al-ʿAyn and several companions from Iraq in the autumn of 1847 brought matters to a head. About this time, Āqā Muḥammad Ṣādiq, a Bābī merchant, was beaten in the bazaar, arrested, and bastinadoed on the orders of the governor.[162] Baraghānī had a Bābī cleric, Mullā ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Rūdbārī, arrested, interrogated, and bastinadoed[163] and, as we have mentioned above, was responsible for the arrest and bastinado of the leading Bābī of the city, Mullā Jalīl Urūmī. The arrest of Mullā Jalīl was regarded as a serious act of provocation on the part of Baraghānī; Āqā Muḥammad Hādī Farhādī (to whom we have referred as engaged in the manufacture of swords), his brother Āqā Muḥammad Jawād and a group of Bābī extremists attacked the house in which Mullā Jalīl was being held and rescued him after a brief struggle.[164] It was probably not long after this, on 15 Dhū ʾl-Qaʿda 1263/25 October 1847, that a group of perhaps three Bābīs. including Āqā Muḥammad Hādī Farhādī, surprised Baraghānī while praying alone in his mosque at dawn, fell on him, and stabbed him repeatedly with daggers; he died two days later.[165]

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[160] Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Zavāraʾī *Waqāyiʿ-i mīmiyya*, Cambridge University Library, Brown Or. Ms. F. 28 item 1, p. 7.

[161] Māzandarānī *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 374.

[162] Samandar *Tārīkh*, pp. 64–66, 354–5.

[163] Ibid., pp. 191–3, 352; Māzandarānī *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 383.

[164] Samandar *Tārīńkh*, pp. 191–3, 352.

[165] For varying accounts of this incident, see Zarandī *Dawn-breakers*, pp. 276–8, who seeks to attribute the murder to a single Shaykhī; Samandar *Tārīkh*, p. 356; Mīrzā

Large numbers of Bābīs in Qazvīn were arrested, homes were broken into and looted, and several individuals were eventually put to death in retribution for what was held to be a general Bābī plot. Rightly or wrongly, many Iranian Muslims must now have begun to fear that the Bābīs were planning to use force to attain their objectives, objectives that were still far from clear to the majority of the populace.

Meanwhile, in the shrine centre of Mashhad, an important Bābī community had grown up under the tutelage of two of the Bāb's leading agents, Mullā Muḥammad Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī and Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī Bārfurūshī Quddūs. Gatherings of large number of Bābīs at a house in the main street of the city excited the uneasiness of the many clerics of the region, who made complaints to Ḥamza Mīrzā, a new governor who had arrived in Mashhad in October 1847.[166] The civil authorities were concerned at the possibility of trouble; the region was still unsettled because of the rebellion of Mīrzā Ḥasan Khān Sālār on behalf of his father, the former governor of the city, while the physical condition of Muḥammad Shāh was giving much cause for concern regarding the general stability of the Qājār state. Two apparently unconnected incidents increased the agitation of the local population with regard to the Bābīs. In the first of these, a servant of Mullā Husayn Bushrūʾī, named Ḥasan, was arrested by the civil authorities for some reason which remains unknown; a group of armed Bābīs attacked and killed the guards escorting him, thereby securing his release.[167] The second incident occurred shortly after this, while Bushrūʾī was staying as a 'guest' of the governor in his camp outside the city. A young Bābī named Muḥammad Ḥusayn became embroiled in an argument with a servant of Ḥājī Mīrzā Ḥasan, a local religious leader, was arrested and, it seems, tortured by the chief constable of Mashhad. Mīrzā Muḥammad Bāqir Qāʾinī, the owner of the Bābī house there, obtained permission from

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Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān Tanakābunī *Qiṣaṣ al-ʿulamāʾ* (Tehran, Intishārāt-I ʿIlmīyya-yi Islāmiyya, n.d.) p. 57. Muʿīn al-Salṭana Tabrīzī gives the names of the assassins as Sayyid Ḥusayn Qazvīnī, Mīrzā Ṣāliḥ Shīrāzī, and Mīrzā Hādī Farhādī, but states that Sayyid Ḥusayn was a Shaykhī (*Tārīkh-i Muʿīn al-Salṭana*, Tehran Bahāʾī Archives, Ms. 19, pp. 242–5)—the distinction between 'Shaykhī' and 'Bābī', was not always, if at all, clear at this period. The date of Muḥammad Taqī's murder is given only in an anonymous account of it appended to a rare early edition of his *Majālis al mutaqqīn* (n.p., 1280/1863–64), a copy of which is in the possession of the present author.

[166] Zarandī *Dawn-breakers*, p. 288; Zavāraʾī *Waqāyiʿ*, p. 3; Mīrzā Muḥammad Taqī Lisān al-Mulk Sipihr *Nāsikh al-tawārīkh: Salāṭīn-i Qājāriyya*, 4 vols, in 1, Tehran 1385/1965–6, vol. 3 pp. 335–6.

[167] Zarandī *Dawn-breakers*, pp. 288–9.

Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī Bārfurūshī to intervene, on condition that they should not strike until struck by the enemy—hardly a severe restriction since they could count on resistance once they began their rescue attempt. A party of seventy-two Bābīs set off with swords bared after the youth and, in the course of effecting his rescue, engaged in several clashes with his captors.[168] We shall see again how a determination to take the law into their own hands led the Bābīs of Zanjān and Nayrīz into direct conflict with the local authorities and populace.

In order to avoid further trouble, Ḥamza Mīrzā ordered Bushrūʾī to leave Mashhad and, on 19 Shaʿbān 1264/21 July 1848, he set out with a large body of fellow Bābīs, ostensibly heading for the Shīʿī shrines in Iraq. Travelling towards Māzandarān, this party, swelled somewhat in numbers by new arrivals along the route, reached Bārfurūsh on 12 Shawwāl/12 September and there clashed seriously with local inhabitants trying to prevent their entry to the town. Penetrating more deeply into the forest region of Māzandarān province, they reached the shrine of Shaykh Abū ʿAlī al-Faḍl Ṭabarsī on 22 Shawwal/24 September. Here they constructed a fortress of sorts and were joined gradually by other Bābīs from various parts of the country, including Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī Quddūs. The continued presence of what was by now a band of almost five hundred armed men created considerable anxiety in the minds of the people of the surrounding region and, before long, the newly-crowned Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh sent the first of several detachments of state troops to confront the Bābīs at Shaykh Ṭabarsī. The details of the ensuing struggle, which continued to May 1849, are well known and have been described in numerous accounts, to which the reader is referred.[169]

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[168] Zavāraʾī *Waqāyiʿ*, pp. 6–8. It is not impossible that this incident and that described by Zarandī are, in fact, one and the same; but the difference in names and the contradictory statements as to the whereabouts of Bushrūʾī make it difficult to assert this categorically.

[169] Zarandī *Dawn-breakers*, pp. 324–4–29; Joseph Arthur Comte de Gobineau *Religions et philosophies dans l'Asie centrale*, 10th ed., Paris, 1957, pp. 161–210; Lisän al-Mulk *Nāsikh al-tawārīkh*, vol. 3 pp. 233–263; A. L. M. Nicolas *Séyyèd Ali Mohammed dit le Bāb*, Paris, 1905, pp. 289–330; Muḥammad ʿAlī Malik Khusravī *Tārīkh-i shuhadā-yi amr*, 3 vols., Tehran, 130 badīʿ/1973–4, vols. 1 and 2; Zavāraʾī, *Waqāyiʿ*; idem *Majlis-i shahādat-i ḥaḍrat-i awwal man āmana Qāʾim-i Khurāsānī*, Cambridge University Library, Browne Or. Ms. F. 28 item 2 pp. 92–110; Luṭf ʿAlī Mīrzā Shīrāzī, untitled history, Cambridge University Library, Browne Or. Ms. F. 28 item 3; Momen *Bābī and Bahāʾī Religions*, pp. 91–113.

Leaving aside the many historical questions raised by this whole incident—or, more correctly, this series of incidents—let us try to examine as far as possible the motives and objectives of the Bābī defenders of Shaykh Ṭabarsī. Our best sources for this are Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Zavāraʾī's *Waqāyiʿ-i mīmiyya* and Luṭf ʿAlī Mīrzā Shīrāzī's history of the struggle—both unpublished eye-witness accounts. Before turning to these, however, it will be in order to consider first some general points which have a bearing on the outlook of most of the Bābīs at the shrine. We shall find that some of these are also relevant to the question of the motivation of the Bābī insurgents at Zanjān and Nayrīz, whom we shall discuss a little later.

In the first months of 1848, towards the end of his confinement in Māku, the Bāb wrote an important letter to Mullā Shaykh ʿAlī Turshīzī ʿAẓīm, in which he proclaimed himself to be the Qāʾim and announced the abrogation of the laws of Islam. On the Bāb's instructions, ʿAẓīm copied and circulated this letter, and it would seem that news of the inception of the Resurrection spread rapidly among the Bābīs of Iran.[170] At an enclave held at the village of Badasht in Māzandarān in July 1848, several Bābī leaders, including the controversial and iconoclastic Qurrat al-ʿAyn, openly announced the advent of the Resurrection to some eighty of their followers.[171] Among those who played an active role at this gathering was Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī Bārfurūshī, who was later to take effective control of the fort at Shaykh Ṭabarsī. It is, I think, unnecessary to labour the point that the advent of the Qāʾim had long ıbeen regarded as the signal for the final *jihād* against the hosts of unbelief and that the Bāb's followers had been daily expecting such apocalyptic upheavals for some four years.

An unforeseen problem existed, however, in the fact that the Bāb was still in prison and, therefore, unable to lead the *jihād* in person, as was proper. The Bābīs gathered at Badasht had, in fact, as one of their aims the possibility of formulating plans for the release of their chief from Chihrīq, where he was now held;[172] Āvāra maintains that they decided to send out messengers to summon the Bāb's followers to go to Chihrīq as pilgrims—once there, it was proposed that they should try to exert pressure on Muḥammad Shāh to free the Bāb, fail-

[170] Māzandarānī *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, pp. 164–6.
[171] Zarandī *Dawn-breakers*, pp. 288–300.
[172] Shoghi Effendi *God Passes By*, p. 31.

ing which they intended to take the latter from his confinement by force.[173] It has been plausibly suggested by A. L. M. Nicolas that, when Mullā Husayn Bushrūʾī and his force left Mashhad about this time, it was with the aim of heading ultimately for Ādharbāyjān, in the hope of effecting the Bāb's rescue.[174]

It is vital to bear in mind, however, that the Bāb's particular role was far from clear to his followers and that Babism in this period was far from being a doctrinally homogeneous movement. Bābī leaders such as Qurrat al-ʿAyn, Bushrūʾī, Quddūs, Ḥujjat-i Zanjānī, and others were accorded considerable respect and veneration and were regarded by many as incarnations of the Imāms or other sacred figures of Shīʿī hagiography. It is significant to note in the present context that Bushrūʾī is referred to consistently by Zavāraʾī as 'the Qāʾim of Khurāsān' and Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī Quddūs as 'the Qāʾim of Jīlān'.[175] The latter in particular seems to have been widely regarded as holding the station of Qāʾim: Bushrūʾī is reported as saying in a sermon that Quddūs was 'the one whose advent you have awaited for one thousand two hundred and sixty years',[176] while the latter is stated to have advanced this claim in his own behalf[177] or even, according to the Bahāʾī patriarch ʿAbbās Effendi, to have claimed to be God in his (no longer extant) commentary on the letter *ṣād of* the divine name *al-Ṣamad*, written mostly in Shaykh Ṭabarsī.[178]

As Qāʾim, whether in a universal or restricted sense, it was held to be legitimate for these two men to lead their followers in *jihād.* That this was not merely Zavāraʾī's personal view is indicated by several references in Luṭf ʿAlī Mīrzā's history. The latter notes, for example, that some of the Bābīs at Shaykh Ṭabarsī regarded Quddūs as the point towards which prayers were to be directed and turned to him when they performed their devotions; on the night of the ʿĪd al-Qurbān, Mullā Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī and others performed ritual circumambulation around the house of Quddūs, a practice which they continued on other nights.[179] The *Kitāb-i nuqṭat al-kāf*, written in the early 1850s, similarly speaks of Quddūs and Bushrūʾī in terms such as these: the former is stated

[173] *Al-kawākib al-durriyya*, p. 129.
[174] *Séyyèd Ali Mohammed*, p. 289.
[175] *Waqāyiʿ*, pp. 1, 3, and passim.
[176] Ibid., p. 54.
[177] Ibid., p. 70.
[178] *Makātīb-i ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ*, vol. 2, Cairo 1330/1912, p. 254; cf. p. 252.
[179] Luṭf ʿAlī Mīrzā history, p. 71.

to have claimed to be the return of Muḥammad[180] or of Jesus,[181] and is referred to as the 'promised Qāʾim', whose gate was the Bāb.[182] The latter is consistently spoken of as 'the Prince of Martyrs', identifying him with the Imām Husayn,[183] is said to have been given the rank of *bāb* in 1848 by the Bāb,[184] and is described as the 'bearer of the Yemeni pillar' and the 'fourth support', the first a term from Shīʿī apocalypse, the second a Shaykhī designation for the representative of the Imām on earth.[185] Bushrūʾī's messianic role was considerably enhanced by his carrying of a black banner on his journey from Khurāsān,[186] a gesture whose significance would hardly have been missed by anyone even vaguely familiar with Shīʿī prophetic traditions. Even the enemies of the Bābīs were given eschatological roles to play, most notably Saʿīd al-ʿUlamāʾ, the leading cleric of Bārfurūsh and the man responsible for the execution of Quddūs there at the end of the Shaykh Ṭabarsī siege, who is described as the 'bearded woman' who, it was prophesied, would kill the Qāʾim.[187]

It is impossible to tell what may have been in Bushrūʾī's mind as he left Mashhad. In all likelihood, he aimed at meeting his associate Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī and others at Badasht, but the meeting there had been broken up and dispersed by local residents by the time the contingent from Mashhad reached nearby Shāhrūd. As has been suggested above, they may have continued into Māzandarān with the intention either of reaching Tehran in the hope of forcing the Shāh to release the Bāb or of going on via Gīlān to Chihrīq in order to effect an immediate rescue. Bushrūʾī seems to have been eager to conceal the identity and plans of his group. On several occasions, he gave strict instructions to his followers to refer to him as Āqā Sayyid ʿAli Makkī, a resident of Karbalāʾ, and to say that they were all headed for the shrines in Iraq, with various pretexts to explain their choice of such an unlikely route.[188]

Whatever their immediate aims, it is clear that the Bābīs under the leadership of Bushrūʾī harboured general hopes of spreading Babism, by

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[180] *Nuqṭat al-kāf*, p. 152.
[181] Ibid., p. 199.
[182] Ibid., p. 202.
[183] Ibid., p. 154 and passim.
[184] Ibid., p. 181.
[185] Ibid.
[186] Zarandī *Dawn-breakers*, pp. 324–5.
[187] *Waqāyiʿ*, p. 48; cf. *Nuqṭat al kāf*, p. 201.
[188] *Waqāyiʿ*, pp. 18–19; Luṭf ʿAlī Mīrzā history, pp. 2–3.

preaching if possible, by force if necessary. In the course of a sermon on the Aḍḥā festival (10 Dhū 'l-Ḥijja/8 November), Bushrū'ī stated that his aim in leaving Mashhad had been to exalt 'the word of God' and to seek martyrdom.[189] Some time later, a more militant tone can be observed in his reply to the new governor of Māzandarān, Mahdī Qulī Mīrzā, who had enquired as to the motives of the Bābīs. They had come from Mashhad, said Bushrū'ī, with the aim of spreading the truth, in whatever way might prove possible, whether by overcoming falsehood (apparently in argument) or by means of the sword or by suffering martyrdom.[190] In this same reply, he refused to leave Māzandarān as requested by the prince, stating that 'until the cause of God is manifested, we shall not depart from this province; we shall make manifest God's cause by means of the sword' and that 'we few companions who are here shall not disperse until we have overcome all (of you) or have ourselves been slain'.[191] Luṭf ʿAlī Mīrzā goes on to describe how, in his communications with the prince, Bushrū'ī referred to Naṣir al-Dīn Shāh as a 'puppy', made threats of terror and sent harsh messages.[192]

The twin themes of martyrdom and *jihad* alternate throughout the Shaykh Ṭabarsī struggle. Shortly after their arrival at the shrine, Bushrū'ī addressed his followers, comparing their intention to reveal the truth through martyrdom with events in the time of the Imām Ḥusayn (martyred in 680).[193] According to Zavāra'i, Quddūs stated that his followers were the army of Ḥusayn and the enemy the army of Kūfa[194] (a reference to the debacle of Karbalā' when Ḥusayn and a small band of followers were massacred almost to a man by imperial troops loyal to the Caliph Yazīd, against whom the imām was rebelling). This same theme recurs in most later accounts.[195] Evocation of the Karbalā' motif provided an excellent focus for a drive towards charismatic martyrdom and *jihad* against the Qājār state, identified with the Umayyad dynasty against which Ḥusayn had rebelled.[196] The death of Muḥammad Shāh in September 1848 was regarded by the Bābīs as a cause for rejoicing:

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[189] Luṭf ʿAlī Mīrzā history, p. 18.
[190] Ibid., p. 86.
[191] Ibid., pp. 88–89.
[192] Ibid., p. 89.
[193] Ibid., p. 54.
[194] *Waqāyiʿ*, pp. 71–72.
[195] See *Nuqṭat al-kāf*, p. 204; Zarandī *Dawn-breakers*, pp. 326, 344.
[196] See Browne *Tārīkh-i-Jadīd*, Appendix II, p. 337.

'praise be to God, the foul tree has gone to hell',[197] but, while Nāṣir al-Dīn remained on the throne, true government could not be established. According to the author of the *Nuqṭat al-kāf*, Quddūs wrote to Prince Mahdī Qulī Mīrzā, stating that 'Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh is a false king and his helpers shall be punished in the fires of God; we are the true sovereign, who seek for the good-pleasure of God'.[198]

Our sources contain numerous explicit references to the struggles of the Bābīs with both local residents and state troops as *jihād*. Refused entry to Bārfurūsh by the inhabitants of the town, the Bābīs 'began to wage *jihād*' and succeeded in killing over one hundred and fifty of the enemy.[199] Throughout Zavāra'ī's account, the Bābīs are described as being 'engaged in *jihād*',[200] while Bushrū'ī orders them to 'fight the holy war'.[201] The purpose of this *jihād* is to 'empty the earth of corruption',[202] while the enemy troops are variously described as 'unbelievers', 'hypocrites', and 'polytheists'[203] or as 'the forces of Satan' and the 'army of satans'.[204] Although Luṭf ʿAlī Mīrzā uses the term *jihād* very little, he ascribes to Bushrū'ī an interesting speech in which he states that 'now two matters are determined: one is *jihād*, the other defence. Whoever turns aside is an unbeliever'.[205] 'Whoever turns his back on *jihād*, he goes on, 'is an unbeliever, according to the decrees of all religions', and he promises that there shall be 'either victory or martyrdom'.[206] According to the same source, when asked by Mahdī Qulī Mīrzā why the Bābīs were building a fort and why they ate the food of others (i.e. food taken from the people of the vicinity), Bushrū'ī replied that the spoils of *jihād* were religiously lawful to the believers.[207]

It seems clear, then, that the Bābīs at Shaykh Tabarsī harboured a variety of interrelated aims. The hopelessness of their numerical position and the existing role of martyrdom as a major element in Shīʿī

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[197] *Waqāyiʿ*, p. 25; cf. Luṭf ʿAlī Mīrzā history, p. 22.
[198] *Nuqṭat al-kāf*, p. 166.
[199] *Waqāyiʿ*, pp. 28–9.
[200] Ibid., pp. 29, 44, 52; cf. idem *Majlis-i shahādat*, pp. 102, 103.
[201] *Waqāyiʿ*, p. 32; cf. idem *Majlis-i shahādat*, p. 94.
[202] *Majlis-i shahādat*, p. 102.
[203] Ibid., p. 101; idem *Waqāyiʿ*, pp. 29, 58.
[204] *Waqāyiʿ*, p. 38.
[205] Luṭf ʿAlī Mīrzā history, p. 102; on the distinction between *jihād* and *difāʿ*, see Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī *Risāla dar radd-i Bāb-i murtād*, 2nd. ed Kirmān 1385/1965–66, p.30.
[206] Luṭf ʿAlī Mīrzā history, p. 102.
[207] Ibid., p. 86.

piety led them to emphasize a desire to die as martyrs in a defensive *jihād* for the purpose of upholding the true faith; at the same time, offensive *jihād* against a government which had shown itself to be the enemy of the truth by its treatment of the Báb was a duty, and it was clearly regarded as an obligation on the part of the defenders of Shaykh Ṭabarsī to send as many as possible of the enemy 'to hell'. If the figures given in most accounts are accurate, there is no doubt that here, as elsewhere, the Bábīs proved a formidable fighting force and succeeded in despatching considerably larger numbers of the enemy than they themselves lost, often showing great brutality not only to the hostile soldiery but to civilians in the region as well.

There were two further major outbreaks of violence between Bábīs and Muslims in Iran after the suppression of the Shaykh Ṭabarsī rising in May 1849. The number of Bábīs in the country was growing rapidly; in February 1849, Prince Dolgorukov, the Russian Minister in Tehran, wrote to his Minister for Foreign Affairs: '…no matter how serious this question (the military rebellion in Khurāsān) may be, it has not preoccupied society to the same extent ever since the sectaries of the Báb have apparently had the tendency to grow in all parts of the Kingdom. The Amīr (the new Prime Minister, Amīr-i Kabīr) confessed to me that their number can be already put at 100,000; that they have already appeared in southern provinces; that they are to be found in large numbers in Tehran itself; and that, finally, their presence in Ādharbāyjān is beginning to worry him very much'.[208] This figure of 100,000 is, curiously, the same as that given by the Báb himself in the *Dalāʾil-i sabʿa* as having been converted during the first four years of his career.[209] In Dolgorukov's report of February 1849, he referred to rumours that the numbers of Bábīs in Zanjān to the west of the capital had reached 800 and that 'by their presence, they threaten to disrupt the public order'.[210] By March 1850, Dolgorukov reported that the number of Bábīs there was now 2000, and noted that 'the harmful doctrines of these dangerous sectaries find a response among the masses and do not cease to worry the government'.[211]

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[208] Dossier no. 177, Tehran, 1849; see *World Order* magazine 1:1 (1966), p. 19.
[209] *Dalāʾil-i sabʿa*, p. 64.
[210] Dossier no. 177, Tehran, 1849; *World Order* 1:1, p. 19.
[211] Ibid., p. 21.

According to ʿAbd al-Aḥad Zanjānī, the number of Bābīs in Zanjān rose to 3000 before trouble broke out.[212] Leadership of the sect there was in the hands of Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī Zanjānī, a religious firebrand who had already fallen foul of the secular authorities well before his conversion to Babism.[213] Following his adoption of the new faith, his position was investigated by the authorities at Tehran, but he seems to have been able to persuade them of his loyalty to Islam and to the state and was allowed to return to Zanjān.[214] It soon became apparent that his role as the Bāb's representative in the city threatened the existing religious and civil authorities. Shortly after his return, he assumed the functions of Imām-Jumʿa (the leader of the main Friday prayers), a position normally conferred by the ruling sovereign; the incumbent naturally protested, but was told that his right to the office 'has been superseded by the authority with which the Qāʾim Himself has invested me. I have been commanded by Him to assume that function publicly, and I cannot allow any person to trespass upon that right. If attacked, I will take steps to defend myself and to protect the lives of my companions'.[215] This behaviour led to further protests on the part of the local clergy, and Zanjānī was taken to Tehran and held there under house arrest for about one year. While in Tehran, in reply to queries from one of his followers in Zanjān, he 'enumerated a series of observances, some of which constituted a definite departure from the established traditions of Islam', maintaining that these were based on instructions of the Bāb.[216] In the autumn of 1848, however, he contrived to make his escape from the capital following the death of Muḥammad Shāh.[217]

Back in Zanjān, it was clear that he aimed at the institution of radical changes in the city. According to ʿAbd al-Aḥad Zanjānī, the poor sat on the right side of the pulpit in his mosque and the rich on the left, while he consistently addressed himself to the poor.[218] He was as impatient as ever of the existing religious and secular powers. Follow-

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[212] 'Personal Reminiscences of the Bābī Insurrection at Zanjān in 1850' trans. E. G. Brown *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 29 (1897), p. 774; Lisān al-Mulk gives the figure as 15,000: *Nāsikh al-tawārīkh*, vol. 3, p. 285.

[213] Zarandī *Dawn-breakers*, pp. 529–30; Lisān al-Mulk indicates that he introduced several innovations in religious practice into the city: *Nāsikh al-tawārīkh*, vol. 3 p. 287.

[214] Zarandī *Dawn-breakers*, pp. 531–32.

[215] Ibid., p. 533.

[216] Ibid., p. 539.

[217] Zanjānī, 'Personal Reminiscences', p. 778.

[218] Ibid., p. 779.

ing an incident in which two Bābīs stabbed a Muslim in the course of an altercation, one Bābī, named ʿAbd al-ʿAlī, was arrested and imprisoned on the orders of Amir Aslan Khān, the governor. After a month, Zanjānī wrote to the governor demanding the release of this man, but was curtly refused on the grounds that this amounted to interference in the affairs of the local administration. A second demand was also refused, whereupon Zanjāni's agent forcibly freed the Bābī prisoner, releasing at the same time other criminals held in the local gaol and threatening to kill anyone who tried to intervene. The whole episode received the approval of Zanjānī.[219] Following this incident, a decree for the death of Zanjānī and his followers was written by the local religious leaders and sent to the capital for ratification by Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh.[220] On 16 May 1850, fighting broke out between a mob organized by the clergy and a small force of Bābīs, in the course of which one of the latter was killed.[221] At some point, the clergy declared *jihad* against the Bābīs—on which ʿAbd al-Aḥad Zanjānī remarks that 'had this religious war been against such as denied their faith, and law, and scripture, there had been no harm; but this war was against those who cried like themselves: "There is no god but God, Muḥammad is the Apostle of God, ʿAlī is the Friend of God!"[222]

It certainly appears that, even before his conversion to Babism, Zanjānī had exhibited a strong puritanical streak and had applied Islamic law rigorously; in one instance, he closed a brothel used for temporary marriage (which is legal under Shiʿi law), married off most of the women in it, and sent others into service.[223] Now, he seems to have continued to take a strong line on the application of the religious law, rigorously prohibiting the sale and manufacture of wine in the region.[224] '… under his jurisdiction,' writes ʿAbd al-Aḥad, 'Zanjān was purified in every way which you can conceive from unnatural crimes and fornications, and such things as are forbidden by Religion and Law', while his followers were consistent in their observance of prayer and fasting, and would not 'tolerate any misdeed which infringed the Law'.[225] It is, therefore, difficult to assess how far Zanjānī and his followers thought

[219] Ibid., pp. 780–2; cf. Zarandī, pp. 540–1.
[220] Ibid, p. 783.
[221] Zarandī *Dawn-breakers*, pp. 542–3.
[222] Zanjānī, 'Personal Reminiscences', p. 786.
[223] Nicolas *Séyyèd Ali Mohammed*, pp. 332–3.
[224] Zanjānī, 'Personal Reminiscences', p. 786.
[225] Ibid.

of themselves as Bābīs and how far as Muslims. According to Nicolas, Zanjānī even forbade his followers to take part in the struggle at Shaykh Ṭabarsī,[226] and it may well be that he regarded those who had abrogated the Islamic legal code as infidels. Quite obviously, our interpretation of the nature and intent of the struggle at Zanjān depends very much on finding clear answers to the questions raised here.

Following the first outbreak of trouble mentioned above, the governor of Zanjān ordered the city divided into two opposing camps, an act which made questions of allegiance particularly sharp.[227] An armed struggle now began which lasted until January 1851, in the course of which the Muslim population of Zanjān was reinforced by troops from the region and, later, from the central government.[228] Various accounts indicate that Zanjānī refused to declare *jihād* against the enemy, although he clearly regarded them as unbelievers and held *jihād* as such to be possible.[229]

This seems to me to be an over-simplification. If the Bābīs were not fighting some kind of *jihād*, then their action could not be justified or rendered legal in any way and would be regarded simply as rebellion. Now, this was certainly how the defence of the Bābīs was looked on by their adversaries, but Zanjānī and his followers clearly did not see their own behaviour as insurrection, if only beause they did not regard the secular government as legal. If the opposition clergy had declared *jihād* against them, then this was further evidence of the infidelity of the former and the rightness of the Bābī cause. The evidence suggests that Zanjānī did not declare an offensive but a defensive *jihād*. Thus, according to ʿAbd al-Aḥad, he asked the Muslim clergy: '…during all this period of strife, what day hath there been, or what night, wherein I have commanded a religious war, save only that I was constantly considering how we might ward off your assaults from our wives and children, for we have no choice but to defend ourselves?'[230]

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[226] *Séyyèd Ali Mohammed*, p. 3.38.

[227] Zarandī *Dawn-breakers*, p. 543.

[228] Full accounts of the struggle can be found in: Zarandī *Dawn-breakers*, pp. 527–81; Nicolas *Séyyèd Ali Mohammed*, pp. 331–78; Lisān al-Mulk *Nāsikh al-tawārīkh*, vol. 3, pp. 285–97; Gobineau *Religions el philosophies*, pp. 21 1–29; Momen *Bābī and Bahā'ī Religions*, pp. 1 14–27.

[229] Zarandī *Dawn-breakers*, pp. 546, 551, 553; Zanjānī 'Personal Reminiscences', pp. 791, 800, 812.

[230] Zanjānī 'Personal Reminiscences', pp. 810–11.

In the absence of strictly contemporary documentation, it remains difficult to assess the motives and aims of the Bābīs at Zanjān; in general, there appear to be several factors involved, not all of them easily compatible. We can see the role played here, as at Shaykh Ṭabarsī, by religious fanaticism and a characteristically Shīʿī fascination with martyrdom. On the other hand, the speed with which conversion to Babism appears to have occurred in Zanjān, and the numbers involved, suggest that other social and economic factors were at work and that few of the combatants had a clear idea of the teachings of the Bāb or of the distinctness of Babism from Islam by 1850. Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī himself seems to have retained his Muslim identity and to have been impelled as much by puritan and egalitarian motives as abstract spiritual convictions centred in the person of the Bāb. Unlike the Bābī leaders at Bidasht and Shaykh Ṭabarsī, he had never been a Shaykhī and may have been less receptive to the metaphysical elements of the Bāb's teaching. There is evidence, however, that he may have subscribed to the belief that the Bāb was the Qāʾim and that the Day of Resurrection had appeared.[231] The use of the watchword 'O, Lord of the Age' by the Bābīs suggests that messianic enthusiasm may have figured largely in the struggle, which, in its turn, implies that many may have regarded themselves as involved in the final *jihād* against the forces of Antichrist.

The Yazd and Nayrīz upheavals of 1850, led by Sayyid Yaḥyā Dārābī Vaḥīd, although on a much smaller scale than that of Zanjān, exhibit many features similar to it.[232] Dārābī was a highly popular religious leader who had the allegiance of large numbers in both towns. He himself seems to have been preparing for a holy war and is known to have tested the swords manufactured by Āqā Muḥammad Hādī Farhādī in Qazvīn.[233] On his arrival at Nayrīz, in opposition to the orders of the local governor, Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn Khān, he made his way to the principal mosque of the city, accompanied by some nine hundred heavily armed supporters, many with swords drawn, and ascended the pulpit in order to preach to a congregation of about one thousand five

[231] Zarandī *Dawn-breakers*, p. 567.

[232] For lull accounts of these struggles, see: Zarandī *Dawn-breakers*, pp. 465–99; Muḥammad Shafīʿ Rawhānī Nayrīzī *Lamaʿāt al anwār*, vol. 1, Tehran 130 badīʿ/1973–4: Muḥammad ʿAlī Fayḍī *Nayrīz-i mushkbīz*, Tehran 129 badīʿ/1972–3, pp. 7–102; Nicolas *Séyyèd Ali Mohammed*, chapter 9; Lisān al-Mulk *Nāsikh al-tawārīkh*, vol. 3 pp. 337–42; Momen *Bābī and Bahāʾī Religions*, pp. 106–13.

[233] Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 374.

hundred.[234] There is good reason to believe that very few of Dārābī's followers knew much of the teachings of the Bāb,[235] and it seems likely that social and political motives dominated the struggle. In Yazd, for example, there had been serious civil disturbance in the town prior to Dārābī's arrival, and at least one of those who lent him his support was a known agitator,[236] In Nayrīz also, the people had already been rebelling against the governor at the time of Dārābī's appearance in the town.[237] Like Zanjānī, the latter seems to have been regarded as an independent authority over against the existing civil powers. In one instance, Hājī Sayyid Ismāʿīl, the Shaykh al-Islām of Bavānāt, ordered the arrest of a certain Mullā Bāqir, an ambassador en route from the governor of Nayrīz to Prince Fīrūz Mīrzā in Shīrāz; the unfortunate man was brought before Dārābī by the village chief of Rastāq and put to death.[238] Dārābī similarly appointed his own officers and functionaries at the fort of Khāja in which he and his followers took refuge.[239] According to Zarandī, Dārābī disclaimed any intention of waging *jihād*.[240] As in the case of Zanjānī, if we mean by this offensive *jihād*, then it may be correct; but the spirit of the defence put up against the royalist forces strongly suggests that the struggle was seen as defensive *jihād*.

In conclusion, then, we may note that in no instance do the Bābīs seem to have declared offensive *jihād* along the lines suggested in the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, probably because it was regarded as wrong to declare a holy war unless there was a reasonable chance of success—a condition clearly lacking in the case of the Bābīs. But their refusal to recognize existing ecclesiastical and secular authority, their carrying of arms in situations of considerable political instability, and their generally aggressive manner resulted in clashes between them and the civilian population which quickly escalated into full-scale struggles. Once battle was joined, religious motifs of martyrdom, defensive *jihād* and 'perfecting the proof' (i.e. demonstrating the truth of the cause in the eyes of men) took precedence over social, economic and other features. In the

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[234] See account by Sayyid Ḥusayn Nayrīzī on the wall of the Masjid-i Jāmiʿ in Nayrîz, quoted Fayḍī, *Nayrīz-i mushkbīz*, p. 94; Zarandī *Dawn-breakers*, pp. 478–9.

[235] Zarandī *Dawn-breakers*, pp. 477, 482.

[236] See Moojan Momen 'Some Problems Connected with the Yazd Episode of 1850', a paper read to the 3rd. Bahāʾī Studies Seminar, University of Lancaster 1977.

[237] Lisān al-Mulk *Nāsikh al-tawārīkh*, vol. 3, p. 338.

[238] Zarandī *Dawn-breakers*, pp. 484–5.

[239] Ibid., p. 483.

[240] Ibid., p. 469.

case of Shaykh Ṭabarsī, religious motives seem to have predominated from the beginning, whereas in the cases of Zanjān, Yazd and Nayrīz, existing urban tensions played a central role which at times obscures the religious elements of these struggles. From the point of view of both local and national government, the Bābīs were manifestly insurrectionaries bent on subverting the existing religious and social order. The role of *jihād* in these struggles is, then, obscured by a multiplicity of motives and by the inability of the Bābīs to transform merely local upheavals into a more widely-based revolutionary struggle against the forces of unbelief. The Bābī ideal *jihad*, as represented in the works of the Bāb, and the reality, as seen at Shaykh Ṭabarsī, Nayrīz and Zanjān, were certainly not commensurate, and failure, once it came, was complete and permanent.

# FROM BABISM TO BAHAʾISM: PROBLEMS OF MILITANCY, QUIETISM, AND CONFLATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF A RELIGION*

## The initial Bahāʾī reaction to Bābī militancy

In my article, 'The Bābī Concept of Holy War' (*Religion* 12, 93–129), I demonstrated a number of ways in which the essentially millenarian movement of Babism exploited existing Islamic legislation relating to the waging of religious warfare (*jihād*) together with various chiliastic motifs to justify its militant opposition to the civil and ecclesiastical status quo of nineteenth-century Iran.[1] I indicated then that my analysis of the roots of Bābī militancy might 'also provide a basis for a later discussion of the dynamics of the transformation which took place from the 1860s from Babism to Bahaʾism', and it is my intention in the present article to undertake that discussion.

Following the physical suppression of militant Babism and the violent deaths of its principal leaders (Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad Shīrāzī, the Bāb; Mullā Muḥammad Ḥusayn Bushrūʾī; Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī Bārfurūshī; Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī Zanjānī; and Sayyid Yaḥyā Dārābī)[2] by 1850, the movement went underground, to re-emerge briefly in the autumn of 1852, when an attempt was made by a group of Bābī activists on the life of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh.[3] A wave of arrests, followed by a number

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* First published in *Religion* vol. 13 (1983): 219–55.

[1] Since that article appeared, the following relevant studies have been written or published: Mangol Bayat *Mysticism and Dissent: Socioreligious Thought in Qajar Iran* (Syracuse University Press, 1982)—see ch. 4, 'The Politicization of Dissent in Shia Thought: Babism'; Abbas Amanat 'The Early Years of the Bābī Movement: Background and Development', Ph.D. dissertation, Oxford University, 1981 published as Resurrection and Renewal); Peter Smith 'Millenialism in the Bābī and Bahāʾī Religions', in Roy Wallis (ed.) *Millenialism and Charisma* (Queen's University, Belfast, 1982), pp. 231–83; Moojan Momen 'The Trial of Mullā ʿAlī Bastami: A Combined Sunni-Shīʿī Fatwa against the Bāb', *Iran* XX (1982): 113–43; Denis MacEoin 'Early Shaykhi Reactions to the Bāb and his Claims', in M. Momen (ed.) *Studies in Bābī and Bahāʾī History* vol. 1 (Los Angeles, 1983).

[2] On the Bāb, Bushrūʾī, and Bārfurūshī, see articles under these headings by D. MacEoin in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* [and elsewhere, reprinted here].

[3] On events connected with this incident, see Mullā Muḥammad Nabīl Zarandī *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabīl's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahāʾī Revelation* ed. and trans. by Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette, 1932), chapter XXVI; E. G. Browne 'The Attempt

of executions in the capital, weakened and demoralized the remaining adherents of what was now a scattered, disorganized, and virtually leaderless community. Babism as a political force was clearly spent, but the events of the past few years and, not least, the attempt on the Shāh's life, left their mark on the Iranian consciousness. Nāṣir al-Dīn and many members of his government continued to fear a renewal of Bābī plots to undermine the state. Increased European penetration and influence during the second half of the nineteenth century combined with internal instability to stimulate demands for political and social reform, and in this climate the authorities tended to think of the Bābīs as prime movers of what they saw as revolutionary activity. Such fears were bred as much by ignorance of the true numbers and circumstances of the sect as by the memory of militant action on the part of its adherents.

In reality, the Bābīs had been forced to modify their position considerably. Following the arrests of 1852, a small but relatively influential group of Bābīs from Tehran had chosen to go into voluntary exile in Baghdad, where they began to attract other members of the sect afraid to continue their activities in Iran. Baghdad and the nearby Shīʿī shrine centres of Najaf and Karbala had long served as gathering-points for Iranian exiles, and now a small community of Bābīs congregated there to take advantage of the relative freedom offered in the region. Here in Baghdad, those who remained actively committed to the sect were compelled to reappraise their long-term aims in an attempt to salvage something out of the chaos bequeathed by militant action. Central to this reappraisal was the need to establish a viable principle of leadership and authority for the group. Babism had been marked from the beginning by a rather diffuse charismatic authority vested in more than one individual, and, after the deaths of the main bearers of that authority, a period of semi-anarchy had ensued, during which competing and conflicting claims to some kind of inspiration were advanced by large numbers of individuals.[4]

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on the Shāh's Life and the Massacre of Teheran' in idem ed. and trans. *A Traveller's Narrative written to illustrate the Episode of the Bāb* (by ʿAbbās Effendi ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ), 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1891), vol. 2, pp. 323–34; H. M. Balyuzi *Bahāʾuʾllāh, the King of Glory* (Oxford, 1980), chs. 15, 17; M. Momen *The Bābī and Bahāʾī Religions, 1844-1944* (Oxford, 1981), ch. 7; Mīrzā Muḥammad Taqī Lisān al-Mulk Sipihr *Nāsikh al-tawārīkh: salāṭin-i Qājār*, 4 vols. in 2 (Tehran, 1344 Sh./1965), vol. 4, pp. 33–42.

[4] See Ḥājī Mīrzā Jānī Kāshānī, *Kitāb-i Nuqṭatuʾl-Kāf* ed. E. G. Browne (Leyden and London, 1910), pp. 252–61; E. G. Browne trans. and ed. *The New History of Mīrzā ʿAlī*

Although later Bahā'ī sources have tended to play down or distort his role, there is adequate contemporary evidence that, in the early period of the Baghdad exile, a consensus of opinion favoured the leadership of a young man widely regarded as the 'successor' (*waṣī*) of the Bāb—Mīrzā Yaḥyā Nūrī Ṣubḥ-i Azal (c. 1830–1912).[5] In contrast to his rivals in this period, who were putting forward extreme theophanic claims similar to those advanced by the Bāb himself before his death, Ṣubḥ-i Azal favoured a more routinized expression of divinely-inspired charismatic authority, and both he and his followers emphasized a conservative, retrenched Babism centred on the doctrines of the Persian *Bayān* and other later works.[6] Ṣubḥ-i Azal seems to have remained faithful to the long-term goal of overthrowing the Qājār state by subversion,[7] an aim which took less radical political form when a number of Azalī Bābīs, such as Mīrzā Āqā Khān Kirmānī, Shaykh Aḥmad Rūḥī Kirmānī, Mīrzā Jahāngīr Khān Shīrāzī, and others, became prominent in the late nineteenth-century movement for political reform in Iran.[8] Although the basic motivation for these Bābīs-cum-freethinkers seems to have been an originally religious desire to see the fall of the 'unjust' kingdom of the Qājārs and its replacement by a new order of things, the programmes they espoused and the political ideals they advocated were derived almost exclusively from European thinkers and expressed secular western views often obviously at variance with the essentially theocratic hopes of Babism.[9] In the end, Azalī Babism proved unable to develop a fresh synthesis capable of recreating the successes of the early movement, with Ṣubḥ-i Azal himself abandoning any hope of direct action in favour of withdrawal from worldly affairs.

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*Muḥammed the Báb* by Mīrzā Ḥusayn Hamadānī (Cambridge, 1893), pp. 384–95; Mīrzā Yaḥyā Ṣubḥ-i Azal *Mustayqiẓ* ([Tehran], n.d.), p. 28; (Sayyid Aḥmad Rūhī Kirmānī and Mīrzā Āqā Khān Kirmānī) *Hasht Bihisht* ([Tehran], n.d.), pp. 302–303.

[5] On whom see E. G. Browne *Traveller's Narrative*, vol. 2, pp. xv–xxvi, 349–89; idem *New History*, pp. xviii–xxiv, 374–82; Kāshānī *Nuqṭatu'l-Kāf*, pp. 238–44; Mahdī Bāmdād *Tārīkh-i rijāl-i Īrān*, 6 vols. (Tehran, 1347–1351 Sh./1968–1973), vol. 4, pp. 436–37.

[6] See D. MacEoin 'Azalī Babism' in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.

[7] This is apparent from his attitude towards the 1852 plot on Nāṣir al-Dīn's life (see Balyuzi *Bahā'u'llāh*, p. 90), his own attempt to organize an assassination of the same ruler (Shoghi Effendi *God Passes By* [Wilmette, 1944], p. 124), and the hopes of some of his associates regarding the future 'Bābī king' referred to in the Persian *Bayān* (Balyuzi *Bahā'u'llāh*, p. 158).

[8] On the role of the Azalīs in the constitutional movement, see Bayat *Mysticism and Dissent*, pp. 180–81, 182–83.

[9] The shift from religious to secular ideals was a common feature of late nineteenth century Iranian thought (see ibid., ch. 5).

In contrast to the latter's routinizing conservatism, his older half-brother, Mīrzā Ḥusayn ʿAlī Nūrī Bahāʾ Allāh (1817–1892),[10] offered a radical reinterpretation and reformation of Babism that succeeded in attracting much larger numbers, not only from the ranks of the old Bābīs, but increasingly from outside the movement. In Baghdad between 1855 and 1863, Ḥusayn ʿAlī implicitly challenged the authority of Ṣubḥ-i Azal by adopting the role of *de facto* leader of the exile group, involving himself actively in their affairs and in relations with the public, in contrast to Azal's personal policy of near-total seclusion. Born in Tehran in 1817, the son of a minister at the court of Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh, Ḥusayn ʿAlī was not a typical Bābī. Although an early convert, his connections were with court circles in the capital rather than with the religious establishment and its fringes that provided the core of the Bābī leadership in the movement's early phase. As far as can be determined, neither he nor his family had any links with the Shaykhī school, from which the majority of the first Bābīs emerged. Like many of his class in nineteenth-century Iran, however, he was deeply religious, with leanings in the direction of popular Shiʿism tinged with esotericism and Sufi mysticism,[11] rather than towards the formal religion of

[10] The only full-length biographies of Mīrzā Ḥusayn ʿAlī to date are two emphatically hagiographical works: M. A. Fayḍī *Ḥayāt-i Ḥaḍrat-i Bahāʾ Allāh* (Tehran, 1969) and the more recent study by Balyuzi referred to above (*Bahāʾuʾllāh*). Details may also be found in Shoghi Effendi *God Passes By*, pp. 89–233; Mīrzā Muḥammad Jawād Qazvīnī 'An Epitome of Bābī and Bahā'ī History to A.D. 1898' in E. G. Browne ed. *Materials for the Study of the Bābī Religion* (Cambridge, 1918), pp. 3–64; Mīrzā Ḥusayn Āvāra *al-Kawākib al-durriyya fī taʾrīkh ẓuhur al-Bābiyya wa 'l-Bahāʾiyya* 2 vols. (Cairo, 1342/1923), vol. 2; Ustād Muḥammad ʿAlī Salmānī *My Memories of Bahāʾuʾllāh* ed. and trans. Marzieh Gail (Los Angeles, 1982)—on the elimination of 'objectionable' passages from this edition by the Bahā'ī 'Universal House of Justice' and their prohibition of the publication of the Persian text, see letters in *Bahā'ī Studies Bulletin* 1 : 4 (Newcastle, March 1983), pp. 88–90; Momen *Bābī and Bahā'ī Religions* pp. 177–240; A. Bausani 'Bahāʾ Allāh' in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd. ed. More critical accounts appear in W. M. Miller *The Bahā'ī Faith: Its History and Teachings* (South Pasadena, Calif., 1974), pp. 94–137; H. Roemer *Die Bābī-Behaʾi. Die jungste mohmmedanische Sekte* (Potsdam, 1912), pp. 73–144. Two important Azali accounts of his rise to influence in Baghdad and later are Kirmānī and Kirmānī *Hasht Bihisht*, pp. 301–304; (ʿIzziyya Khānum) *Tanbiḥ al-nāʾimīn* ([Tehran], n.d.).

[11] Following the revival of the Niʿmat Allāhī order in the late eighteenth century, many members of the Iranian ruling class became devotees: see W. R. Royce 'Mīr Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh and the Niʿmat Allāhī Revival 1776–77 to 1796–97', Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1979 (U.M. 7920434), p. 173. There is no direct evidence of Ḥusayn ʿAlī's involvement with the Niʿmat Allāhī order as such, but later evidence of his connection with Sufism in some form is abundant (cf. J. R. Cole 'Babism and Naqshbandī Sufism in Iraq 1854–1856: a qaṣīdah by Mīrzā Ḥusayn ʿAlī Bahāʾuʾllāh',

the ʿulamāʾ, much of which remained inaccessible to the untrained. The Babism taught by Ḥusayn ʿAlī in the Baghdad period, as reflected in his early writings,[12] is a much watered-down, 'spiritualized' version of the later doctrines of the Bāb, with a strong emphasis on mystical and ethical themes, couched, with only a few exceptions, in an extremely simple and poetic form of Persian far removed from the obscure and convoluted style of the Bāb's writings.

There are indications that Ḥusayn ʿAlī did not at first envisage for himself any role in the Bābī community beyond that of spiritual preceptor, and, indeed, he abandoned the group at one point to embark on the life of a Sufi *darvīsh* at the Khālidiyya monastery in Sulaymāniyya, with every intention, it seems, of dissociating himself from the movement permanently.[13] Persuaded to return to Baghdad in the spring of 1856, however, he began to devote himself to the reorganization of the sect, with himself as its real head, in whom more and more authority was vested. By the early 1860s, towards the end of his stay in Baghdad, he had firmly established his position within the community and begun to

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unpublished paper presented at Bahāʾī Studies Seminar, Lancaster University, 1981, especially p. 27). On the Sufism and popular Shīʿīsm of this period, see Amanat 'Early Years', pp. 56–99.

[12] Bahāʾ Allāh's main works from the Baghdad period include the *Kitāb-i īqān* (Cairo, 1933)—trans. Ali Kuli Khan as *The Book of Assurance* (*the Book of Ighan*) (New York, n.d.) and Shoghi Effendi as *The Kitāb-i-Īqān, the Book of Certitude* (Wilmette, Ill., 1931); *Haft wādī* and *Chahār wādī*, both in Bahāʾ Allāh *Āthār-i qalam-i aʿla*, vol. 3 (Tehran, 129 *badīʿ*/1973–74), pp. 92–137, 140–57—trans. ʿAli Quli Khan and Marzieh Gail as *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys* (Wilmette, 1945); *Jawāhir al-asrār* in *Āthār*, vol. 3, pp. 4–88; *Qaṣīda ʿizz warqāʾiyya* in ibid., pp. 196–215 and in ʿAbd al-Ḥamid Ishrāq Khāvarī ed. *Māʾida-yi āsmānī*, 9 vols. (Tehran, 128–129 *badīʿ*/1972–74), vol. 4, pp. 197–209; and *Kalimāt-i maknūna* (Tehran, n.d.)—trans. Shoghi Effendi as *The Hidden Words of Bahāʾuʾllāh* (Wilmette, 1925; rev. ed. 1932). For details of the numerous other short works of this period, see ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Ishrāq Khāvarī *Ganj-i shāyagān* (Tehran, 123 *badiʿ*/1967–68), pp. 7–68 and Adib Taherzadeh *The Revelation of Bahāʾuʾllāh*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1974). See also ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Qāmūs-i Īqān* 4 vols. (Tehran, 126–127 *badiʿ*/1970–72), a commentary on the *Kitāb-i īqān.*

[13] Balyuzi *Bahāʾuʾllāh*, pp. 115–22. Bahāʾ Allāh himself writes with reference to his absence in Sulaymaniyya: 'I swear by God that in my departure there was no thought of return and in my journeying no hope of reunion' (*Kitāb-i-iqan*, p. 194; cf. Shoghi Effendi *Book of Certitude*, p. 160). According to Zarandī, he stated to one of his followers that 'but for my recognition of the fact that the blessed Cause of the Primal Point [i.e. the Bāb] was on the verge of being obliterated, and all the sacred blood poured out in the path of God would have been shed in vain, I would in no wise have consented to return to the people of the Bayān, and would have abandoned them to the worship of the idols their imaginations had fashioned' (cited Shoghi Effendi *God Passes By*, p. 126).

express his authority claims in increasingly messianic terms. Numerous passages of the Persian *Bayān* refer to the future 'divine manifestation' destined to succeed the Báb as the latter had succeeded Muḥammad, speaking of him eschatologically as 'he whom God shall make manifest' (*man yuẓhiruhu 'llāh*), and indicating that he would appear in about one to two thousand years time.[14] Although he does not appear to have made a public declaration to that effect until 1866 (while in Edirne, in Turkey), there is evidence that Ḥusayn ʿAlī already thought of himself as 'he whom God shall make manifest' before his departure from Baghdad. The appeal of a new messianic impulse encouraged a thoroughgoing reinterpretation of the Bayānic prophecies, in order to demonstrate that the Báb had, in fact, anticipated an extremely early appearance of this saviour figure,[15] and, before long, large numbers of Bábīs responded to the announcement of a new revelation. By the 1870s, Ḥusayn ʿAlī, now in exile in southern Syria (now northern Israel), had begun to effect even further-reaching changes in the character of Babism than he had ever attempted in Baghdad. His assumption of the status of a new divine manifestation and, as time passed, of God in the flesh,[16]

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[14] See Browne *Nuqṭatu'l-Kāf*, pp. xxix–xxxi; Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad Shirazi, the Báb *Bayān-i Fārsī* ([Tehran], n.d.) 2 : 16, pp. 61, 62; ibid., 2: 17, p. 71; Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir Najafī *Bahā'īyān* (Tehran, 1399/1979), pp. 287–306.

[15] See, for example, Bahā' Allāh *Lawḥ-i mubārak khiṭāb bi-Shaykh Muḥammad Mujtahid Iṣfahānī* (Cairo, 1920; reprinted Tehran, 1962), pp. 112–14—trans. Shoghi Effendi as *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* (Wilmette, 1941), pp. 151–54. As an example of later Bahā'ī apologetic on this subject, see Taherzadeh *Revelation*, vol. 1, pp. 294–314.

[16] The precise nature of Bahā' Allāh's claims is difficult to establish. The official modern Bahā'ī doctrine rejects any notion of incarnationism and stresses instead his status as a locus of divine manifestation (*maẓhar ilāhī*), comparable to a mirror with respect to the sun (see Shoghi Effendi *The World Order of Bahā'u'llāh*, rev. ed. [Wilmette, 1969], pp. 112–114). Nevertheless, it is difficult to avoid the suspicion that he himself made much more radical claims than this in parts of his later writings. The following statements are, I think, explicit enough to serve as examples: 'he who speaks in the most great prison (i.e. Acre) is the Creator of all things and the one who brought all names into being' (letter in Bahā' Allāh *Āthār-i qalam-i aʿlā*, vol. 2 [Tehran, n.d., being a repaginated reprint of a collection of writings originally preceded by the *Kitāb al-aqdas*, first printed Bombay, 1314/1896], p. 177); 'verily, I am God' (letter in Ishrāq Khāvarī *Mā'ida*, vol. 7, p. 208); 'the essence of the pre-existent (*dhāt al-qidām*) has appeared' (letter to Ḥājī Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Khalīl Qazvīnī in ibid., vol. 8, p. 113); 'he has been born who begets not nor is begotten' ('Lawḥ-i mīlād-i ism-i aʿẓam' in ibid., vol. 4, p. 344, referring to Qur'ān *sūra* 112); 'the educator of all beings and their creator has appeared in the garment of humanity, but you were not pleased with that until he was imprisoned in this prison' ('Sūrat al-ḥajj' in Bahā' Allāh *Āthār-i qalam-i aʿlā*, vol. 4 [Tehran, 133 *badīʿ*/1976–77], p. 203). See also Ishrāq Khāvarī *Mā'ida*, vol. 8, pp. 123, 155, 162; 'Lawḥ-i Jamāl' in Bahā' Allāh *Alwāḥ-i Ḥaḍrat-i Bahā' Allāh…shāmil-i…Iq-*

gave him the authority to declare the Bābī religious and legal system abrogated by the laws and ordinances of Baha'ism, and it is from this period that he and his followers began to promulgate their movement as a religion independent of Islam.

By introducing new forms of millenarianism and prophetic charisma into the movement at this critical juncture, Bahā' Allāh succeeded in avoiding the 'premature' routinization of Babism that was offered by the policies of Ṣubḥ-i Azal.[17] At the same time, the millenarianism preached in exile was of a radically different type to that which had characterized the earlier stages of Babism. In 1844/45, the first Bābīs had anticipated the imminent appearance of the Imām to lead the final uprising against injustice, only to be disappointed by the Bāb's failure to arrive in Karbala and the indefinite postponement of the day of judgement. Between 1847 and 1850, following the Bāb's announcement that he himself was the Qā'im, his followers took up arms to begin the last crusade or share in the messianic woes in the hope of hastening the final restitution of things, but again all came to nothing and the world was manifestly not redeemed.

Revolutionary millenarian movements react to such failure in a number of ways.[18] A typical response is the modification of certain doctrines, particularly those with a high specific prophetic content, partly to explain the non-advent of the millennium, partly to substitute for disappointed expectations more diffuse and flexible hopes. Although Ḥusayn ʿAlī spoke in terms of the fulfilment of the Bāb's prophecies regarding *man yuẓhiruhu 'llāh* (which provided the primary, indispensable justification for his claims addressed to the Bābīs) and referred openly to the advent of the Day of Judgement, the promised

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*tidārāt* ([Bombay], 1893; reprinted Tehran, n.d.; hereinafter referred to as *Iqtidārāt*), p. 219; 'Sūrat al-aṣḥāb' in *Āthār*, vol. 4, pp. 6, 7; letter in ibid., vol. 2, p. 194; letter in Bahā' Allāh *Alwāḥ-i mubāraka-yi Ḥaḍrat-i Bahā' Allāh…shāmil-i Ishrāqāt* (Tehran, n.d.; hereinafter referred to as *Ishrāqāt)*, p. 195. Note also headings of letters in Bahā' Allāh *Āthār-i qalam-i aʿlā*, vol. 5 (Tehran, 131 *badīʿ*/1975–76), p. 181; ibid., vol. 6 (Tehran, 132 *badīʿ*/1976–77), pp. 256–70. An important discussion with textual references, which argues against a claim to divinity, is J. R. Richards *The Religion of the Bahā'īs* (London, 1932), ch. VII.

[17] This point is discussed at length by Peter Berger in 'Motif messianique et processus social dans le Bahaisme', *Archives de Sociologie des Religions*, 4 (1957): 93–107. For wider discussions, see Peter Smith 'Motif research: Peter Berger and the Bahā'ī faith', *Religion* 8 : 2 (1978), pp. 210–234; idem, 'Bābī and Bahā'ī Millenarianism'.

[18] For examples, see Guenter Lewy *Religion and Revolution* (New York, 1974), pp. 264–74.

messianic age of past prophets,[19] he avoided any suggestion that the millennium itself was at hand. On occasion, he would make reasonably specific prophecies relating to immediate events,[20] but more generally he preferred to speak of imminent tribulations or a 'great catastrophe',[21] followed at an unspecified future date 'the most great peace' (*al-ṣulḥ al-akbar*) and a 'new world order'.[22] The Bābī dream of the immediate rule of the saints on earth was replaced by less urgent expectations capable of repeated deferment to an increasingly distant future.

Where millenarian expectancy had led to particularly violent action, and here this has met with repeated military defeat, it is common for a revolutionary movement to undergo a radical change in its attitudes to the world at large. Militancy is replaced by quietism, political radicalism gives way to acceptance of the status quo (or, at least, a willingness to put up with it), and the wish to change 'the world' is transformed into an emphasis on spiritual change within the individual. It was precisely this kind of reaction that characterized the transition from early militant Shiʾsm to the normative Imāmī position that eventually came to be identified as the Twelver sect. In the first two centuries of Islam, Shīʿī rejection of the political and religious establishment expressed itself in repeated risings against the Umāyyad and ʿAbbāsid dynasties, led by or on behalf of various claimants to the Imāmate.[23] The failure of such attempts to effect any lasting political change and the harm caused to the Shīʿī community at large both by reprisals and preventative measures

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[19] This theme is pursued in many of his writings. For examples, see Shoghi Effendi *The Advent of Divine Justice* rev. ed. (Wilmette, 1963), pp. 64–68; Bahāʾ Allāh *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahāʾuʾllāh* trans. Shoghi Effendi (London, 1949), pp. 5–17, 27–46.

[20] For examples, see Mīrzā Asad Allāh Fāḍil Māzandarānī (ed.) *Amr wa Khalq* vol. 4 (Tehran, 1975), pp. 417–60; J. E. Esslemont *Bahāʾuʾllāh and the New Era* (London, 1923), pp. 202–08.

[21] See Shoghi Effendi *Advent*, pp. 68–69; idem, *The Promised Day is Come* (Wilmette, 1961), pp. 1–3; Bahāʾ Allāh *Gleanings*, pp. 39–40, 118, 213, 215–16, 341–42.

[22] See Shoghi Effendi *World Order*, pp. 40–45, 163–69, 202–06; idem, *Promised Day*, pp. 4, 122, 127–29; Bahāʾ Allāh and ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ in Māzandarānī *Amr wa khalq*, vol. 4, pp. 460–68.

[23] Most notable are the risings of al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī in 60/680, ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr from 61/680 to 64/684, al-Mukhtār ibn Abī ʿUbayda al-Thaqafī (on behalf of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya) from 66/686 to 67/687, Zayd ibn Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn in 122/740, his son Yaḥyā from 122/740 to 125/743, and Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya with his brother Ibrāhīm in 145/762 and 146/763. For details, see S. H. M. Jafri *The Origins and Early Development of Shiʾa Islam* (London and New York, 1979), pp. 174–221, 198–99, 228–29, 265–67, 275–76; J. Wellhausen *Die religios-politischen Oppositionsparteien im alten Islam* (Berlin, 1901).

forced a central party within the Shīʿa to preach a quietist ethic.[24] The 'legitimist' Imāms after Ḥusayn emphasized the virtues of obedience to established authority and disclaimed for themselves any desire to obtain the outward leadership of the Islamic community, relinquishing at the same time the right to lead *jihād* or to organize an uprising in order to seize power. This did not, of course, amount to a wholesale abdication of the right of the Imām to rule. It was merely a renunciation of immediate military action while awaiting the time set by God for the appearance of an Imām as *al-qāʾim bi 'l-sayf* (the one rising up with the sword), who would initiate the final uprising against the rule of those who had usurped his authority. It was this latter justification that the Bāb and his followers had invoked in their call to arms against the Qājār state.

Bābī militancy having failed, Ḥusayn ʿAlī chose to revert to the quietist stance of orthodox Shīʿīsm. It was clearly essential for the survival of the movement that both its leadership and rank and file be seen to renounce the use of force as a means towards religio-political change, and, indeed, to lay claim to a reformist rather than a revolutionist attitude towards the existing order. Although simple pragmatism may have provided the initial impulse in a quietist direction, the shift in policy had deeper roots and proved to be both permanent and far-reaching in its effects. A semi-pacifist, politically acquiescent posture was consonant with and, indeed, integral to the deradicalized and increasingly universalist form of Babism being taught by Ḥusayn ʿAlī during the 1860s, and it seems to have owed its origin as much to factors in his personal background and inclinations as to immediate pressures on the Baghdad community of which he was head.

Ḥusayn ʿAlī appears to have been ill at ease with the militant side of Islam from an early age. He himself writes that, as a child, he read an account by Mullā Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī (d. 1111/1700) of the execution of the Jews of Banū Qurayẓa on the instructions of the prophet Muḥammad;[25] the effect of this was to plunge him into a state of acute depression for some time, despite his recognition that 'what occurred

[24] See D. M. MacEoin 'Aspects of Militancy and Quietism in Imāmi Shʾism', paper delivered to the annual conference of the British Society for Middle East Studies, Lancaster, 1982.

[25] On relations between Muḥammad and the Jewish clans of Medina in general, see W. M. Watt *Muḥammad at Medina* (Oxford, 1956), chapter VI, and on the execution of the Banū Qurayẓa, see ibid., pp. 214–16.

had been the decree of God'.[26] How far this attitude influenced the nature and extent of his involvement with Babism during its militant phase, it is a little difficult to tell. Bahā'ī sources invariably try to enhance his role at this period, implying or stating that he was a leading force behind many crucial events. But contemporary documents provide no evidence for this, and it is, indeed, unlikely that a non-cleric should at this point have had much say in matters of doctrine or general policy. There is evidence, albeit of a confused nature, that, in 1848, Ḥusayn ʿAlī sought to join the Bābī defenders at the shrine of Shaykh Ṭabarsī,[27] and it is quite likely that he saw that episode—in distinction to those at Nayrīz and Zanjān—as an attempt to re-enact the sufferings of Karbala, a view which, as I have indicated in my previous article (pp. 116–117), was held by most of those at the fort.

Whatever his attitude towards the exploits of the Bābīs at the Shaykh Ṭabarsī shrine, it is evident that Ḥusayn ʿAlī was generally unhappy about the course of events after 1848 and that he viewed the uprisings in Nayrīz and Zanjān as contrary to the divine purpose. Writing in later years, he expresses his disapproval of Bābī militancy in explicit and unequivocal terms: 'the excesses of some at the beginning of the cause were like devastating, ruinous winds that cast down the saplings of trust and hope. On account of them, the state became opposed and the people disturbed, for they were ignorant of the divine will and decrees, and acted according to their own desires'.[28] In a letter written in Acre about 1890, he contrasts the violence of early Babism with the reformation instituted by him in Baghdad: 'All know that, previously, in every year there was strife and fighting: how many souls were slain on both sides! In one year at Ṭabarī (i.e. Shaykh Ṭabarsī), in the next at Zanjān, in the next at Nayrīz. After this wronged one went to Arab Iraq by permission of the king (i.e. Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh), we forbade all to engage in sedition or strife'.[29] Similarly, in a letter addressed to the

[26] Passage in Ishrāq Khāvarī *Mā'ida*, vol. 7, p. 136; cf. Bahā' Allāh *Ishrāqāt*, p. 34.

[27] Zarandī writes that he visited the fort shortly after Bushrū'ī's arrival there in October 1848, approved of the arrangements that had been made, returned to his home in Tehran, and tried without success to go back to Shaykh Ṭabarsī in December, only to be arrested en route at Āmul (*Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 347–49, 368–76). ʿAbd al-Bahā', however, writes only of the second expedition and the arrest at Āmul, and indicates that this took place in September 1848, thereby seeming to rule out an earlier visit (letter in Ishrāq Khāvarī *Mā'ida*, vol. 5, pp. 169–171).

[28] Letter to Zayn al-Muqarribīn in ibid., vol. 8, p. 46.

[29] Letter in *Ishrāqāt*, pp. 44–45.

French diplomat, Comte de Gobineau, during the early Acre period (about 1869), he draws much the same comparison: 'In the sixteen years since my arrival in Baghdad until now, no offense has been committed by anyone. Your excellency will have heard that, before those sixteen years, this sect did not endure oppression, but took revenge. I forbade all (to do so), so that they were put to death in every land, yet opposed no-one'.[30]

Initially, however, Ḥusayn ʿAlī, as the emerging centre of authority for the small Bābī community of Baghdad, was concerned less with the possibility of a recrudescence of the large-scale militancy that had characterized the period between 1848 and 1850, and more with outbreaks of violence and anti-social behaviour on a restricted level. On more than one occasion, trouble erupted between members of the Baghdad exile community and the population at large,[31] leading in at least one case to the deaths of Muslim opponents. According to his own testimony, while in prison in Tehran in 1852 following the attempt on the life of the Shāh, Ḥusayn ʿAlī had meditated on the causes of that event and determined to 'undertake, with the utmost vigour, the task of regenerating this people'.[32] It may not be entirely irrelevant to remember in this connection Nūrī's extremely close family connections with the Shāh's court.[33]

In condemning the behaviour of the Bābīs in Baghdad (and, indeed, in Iran before that), Ḥusayn ʿAlī had recourse to the classical Islamic strictures against *fasad* (corruption) and *fitna* (mischief or sedition),[34] terms which he uses to denote any behaviour likely to disturb the established order of society or to cause conflict with the state. In his well-known letter to Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh, written towards the end of

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[30] Letter in Gobineau Collection, Bibliotheque Nationale et Universitaire de Strasbourg: text and translation by D. MacEoin in *Bahāʾī Studies Bulletin* 1: 4 (Newcastle, March, 1983), pp. 46, 50.

[31] For examples, see Balyuzi *Bahāʾuʾllāh*, pp. 125, 128, 135–36; Shoghi Effendi *God Passes By*, p. 125.

[32] *Lawḥ-i…Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī* p. 16; trans. Shoghi Effendi *Son of the Wolf*, p. 21.

[33] On these connections, see Balyuzi *Bahāʾuʾllāh*, ch. 2.

[34] On these and related terms, see Bernard Lewis 'Islamic Concepts of Revolution' in P. J. Vatikiotis (ed.) *Revolution in the Middle East* (London, 1972), pp. 30–40; L. Gardet 'Fitna' in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* 2nd. ed.; A.J. Wensinck *A Handbook of Early Muḥammadan Tradition* reprinted (Leyden, 1971), under 'Fitna'; Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī *al-Ṣaḥīḥ* (Istanbul, 1315/1897–98; reprinted 1401/1981), vol. 8, 'Kitāb-al fitan', pp. 86–104.

his stay in Edirne (1863–1868), he states that 'in every land where a number of (the adherents of this sect (*īn ṭā'ifa*) resided, because of the injustice of some governors, the fires of strife and conflict were ignited. But after I arrived in Iraq, I forbade everyone to engage in corruption or contention'.[35] Later in the same letter, he insists that, while in Istanbul in 1863, 'I had no thought of (engaging in) corruption, nor did I at any time meet with the people of corruption'[36]—probably a reference to the reformers then resident at the Ottoman capital. In the *Lawḥ-i sirāj*, also written in Edirne, he writes: 'Corruption has never been and is not approved of; what happened previously was without the permission of God',[37] while, in the *Sūrat al-bayān*, written about the same time, he instructs his followers to 'avoid those affairs which lead to sedition'.[38]

Ḥusayn ʿAlī did not, however, restrict himself to mere condemnation of sedition, but went beyond that to enjoin on his followers absolute obedience to established authority, ideally vested in the institution of monarchy.[39] In a letter to Ḥājj Mīrzā Ismāʿīl Dhabīḥ Kāshānī, he writes: 'it is not permissible to speak concerning the affairs of the world or whatever is connected with it or with its outward leaders. God has given the outward kingdom to the monarchs: it is not permissible for anyone to commit an act contrary to the opinion of the heads of state'.[40] This same theme is pursued in his long letter to the Iranian cleric, Āqā Najafī: 'Every nation must have a high regard for the position of its sovereign, must be submissive unto him, must carry out his behests, and hold fast his authority. The sovereigns of the earth have been and are the manifestations of the power, the grandeur and the majesty of God'.[41] We are, quite clearly, moving very far away from the hopes and methods of early Babism. And, indeed, it is obvious that Ḥusayn ʿAlī went beyond even the tradition of Shīʿī quietism in arguing, not that

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[35] Letter to Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh ('Lawḥ-i Sulṭān') in *Kitāb-i mubīn* ([Bombay], 1308/1890–91), p. 98.

[36] Ibid., p. 102.

[37] 'Lawḥ-i sirāj' in Ishrāq Khāvarī *Mā'ida*, vol. 7, p. 80.

[38] 'Sūrat al-Bayān' in *Āthār*, vol. 4, p. 119.

[39] On this topic generally, see MacEoin 'Religious Heterodoxy in Nineteenth Century Iranian Politics'. On Bahā' Allāh's view of monarchy, see Shoghi Effendi *Promised Day*, pp. 73–76.

[40] 'Lawḥ-i Dhabīḥ' in *Iqtidārāt*, p. 324; cf. the rather free translation of Shoghi Effendi *in Gleanings*, p. 240.

[41] *Lawḥ-i…Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī*, p. 66; trans. Shoghi Effendi *Son of the Wolf*, p. 89.

secular rulers, though usurpers of true authority, had to be tolerated, but that God Himself had given the government of the earth into their hands.

Ḥusayn ʿAlī's insistence on quietism was underpinned by a renewed emphasis on the sacred qualities of martyrdom (*shahāda*). For the Shīʿa, *shahāda* had long been elevated to the rank of a primary religious ideal, and the figure of the martyr loomed large in Shīʿī hagiography as the supreme embodiment of faith. The early Bābīs, especially those at Shaykh Ṭabarsī, had drawn extensively on martyrdom motifs, identifying their sufferings with those of the Shīʿī Imāms and their companions. But the Bābī leaders had not been committed to an exclusive policy of passive self-sacrifice: Bushrūʾī, for example, had expressed a readiness to spread the truth by means of debate, the sword, or martyrdom,[42] and had promised his followers 'either victory or martyrdom'.[43] Bahāʾ Allāh, on the other hand, extolled martyrdom as a positive alternative to militant action. In a passage quoted from an earlier work in his letter to Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh, he writes: '*Fasad* has never been nor is it now loved by God; what was committed before this by a number of ignorant men (probably a reference to the attempt on the Shāh's life in 1852) was never approved of. In this day, it is better for you if you are killed in His good-pleasure than that you should kill'.[44] It is, he says, better to die a martyr than to expire of illness on one's bed,[45] and, in numerous passages, he extols the sacrifices of those who have given their lives in the path of God.[46] Several sections of his Arabic *Kalimāt maknūna*, written in Baghdad about 1858, elaborate on this theme: 'O Son of Being! Seek a martyr's death in My path, content with My pleasure and thankful for that which I ordain, that thou mayest repose with Me beneath the canopy of majesty behind the tabernacle of glory;[47]

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[42] MacEoin 'Bābī Concept of Holy War', p. 116.

[43] Ibid., p. 117.

[44] *Kitāb-i mubīn*, p. 101.

[45] Letter to Ḥājī Āqā Bāba in *Āthār*, vol. 5, p. 131.

[46] See, for example, 'al-Lawḥ al-aqdas' in *Kitāb-i mubīn*, p. 172 (trans. Ḥabīb Taherzadeh *Tablets of Bahāʾuʾllāh revealed after the Kitāb-i-Aqdas* (Haifa, 1978), p. 17); 'Lawḥ al-burhān' in Bahāʾ Allāh *Majmūʿa-yi alwāḥ-i mubāraka* (Cairo, 1920), pp. 57–59 (trans. Taherzadeh *Tablets*, pp. 209–10—using existing translation by Shoghi Effendi); *Lawḥ-i…Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī*, pp. 52–57 (trans. Shoghi Effendi *Son of the Wolf*, pp. 72–77); *Īqān*, pp. 174–77, 182–84 (trans. Shoghi Effendi *Book of Certitude*, pp. 143–46, 150–51).

[47] *Kalimāt-i maknūna*, Arabic section, no. 45, p. 14 (trans. Shoghi Effendi *Hidden Words*, p. 14.

'O Son of Man! By My beauty! To tinge thy hair with thy blood is greater in My sight than the creation of the universe and the light of both worlds. Strive then to attain this, O servant!'[48]

As time passed, however, he became concerned to replace the extreme Shī'ī obsession with *shahāda* for its own sake with a more constructive attitude. Martyrdom, he says, 'is a great matter, but it is as precious as red sulphur (*kibrīt-i aḥmar*) and more rare: it has not been, nor is it, the lot of everyone'.[49] Following the martyrdom of his emissary to Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh, Mīrzā Badī' Khurāsānī,[50] in 1869, Ḥusayn 'Alī cautioned the use of wisdom (*ḥikma*) in the propagation of the Bahā'ī message.[51] An element of reservation creeps into his writings on the subject: 'Although they (certain unnamed believers) have been martyred in the path of God, and although their martyrdom is acceptable, nevertheless, they exceeded the bounds of wisdom somewhat'.[52] In Bahā' Allāh's writings, *ḥikma* seems to operate as a codeword for *taqiyya*, the concealment of faith in times of danger permitted by Shī'ī law.[53] He writes, for example, that 'it is not permitted for anyone to confess to this cause before the faces of the unbelievers and opponents. He must conceal the beauty of the cause, lest the eyes of the untrustworthy fall on him'.[54] He commands his followers not to seek martyrdom,[55] and in one place even writes that it has actually been forbidden to give up one's life in this way.[56] Instead, he says, individuals are to dedicate their lives to faith in God and the task of spreading His word.[57] 'Martyrdom,' he says, 'is not

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[48] *Kalimāt-i maknūna*, Arabic section, no. 47, pp. 14–15 (trans. Shoghi Effendi *Hidden Words*, pp. 14–15). See also nos. 46; 48; 49; 50; 51; 71, pp. 14, 15–16, 23 (trans. pp. 14–15, 21).

[49] Letter in Ishrāq Khāvarī *Mā'ida*, vol. 4, p. 348.

[50] On this incident, see Balyuzi *Bahā'u'llāh*, ch. 33.

[51] See letter in Ishrāq Khāvarī *Mā'ida*, vol. 1, p. 69; letter in ibid., vol. 8, p. 98.

[52] Letter to Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Afnān, in ibid., vol. 8, p. 129.

[53] See Mīrzā Asad Allāh Fāḍil Māzandarānī *Asrār al-Āthār*, vol. 2 (Tehran, 124 *badī'*/1968–69), pp. 169–172: 'in the writings of Bahā' Allāh, instead of *taqiyya, ḥikma*... is repeatedly mentioned and stressed'. Bahā' Allāh's attitude is contradicted by the later Bahā'ī view, developed by Shoghi Effendi, that *taqiyya* is prohibited (see 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Ishrāq Khāvarī ed. *Ganjīna-yi ḥudūd wa aḥkām* 3rd. ed. [Tehran, 128 *badī'*/1972–73], pp. 456–59). Modern Bahā'ī practice in Communist and Islamic countries, however, generally corresponds to the earlier ruling. A critical account of the Bahā'ī use of *taqiyya* is given by S. G. Wilson in *Baha'ism and its Claims* (New York, 1915), pp. 197–205.

[54] Bahā' Allāh, quoted Māzandarānī *Asrār*, vol. 2, p. 171.

[55] Letter to Jamāl-i Burūjirdī in Ishrāq Khāvarī *Mā'ida*, vol. 4, p. 213.

[56] Letter to Ibn Aṣdaq in ibid., pp. 123–24.

[57] Ibid., p. 124.

limited to self-sacrifice and the shedding of one's blood, for a man may be accounted in the book of the King of Names as a martyr, though he be still alive;'[58] or, again, 'whoso dies believing confidently in God, his Lord, and knowing his own self, and turning towards Him, he has indeed died a martyr'.[59] If a choice has to be made between dying as a martyr and mentioning the truth 'with wisdom and utterance', the second is to be preferred.[60]

Nevertheless, it is evident that Ḥusayn ʿAlī did not at first envisage any very radical departure from lslamic or Bābī norms, merely to effect a practical reformation within the Bābī community by insisting on the illegitimacy of insurrection.[61] In 1873, some five years after his arrival in Acre, however, he began the task of replacing the Bābī *sharīʿa* or holy law with a new Bahāʾī code contained in the *Kitāb al-aqdas* and subsequent writings. Whereas the *sharīʿa* devised by the Bāb in the *Bayān* had been little more than an at times eccentric reworking of the Islamic system, Ḥusayn ʿAlī, while retaining numerous Islamic and Bābī elements and preserving their basic outlook, went much further in his break with tradition. Already strongly influenced by Christian ideas from an early period, and having been in contact with European missionaries in Edirne,[62] he seems to have come increasingly under the spell of western concepts then current in the Ottoman empire. His later writings, particularly those composed in Acre, show a growing concern with themes such as constitutional government, world peace, disarmament, collective security, a world legislature, an international language and script, free association between members of different religions and races, and so on—ideas which he grafted rather awkwardly

[58] Letters to Ibn Aṣdaq in ibid., p. 213.
[59] Letter in ibid., p. 124.
[60] Letter in ibid., vol. 1, p. 69.
[61] This would seem to be the essential thrust of his condemnation of the use of the sword towards the end of the Baghdad period: see Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahāʾuʾllāh*, vol. 1, p. 278.
[62] Although it is difficult to trace the origins of this Christian influence, it can be seen very clearly in the copious use of Biblical quotations in writings of the Baghdad period, such as the *Jawāhir al-asrār* (see note 12) and *Kitāb-i īqān*. There is evidence of frequent contact between the Bābī exile community and Christian missionaries in Edirne and Palestine (see Momen, *Bābī and Bahāʾī Religions*, pp. 187–97, 205–07, 209–19). Ḥusayn ʿAlī's son, ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ, is described by one missionary as having 'a minute and accurate knowledge of the Old and New Testaments' (ibid., p. 211). [For more on Bābī and Bahāʾī readings of the Bible, see Stephen Lambden, 'Some Aspects of Isrāʾīliyyāt and the emergence of the Bābī-Bahāʾī Phenomenon and the Islamo-Biblical Tradition', 2002, unpublished PhD, University of Newcastle upon Tyne'.

onto existing Islamic theories, in common with a number of reformers of his period.[63]

Under influences such as these, Ḥusayn ʿAlī was unable to retain, even in a modified form, many of the harsher Bābī ordinances, including the law of holy war. In several short works written after the *Kitāb al-aqdas*, he stresses the significance of his abrogation of *jihād* and related regulations, which he holds to be ethically inappropriate to the new religion he was now preaching. Thus, for example, he writes in the *Lawḥ-i bishārāt*: 'O people of the world! The first glad tidings which has been granted in the Mother Book in this most great revelation for all the peoples of the earth is the abolition of the decree of holy war from the book'.[64] In this and other works, he specifically mentions the abrogation of holy war, the destruction of books, the ban on reading certain books, the confiscation of property, the shunning of non-believers, and the extermination of their communities.[65]

As a result of these prohibitions, Ḥusayn ʿAlī claimed to have transformed the war-like Bābīs into a peace-loving, pacifist community. 'Praise be to God,' he writes, 'for fifty years we have forbidden men to engage in strife, in mischief, or in fighting, and, by the grace of God and

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[63] On these and related topics, see Bahāʾ Allāh 'Lawḥ-i bishārāt' in *Majmūʿa*, pp. 116–124 (trans. Taherzadeh *Tablets*, pp. 21–29); idem, 'Lawḥ-i tarāzāt' in *Ishrāqāt*, pp. 147–60 (trans. Taherzadeh *Tablets*, pp. 33–44); idem, 'Lawḥ-i tajallīyāt' in *Ishrāqāt*, pp. 198–205 (trans. Taherzadeh *Tablets*, pp. 47–54); idem, *Lawḥ-i Maqṣūd* (Cairo, 1339/1920; trans. Taherzadeh *Tablets*, pp. 159–78). The combination of western secular ideas with Islamic perspectives and language in the thought of late nineteenth-century Iranian reformers is commented on by Bayat in *Mysticism and Dissent*, p. 133. The most basic problem in the Bahāʾī case is the failure to realize the possible tensions between western liberalism on the one hand and the insistence on the absolute, divine authority of the prophet and his successors on the other. Smith has noted the effects of this tension among early western Bahāʾīs (see 'American Bahāʾī Community', pp. 179–94). The problem remains critical, if often unsuspected, in the modern western Bahāʾī community.

[64] 'Lawḥ-i bishārāt' in *Majmūʿa*, pp. 116–17 (cf. trans. by Taherzadeh *Tablets*, p. 21). See also 'Lawḥ-i sirāj' in Ishrāq Khāvarī *Māʾida*, vol. 7, p. 79; '…this servant has abrogated the decree of killing, which had become well known among this sect'); letter to Mīrzā ʿAlī Ashraf Lāhijānī ʿAndalib in *Iqtidārāt*, p. 28; 'this revelation is that of the most great mercy and the mightiest grace, in that the decree of *jihād* has been wiped out from the book and forbidden, and association with all religions in a spirit of love and fellowship has been made obligatory'; 'Sūrat al-haykal' in *Kitāb-i mubīn*, p. 25; *Ishrāqāt*, pp. 177; *Āthār*, vol. 2, pp. 15, 109; ibid., vol. 4, p. 218.

[65] See 'Lawḥ-i bishārāt' in *Majmūʿa*, pp. 123–24 (trans. Taherzadeh *Tablets*, p. 28); letter in Mīrzā Asad Allāh Fāḍil Māzandarānī (ed.) *Amr wa khalq*, vol. 3 (Tehran, 128 *badīʿ*/1971–72), p. 221; 'Lawḥ-i dunyā' in *Majmūʿa*, pp. 294–95 (trans. Taherzadeh *Tablets*, p. 91).

His mercy, this sect has turned from arms to peace-making'.[66] Again, he says, 'by the aid of God, the sharp swords of the Bābī sect have been put back within their sheaths through goodly words and virtuous deeds'.[67] In place of *jihād*, non-violent proselytizing (*tablīgh*) was to be used to spread Baha'ism, this being interpreted as the true *jihād:* 'O peoples of the earth! Hasten to that in which the good-pleasure of God lies, and strive in the true war (*jāhidū ḥaqq al-jihād*) in order to manifest His firm and mighty cause. We have decreed that *jihād* in the path of God be fought with the armies of wisdom and utterance, with goodly deeds and actions'.[68] Bahāʾ Allāh seized here on an existing theme in much later Islamic, particularly Sufi, literature—that of a stress on the 'greater *jihād*' against the self as superior to the 'lesser *jihād*' against unbelievers, especially insofar as proselytizing was dependent on the acquisition of moral qualities and the exercise of spiritual influence. Thus, Ḥusayn ʿAlī's son and successor ʿAbbās Effendi ʿAbd al-Bahā'[69] later writes that 'the cause of God in the Bahāʾī era is pure spirituality and has no connection whatever with the physical world. It is neither war nor conflict, neither disputation nor punishment. It does not involve struggling with the nations, now war with different peoples and tribes. Its army is the love of God, and its enjoyment the wine of the knowledge of God. Its warfare is the explication of the truth, and its *jihād* is with the evil-natured soul that impels to wrong-doing (*nafs-i ammāra*)'.[70]

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[66] Letter in *Ishrāqāt*, p. 12; cf. ibid., pp. 34, 44. At the same time, he expressed reservations about continuing tendencies towards *fasad* within the Bahāʾī community: 'I am astonished that some of the friends have regarded and still regard *fasad* as probity, despite the fact that, day and night, they have been forbidden (to engage in) *fasad*, disputation, or contention' (letter to Samandar in *Majmūʿa yi alwāḥ-i mubāraka-yi Ḥaḍrat-i Bahāʾ Allāh* [Tehran, 132 *badīʿ*/1976–77, offset from ms. in hand of ʿAlī Ashraf Lāhijānī], p. 73.

[67] 'Lawḥ-i dunyā' in *Majmūʿa*, p. 287.

[68] *Lawḥ-i…Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī*, p. 18 (see also trans. by Shoghi Effendi, *Son of the Wolf*, p. 24); cf. 'Sūrat al-aṣḥāb' in *Āthār*, vol. 4, p. 21; letter in ibid., vol. 5, p. 9. On the use of 'wisdom', see idem, 'Lawḥ-i Sulṭān' in *Kitāb-i mubīn*, pp. 99–101 (quoting a passage from an unspecified earlier text); letter in ibid., p. 298; letter in Ishrāq Khāvarī *Māʾida*, vol. 4, pp. 351–53; letter to ʿAlī Ashraf Lāhijānii in *Āthār*, vol. 2, p. 26.

[69] On whom see A. Bausani and D. MacEoin 'ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ in *Encyclopaedia Iranica.*

[70] *Makātib ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ*, vol. 2 (Cairo, 1330/1912), p. 206. The use of military metaphors such as 'crusade', 'campaign', 'army', 'vanguard', 'warriors', and 'cohorts' is common in the writing of ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ and his successor, Shoghi Effendi. For examples, see ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ, *Makātīb ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ*, vol. 1, (Cairo, 1328/1918; reprinted with index, Tehran, n.d.), pp. 263; ibid., vol. 2, pp. 243, 262; idem, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*

ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ stressed even more than did his father the contrast between the Bābī and Bahāʾī communities and their teachings. In one passage, having referred to the Bahāʾī obligation to associate with all men in a spirit of love, he goes on to say that 'this is one of the religious duties of the Bahāʾī community, not of the Bayānīs (i.e. Bābīs). The aim of the latter is the opposite of this. For the Bahāʾīs have as their sacred book the *Kitāb-i aqdas* (sic), which commands us thus, whereas the book of laws of the Bayānīs is the *Bayān*, which is a direct contrast to the *Kitāb-i aqdas* in these matters. The Bahāʾīs, however, regard the *Kitāb-i aqdas* as abrogating the *Bayān*, and say that in the Qurʾān and the *Bayān* there is the decree of opposing other religions, whereas the *Kitāb-i aqdas* abrogates all these laws'.[71] In a letter apparently addressed to the Bahāʾīs of either Baghdad or Shīrāz *(madīnat Allāh)*, he puts forward the view that, in every religious dispensation, a particular teaching was given special emphasis. Thus, in the time of Moses, obedience and submission to God were stressed; in the days of Jesus, moral behaviour, friendship, harmony, and turning the other cheek; and, in the dispensation of Muḥammad, the smashing of idols and the prohibition of the worship of false gods. In the days of the Bāb, he goes on, 'the decree of the *Bayān* was the striking of necks, the burning of books and papers, the destruction of shrines, and the universal slaughter of all save those who believed and were faithful'. By way of contrast, he says, the emphasis in the Bahāʾī dispensation is upon compassion, mercy, association with all peoples, trustworthiness towards all men, and the unification of mankind.[72]

The continued existence of the Azalī sect of Babism made the Bahāʾīs all the more eager to dissociate themselves from their Bābī origins. Thus, in his letter to the Central Organization for a Durable Peace at the Hague, ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ writes that 'in Iran at present there is a sect made up of a few individuals who are called "Bābīs"; they claim allegiance to the Bāb, but are utterly uninformed of him. They possess secret teachings which are utterly opposed to those of Bahāʾuʾllāh (sic). Now, in Iran, the people know this, but, when they come to Europe,

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(Wilmette, 1959), pp. 11, 17, 37; idem, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha* trans. Marzieh Gail (Haifa, 1978), pp. 260, 264; Shoghi Effendi *Messages to the Bahāʾī World 1950–1957* (Wilmette, 1958), pp. 37–38, 44, 101- 102; idem, *Citadel of Faith: Messages to America, 1947–1957* (Wilmette, 1965), pp. 117, 120, 149.

[71] Passage in Ishrāq Khāvarī *Ganjīna*, pp. 271–72.

[72] Letter in *Makātīb*, vol. 2, p. 266.

they conceal their own teachings and utter the teachings of Bahāʾuʾllāh; once they know that his teachings are effective, they make them known in their name. But their hidden teachings are taken from the book of the *Bayān*, which is by the Bāb. When you obtain the translation of the *Bayān* which has been made in Iran,[73] you will see the true fact that the teachings of Bahāʾuʾllāh are completely at odds with those of this sect'.[74]

ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ also took pains to re-establish the chronology of the Bahāʾī move towards pacifism and universalism, and to maintain that Bahāʾ Allāh had taught these ideals from a date preceding even the inception of the Bahāʾī movement as such. Thus, for example, in a letter written in 1911 to Albert Smiley, founder-president of the Mohonk Lake Conference on Peace and Arbitration, he states that 'Bahāʾ Allāh founded the concept of international peace in Iran sixty years ago, that is, in the year 1851, and at this period he distributed many letters on this subject, initially in Iran and afterwards in other places'.[75] Leaving aside the point that the earliest recorded work of Bahāʾ Allāh dates from 1853, it is worth noting that his early writings, such as the *Qaṣīda ʿizz warqāʾiyya, Mathnawī mubārak, Haft wādī, Chahār wādī, Jawāhir al-asrār*,[76] *Kalimāt maknūna*,[77] and *Kitāb-i īqān*,[78] are concerned exclusively with mystical, ethical, and theological subjects and make no reference to this topic. The letter continues with the curious statement that 'this went on until the *Kitāb-i aqdas* (sic) was revealed nearly fifty years ago (i.e. in 1861)', although ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ would

[73] No such translation is known to have existed, unless the reference is to Nicolas' French version. ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ at the same time forbade the Iranian Bahāʾīs to publish the text of the *Bayān* until the laws of the *Aqdas* had been promulgated, in case it caused confusion (passage in Ishrāq Khāvarī *Māʾida*, vol. 2, pp. 16–17). As will be noted later, however, the subsequent conflation of Babism with Baha'ism has meant that the integral text of the *Bayān* is likely to cause embarrassment to modern Bahāʾīs, with the result that they have instead published short selected passages, from which ritual and legislative matter has been excluded.

[74] *Lawḥ-i Lāha* (n.p. [Tehran?], pp. 39–41; trans. as 'Tablet to the Hague' in Bahāʾ Allāh and ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ *Bahaʾi Revelation* rev. ed. (London, 1970), p. 217 (also published separately, London, n.d., p. 10).

[75] Letter in *Makātīb*, vol. 2, p. 228 (also printed in the Persian section of *Star of the West* 2 : 10 September, 1911], pp. 3–4.

[76] All these are published in *Āthār*, vol. 3: see note 12.

[77] See note 12. An attractive illuminated edition of this work was published several years ago in Frankfurt, Germany (n.d.).

[78] See note 12.

certainly have known that the book in question was written some ten or more years later.

An absolute distinction between Babism and Baha'ism is made by Sayyid Mahdī Gulpāygānī, a nephew of the well-known Bahāʾī apologist, Mīrzā Abu 'l-Faḍl Gulpāygānī, in the section written by him of the *Kashf al-ghiṭāʾ ʿan ḥiyal al-aʿdāʾ*, an important Bahāʾī controversial work devoted to the views of the English scholar E. G. Browne. Stating that 'Bābīyya' and 'Bahāʾīyya' are two distinct religions, he goes on to say that 'the Bahāʾī *sharīʿa* is composed of laws, ordinances, decrees, customs, teachings, and ethical views which have been written down in the *Kitāb-i aqdas*. The legislator (*shāriʿ*) and founder of this manifest religion is…Bahāʾ Allāh. The Bābī beliefs are taken from the book of the *Bayān*, and the commandments, prohibitions, laws, orders, and decrees written in it. Their establisher is the Bāb. Both of these groups are as different from one another in their basic principles (*uṣūl*) and secondary ordinances (*furūʿ*) as the Gospel from the Torah, or the Kaʿba from the idol-temple at Sumnath. The basis of the religion of the *Bayān*, in which the Azalīs, the cronies of Browne, believe, is the effacement and destruction of all books not written on the Bābī faith, the demolition and ruination of all shrines, temples, holy places, and resting-places, the slaying of men, the legalization of shunning and unchastity, and, in fine, the wiping out of all who do not believe in the religion of the *Bayān*, and the obliteration of all traces of them.'[79]

Abu 'l-Faḍl Gulpāygānī himself makes a similar statement in his *Al-ḥujjaj al-bahiyya:* 'The unseemly actions of the Bābīs cannot be denied or excused, but to arrest Bahāʾīs for them is oppression, for these unfortunates have no connection with the Bābīs, who took up arms, nor are they of the same religion or creed'.[80] Even in later Bahāʾī publications, exaggerated statements about Bābī doctrine can occasionally be found, although, as we shall see, they have, for the most part, been ousted by opinions just as exaggerated in the opposite sense. Thus, it is surprising to find a well-informed Bahāʾī writer like ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Ishrāq Khāvarī stating that 'the decree of *jihād* with the unbelievers, and insistence on treating them harshly, was revealed repeatedly, time and again, by the

[79] Mīrzā Abu 'l-Faḍl Gulpāygānī and Sayyid Mahdī Gulpāygānī *Kashf al-ghiṭāʾ ʿan ḥiyal al-aʿdāʾ* (Ashkhabad, n.d.), p. 166.

[80] *The Bahaʾi Proofs* trans. Eshtael-ebn-Kalenter (New York, 1902), pp. 77–78; cf. p. 63.

pen of the Báb in the *Qayyūm al-asmā'*, and there is hardly a *sūra* in this blessed book which does not contain this decree'.[81]

## The reinterpretation of Baha'ism in the West

By the end of the nineteenth century, Baha'ism, encouraged by this partial rejection of its Bābī origins, had developed a sense of separate identity as a progressive movement within the Islamic world, and seemed set to come to terms with its status as a small minority group with its main body of adherents in Iran and its leadership in southern Syria.[82] During the 1890s, however, a fortuitous combination of factors led to conversions in the United States and Europe, and the Bahā'ī leadership soon adopted a conscious policy of prozelytization outside the Middle East. As new communities emerged and consolidated themselves in the West, a modified presentation of Bahā'ī history, law, and doctrine evolved to suit the tastes and preoccupations of a membership mentally and culturally divorced from the movement's Islamic background and character. The development of a deracinated, westernized Baha'ism, and its promulgation over an ever-expanding geographical area as a 'new world faith' must be studied elsewhere,[83] but one aspect of that development deserves closer examination here.

Neither the early western Bahā'ī communities nor the societies in which they lived and from which they obtained their adherents had inherited a distrust of Babism as a militant, possibly subversive religio-political movement. On the contrary, if Westerners had heard anything

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[81] *Ganjīna*, p. 272.

[82] The Bahā'ī community of Iran was never very large. By the 1880s, it numbered about 100,000 adherents (between 1.25 and 2.0 percent of the population), and between the 1910s and 1950s the figure was between 100,000 and 200,000, representing a decline in population percentage (to between 0.5 and 1.1 percent). Current numbers are estimated at between 300,000 and 350,000 (0.9 and 1.0 percent of the population). For details, see Peter Smith 'A Note on Bābī and Bahā'ī Numbers in Iran' in *Bahā'ī Studies Bulletin* 1:4 (March, 1963), pp. 3–7.

[83] On the early growth of Baha'ism in the United States, see Smith 'American Bahā'ī Community' (and bibliography, pp. 310–20). For discussions of wider developments, see idem, 'A Sociological Study of the Bābī and Bahā'ī Religions', Ph.D. dissertation, University of Lancaster, 1983; V. E. Johnson 'An Historical Analysis of Critical Transformations in the Evolution of the Bahā'ī World Faith', Ph.D. dissertation, Baylor University, Texas, 1974; Peter Berger 'From Sect to Church: A Sociological Interpretation of the Bahā'ī Movement', Ph.D. dissertation, New School for Social Research, New York, 1954; A. Hampson 'The Growth and Spread of the Bahā'ī Faith', Ph.D. dissertation, University of Hawaii, 1980.

at all of the Bābīs, it was likely to have taken the form of a somewhat romanticized image of a band of inspired reformers systematically killed and persecuted by the forces of Islamic obscurantism and oriental despotism—an image fostered by Gobineau and numerous writers after him.[84] The heroism of the Bābī martyrs and the charismatic qualities of the Bāb, much idealized and, as it were, 'Christianized' in the transition to Europe and America, had evoked a sympathetic and admiring response among Westerners unable to place the aims and attitudes of the Bābīs in their proper context. In Iran, the failure of the Bābī attempt to overthrow the Qājār state had led to a largely negative reaction from the Shīʿī population to whom the execution of the Bāb and the deaths of his followers could only be evidence that he had not, after all, been the true Qāʾim and Mahdī, whose uprising was destined to be met with success. To Christian observers, brought up in an entirely different tradition, such events, reminiscent as they seemed to be of the crucifixion and the persecution of the early Church, meant almost the opposite.[85] One early western writer, for example, speaks of how the Bahāʾī movement 'has the vital force of the early Christian faith shown in glad martyrdom, in loving union, in happy service. The blood of the martyrs of Shaykh Ṭabarsī, of Zanjān, of Yazd, has not been shed in vain'.[86]

There was, therefore, no need to play down for western converts the links between the Bābī and Bahāʾī movements. On the contrary, the appeal of the Bābīs as their own persecuted forebears was one of the strongest planks in the platform of the missionaries (including ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ himself) who came from the Middle East to the West in the early decades of this century. Although the social progressivism of the Bahāʾī teachings continued to be stressed in Europe and North America, such ideas were necessarily less of a novelty there than in the Islamic world and were unlikely of themselves to win converts to Bahaʾism as a religious creed. What early enquirers sought was a modern religious drama that could inspire faith in an age when the narrative roots of

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[84] On early European accounts of Babism, see Momen *Bābī and Bahāʾī Religions*, pp. 3–65.

[85] This theme is particularly clear in some later Bahāʾī writing, in which a direct and sometimes detailed comparison is made between Christ and the Bāb. See Shoghi Effendi *God Passes By*, pp. 56–57; W. Sears *Thief in the Night* new ed. (London, 1964), pp. 87–89.

[86] Mrs Alexander Whyte, pilgrimage account in Shoghi Effendi ed. *The Bahāʾī World* vol. IV (New York, 1933), quoted Balyuzi *ʿAbdu'l-Baha* (London, 1971), p. 359.

early Christianity were being called into question more and more intensely. The sense of a biblical past enacted afresh in modern times was, of course, focussed for most early western Bahā'īs in the benevolent, patriarchal figure of ʿAbd al-Bahā', 'the Master', whom many, in spite of his advanced years, regarded as the return of Christ.[87] But the more distant figures of the Bāb and his followers continued to exercise their fascination for western converts as the trailblazers of a new age, whose blood was the seed of the Bahā'ī Church.[88]

Following the death of ʿAbd al-Bahā' in 1921, the attention of the western Bahā'ī communities was shifted increasingly towards the age of the Bābī martyrs as the sacred time of the faith par excellence. Shoghi Effendi Rabbānī (1897–1957), the new Bahā'ī leader, although a grandson of ʿAbd al-Bahā', was an administrative rather than a charismatic leader,[89] and he was clearly not willing to let himself serve as a focus for faith in the way his grandfather had been. At the same time, he was a brilliant systematizer who sought to clarify and regularize Bahā'ī doctrine in what became a life-long effort to reconstruct the movement as a new world religion, on a par with Christianity or Islam. In his numerous English writings,[90] he quietly reversed the earlier view of Babism and Baha'ism as distinct, even mutually incompatible religions, conflating them instead into a single revelatory scheme.

This process of conflation, based as it was on the essential and irreducible position that the Bāb had been both an independent divine manifestation and the immediate prophetic herald of Bahā' Allāh,[91] was particularly pursued in two historical works. In 1932, Shoghi Effendi published an edited English translation of a Persian history of Babism by Mullā Muḥammad Nabīl Zarandī (1831–92), originally

[87] See Smith 'American Baha'i Community', pp. 100–103.

[88] An excellent example of the romanticizing of Bābī history by early Bahā'īs may be found in Laura Clifford Barney's drama, *God's Heroes* (London and Philadelphia, 1910).

[89] For details, see the hagiographical biographies by his widow Ruhiyyih Rabbani (*The Priceless Pearl*, London, 1969) and Dhikr Allāh Khādim (*Bi-yād-i maḥbūb*, Tehran, 131 *badīʿ*/1975–76). See also Marcus Bach *Shoghi Effendi: An Appreciation* (New York, 1958).

[90] His more important treatises in this context include 'The Dispensation of Bahā'u'llāh', in *World Order*, pp. 97–157 (also published separately); *The Promised Day is Come*; 'The Faith of Bahā'u'llāh', in *Guidance for Today and Tomorrow* (London, 1953). A full bibliography is contained in Ugo Giachery *Shoghi Effendi* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 199–205.

[91] See Shoghi Effendi *World Order*, pp. 123–28.

written between 1888 and 1890. Given the English title of *The Dawn-Breakers*, and significantly sub-titled *Nabīl's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahā'ī Revelation*, this previously unpublished work[92] marked an important stage in the process of re-writing Bābī history to conform to Bahā'ī standards of doctrine and behaviour—something to which E. G. Browne had already drawn attention many years earlier, and which has remained a basic element in controversial works.[93] In its published form, Nabīl's Narrative proved an excellent solution to Shoghi Effendi's central problem in the task of conflating Babism and Baha'ism—how to continue the dissociation of the latter from matters such as holy war, sedition, or even overt political activity, while retaining the historical episodes of Shaykh Ṭabarsī, Zanjān, and Nayrīz as tales of thrilling heroism and unprovoked persecution.

The Bābīs are portrayed throughout this work as a band of peaceloving devotees, forced to take up arms in self-defence only after extreme provocation. Thus, for example, in the course of the Shaykh Ṭabarsī struggle, Mullā Ḥusayn Bushrū'ī is recorded as sending a message to Prince Mahdī Qulī Mīrzā to the effect that 'we utterly disclaim any intention of subverting the foundations of the monarchy or of usurping the authority of Nāṣiri'd-Dīn (sic) Shāh. Our cause concerns the revelation of the promised Qā'im and is primarily associated with the interests of the ecclesiastical order of this country'.[94] Similarly, Sayyid Yaḥyā Dārābī Vahīd, while besieged in his house in Yazd, is said to have announced to his followers that 'had I been authorized by Him (the Bāb) to wage holy warfare against this people, I would, alone and unaided, have annihilated their forces. I am, however, commanded to refrain from such an act.'[95] Again, Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī Zanjānī Ḥujjat is reported to have constantly reminded his supporters in Zanjān

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[92] The original text is preserved in a unique autograph manuscript at the Bahā'ī World Centre Archives in Haifa; no edition of it has ever been published, a fact of no small importance since Shoghi Effendi is reputed to have made major editorial revisions in his translation. One Iranian Bahā'ī writer who appears to have seen the original maintains that the changes are so great as to make the translation virtually an original work by Shoghi Effendi (Dr. Dā'ūdī, quoted Najafī, *Bahā'īyān*, p. 412, f.n. 107).

[93] See Muḥīṭ Ṭabātabā'ī 'Kitābī bī nām bā nāmī tāza', *Gawhar* nos. 11–12 (1353/1974), pp. 952–61; idem, 'Tārīkh-i qadīm wa jadīd', *Gawhar* nos. 5–6 (1354/1975), pp. 343–48, 426–31; Browne *New History*, pp. vii–xxxii; idem, *Nuqṭatu'l-Kāf*, pp. xxxiv–xlvii; Najafi *Bahā'īyān*, pp. 359–415; Richards *Religion of the Bahā'īs*, pp. 12–14; Miller *The Bahā'ī Faith*, pp. xii–xv.

[94] *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 363–65.

[95] Ibid., p. 469.

'that their action was of a purely defensive character, and that their sole purpose was to preserve inviolate the security of their women and children'.[96] Zarandī then attributes the following words to Zanjānī: 'We are commanded . . . not to wage holy war under any circumstances against the unbelievers, whatever be their attitude towards us'.[97]

Paradoxically, perhaps, a great proportion of Zarandī's narrative is devoted to detailed and dramatic accounts of the three major Bābī-state struggles, but nowhere is any hint given of Mīrzā Ḥusayn ʿAlī's disapproval of these as 'excesses'. Instead, they are 'thrilling episodes'[98] or 'memorable sieges',[99] characterized by 'heroism', 'unquenchable fervour', and 'enthusiasm',[100] the exploits of 'pioneers who, by their life and death, have so greatly enriched the annals of God's immortal faith'.[101] Whereas ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ had contrasted the Bābī decrees of 'the striking of necks, the burning of books and papers, the destruction of shrines, and the universal slaughter of all save those who believed and were faithful' with the Bahāʾī emphasis on the virtues of compassion, mercy, and universalism, Zarandī's account puts Bahāʾī sentiments into the mouths of his Bābī heroes and heroines. Thus, the leader of the Zanjān insurrection, Muḥammad ʿAlī Ḥujjat, is quoted as saying: 'I am bidden by Him (i.e. the Bāb) to instil into men's hearts the ennobling principles of charity and love, and to refrain from all unnecessary violence. My aim and that of my companions is, and ever will be, to serve our sovereign loyally and to be the well-wishers of his people'.[102]

The process of conflation reached its climax, however, with the publication in 1944 of Shoghi Effendi's own lengthy English history of what he calls 'the first century of the Bahāʾī Era', *God Passes By*,[103] together with a shorter version in Persian, the *Lawḥ-i qarn-i aḥibbā-yi sharq*.[104] *God Passes By* is an altogether remarkable (if at times almost unreadable) work of historico-theological reconstruction and synthesis,

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[96] Ibid., p. 546.
[97] Ibid. For further examples, see ibid., pp. xxxiv, 213, 330, 396, 472, 488, 553, 554–55, 565–66.
[98] Ibid., p. 529.
[99] Ibid., p. 414.
[100] Ibid., pp. xxxiv, 413.
[101] Ibid., p. 413.
[102] Ibid., p. 553.
[103] See note 7; reference to p. xiii.
[104] New ed. Tehran, 123 *badīʿ*/1967–68. See also the commentary on this by ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Raḥīq-i makhtūm*, 2 vols. (Tehran, 130–131 *badīʿ*/1974–76).

in which Shoghi Effendi's personal vision of the Bahā'ī revelation as a unitary process beginning with the appearance of the Bāb in 1844 and proceeding through successive ages and epochs[105] to its future efflorescence in a Utopian 'Golden Age' is systematically worked out and rhetorically expressed. Although the Bāb is still clearly portrayed as an independent prophet with his own book and laws,[106] his main function in the narrative is to act as a herald of Bahā' Allāh.[107] The distinctiveness of Babism is played down to the extent that it becomes merely a preliminary phase of the all-embracing 'Bahā'ī Faith': the 'Bābī Dispensation' represents nothing more than the first period of the 'Heroic Age' of the 'Bahā'ī Era', stretching from 1844 to 1921.[108] The sense of an abrupt and significant break between Babism and Baha'ism, which had been emphasized by Bahā' Allāh and 'Abd al-Bahā', is replaced by a view of the Bābī era as the first of four historical periods (1844–1853; 1853–1892; 1892–1921; 1921–1944) that make up the first Bahā'ī century and that 'are to be regarded not only as the component, the inseparable parts of one stupendous whole, but as progressive stages in a single evolutionary process'.[109] None of the Bāb's specific laws or teachings

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[105] Shoghi Effendi's obsession with dividing and sub-dividing historical periods in order to imbue selected years or decades with cosmic significance reached remarkable lengths. For examples, see *God Passes By*, pp. xiii–xiv, xiv–xvii, 3, 223, 325; *Citadel of Faith*, pp. 4–6, 32–33, 67, 107; *Messages to the Bahā'ī World*, pp. 18–19, 58, 60–61, 76, 82, 85, 129. This technique is paralleled by the use of repeated references to significant anniversaries, a method of locating events that has also been much used during and after the Islamic revolution in Iran. This concern is best interpreted in the light of Mircea Eliade's comments on sacred time in *The Sacred and the Profane* (New York, 1959), ch. II.

[106] *God Passes By*, pp. 56–59; cf *World Order*, pp. 123–28.

[107] See *God Passes By*, pp. 27–31.

[108] See ibid., pp. xi, xiii–xiv, 3; cf idem, *Citadel of Faith*, pp. 4–5.

[109] *God Passes By*, p. xv; cf. ibid., p. xvi: 'viewing these periods of Bahā'ī (sic) history as the constituents of a single entity, we note that chain of events proclaiming successfully (sic) the rise of a Forerunner, the Mission of One Whose advent that Forerunner had promised, the establishment of a Covenant generated through the direct authority of the Promised One Himself, and lastly the birth of a System which is the child sprung from both the Author of the Covenant and its appointed Center'. The Bābī/Bahā'ī movement is consistently referred to in terms of a single phenomenon as 'the Faith' (e.g. ibid., pp. xvi, xvii, 37, 42, 44, 46). ('These and other similar incidents connected with the epic story of the Zanjān upheaval… combine to invest it with a sombre glory unsurpassed by any episode of a like nature in the records of the Heroic Age of the Faith of Bahā'u'llāh'), 47 ('… these were the chief features of the tragedy of the Seven Martyrs of Tehran, a tragedy which stands out as one of the grimmest scenes witnessed in the course of the early unfoldment of the Faith of Bahā'u'llāh'), 221, 376, 378. It would be possible to develop a useful critique of Shoghi Effendi's method in terms of Popper's theory of historicism.

is anywhere referred to: the implication—perpetuated, as we shall see, in later Bahāʾī literature—is that they were fundamentally the same as those of Bahāʾ Allāh. Instead of a sharp division between Bābī and Bahāʾī doctrine, Shoghi Effendi speaks of an 'evolution in the scope of its (i.e. the Bahāʾī faith's) teachings, at first designedly rigid, complex and severe, subsequently recast, expanded, and liberalized under the succeeding Dispensation, later expounded, reaffirmed and amplified by an appointed Interpreter, and lastly systematized and universally applied to both individuals and institutions'.[110]

Having carried the process of conflation to such lengths, Shoghi Effendi was clearly obliged to transform the early Bābīs into proto-Bahāʾīs, going so far as to recruit them as martyrs, not for Babism, but for the Bahāʾī cause: 'The torrents of blood that poured out during those crowded and calamitous years may be regarded as constituting the fertile seeds of that World Order which a swiftly succeeding and still greater Revelation was to proclaim and establish'.[111] The same theme is pursued in numerous other writings: 'In the blood of the unnumbered martyrs of Persia lay the seed of the Divinely-appointed Administration which, though transplanted from its native soil, is now budding out…into a new order, destined to overshadow all mankind'.[112] Since the Bābī 'Dawn-Breakers' are, in a sense, now Bahāʾī martyrs, all references to the Bābī doctrine of *jihād* are carefully omitted in Shoghi Effendi's works, and it is instead stated positively that the followers of the Bāb resorted to arms only in self-defence and that they were victims of unmerited aggression on the part of church and state. 'Though the Faith had,' he writes, 'from its inception, disclaimed any intention of usurping the rights and prerogatives of the state; though its exponents and disciples had sedulously avoided any act that might arouse the slightest suspicion of a desire to wage a holy war, or to evince an aggressive attitude, yet its enemies, deliberately ignoring the numerous evidences of the marked restraint exercised by the followers of a persecuted religion, proved themselves capable of inflicting atrocities as barbarous as those which will ever remain associated with the bloody episodes of Māzindarān

[110] Ibid., p. xvii.
[111] Ibid., p. 79; cf. p. 38.
[112] Shoghi Effendi *World Order*, p. 52; cf. ibid., pp. 156, 173. See also idem, *Promised Day*, pp. 5–6; idem, *Citadel of Faith*, pp. 93, 100; idem, *Messages to the Bahāʾī World*, pp. 34, 39, 88 ('persecution…for over a century'), 91.

(sic), Nayrīz and Zanjān.'[113] It is worth noting that, in this passage, not only does Shoghi Effendi personify an abstraction ('the Faith'), but he conveys a sense of cohesiveness and agreement on matters of policy that was, in fact, quite alien to the Bābī experience. More seriously, perhaps, he makes it quite impossible for himself at a later stage in his history to deal adequately or convincingly with the actual reformation effected by Ḥusayn ʿAlī in his reaction against Bābī militancy.

Shoghi Effendi is consistently explicit in his portrayal of the Bābīs as averse to acts of violence. Thus, he writes that they were victims of 'a systematic campaign' waged by the Iranian civil and ecclesiastical authorities, and goes on to describe how 'in remote and isolated centers the scattered disciples of a persecuted community were pitilessly struck down by the sword of their foes, while in centers where large numbers had congregated measures were taken in self-defense, which, misconstrued by a cunning and deceitful adversary, served in their turn to inflame still further the hostility of the authorities, and multiply the outrages perpetrated by the oppressor."[114] According to this account, the Nayrīz insurrection 'was preceded by a… categorical repudiation, on the part of the Bābīs, of any intention of interfering with the civil jurisdiction of the realm, or of undermining the legitimate authority of its sovereign',[115] while those involved in the struggle are described as 'a handful of men, innocent, law-abiding, peace-loving, yet high-spirited and indomitable' who were 'surprised, challenged, encompassed and assaulted by the superior force of a cruel and crafty enemy, an innumerable host of able-bodied men who, though well-trained, adequately equipped and continually reinforced, were impotent to coerce into submission, or subdue, the spirit of their adversaries.'[116] In speaking of the struggle at Zanjān, Shoghi Effendi similarly refers to 'the reiterated exhortations addressed by Ḥujjat to the besieged to refrain from aggression and acts of violence; his affirmation, as he recalled the tragedy of Mazindaran, that their victory consisted solely in sacrificing their all on the altar of the Cause of the Ṣāḥibu'z-Zamān (i.e. the Bāb as Qā'im), and

[113] Shoghi Effendi *God Passes By*, p. 63.
[114] Ibid., p. 37.
[115] Ibid., p. 43.
[116] Ibid., p. 42.

his declaration of the unalterable intention of his companions to serve their sovereign loyally and to be the well-wishers of his people'.[117]

The events of Shaykh Ṭabarsī, Nayrīz, and Zanjān are no longer interpreted, as they were by Ḥusayn ʿAlī, as 'devastating, ruinous winds that cast down the saplings of trust and hope'. On the contrary, the Ṭabarsī struggle is now 'a stirring episode, so glorious for the Faith',[118] immortalized by 'stirring exploits';[119] the Bābīs there are called 'heroic defenders',[120] 'heroes',[121] and 'God-intoxicated students",[122] whose 'fortitude … intrepidity, … discipline and resourcefulness' are contrasted with 'the turpitude, the cowardice, the disorderliness and the inconstancy of their opponents'.[123] Likewise, the Bābī insurgents at Nayrīz display 'superhuman heroism … fortitude, courage, and renunciation",[124] and reference is made to the 'heroic exertions'[125] of those in Zanjān, led by 'one of the ablest and most formidable champions of the Faith'.[126]

Thus transmogrified and denatured by Shoghi Effendi's splendidly cosmetic prose, the Bābī 'upheavals' could be fitted more easily into a broad pattern of proclamation and persecution, in which the ideal of martyrdom served to link militant Bābīs with quietist Bahā'īs as if they had shared the same ideals and died in approximately identical circumstances. Ḥusayn ʿAlī, as we have seen, had come to express reservations about martyrdom and even to forbid his followers to seek it, but, by the time of Shoghi Effendi, the risk of violent death, even in Iran, had diminished considerably; and there was, therefore, less reluctance to stress again the spiritual significance of the martyr's death. Western Bahā'īs, in particular, had never had cause to give their lives for their faith, nor were they likely to have to do so. For them, therefore, the

[117] Ibid., p. 44. See also ibid., pp. 38 ('to resist and defend themselves against the onslaughts of malicious and unreasoning assailants'), 51 ('the repressive measures taken against the followers of the Báb', '… their persecuted Faith'), 62 ('maligned and hounded from the moment it [the Faith of the Báb] was born', 'cruel blows', 'a sorely persecuted Faith'), 66 ('a sorely-tried Faith'; 'the Báb's persecuted followers').
[118] Ibid., p. 42.
[119] Ibid., p. 68.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid., p. 38.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid., p. 39.
[124] Ibid., p. 43.
[125] Ibid., p. 44.
[126] Ibid.

events of the Bābī past could serve as an ideal to which they could aspire in a rather abstract but religiously valuable sense.

The extent to which conflation has blurred important distinctions between the Bābī and Bahā'ī martyr ideals is, perhaps, most evident in the confusion exhibited in Bahā'ī writing as to the total numbers of martyrs, whether for each group separately or for both as a whole. What appears at first to be a purely numerical problem reveals deeper anomalies that stem from the conflation process itself. In order to make this point clear, it will be useful to try to calculate roughly how many Bābī and Bahā'ī martyrs there have actually been—something which has not, curiously enough, been attempted seriously so far.

As far as can be estimated, the number of Bābīs killed during the main upheavals between 1848 and 1850 was very small. According to Bahā'ī sources, between 540 and 600 Bābīs in all were involved in the Shaykh Ṭabarsī episode, of whom about 300 were actually put to death or died from other causes in the course of the siege.[127] Estimates of the numbers involved in Nayrīz in 1850 vary considerably,[128] but a figure of almost 1,000 would seem to be realistic,[129] of whom rather less than 500 were killed.[130] According to Zarandī, a total of about 350 Bābīs died during or after the later Nayrīz disturbances of 1853.[131] Larger numbers were involved in Zanjān from 1850 to 1851, of whom between 1000 and 1800 were put to death.[132] The Tehran executions of 1852, following the attempt on Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh's life, and which Shoghi Effendi variously describes as 'a blood-bath of unprecedented severity,'[133] 'a holocaust reminiscent of the direst tribulations undergone

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[127] For a detailed discussion of the problem of the numbers involved at Shaykh Ṭabarsī, see M. Momen 'The Social Basis of the Bābī Upheavals (1848–1853): A Preliminary Analysis', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 15 (1983), pp. 161–66. Muḥammad ʿAlī Malik Khusrawī gives the names of 367 individuals (*Tārīkh-i shuhadā-yi amr*, 3 vols. [Tehran, 130 *badīʿ*/1974–75], vol. 2, pp. 316–17), fifty-three of whom he names as survivors (*baqiyyat al-sayf*: see ibid., vol. 1. pp. 416–49). Zarandī names only 173 martyrs (*Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 414–26).

[128] See Momen, 'Social Basis', pp. 166–69.

[129] See ibid., p. 168; Muḥammad Shafīʿ Rawḥānī Nayrīzi *Lamaʿāt al-anwār*, 2 vols. (Tehran, 130–132 *badīʿ*/1974–77), vol. 1, pp. 63, 72.

[130] Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 73, 95, 96. This figure is made up of some 60 killed in an engagement in mid-Rajab 1266 (early June 1850), 350 put to death on the capture of the fort of Khāja on 18 Shaʿbān/29 June, and 50 afterwards.

[131] *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 644; see also Momen 'Social Basis', pp. 167–69.

[132] Zarandī gives both 1,000 and 1,800 (*Dawn-Breakers*, p. 580).

[133] *Citadel of Faith*, p. 100.

by the persecuted followers of any previous religion,'[134] and 'the darkest, bloodiest and most tragic episode of the Heroic Age of the Bahā'ī Dispensation,'[135] actually claimed the lives of only some 37 individuals.[136] The total number of Bābīs executed in the Iranian capital between 1847 and 1863, amounted, according to a recent Bahā'ī account, to no more than 62 named individuals.[137] Even when we add to the above numbers the figures for Bābīs killed in isolated incidents during this period (which cannot amount to more than a few dozen all told), we are left with a total of not much more than 3000 martyrs at the outside or, if we take the lower figure of 1000 for Zanjān, something just over 2000 in all. Since there were no further incidents on the scale of Shaykh Ṭabarsī, Zanjān, or Nayrīz, it is difficult to compute the number of Bahā'īs killed in Iran up to the present day in a number of small-scale outbreaks of violence. It would not, however, be far from the truth to speak of something under 300 altogether.[138]

While accurate figures for individual incidents are available in Bahā'ī publications, the general tendency is to speak of a single, rounded figure (usually 20,000), which is sometimes applied overall and sometimes only to the Bābī period, with very little consistency between references.

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[134] *Messages to the Bahā'ī World*, p. 34.

[135] Ibid., p. 39.

[136] See Malik Khusrawī *Tārīkh-i shuhadā*, vol. 3, pp. 6–8, 129–332. See also Momen 'Social Basis', p. 171–72. The notion that the executions of 1852 amounted to a 'holocaust' seems to have originated with a number of European accounts, including that of Gobineau, which exaggerated the affair out of all proportion (see ibid., pp. 171–72 and notes 55, 56); for further details, see idem, *Bābī and Bahā'ī Religions*, pp. 128–45.

[137] *Tārīkh-i shuhadā*, vol. 3, pp. 6–9.

[138] The following figures provide a rough guide; five in Tabriz, Zanjān, and Tehran in 1867; four in Najafābād in 1864; two in Isfahan in 1879; seven in Sidith in 1890; one in Ashkhabad in 1889; seven in Yazd in 1891; five in Turbat-i Haydarī in 1896; two in Isfahan and about 100 in Yazd in 1903; eight in Jahrum in 1926. For details, see Momen, *Bābī and Bahā'ī Religions*, pp. 251–54, 268–69, 274–77, 284–88, 296–300, 301–304, 376–85, 385–98, 405–06, 465–72. There were also seven martyrs in Hurmuzak in 1955 (see Muḥammad Labib *The Seven Martyrs of Hurmuzak*, trans. M. Momen [Oxford, 1981]) and some 100 between 1979 and 1982 (see Roger Cooper *The Bahā'īs of Iran*, Minority Rights Group Report No. 51 [London, 1982] and G. Nash *Iran's Secret Pogrom* [Sudbury, 1982]). [since 1982, there have been roughly another 100 deaths.] For further details on earlier persecutions, see Ḥājj Muḥammad Tāhir Mālmīrī *Tārīkh-i shuhadā-yi Yazd* (Cairo, 1342/1923–24); Sayyid Muḥammad Ṭabīb Manshādī *Sharḥ-i shahādat-i shuhadā-yi Manshād* (Tehran, 127 *badī'*/1971–72); Qazwīnī 'Epitome of Bābī History', pp. 35–43; E. G. Browne 'Persecutions of Bābīs in 1888–1891 at Yazd' in *Materials*, pp. 291–308; A. L. M. Nicolas *Massacres de Bābīs en Perse* (Paris, 1936); Miller *Bahā'ī Faith*, pp. 214, 230. 'Abd al-Bahā' gives the high figure of 'almost two hundred' for the martyrs of Yazd in 1903 (letter in *Makātīb*, vol. 1, p. 427).

Probably the earliest 'official' figure is that of 'more than four thousand', which was, according to ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ, the number of Bābīs killed during the years 1266 and 1267 (1850–1851), following the death of the Báb.[139] Nevertheless, the same authority appears to have started speaking of 20,000 Bābī martyrs in all as early as 1871,[140] and, in his later writings and talks, he fluctuates between 'thousands',[141] 'twenty thousand',[142] 'more than 20,000',[143] and 'twenty or thirty thousand'[144] in all; 'ten thousand, possibly twenty thousand'[145] or 'over twenty thousand'[146] Bābīs alone; and 'twenty thousand Bahāʾīs' killed just in the reign of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh (1848–1896).[147] There are examples of similar confusion in other Bahāʾī references of this period. Thus, Amīn Farīd talked in 1911 of 'hundreds' of Bābī martyrs,[148] while Ḍiyāʾ Allāh Baghdādī spoke in 1918 of '24,000 or more' Bābī and Bahāʾī martyrs together.[149]

It might have been expected that Shoghi Effendi would attempt to end this confusion, but he himself appears to have remained as uncertain about the subject as his predecessor. At the beginning of *God Passes By*, he refers to 'above ten thousand' martyrs during the first nine years of the Bābī period,[150] and at the end of the same book he speaks of 'a world community (i.e. the Bahāʾī community of 1944)… consecrated by

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[139] *Traveller's Narrative*, vol. 1, p. 60; vol. 2, p. 47.

[140] Letter from Dr T. Chaplin to *The Times*, 5 October, 1971, quoted Momen *Bābī and Bahāʾī Religions*, pp. 210–12. Chaplin refers to the killing of 20,000 individuals before the Baghdad exile; he later states that ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ 'gave us the information here detailed' in the course of an interview in Acre.

[141] 'Alwāḥ-i wasāyā' in ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Ishrāq Khāvarī ed. *Ayyām-i tisʿa* 5th. printing (Tehran, 129 *badīʿ*/1973–74)), p. 457; trans. Shoghi Effendi as 'The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha', in Anon. comp. *The Covenant of Bahāʾuʾllāh* (London, 1963), p. 90 (but see later on the inaccuracy of the translation of this passage). Cf. idem, letter in *Makātīb*, vol. 1, p. 385.

[142] Address to Fourth Unitarian Church, Brooklyn, 16 June, 1912, in *Star of the West* III:10 (8 September, 1912), p. 31.

[143] Address to the Theosophical Society, Liverpool, 14 December, 1912, in ibid., III:17 (19 January, 1913), p. 4.

[144] Letter to 'Āqā Bihrūz' in London, in Ishrāq Khāvarī *Māʾida*, vol. 5, p. 45.

[145] Address at the Brotherhood Church, Jersey City, 19 May, 1912, in *Star of the West* III:9 (20 August, 1912), p. 9. Cf. letter in *Makātīb*, vol. 1, p. 344 ('ten or twenty thousand').

[146] Address to the New York Peace Society, 13 May, 1912, in *Star of* the *West* III:8 (1 August, 1912), p. 15.

[147] Address to the Central Congregational Church, Brooklyn, 16 June, 1912, in ibid., III:10 (8 September, 1912), p. 23.

[148] Address at Los Angeles, in ibid., 11:13 (4 November, 1911), p. 8.

[149] Address to the Tenth Annual Convention of the Bahāʾī Temple Unity, in ibid., IX:5 (5 June, 1918), p. 69.

[150] *God Passes By*, p. xiv.

the sacrifice of no less than twenty thousand martyrs'.[151] The implication would seem to be that there were ten thousand Bābī martyrs and a further ten thousand Bahā'īs, but Shoghi Effendi himself contradicts this when he writes of 'twenty thousand of his (i.e. the Bāb's) followers' being put to death,[152] or, in the reverse sense, when he translates ʿAbd al-Bahā's reference to 'thousands' who had 'shed streams of their sacred blood in this path' by the phrase 'ten thousand souls'.[153]

Following Shoghi Effendi, however, a broad consensus of Bahā'ī writing has favoured the round figure of 20,000, although no-one seems to be sure as to what it refers. Thus, we read of around 20,000 martyrs 'during the lifetimes of the Bāb and Bahā'u'llāh',[154] or 'in the Heroic Age of His (i.e. Bahā' Allāh's) Cause',[155] or for the 'Bahā'ī Faith',[156] or even during the pogrom of 1852![157] In some cases, writers give an impression of even more inflated figures, or refer to specific higher (but never lower) totals: thus, 'tens of thousands',[158] as a whole, or nearly 'thirty thousand' during the later part of Bahā' Allāh's lifetime.[159]

I have thought it worthwhile to look at these figures in some detail, less for their intrinsic interest than for what they reveal in concrete terms about Bahā'ī historical thinking (and, of course, about similar thinking in other religions). As I have indicated, it is extremely easy to arrive at what seems to be a fairly accurate picture, not only of the number of Bābī and Bahā'ī martyrs, but also of the circumstances in which most of them met their deaths. Yet there is a remarkable discrepancy between the figures given in the more detailed Bahā'ī historical accounts and the inflated numbers stated in general references. Since the matter is clearly one of importance to Bahā'īs, one is forced to ask why no attempt has been made to resolve this contradiction or even to bring it into the open. The answer may, of course, be simple carelessness or an absence of concern for historical accuracy, but I suspect that it has more to do with the increasing tendency, to which I have already

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[151] Ibid., p. 402.
[152] 'The Faith of Bahā'u'llāh' in *Guidance*, p. 5.
[153] See note 141.
[154] National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahā'īs of the U.K., *Bahā'ī* (London, n.d.), p. 10.
[155] Marzieh Gail, Introduction to Bahā' Allāh *Son of the Wolf*, p. iii.
[156] Anon., foreword to Bahā' Allāh and ʿAbd al-Bahā' *Bahā'ī Revelation*, p. xiv.
[157] Nash *Iran's Secret Pogrom*, pp. 22; cf. p. 42 ('the most vicious pogrom of all—the 1852 massacre of Bābīs'), but cf. also pp. 133, 144.
[158] Ibid., p. 18.
[159] Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Baha*, p. 45.

alluded, to place first the Bābī, and then the Bahā'ī, martyrs within a remote, idealized realm in which they can serve as undifferentiated but crucial figures in a wider historical myth. This is not, of course, very unusual in religious history, but the Bahā'ī case is interesting because of the number of shifts of emphasis it involves and because of the relative closeness and accessibility of firm empirical data from which the popular version must diverge.

Within the modern period, it is of interest to consider one further aspect of the Bahā'ī attitude to martyrdom within the context of current theories about religious communities competing in a 'market situation' for converts and favourable publicity.[160] Beginning with the 1955 persecutions in Iran and resuming with the current pogrom under the Islamic Republic there, the Bahā'ī authorities have come to stress not only the spiritual significance and potentialities of martyrdom, but also its power to generate publicity for the Bahā'ī cause, particularly at the governmental and inter-governmental levels. Writing in August 1955 to the American Bahā'īs, Shoghi Effendi, having described the recent persecutions in Iran and the appeals made to the United Nations to intervene there, goes on to say that 'seldom, if at any time since its inception, has such a widespread publicity been accorded the infant Faith of God, now at long last emerging from an obscurity which has so long and so grievously oppressed it.... To the intensification of such a publicity...the American Bahā'ī Community...must fully and decisively contribute'.[161] In the following year, referring again to the Iranian persecution, he speaks of the provision of funds for the hire of 'an expert publicity agent, in order to reinforce the publicity already being received in the public press'.[162] The same approach can be observed some thirty years later. In a letter written in January 1982, the Bahā'ī 'Universal House of Justice' notes that 'current persecution has resulted in bringing the name and character of our beloved Faith to the attention of the world as never before in its history.... The world's leading newspapers, followed by the local press, have presented sympathetic accounts of the Faith to millions of readers, while television and radio stations are increasingly making the persecutions in Iran the subject of

[160] See Peter Berger *The Sacred Canopy* (New York, Anchor Books, 1969), p. 138; Bryan Wilson *Contemporary Transformations of Religion* (Oxford, 1976), pp. 86–90.
[161] *Citadel of Faith*, pp. 139–40.
[162] Ibid., p. 144. See also *Messages to the Bahā'ī World*, pp. 89, 97.

their programmes',[163] while some months later, the same body states that 'the effect of these developments (i.e. the persecutions in Iran) is to offer such golden opportunities for teaching and further proclamation as can only lead, if vigorously and enthusiastically seized, to large scale conversion and an increasing prestige'.[164] That such methods have not, to the knowledge of the present writer, evoked protests within the Bahā'ī community, is an important indication of how far the goals of publicity and conversion have now taken precedence over earlier ideals.

## 'Orientalism' and the conflation of Babism and Baha'ism

Between the early Bābī ideal of an immediate *jihād* led by the Bāb as representative of the Imām, and current, largely western, Bahā'ī images of a continuum of martyrdom and persecution, there is a complex process of transformation of consciousness, the details of which are not always easy to trace. The central figure in the later stages of this process is unquestionably Shoghi Effendi, whose reconstruction of Bābī and Bābī history successfully disengaged events, personalities, and doctrines from their original contexts to recast them in what has since become their definitive dramatic form for members of the religion. It would take at least another article to examine in any detail the methods used by Shoghi Effendi to formulate his vision of Bahā'ī history as part of his general construction of Baha'ism as a doctrinally coherent, centrally organized, and geographically diffuse 'world religion'. But for our present purposes, it will be of most value to look briefly at what may prove to have been the most essential feature of his work: his ability to see and interpret the material with which he deals from what may best be described as an 'orientalist' viewpoint.

In recent years, considerable controversy has raged around the concept of 'orientalism', principally as the result of an important critique of the orientalist vision and method developed by Jacques Waardenburg

[163] Letter to 'The Bahā'īs of the World', 26 January, 1982 (mimeographed copy), p. 2.

[164] Idem, letter dated 'Riḍvān (12–21 April), 1982' (mimeographed copy). See also idem, letter to 'The Bahā'īs of the World', March 1981 (mimeograph copy); National Proclamation Committee of the Bahā'īs of the U.K., 'Campaign Bulletin No. l' (mimeograph copy, n.d.), p. 2; National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahā'īs of the U.K. *Bahā'ī Monthly News Service*, 2:7 (February, 1981), p. 5.

and Edward Said.[165] According to this critique, orientalism is an adjunct of the imperialist venture, whereby the West creates an intellectual Orient for itself, as part of the process of physically and mentally controlling the real East, and as a means towards understanding itself better by creating a psychologically useful image of 'the Other'. Said maintains that 'empirical data about the Orient or about any of its parts count for very little; what matters and is decisive is what I have been calling the Orientalist vision, a vision by no means confined to the professional scholar, but rather the common possession of all who have thought about the Orient in the West.... The Orientalist attitude... shares with magic and with mythology the self-containing, self-reinforcing character of a closed system, in which objects are what they are *because* they are what they are, for once, for all time, for ontological reasons that no empirical material can either dislodge or alter'.[166] This critique, which is elaborate and, it must be said, frequently exaggerated, has been eagerly adopted by some contemporary Muslim polemicists as a reductionist device for refuting what they interpret as western criticisms of their faith and culture. In all of this, it is often forgotten that, although the primary impulse for the orientalist vision came from the West, an important part of the process of creating an Orient of the mind was the way in which many Muslim thinkers borrowed western lenses, as it were, through which to see and interpret their own society. It is, indeed, a point worth noting that the critique of orientalism has itself been developed on modern western lines and is not derived from any set of traditional or contemporary Islamic approaches.

Viewed from this angle, Shoghi Effendi's achievement begins to make a great deal of sense. He himself was ideally situated to act the part of

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[165] See Jacques Waardenburg *L'Islam dans le miroir de l'Occident* (The Hague, 1963); Edward Said *Orientalism* (New York, 1978). See also Bryan Turner 'Accounting for the Orient' in D. MacEoin and A. Al-Shahi eds. *Islam in the Modern World* (London, 1983); Ernest Gellner 'In defence of Orientalism' in *Sociology* 14 (1980), pp. 295–300; Ghislaine Alleaume 'L'Orientalisme dans le miroir de la litterature Arabe' in Bulletin of the *British Society for Middle East Studies* 9:1 (1982), pp. 5–13; Clement Dodd 'The Critique of Orientalism' in ibid., 6:2 (1979), pp. 85–95. [Since its publication, *Orientalism* has spawned a vast academic theory generally termed post-colonialism studies, whereby Said's ideas are applied to non-oriental societies. More recently, it has become a target for writers arguing that Said's simplistic anti-Westernism has distorted academic work in many fields. See Robert Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing: the Orientalists and their Enemies*, London, 2007; Ibn Warraq, *Defending the West: A Critique of Edward Said's 'Orientalism'*, Amherst, 2007.]

[166] Said *Orientalism*, pp. 69–70.

an eastern orientalist, living as he did in a sort of intermediate realm between East and West. An Iranian by birth, he never set foot in his native country and lived for most of his life in Haifa, as the head of a small community composed almost equally of Persian and western Bahā'īs. Fluent in Persian and Arabic, he received a western education in Haifa, Beirut, and Oxford, where he acquired a felicitous command of English coupled with a predilection for orotund prose.[167] Following his accession to the position of Guardian of the Bahā'ī faith in 1921, he 'refused to wear a turban and the long oriental robes the Master (i.e. 'Abd al-Bahā', his grandfather) had always worn; he refused to go to the mosque on Friday, a usual practice of 'Abd al-Bahā'; he refused to spend hours with visiting Muslim priests, who were wont to pass the time of day with the Master…'.[168] In 1937, he married Mary Maxwell, the daughter of two well-known Canadian Bahā'īs, an act he regarded as symbolic of the 'union of East and West'.[169]

When we turn to his English writings, it is striking to observe how far Shoghi Effendi had disengaged himself from the Iranian and Islamic backgrounds of Babism and Baha'ism. He writes as if himself a Westerner, viewing the Orient from outside and using racial and religious stereotypes that owe a great deal to nineteenth-century European concepts of Iran and Islam. Thus, for example, he describes the Iranian people as 'the most decadent race in the civilized world, grossly ignorant, savage, cruel, steeped in prejudice, servile in their submission to an almost deified hierarchy, recalling in their abjectness the Israelites of Egypt in the days of Moses, in their fanaticism the Jews in the days of Jesus, and in their perversity the idolators of Arabia in the days of Muḥammad'.[170] Elsewhere, he writes: 'All observers agree in representing Persia as a feeble and backward nation divided against itself by corrupt practices and ferocious bigotries. Inefficiency and wretchedness, the fruit of moral decay, filled the land. From the highest to the lowest

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[167] See Rabbani *Priceless Pearl*, pp. 9, 14–15, 17, 25–26, 30, 34–38.

[168] Ibid., pp. 54–55.

[169] Ibid., p. 152.

[170] *God Passes By*, p. 4. The passage seems to be based on a sentence of A. L. M. Nicolas in his introduction to his translation of the Persian *Bayān: Le Bayān Persan*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1911–14), vol. 1, p. iv. See also *God Passes By*, pp. 84, 197 ('a country "firmly stereotyped in the immemorial traditions of the East"'—the unsourced quotation is from George Curzon *Persia and the Persian Question*, 2 vols. [London, 1892]. vol. 1, p. 391). This dismissive stereotyping is still apparent in some western Bahā'ī writing about Iran (e.g. 'barely civilized countries, such as Iran', Nash, *Iran's Secret Pogrom*, p. 39).

there appeared neither the capacity to carry out methods of reform nor even the will seriously to institute them. National conceit preached a grandiose self-content. A pall of immobility lay over all things, and a general paralysis of mind made any development impossible'.[171]

The Iranian government is described as 'bolstered up by a flock of idle, parasitical princelings and governors, corrupt, incompetent, tenaciously holding to their ill-gotten privileges, and utterly subservient to a notoriously degraded clerical order',[172] while Sulṭān ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz and Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh are dismissed as 'two Oriental despots'.[173] Shoghi Effendi's portrayal of contemporary Islam is similarly stereotyped, reminiscent as it is of much late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century western writing devoted to the need for reform in the Islamic world. He speaks of 'arrogant, fanatical, perfidious, and retrograde clericals',[174] of their 'fanatical outcries, their clamorous invocations, their noisy demonstrations'[175] and their theological colleges 'with their medieval learning',[176] and of 'innumerable tomes of theological commentaries, super-commentaries, glosses and notes, unreadable, unprofitable, the product of misdirected ingenuity and toil, and pronounced by one of the most enlightened Islamic thinkers in modern times as works obscuring sound knowledge, breeding maggots, and fit for fire',[177] while he writes more than once with undisguised approval of the decline in the authority and influence of Islam in the modern period.[178]

What distinguishes Shoghi Effendi's image of Iran and Islam from the condemnatory references of his predecessors, is that he draws so heavily, not on first-hand experience, but on secondary opinions drawn exclusively from the works of western writers. In his introduction to

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[171] Introduction to Zarandī *Dawn-Breakers*, p. xxiv. This introduction as a whole is a sustained example of Shoghi Effendi's orientalist approach. It has been claimed that it was actually penned by the Irish Bahā'ī writer George Townshend (letter from the Universal House of Justice, *Bahā'ī Monthly News Service*, London, 3:3, p. 2, referring to Townshend as Shoghi Effendi's 'English correspondent'). Shoghi Effendi himself thanks his English correspondent 'for his help in the preparation of the Introduction' (*Dawn-Breakers*, p. lxi), which implies that he himself took a greater hand in finalizing its text than the House of Justice suggests.

[172] *God Passes By*, p. 4.

[173] Ibid., p. 185.

[174] *Promised Day*, p. 95.

[175] Ibid., p. 96.

[176] Ibid.

[177] Ibid. This passage is based on E. G. Browne *A Literary History of Persia*, vol. 4 (Cambridge, 1924), pp. 377, 416.

[178] See *Promised Day*, pp, 93–102; cf. *World Order*, pp. 172–80.

*The Dawn-Breakers*, for example, he draws his readers' attention to 'books of European travellers like Lord Curzon, Sir J. Malcolm, and others',[179] without even pointing out the gap of almost eighty years that separates Malcolm's *History of Persia* from Curzon's *Persia and the Persian Question*. He himself makes use of quotations from works such as these, not only in his footnotes to Nabīl's Narrative, but in the text of *God Passes By*, where they are often not even attributed. What is, perhaps, more significant in the present context is that, when, in *God Passes By*, Shoghi Effendi quotes western sources with reference to Babism, he almost never has recourse to the works of the few scholars, such as Browne and Nicolas, who were relatively well informed on the subject, but makes use instead of comments by writers such as Curzon or Gobineau, or even Ernest Renan, Jules Bois, or numerous other literary figures, none of whom had any real knowledge of the subject or its background at all.[180] The passages quoted are invariably approbatory and are generally couched in enthusiastic and hyperbolic language. Most importantly, these quotations together provide a consensus that is wholly Western in inspiration, through which Babism is interpreted and represented in a manner palatable to the modern Bahā'ī audience for whom Shoghi Effendi was writing.

The influence of Shoghi Effendi's orientalist vision of the Bābī-Bahā'ī movement on later Bahā'ī writing in the West has been profound and enduring. It is his conflation of the two sects into a unitary 'Bahā'ī Faith' that holds true for present-day adherents, rather than ʿAbd al-Bahā's or Gulpāygānī's emphasis on their mutual distinctiveness, and it is a second-hand western image of Babism that prevails, rather than one grounded in a realistic presentation of contemporary Iranian and Shīʿī history. Since the Bābī scriptures—with the exception of a few texts noted below—have never been made available to Bahā'īs, even in Iran, and since knowledge of Bābī history tends to be limited to the contents of Nabil's Narrative, *God Passes By*, and various derivative works, references to the 'teachings of the Bāb' in Bahā'ī literature have been more notable for their vague idealism than for their correspondence to textual and historical realities. It is not insignificant that George Townshend, an influential contemporary of Shoghi Effendi's, adopts his technique of using a poorly-informed secondary source as the basis for his version of

[179] p. xxiv.
[180] *God Passes By*, pp. 46, 55–56, 65–66, 76, 80–81, 203–04.

Bābī doctrine: 'The teaching (of the Bāb) was in itself such as no lover of God or of mankind could object to. "Babism," wrote Lord Curzon in his *Persia and the Persian Question* (pp. 501–2), "may be defined as a creed of charity and almost of common humanity. Brotherly love, kindness to children, courtesy combined with dignity, sociability, hospitality, freedom from bigotry, friendliness even to Christians, are included in its tenets." . . . The teaching of the Bāb, like his character, was beautiful and attractive.'[181] Curzon, writing in 1892, was obviously referring here to the tenets of Baha'ism, which he, like many other European writers of the period, continued to refer to as 'Babism'.

Misrepresentations of this kind can, of course, for the most part be laid at the door of simple ignorance of the facts combined with a certain degree of wishful thinking. But there is evidence that, apart from Shoghi Effendi's own efforts in this direction, some conscious manipulation of the data has occurred. In his introduction to his *Bābī and Bahāʾī Religions*, Moojan Momen writes that 'it would be interesting to be able to come to an understanding of the Bāb's attitude towards the upheavals caused by his followers. It would seem that the Bāb neither strongly advocated nor discouraged the warlike activities of his supporters', and continues in a footnote that 'a passing reference to *jihād* (religious warfare) in the sixth chapter of the seventh *vāhid* of the Persian *Bayān* indicates that the Bāb was not opposed to this concept, although it was later forbidden by Bahāʾuʾllāh'.[182] From other references, however, it is clear that Momen is familiar with the Bāb's earlier *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, which contains numerous references to *jihād*,[183] and, in view of his extensive scholarly work in this area, it must be presumed that he is also aware of the general contents of the *Bayān* and other late works of the Bāb, in which a severe attitude towards unbelievers is unequivocally expressed. Again, he writes that 'the present incomplete state of knowledge concerning the teachings of the Bāb precludes any attempt to give an outline of his doctrines beyond what is given below,'[184] and some pages later he summarizes what he calls 'the teachings given by the Bāb and Bahāʾuʾllāh, and expounded by 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi

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[181] *The Promise of All Ages* (London, n.d.), pp. 136, 138. The quotation from Curzon is, in fact, from volume one. For an example of similar confusion, see Ruhiyyih Rabbani *Prescription for Living* rev. ed (London, 1960), pp. 150, 154.

[182] *Bābī and Bahāʾī Religions*, p. xxi.

[183] Momen 'The Trial of Mullā ʿAlī Basṭāmī', p. 118.

[184] *Bābī and Bahāʾī Religions*, p. xxi.

Effendi'.[185] These latter, however, are all Bahāʾī teachings, only a few of which are also taught by the Bāb. None of the distinctive teachings of the Bāb mentioned by ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ are even hinted at. In view of the accessibility of original texts of the major writings of the Bāb, one has to ask why Momen refers to 'the present incomplete state of knowledge' concerning them. It cannot be denied that much work remains to be done in this area, but it is far from true to suggest that no general account can be given of Bābī doctrine. This misrepresentation of the true facts is doubly misleading in that, elsewhere in his book Momen is at pains to 'correct' what he regards as the errors of early western writers on the subject.

It is of even greater interest to examine a publication entitled *Selections from the Writings of the Bāb*, translated by Ḥabīb Taherzadeh and published under the auspices of the Universal House of Justice in Haifa in 1976.[186] Significantly referred to in the preface as 'a precious addition to the volume of Bahāʾī literature in the English language,'[187] this compilation contains excerpts from the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, *Bayān-i Fārsī*, *Dalāʾil-i sabʿa*, *Kitāb al-asmāʾ*, and other short works of the Bāb. While several sections are of undoubted interest, it is extraordinary to observe that not a single passage has been translated that deals with any of what had earlier been regarded by Bahāʾīs as the most distinctive laws and teachings of Babism. Indeed, to anyone who has read the Bāb's works at any length, the compilation seems remarkably unrepresentative, composed as it is of brief passages of a general ethical and theological nature, and leaving out some of the most exciting and significant sections of the writings used. The sense of conflation is reinforced by the use of an English style closely modelled on that of Shoghi Effendi in his translations of the works of Bahāʾ Allāh.

Over seventy years ago, E. G. Browne wrote that 'the more the Bahāʾī doctrine spreads, especially outside Persia, and most of all in Europe and America, the more the true history and nature of the original Bābī movement is obscured and distorted'.[188] As time passes and the Bahāʾī version of Babism is presented with increasing confidence in a growing body of literature, while historical image and self image become

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[185] Ibid., pp. xxiii–xxv.

[186] A volume containing the original texts was published shortly afterwards in Iran: *Muntakhabāt-i āyāt az Āthār-i Ḥaḍrat-i Nuqṭa-yi Ūlā* (Tehran, 134 *badīʿ*/1978–79).

[187] *Selections from the Writings of the Bāb* (Haifa, 1976), p. v.

[188] *Nuqṭatuʾl-kāf*, p. xxxv.

more and more mutually reinforcing, it would seem that Browne's pessimism was not misplaced. At the same time, the undoubted concern of modern Bahā'īs with the 'historicity' of their faith and the eagerness they express for more detailed information regarding its origins, must lead, in the long run, to some sort of confrontation with precisely the kind of uncomfortable data that efforts have previously been made to suppress. If that should happen, it may be expected that we will witness yet another twist in the complex spiral whereby Baha'ism has sought to come to terms with its own immediate antecedents and the problems created by the need to conflate early Babism with itself.

# NINETEENTH-CENTURY BĀBĪ TALISMANS*

One of the chief features of early Babism is the remarkable combination within the same movement of elements from both popular and official religion. The members of the original core group of converts centred around Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad Shīrāzī, the Bāb, from the spring of 1844, were all middle- or low-ranking ʿ*ulamāʾ* recruited exclusively from the ranks of the semi-heterodox Shaykhī school, to which the Bāb himself was affiliated. As the movement spread, converts were made outside the circle of Shaykhism, and the provincial Bābī leaders of the late 1840s included important local ʿulamāʾ such as Sayyid Yaḥyā Dārābī in Nayrīz and Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī Zanjānī in Zanjān. At the same time, Shīrāzī himself and some of his early converts, including members of his own family, were not ʿulamāʾ, but rather laymen with an intense interest in religious matters and a smattering of theological and philosophical knowledge.[1] Although the leadership of the sect remained firmly in the hands of lay members played a greater role within it than they could have done in the wider context of official Shiʿism and, as time went on. an increasing number of merchants, urban workers, and peasants affiliated themselves in some degree to the movement.[2]

It is clear from some early Bābī writings that a major preoccupation of many of those who accepted the claims of Shīrāzī was the possibility of dispensing with rational proofs or knowledge in religious matters. In an important but hitherto neglected Bābī treatise[3] dating from the

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* First published in *Studia Iranica* 14:1 (1985), pp. 77–98.

[1] On the amateur scholarship of some of the Bāb's relatives, see A. Amanat, 'The Early Years of the Bābī Movement', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Oxford University, 1981, pp. 111–113 [published as *Resurrection and Renewal*].

[2] For analyses of the social origins of the Bābīs in several major centres, see M. Momen 'The Social Basis of the Bābī Upheavals in Iran (1848–1853): A Preliminary Analysis', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 15 (1983): 157–183.

[3] This untitled and anonymous risāla is contained in a manuscript collection entitled *Sūrat-i nivishtijāt va āthār-i aṣḥāb-i awwaliyya-yi amr-i aʿlā ki dar ithbāt-i amr-i badīʿ nivishta-and*, Iranian National Bahāʾī Archives. A xerox edition of the manuscript bearing the number 80 was produced in 133 badīʿ/1917. The *risāla* in question is on pp. 212–282. The name of the writer is not given anywhere, but the style and content strongly favour attribution of the treatise to Fāṭima Baraghānī Qurrat al-ʿAyn, a possibility which is strengthened by the writer's personal description in the feminine as *hādhihi al-aqalla min al-dharra* (this one [who is] smaller than an atom) (p. 278).

early period (about 1846), the anonymous author condemns those who depend on proofs such as the Qurʾān and sunna for their knowledge (*maʿrifa*) of 'the new word'.[4] By way of contrast, the same writer praises the earliest followers of the Bāb for having believed without proofs[5] and urges the 'brethren' to 'abandon those imaginations which you have conceived and which you have named "knowledge".[6] The same treatise stresses the value of the organs of the heart (*fuʾād*) in reaching true understanding[7] and emphasizes spiritual love as the prerequisite for gnosis.[8] This concern for pure knowledge was exhibited by both laymen and *ʿulamāʾ* and owed much to the Shaykhī origins of the movement, in which traditional Islamic preoccupations with *ʿilm* and *maʿrifa* were given an unusual emphasis.[9]

From its inception, Shaykhism had been particularly concerned with the problem of securing uncorrupted and comprehensive knowledge. Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Zayn al-Dīn al-Aḥsāʾī (1166/1753–1241/1826)[10] upon whose teachings the school was based after his death, was one of the most brilliant Shīʿī theologians of his day. Although his major works[11] were concerned primarily with aspects of theosophical Shiʿism (*ḥikma ilāhiyya*), he also wrote at length on most areas of Shīʿī doctrine and practice, including theology, Qurʾān, ḥadīth, and *fiqh.* His chief disciple and successor, Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī (d. 1260/1844), emphasized the universality of al-Aḥsāʾī's knowledge, enumerating some thirty sciences in which he was adept.[12] These include the main occult sciences of astrology, alchemy, numerology, gematria, *jafr*, and the four disciplines known as *līmīyā, hīmīyā, sīmīyā*, and *rīmīyā.*[13]

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[4] Ibid., p. 217.
[5] Ibid., p. 224.
[6] Ibid., p. 244.
[7] Ibid., p. 246.
[8] Ibid., p. 293.
[9] On traditional theories of knowledge, see F. Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant* (Leiden, 1970), especially pp. 142–154, on Shīʿī notions.
[10] See D. M. MacEoin 'From Shaykhism to Bābīsm', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Cambridge University, 1979, chapter 2 (reprinted here); idem 'Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī', *Encyclopaedia Iranica* vol. 1, pp. 674–8.
[11] A full list of al-Aḥsāʾī's works is given in Abu 'l-Qāsim ibn Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn (Ibrāhīmī), *Fihrist-i kutub-i…Shaykh Ahmad Ahsāʾī wa sāʾir-i mashāyikh-i ʿiẓām*, 3rd. ed. (Kirman, n.d. [1977]), pp. 219–288.
[12] Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, *Dalīl al-mutaḥayyirīn* (n.p. 1276/1859–60),13–16.
[13] Together with alchemy (*kīmiyā*), these form the 'five occult sciences' that are the subject of the *Asrār-i Qāsimī* (Bombay, 1302/1885), attributed to Ḥusayn Wāʿiẓ-i Kāshifī (d.1505). Their initial letters form the words *kulluhu sirr*, 'it is all a mystery'.

The breadth of al-Aḥsāʾī's knowledge was, however, less significant for his followers than the source from which it was supposed to come. Despite his excommunication (*takfīr*) towards the end of his life, al-Aḥsāʾī may be fairly regarded, not just as one of the leading Shīʿī thinkers of the early nineteenth century, but, more particularly, as the chief representative of a central strand in the Uṣūlī tradition in which non-rational modes of understanding in religious matters were emphasized.[14] The possibility that knowledge could be acquired through learning or *taqlīd* (following the rulings of a mujtahid), but through intuitive revelation (*kashf*) involving direct contact with supernatural agencies in the interworld of the *barzakh*, was for many Uṣūlī scholars a necessary corollary to the use of reason in the pursuit of the traditional sciences. Al-Aḥsāʾī went much further than any of his contemporaries in claiming more or less perpetual access to supernatural sources of knowledge: 'The ʿulamāʾ,' he writes, 'derive their knowledge from one another, but I have never followed in their way. I have derived what I know from the Imams of guidance, and error cannot find its way into my words, since all that I confirm in my books is from them and they are preserved from sin and ignorance and error. Whoso derives (his knowledge) from them shall not err, inasmuch as he is following them'.[15]

This knowledge was, moreover, transferable. In speaking of his successor, Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, al-Aḥsāʾī emphasized his own role as a medium for the transmission of what was ultimately divinely inspired knowledge: 'He (Rashtī) has learnt what he knows orally from me (al-Aḥsāʾī), and I have learnt (what I know) orally from the Imams, and they have learnt from God without the mediation of anyone'.[16] Later Shaykhī leaders, notably Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī (1225/1809–1288/1870), the first *shaykh* of the Kerman blanch of the school, even sought to bypass al-Aḥsāʾī in claiming access to direct knowledge from God for themselves. Karīm Khān, for example, speaks

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*Līmīyā* is the science of talismans, *hīmīyā* that of spells and suchlike, *sīmīyā* seems to be equivalent to mesmerism, and *rīmīyā* to be nothing more than conjuring. See E. G. Browne *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Oriental MSS. belonging to the late E. G. Browne*, ed. R. A. Nicholson (Cambridge, 1932), p. 200.

[14] On this theme, see Amanat, 'Early Years', pp. 23–29.

[15] Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ al-fawāʾid* (n.p., 1272/1856), p. 4 (the original text was completed in 1233/1818).

[16] Quoted Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī, *Hidāyat al-Ṭālibīn*. 2nd. ed. (Kirman, 1380/1960–61), p. 71.

of God's eternal 'Book of knowledge' and says that 'whatever I write here is a dictation from that Book. The visible book I am writing with my hand is the copy of that Book written by God Himself.[17]

The implications of such direct access to knowledge are discussed with respect to Karīm Khān by a later head of the school in the following terms: 'The best introduction and explanation of his life is his books, which dealt in an original fashion with all arts and sciences. They were not copied from anyone else, for he obtained all his knowledge from the Family of Muḥammad (i.e. the Imams). In contrast to most men, who imagine that the knowledge of the Family of Muḥammad is limited to the explanation of the regulations of the religious law, acts of worship, and social relations, he believed that all sciences relative to this world and the next, to the past and the future, were to be found in their correct form in the possession of the Family of Muḥammad'.[18] Karīm Khān's own faith in the universality of his knowledge was enough to encourage him to write on an extraordinary range of topics, from medicine to optics to the occult sciences.[19]

Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad Shīrāzī (1235/1819–1266/1850) began his career with claims very similar to these.[20] In his early writings, he describes himself as the 'gate' (bāb) of the hidden imam, sent by him as his Proof and Remembrance to men, in order to prepare them for his imminent return. His writings are 'revealed' to him by the Imam, who has received them from God,[21] or, in different terminology, the Imam inspires (*awḥā*—cf. *waḥy*) the Bāb with what God has inspired him.[22] Thus, he maintains, his knowledge consists of what God himself has taught him.[23] One of the Bāb's leading followers, Qurrat al-ʿAyn, a female scholar who was the effective head of the Bābī community in Iraq (and later possibly the most influential single individual in the movement after the Bāb), writes in a letter of how, in every age, God reveals what she terms 'the bearer of the knowledge of the unseen'

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[17] Quoted M. Bayat *Mysticism and Dissent: Socioreligious Thought in Qajar Iran* (Syracuse University Press, 1982), p. 77.

[18] Ibrāhīmī, *Fihrist*, p. 58.

[19] A full bibliography of his writings may be found ibid., pp. 360–487.

[20] On the early claims of the Bāb, see MacEoin, 'From Shaykhism to Bābīsm', chapter 5; idem 'Early Shaykhī Reactions to the Bāb and his Claims' in M. Momen (ed.) *Studies in Bābī and Bahā'ī History*, vol. 1 (Los Angeles, 1983), pp. 16–19.

[21] Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad Shīrāzī *Qayyūm al-asmā'*, Ms. F. 11 in the E. G. Browne Oriental Collection, Cambridge University Library, f. 196b; cf. f. 29b.

[22] Ibid., f. 4b; cf. f. 90b.

[23] Ibid., f. 5b.

(*ḥāmil-i ʿilm-i ghaybat*).[24] She goes on to say that knowledge of the unseen has now been revealed and that her recipient should recognize the Báb as 'the bearer of divine knowledge' (*ḥāmil-i ʿilm-i rabbāniyya*).[25] In the anonymous *risāla* referred to earlier—which may, in fact, have been written by Qurrat al-ʿAyn—the author states that 'in this day, there is no knowledge except what the Remembrance (i.e. the Báb) has taught. And he teaches only what he has beheld within himself, according to what his Lord has caused him to behold upon himself, from the description of His own Self.[26]

In 1848 the Báb, possibly encouraged by Qurrat al-ʿAyn's increasing emphasis on the advent of an age of inner truth succeeding that of outward observance, proclaimed himself to be the hidden Imam in person. Using this as a starting-point, as it were, he went on to develop his claims in a radical manner, describing himself as a manifestation of the Universal or Primal Will empowered to abrogate the religious dispensation of Islam and to usher in a new revelation.[27] As such, he was not so much in contact with divine knowledge as its source, just as he was the cause of the entire creation and the one who had sent all the previous prophets and their books.[28] He could, therefore, reveal to men not only material knowledge, but also gnosis located in the interworld of *barzakh* or *hūrqalyā*.[29]

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[24] Untitled *risāla* in possession of Mr Nūrī Naẓarī, p. 12 (copy in possession of present author).

[25] Ibid., p. 16.

[26] Risāla in *Sūrat-i nivishtijāt*, pp. 288–289.

[27] This claim is consistently urged in the Báb's later works, principally the *Bayān-i Fārsī* ([Tehran], n.d.), *Dālāʾil-i sabʿa* [Tehran], n.d.), and *Kitāb-i panj shaʾn* ([Tehran], n.d.).

[28] See, for example, *Bayān-i Fārsī* 2:1 (p. 18): 'let him . . . ask whatever he wishes on any question, to be answered in the form of verses, so that he may hear for himself how the source (*mubdiʾ*) neither hesitates nor composes artificially nor consciously considers the order of words'; 2:8 (p. 39): One should regard all things as coming into existence through the Primal Will'; 2:8 (p. 37): 'Whatever is mentioned concerning the "appearance" of God (*ẓuhūr Allāh*) refers to the Tree of Reality (i.e. the manifested Primal Will), which is a token of none but Him. That is a Tree which has been and is responsible for sending forth all the divine Messengers and causing all the Books to descend'.

[29] See ibid., 2:9 (p. 44): 'How often has that same locus of the Universal Will (*maẓhar-i mashiyyat-i kulliyya*) opened up a gate of mystic knowledge (*maʾrifa*) in the Interworld (*barzakh*)'. On Karīm Khān Kirmānī's ideas regarding the availability of knowledge in the Interworld, see Bayat *Mysticism and Dissent*, pp. 75, 77. On the Shaykhī concept *hūrqalyā*, see H. Corbin, *Terre Céleste et Corps de Résurrection* (Paris, I960) passim (see index).

What was the content of this supernatural knowledge that the Bāb claimed to make known in his writings? In the broadest sense, it differs little from most other systems of esoteric knowledge in Sufism or extreme Shiʿism, in that it purports to reveal the inner meaning (*bāṭin*) and structure of exoteric reality and, in particular, the true significance of expressions of that reality in conventional scriptural terminology. The Bāb is especially concerned to uncover the meaning behind eschatological concepts such as resurrection, the grave, the questioning of the dead, death itself (and life), the hour, the bridge, the book, and so forth, which he reinterprets in an original allegorical manner within the framework of an elaborate metaphysical system. The Bāb's view of the world is rooted in a subtle vision of existence as structured according to a series of correspondences between names and the realities that underlie them, in patterns familiar to us from Ḥurūfī, Bektāshī, and related speculations.

This system of correspondences is linked in a unique way to the Bāb's theory of knowledge in general, much as the idea of *kashf* is central to Ibn al-ʿArabī's ontology.[30] A knowledge of the realities lying behind words and letters is not merely part of a more comprehensive knowledge, but serves as the key to such a knowledge and forms the most distinctive feature of the Bāb's revelation of hidden truth. In one of the last sections of the *Kitāb-i panj shaʾn* or *Shuʾūn-i khamsa*,[31] an extremely late major work of the Bāb's, written between 19 March and 5 April 1850, God is credited with the following statement: 'I have created the letters and made them the keys of every science (*mafātīḥ kulli ʿilm*)'.[32] He then goes on to address all things, saying 'consider everything

[30] On Ibn al-ʿArabī's theory of the soul being able to know its own *qadar* in its archetype when in a state of *kashf*, see T. Izutsu *A Comparative Study of the Key Philosophical Concepts in Sufism and Taoism. Part One: The Ontology of Ibn al-ʿArabī* (Tokyo, 1966), pp. 73–74.

[31] See note 27 above. This book derives its name from the 'five grades' in which the Bāb wrote his works, these being *āyāt* (Qurʾānic-style 'verses'), *munājāt* (prayers), *khuṭba* (homilies), *tafsīr* (commentaries), and *Fārsī* (Persian-language writings): see *Bayān-i Fārsi* 3:17 (p. 102), 6:1 (p. 1X4). 9:2 (p. 313), where *suwar ʿilmiyya* (scientific treatises) replace *khuṭba*. The last five sections of the *Kitāb-i panj shaʾn* (which were addressed to Mīrzā Asad Allāh Khūʾī Dayyān), seem to have been distributed independently and to have been variously named the *Lawḥ-i ḥurūfāt, Risāla-i Jaʿfariyya*, and *Kitāb-i haykal* (or *hayākil*): see D. M. MacEoin 'The Identity of the Bāb's Lawḥ-i ḥurūfāt' in *Bahāʾī Studies Bulletin* 2:1 (June 1983): 78–79.

[32] *Panj shaʾn*, p. 405.

from the most exalted heights to the lowliest atom: you shall behold it all in the twenty-eight letters, just as you have beheld all the letters in it; and you shall behold all the spirits of the letters in their spirits'.[33] Some lines later, he continues: 'I created an essence of hidden[34] and concealed knowledge, and I stored it up behind the veils of the unseen from the beginning that has no beginning until now… We did not see any servants on whom to send down that knowledge, and so We kept it hidden in Our presence until now but We taught (it to) the Thrones of the Reality[35] then to the first believers[36] in every revelation, and We commanded them to conceal (it). But now, since We have observed in this Resurrection[37] that the names of all (things) have become Our tokens, We have desired to show bounty towards them through this knowledge, as an act of grace on Our part…'[38]

This knowledge or science is, of course, the science of gematria and, in particular, the science of letters as expressed in the construction of talismanic devices. In a later section of the *Panj shaʾn*, the Báb, now writing in his own person, explains the importance of this knowledge and provides a brief summary of what it entails.

> Among the bounties bestowed by God on the Point of the Bayān (i.e. the Báb)[39] is the knowledge of all things in a single person (*nafs-i wāḥid*), so that he may behold the creation (*takwīn*) in the world of letters, with the eye of certitude. This is a perfect proof unto all men, like the verses. It was one of those things hidden in the divine knowledge which was not sent down until now und it is more glorious than any other knowledge. All the (holy) books were sent down and shall be sent down on the basis

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Text reads *masṭūr*, but by analogy with the recurring phrase *ʿilm maknūn makhzūn*, I prefer to read *mastūr*.

[35] *Aʿrāsh al-ḥaqīqa*, i.e. the manifestations of the Universal Will. On the use of 'throne', see ibid., p. 422; *Bayān-i Fārsi* 7:10 (p. 252).

[36] *Al-ḥayy al-awwal*, the 'first Living', that is the 'Letters of the Living', *(al-ḥayy* = 18), who are the first eighteen to believe in the manifestation of the Will (see MacEoin 'From Shaykhism to Bābīsm', chapter 4).

[37] *Tilka al-qiyāma*. In the Bābī system, a 'resurrection' occurred each time the manifestation of the Universal Will appeared (see *Bayān-i Fārsi*, 2:7, pp. 30–33).

[38] *Panj shaʾn*, p. 405.

[39] *Nuqṭa-yi Bayān*: the manifestation of the Universal Will is the 'Point' from which all things originate, like a line of writing from an initial dot, and is the essence of the divine word in each era. Thus, Jesus was the 'Point of the Gospel', Muḥammad the 'Point of the Qurʾān', and the Báb the 'Point of the Bayān'. The Báb is more frequently referred to as Nuqṭa-yi Ūlā, the 'Primal Point'.

> of this knowledge… In brief, all things are confined to the twenty-eight letters (of the alphabet). Likewise, the creation of all things is confined to the meanings contained in these letters. God has collected together these letters in eleven degrees within His knowledge (i.e. 11 degrees corresponding to the sum of the letters *hāʾ* and *wāw*, representing existence or *huwiyya*) and has established them as the talisman (*haykal*) of the Primal Will (*mashiyyat-i awwaliyya*), which is the Primal Man (*insān-i awwal*). The outward form *ẓāhir*) of the talisman is the *hāʾ* (= 5), while its inward nature (*bāṭin*) is the *wāw* (= 6). He then created eighteen talismans in the shadow of this talisman, within the ocean of names (i.e. in the world of the divine names). Nor can they become twenty, for the utmost limit of the number of the names is the name *mustaghāth* (= 2001).[40]

The meaning of this rather obscure passage is made somewhat clearer a few lines later, when the Bāb states that this knowledge has only been revealed so that the 'guides of the Bayān may be enabled to prove to others how the whole of the Qurʾān is contained in a single point.[41] This is, of course, a reference to the tradition that the whole of the *Fātiḥa* is in the *basmala*, the whole of the *basmala* in the *bāʾ* and the whole of the *bāʾ* in the point beneath it. In Shīʿī tradition, the point is identified with ʿAlī. A related tradition, of considerable relevance to the present discussion, is that 'knowledge is a single point which the ignorant have multiplied'.

According to the system elaborated by the Bāb in the Persian *Bayān*, the 'Primal Point' from which all things originate is the Universal Will, which first manifests itself in the form of nineteen letters, the numerical equivalent of the divine name *al-wāḥid*. In the religious sphere, this is expressed by the appearance of the Point in the person of the manifestation of the Universal Will, followed by his first eighteen disciples, the first things to be created in each cycle. When nineteen of these wāḥids have been brought into being, 'all things' (*kullu shayʾ* = 361) are symbolically created. This process is again reflected in the structure of the *Bayān* in nineteen sections of nineteen chapters, or the Babi year of nineteen months, each of nineteen days.[42]

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[40] *Panj Shaʾn*, pp. 446–7.
[41] Ibid., p. 447; cf. p. 434.
[42] A useful summary of this subject may be found in A. L. M. Nicolas (trans.) *Le Béyàn Persan*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1911–1914), vol. 1, pp. 7–9, fn. 2.

In the *Kitāb-i panj shaʾn*, however, the Bāb describes this process in a rather more complex way, using as the basis of his system the concept of the Primal Will as a talisman or temple (*haykal*), a notion that can be found in the Persian *Bayān*, where God says, 'there is nothing whatsoever whose decree does not return to this human talisman (*haykal-i insānī*), which has been created at My command. And that talisman returns by degrees until it reaches My Prophet'.[43] This procession of talismans is illustrated in the *Panj shaʾn* by the case of Muḥammad, who is the 'first talisman', followed by the second, who is ʿAlī. Although the talisman of ʿAlī and his inner being were created by Muḥammad, ʿAlī nevertheless possessed what was sent down by God in the Qurʾān, and this was true of each of the succeeding talismans through to the nineteenth, which was the fourth of the *abwāb*.[44]

This concept is not restricted to Muḥammad and his successors, however, as the following passage shows:

> You, O all things, had your origin in a single individual and you shall return to a single individual. You shall recognize that individual, for it is the throne of the manifestation (*ẓuhūr*) of God and the talisman of talismans (*haykal al-hayākil*) in the talisman of God… Compare this by analogy to the sun, then consider the fruits of such an analogy. It shall be your salvation in every revelation and your guidance during every period of inner truth.[45] Whenever the sun of reality rises up, it is but a single sun, and whenever it sets, it is (still) but a single sun.[46]

All of this can be expressed in a more direct fashion through the construction of actual talismans in which the pattern of the reality underlying all creation can be discerned. In the *Dalāʾil-i sabʿa*, which would appear to have been completed shortly after the *Panj shaʾn*, the Bāb writes that 'among the firm evidences is the knowledge of all things in a single individual, the elaboration of which is on the level of miraculous inimitability (*iʿjāz*). This hidden and concealed knowledge has been explained in the *Kitāb-i hayākil-i wāḥid*, nor was anyone aware of it

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[43] *Bayān-i Fārsī* 2:1 (pp. 14–15).

[44] *Panj shaʾn*, p. 412. In fact, the fourth *bāb* was the eighteenth, if we count Muḥammad, Fāṭima, and twelve Imams.

[45] The *ẓuhūr* is when the manifestation of the Will is actually manifested, the *buṭūn* the period from his death to his re-appearance.

[46] *Panj shaʾn*, p. 423. On the return to a single individual, cf. p. 411 and *Bayān-i Fārsī* 1:1 (p. 5).

before this. The fruit of it is this, that one should see in the letters how all things are joined together in eleven degrees, which is the talisman of existence (*haykal-i huwiyyat*). When you cause the first talisman to journey through the ocean of names, it reaches as far as nineteen, but it does not enter the number twenty'.[47]

The above mentioned *Kitāb-i hayākil-i wāḥid*, is, as is evident from number of other sources, nothing other than the last five sections of the *Kitāb-i panj shaʾn*, which are devoted to the explanation of this subject. In these sections, the Bāb provides practical guidance as to how to construct a series of nineteen talismans containing various divine names calculated on an elaborate mathematical basis, as follows.[48]

The first name is obtained by writing down the letters of the alphabet in their numerological order. Since these number twenty-eight, the divine name *wāḥid* (= 28) is obtained.

Next, the dots representing these letters numerically are taken, these being nine units, eighteen tens (i.e. the tens plus the units), twenty-seven hundreds (i.e. the hundreds plus the tens plus the units), and four thousands (i.e. the thousand plus the three other groups). These number fifty-eight in all, which gives us the name *maḥbūb* (= 58).

Next, the *alifs* (that is, the ones) are taken, as follows: 1, 10, 11, 100, 101, 110, 111, 1000, 1001, 1010, 1011, 1100, 1101, 1110, 1111. There are thirty-two occurrences of the numeral one, so we have the name *bīdawī* (= 32). Like many of the names that follow, this is obviously an artificial construction of the Bāb's.

This pattern is continued through the rest of the units up to nine, giving us a total of eleven names, arranged in the following talismanic device:

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[47] *Dalāʾil-i sabʿa*, pp. 45–46. See also *Panj Shaʾn*, pp. 422–423; 'He (God) chose out of the arena of existence a Throne for the revelation of His Essence and a Chair for the dawning of His Self. And He shone forth upon him in Himself through His Self, then sent down the verses of His holiness upon him, then taught him the knowledge of all things in the knowledge of the talismans of oneness'.

[48] *Panj Shaʾn*, pp 406–411.

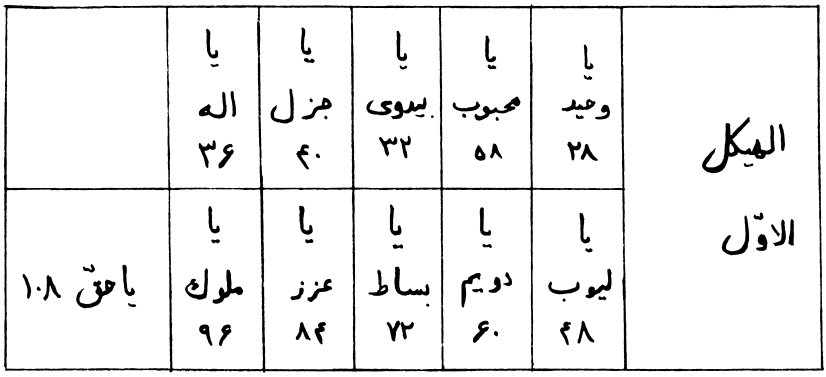


Fig. 1

In this diagram, the top five lines (those of the *hāʾ*) are the exterior (*ẓāhir*) of the first talisman, while the bottom six (those of the *wāw*) are its interior (*bāṭin*). This first talisman, the Báb writes, is 'the essence of the talismans, whereby all are created. It is the unity without numbers; you all originate in it and you shall all return to it'[49]

The remaining eighteen talismans are constructed on the same pattern, except that the numbers used to obtain the names are doubled in the second, trebled in the third, and so on. In other words, the first talisman is constructed on the basis of *alif* (1), the second on the basis of *bāʾ* (2), the third on the basis of *jīm* (3), up to *tā* and *yāʾ* (19)[50]

In the final talisman, it is possible to see 'the form of comprehensiveness' (*sūrat al-jamʿ*).[51]

The Báb seems to have regarded knowledge of the science of talismans as important for two connected reasons. It was, first of all, to serve as a means whereby his followers would be aided to recognize *man yuẓhiruhu 'llāh*, him whom God shall manifest, the messianic figure of the Báb's later works, on his appearance.[52] More significantly, perhaps, this science was seen as a rational proof of the truth of the Báb. We have

[49] Ibid., p 407.On the '*wāḥid* without numbers' contrasted with the '*wāḥid* with numbers' see p. 409.

[50] Ibid., p. 408.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid., p. 428. This element has led to a later Bahāʾī interpretation of this part of the *Panj shaʾn* as a prophecy of the appearance of Mīrzā Ḥusayn ʿAlī Nūrī Bahāʾ Allāh. See idem, letter to Mīrzā Ibrāhīm Shīrāzī, ms. 3003.C in Iranian National Bahāʾī Archives (incorrectly attributed to the Báb), passim.

already quoted a passage from the *Panj shaʾn* in which this knowledge is declared 'a perfect proof to men, like the verses', and another from the *Dalāʾil-i sabʿa* in which it is described as a 'firm evidence' and given the status of a miracle (*iʿjāz*). In the *Panj shaʾn*, more-over, the Bāb says that 'this knowledge of talismans has not been sent down except as a means of evidence (*istidlāl*) for the guides of the Bayān in respect of others, to explain how the entire Qurʾān is contained in a single point and is manifested from it'.[53] More generally, 'the knowledge of all things in the knowledge of the talismans of oneness' is regarded as 'a proof (*ḥujja*) to all that has been and will be created, providing confirmation of his unprecedented wisdom'.[54] This emphasis on the need for rational proofs, which stands in contrast to the earlier stress on the need to abandon such evidences in favour of intuitive recognition of the truth, seems to have become extremely important for the Bāb, who was highly sensitive to attacks made on him by the *ʿulamāʾ*, who criticized his ignorance of the religious sciences and of Arabic grammar. Towards the end of the *Panj shaʾn*, indeed, he writes that 'it has been prohibited in the Bayān to believe in a religion except through demonstration (*dalīl*) and evidence (*burhān*), proof (*ḥujja*) and certitude (*īqān*).[55] It should not be assumed, however, that the Bāb intended this science of letters and talismans to remain purely speculative or evidentiary. Even at the beginning of his career, he had 'fashioned amulets (*hayākil*), charms (*ahrāz*), and talismans (*tilismāt*),[56] and in an early work entitled the *Khasāʾil-i sabʿa*, he instructed each of his followers to wear round his neck a talisman (*haykal*) in his (the Bāb's) hand, containing various names of God and other mysterious devices based on the divine names.[57] Another early work, the *Ṣaḥīfa bayn al-ḥaramayn*, contains a section dealing with talismans, with general instructions for their construction.[58]

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[53] Ibid., p. 447; cf. p. 434.

[54] Ibid., p. 423.

[55] Ibid., p. 437.

[56] Mīrzā Muḥammad ʿAlī Zunūzī, quoted Mīrzā Asad Allāh Fāḍil Māzandarānī *Kitāb-ī ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3 ([Cairo], n.d.), pp. 31–32.

[57] Cited M. A. Fayḍī, *Ḥaḍrat-i Nuqṭa-yi Ūlā* (Tehran, 132 badiʿ 1975–76), pp. 53–54.

[58] *Ṣaḥīfa bayn al-ḥaramayn*, ms. F. 7, Browne Oriental Collection, Cambridge University Library, chapter two, pp. 27–37. Two forms of talisman (*tilism; haykal*) are referred to: rectangular (*shikl al-tarbīʿ*) and triangular (*shikl al-thathlīth*—see p. 28. This latter would seem from the description on p. 30 (which says it should not be regarded as resembling a Christian cross) to be identical with the pentagram talisman which the Bāb later made the Bābī *haykal* proper.

In the *Panj shaʾn*, he instructs his followers to teach their children the science of talismans when they reach the age of eleven (the Bābī age of maturity). He also instructs them to write out the talismans of unity given in the book and to protect themselves with them.[59] More specifically, they are to read eleven *hayākil* every day, completing one cycle of readings every Bābī month (i.e. in nineteen days)[60] a practice which suggests that this particular talismanic design may owe its basic shape to square Shīʿī talismans used on specific days of the week. The following example of such a talisman may be compared with the *haykal* above from the *Panj shaʾn*:[61]

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| بصير بالعباد | انّ الله | الى الله | امرى | وافوض |
| ٧ | ١٢٠٢ | ٧٦ | ٥٣ | محمد علي |
| ١٧ | ع | ١٢ | يي | ١٧٣ |
| ١٧ | ١٩ | ٨١٧٥ | و ٧٠ | ٦ |
| ١٠٧١ | ع | ٩٦ | ١٧ | ١٨ |
| الله | محمد رسول | الا الله | اله | لا |

Fig. 2. (from Philott and Shirazi, JASB 2:10 (1906) p. 534).

[59] *Panj shaʾn* pp. 409, 413.
[60] Ibid., p. 412. This cycle works out exactly.
[61] For examples, see D. C. Philott and M. K. Shirazi 'Notes on certain Shiʿah Tilisms', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Siciety of Bengal* 2:10 (1906) pp. 534–537.

In the case of talismans, perhaps more clearly than in any other instance, we can see how the Báb sought to incorporate within his system practices derived from popular Shiʿism alongside legal and ritual prescriptions of a more formal nature. The Persian *Bayān*, which is the principal text of the Bābī *sharīʿa*, contains a number of regulations relating to the preparation and use of talismans. Two basic forms are mentioned: the *haykal*, which is to be worn by men, and the *dāʾira*, to be worn by women.[62] The Persian *Bayān* also refers to the construction of a *haykal* consisting of 2001 names of God (to the number of *al-mustaghāth*), which is to be worn as an amulet (*ḥirz*) from the moment of birth and never left off.[63] The Arabic *Bayān* and the related *Haykal al-dīn* make it obligatory for every individual either to write or to have written for him from the moment of his conception the phrase *Allāhu aʿẓam* nineteen times per month; if it is light enough, this is to be carried about as a talisman. Should someone fail to complete his talisman up to the time of his death, his youngest heir is to do so for him. These amulets are, in any case, to be passed on to one's heirs.[64]

It is not entirely clear what relationship (if any) exists between the *haykals* described in the *Panj shaʾn* and those in the shape of a pentagram commonly found by that name and evidently identical with the 'triangular' talisman referred to in the *Ṣaḥīfa bayna ʾl-ḥaramayn*. Pentagram *haykals*, many of them in the hands of the Báb and Mírzá Yaḥyá Ṣubḥ-i Azal, are quite common, consisting in general of repetitious phrases, sometimes incorporating Qurʾanic verses and the names of Muḥammad, Fāṭima, ʿAlī, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn. Figs. 3 and 4 will give some idea of the basic form.[65]

There appear to be several variant forms of the *dāʾira* or circle talisman, intended for the use of women. In the Persian *Bayān*, the Báb instructs that it be divided into five *wāḥids*, each to be divided into nineteen sections, and that women may write within it whatever they wish.[66] There is, however, a short but detailed treatise by the Báb, in which the method for constructing a *dāʾira* is given step by step.[67] Figs. 5 and 6 are two examples of talismans drawn on this pattern.

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[62] *Bayān-i Fārsī*, 5:10 (p. 166).
[63] Ibid., 7:10 (pp. 252–253).
[64] *Al-Bayān al-ʿArabī* ([Tehran], n.d.), 7:8 (p. 30); *Haykal al-dīn* (published with foregoing), 7:8 (p. 29).
[65] For examples of pentagram *haykals*, see Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad Shīrāzī and Sayyid Ḥusayn Yazdī *Qismatī az alwāḥ-i khaṭṭ-i Nuqṭa-yi Ūlā wa Āqā Sayyid Ḥusayn Kāṭib* ([Tehran], n.d.), pp. 19, 26.
[66] *Bayān-i Fārsī* 5 10 (p. 166).
[67] Ibid., p. 437.

Fig. 3. (from *Qismati az alwah*, p. 19).

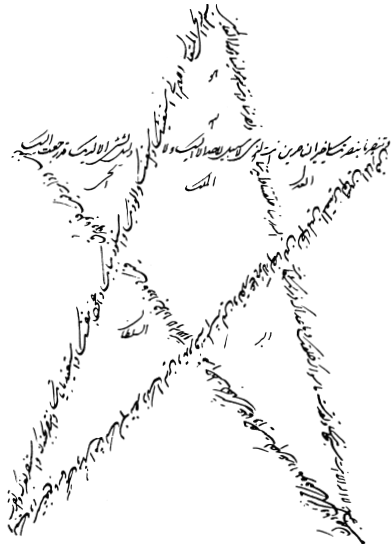

Fig. 4. (item 10:5, Folder 3 E. G. Browne Oriental Collection, Cambridge University Library).

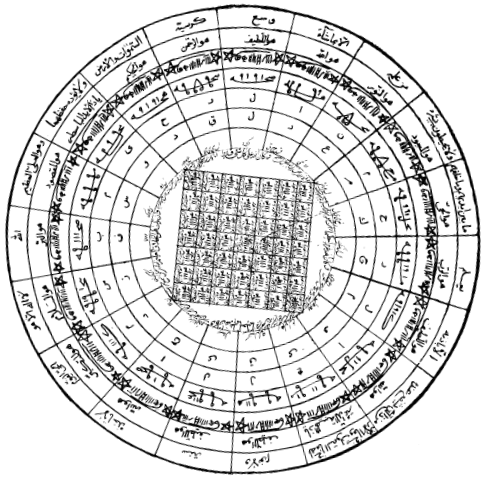

Fig. 5. (item B. 5 in Folder 3, E. G. Browne Oriental Collection, Cambridge University Library).

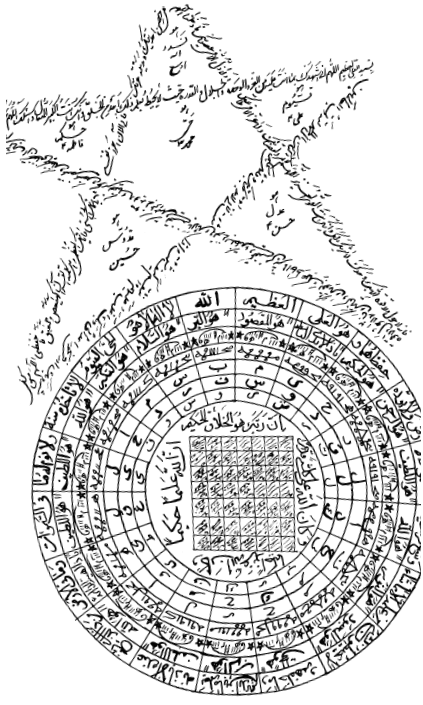

Fig. 6. (from copy of original in possession of author).

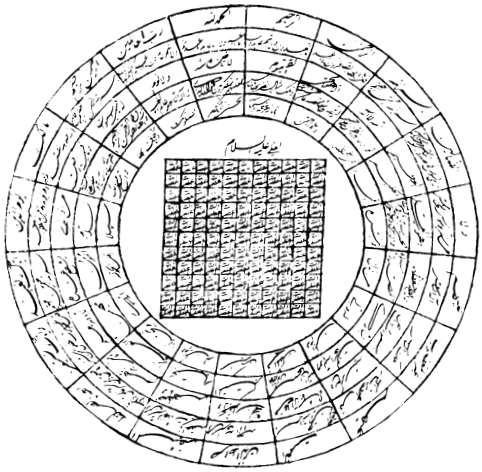

Fig. 7. (from *Qismati az alwah*, p. 11).

It will immediately be apparent that this device is formed on fairly traditional lines, incorporating sever elements derived from standard Islamic talismanic models, such as the seven seals of Solomon,[68] devices formed by analogy with spectacle letters[69] and Qurʾānic verses.

Apart from this more or less standardized form, however, there are two other styles of *dāʾira*—one incorporating Qurʾānic verses around a central *jadwal* bearing the words *Allāhu aʿẓam*, above which is the phrase 'for ʿAlī, on him be peace' (fig. 7)—and one made up of concentric circles of writing alone, in a manner bearing a close resemblance to the pattern of Mesopotamian magic bowls.[70] (fig. 8).

I also possess a copy of a predominantly circular device made up of the complete (but slightly corrupt) text of the 'Lawḥ al-nāqūs' by Mīrzā Ḥusayn ʿAlī Bahāʾ Allāh. The incantatory style of the original suggests a talismanic use, as does the arrangement of four verses at the corners. (fig. 9).

[68] Ibid., p. 437.
[69] Ibid., p. 437.
[70] For these two types of *dāʾira*, see Shīrazī, *Qismati az alwāḥ*, pp. 11, 22. On circular talismans, see T. Canaan 'The Decipherment of Arabic Talismans', *Berytus* IV (1937), p. 109.

Fig. 8. (from *Qismati az alwah*, p. 22).

Fig. 9. (copy of original in possession of author).

Fig. 10

There is, indeed, a close resemblance between this figure and the *dāʾira* found in al-Būnī's *Shams al-maʿārif*:[71] fig. 10.

Dāʾiras are also prescribed for use in the preparation of ringstones. In the Persian *Bayān*, the Bāb writes that 'if anyone should wish to enter into the talismanic protection of God (*ḥirz Allāh*), he should order inscribed on a round cornelian a *dāʾira* of five circles. In the first circle, there is to be written the Throne verse, in the second the names of the circle, in the third the letters of the *basmala*, in the fourth the six names (i.e. *al-fard, al-ḥayy, al-qayyūm, al-ḥakam, al-ʿadl*, and *al-quddūs*), and in the fifth whatever is conformable to the individual's condition and intention, but to no more than nineteen letters. Similarly, it is considered pleasing to God if no more than nineteen letters be inscribed in the first and second circles.[72] The same work also makes it obligatory for everyone to have engraved and to wear in the form of a ring a stone of red cornelian or agate inscribed with the words, 'Say, God is the Truth, and all save God is (His) creation, and all are His servants'.[73]

In the *Haykal al-dīn*, believers are directed to wear on their right hands a ring inscribed with two verses: 'Praise be to God, the mighty Power; praise be to God, the inaccessible knowledge'.[74] In his

[71] See G. Anawati 'Le Nom Suprême de Dieu', *Atti del Terzo Congresso di Studi Arabi e Islamici* (Naples, 1967), p. 31.
[72] *Bayān-i Fārsī* 6:10 (pp. 215–216).
[73] Ibid. p. 215; cf *Al-Bayān al-ʿArabī* 6:10 (p. 24).
[74] *Haykal al-dīn*, 6:10 (p. 24).

Fig. 11

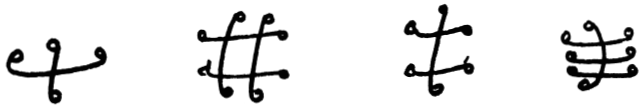

Fig. 12. (from Ibn al-Waḥshiyya).

commentary on the *Sūrat al-qadr*, the Báb recommends the inscription of the seven seals on a ringstone of red Yemeni ruby. Whoever does this 'shall gather together all good, and it shall be his protection (*ḥirz*) from all evil'.[75] Several other inscriptions are recommended elsewhere for use on precious stones.[76]

In this context, it is interesting to note the evidently magical origins of the well-known Bahā'ī ringstone symbol formed from the letters *bā'* and *hā'*, generally understood as a symbolic form of the greatest name of God (which is taken to be *al-bahā'*): fig. 11.

A number of 'spectacle letters' given by Ibn al-Waḥshiyya show a very close resemblance to this figure, and it may be fairly assumed that it has been based on one of these, even though this origin has subsequently been forgotten:[77] fig. 12.

Although talismanic devices and prayers do, in fact, exist in early Bahā'ī literature, their significance has largely been eroded by increasing emphasis within the sect on rationality and the avoidance of

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[75] *Sharḥ sūrat al-qadr*, quoted Māzandarānī, *Asrār*, vol. 5, p. 241.

[76] See ʿA. F. *Ā'īn-i Báb* (Tehran, n.d.), pp. 69–70, quoting *Kitāb-i chahār sha'n* and an untitled *ṣaḥīfa*.

[77] Aḥmad Abū Bakr Ibn Wahshiyya *Kitäb shawq al-mustahām fī maʿrifa rumūz al-aqlām*, trans, and reproduced in Sylvain Matton (ed.) *La magie arabe traditionelle* (Paris, 1977), pp. 129–241. See various letters reproduced on pages 158, 160, 165 (especially the letter *ṣād*).

'superstition'. This development is of particular interest as an example of the way in which western notions of rationality have reinforced existing orthodox disapproval of the occult sciences to displace almost entirely what was originally a major strand of belief and practice in the Bābī tradition.

# BĀB, SAYYED ʿALĪ MOḤAMMAD SHĪRĀZĪ (1235/1819–1266/1850), THE FOUNDER OF BABISM (Q.V.)*

Born in Shiraz on 1 Moḥarram 1235/20 October 1819, he belonged to a family of Ḥosaynī *sayyed*s, most of whom were engaged in mercantile activities in Shiraz and Būshehr. Conflicting accounts indicate that the Bāb's father, Sayyed Reżā Bazzāz, died either when he was in infancy or when he was aged nine and that the Bāb's guardianship was undertaken by a maternal uncle, Ḥājī Mīrzā Sayyed ʿAlī, who later became a disciple and was martyred in Tehran in 1850 (Balyuzi, *The Báb*, p. 32). The family had few direct links with the *ʿolamāʾ*, apart from Mīrzā Moḥammad Ḥasan Shīrāzī (the Mīrzā-ye Shīrāzī of the Tobacco Rebellion, q.v.) and Ḥājī Sayyed Jawād Shīrāzī (an *emām-e jomʿa* of Kermān), but several of them were active adherents of the Shaikhī school (q.v.; Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 30). After six or seven years schooling at a local *maktab*, the Bāb began work in the family business, entering into partnership at the age of fifteen, at which point he went to Būshehr with his guardian. References in some of his early writings, however, suggest that he had little love for business pursuits and instead applied himself to the study of religious literature, including works on *feqh*. At some point during the five or so years he remained in Būshehr, he began to compose prayers and sermons, an activity which seems to have excited unfavorable comment (Balyuzi, *The Báb*, p. 40). The Bāb's short period of study in Iraq, his composition of *tafāsīr* and works on *feqh* and *kalām*, his references to theological literature in his early writings, and his idiosyncratic, ungrammatical Arabic all serve to paint a picture of him in his early youth as a would be *ʿālem* with original aspirations and ideas, whose lack of *madrasa* education, however, excluded from the rank of the *ʿolamāʾ*.

In 1255/1839–40, he headed for the *ʿatabāt* (q.v.) in Iraq, where he spent a year, mostly in Karbalāʾ, where he regularly attended the classes of the then head of the Shaikhī school, Ḥājj Sayyed Kāẓem Rashtī (q.v.) and where he became acquainted with several of the latter's younger disciples, including a number who later became his own followers. This

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* First published in *Encyclopedia Iranica* 3:3 (1988), pp. 278–284. Note different system of transliteration.

obviously crucial period in his development remains virtually undocumented, however, and it is difficult to define the exact dimensions of the Bāb's relations with Shaikhism at this time. In 1256/1840–41, the Bāb returned reluctantly to Shiraz at the insistence of his family and in Rajab, 1258/August, 1842, married Khadīja Begom, a daughter of his mother's paternal uncle. A child, Aḥmad, was born in 1259/1843 but died in infancy or was, possibly, stillborn.

Some months later, Sayyed ʿAlī Moḥammad had what seems to have been the first of a number of dreams or visions through which he was convinced of a high spiritual station for himself; on the following day, he began the composition of his first major work, a *tafsīr* on the *sūra al-Baqara* (see *bayān*). A second such experience occurred on 15 Rabīʿ II 1260/4 May 1844, which he describes as "the first day on which the spirit descended into his heart" (*Ketāb al-fehrest*, p. 286); this experience seems to have been accompanied or followed by a dream in which he imbibed blood from the severed head of the Imam Ḥosayn, to which he later attributed "the appearance of these verses, prayers and divine sciences" (*Ṣaḥīfa-ye ʿadlīya*, p. 14). It must have been immediately after this that he began the composition of his first work of an unconventional nature, the unusual *tafsīr* on the *sūra Yūsof* entitled *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*. He continued to experience dreams or visions until at least Ramaḍān, 1260/September–October, 1844 (see MacEoin, *From Shaykhism*, p. 153 n. 134) and possibly much later, but their significance dwindled as he came to believe himself in a state of perpetual grace and a recipient of direct verbal inspiration from the twelfth imam or God Himself.

About the time of his second vision in Rabīʿ II, 1260/early May, 1844, Sayyed ʿAlī Moḥammad seems already to have been in contact with Mollā Moḥammad Ḥosayn Boshrūʾī (q.v.), a young Shaikhī who had come to Shiraz from Karbalāʾ following the death there of Sayyed Kāẓem Rashtī on 11 Dhū 'l-Ḥejja 1259/1 January 1844. In common with other Shaikhīs, Boshrūʾī was searching for a possible successor to Rashtī (see Babism) and, on 5 Jomādā I/22 May, Sayyed ʿAlī Moḥammad told him privately that he was indeed Rashtī's successor as the bearer of divine knowledge and, more specifically, the channel of communication with (or "gate to") the Hidden Imam (*Bāb al-emām*), a theme which is pursued in the pages of the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*. This date is mentioned by the Bāb in several places, notably his Persian *Bayān* (2:7, p. 30). Boshrūʾī accepted these claims after some consideration, as did several other Shaikhis who arrived in Shiraz from Karbalāʾ shortly after this (see Babism). A small group of disciples, to whom he gave the title

*ḥorūf al-ḥayy* (Letters of the Living) was thus formed about the Bāb, instructed by him, and sent out as missionaries on his behalf to various parts of Iran and Iraq.

The Bāb claimed to be the "gate" (*bāb*) and "representative" (*nāʾeb*) of the Hidden Imam, succeeding Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī (q.v.) and Sayyed Kāẓem Rashtī (*Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, fols. 41a, 64b, 139a; *resāla* in Iran National Bahaʾi Archives 6003c, p. 321; see also MacEoin, "From Shaykhism," pp. 172–73). In his early works, he describes himself as the "remembrance" (*dhekr*) of the imam, the "servant of the *baqīyat Allāh*" (i.e., of the Hidden Imam), and the "seal of the gates" (*khātem al-abwāb*) and makes it clear that he has been sent by the Hidden Imam to prepare men for his imminent advent. An anonymous Bābī *resāla* dated 1848 speaks of how, during the lesser occultation of the imam, there appeared the "four appointed gates" (see bāb) while, in the greater occultation, there were in every age "gates not appointed by name or connection" until the appearance of two further specific gates—Aḥsāʾī and Rashtī (*resāla* in Iran National Bahaʾi Archives, MS 6006.C, p. 8). The Bāb himself is the third of these gates (Qorrat-al-ʿAyn, *resāla* in Golpāyegānī, *Kashf*, p. 2), after whom the Qāʾem will appear (ibid., pp. 14–15). In several passages, however, the Bāb already identifies himself effectively with the imam, while retaining a distinction of function (MacEoin, *From Shaykhism*, p. 174; for a full discussion of the earliest claims of the Bāb see MacEoin, ibid., chap. 5).

While his earliest disciples spread news of his appearance, the Bāb left Shiraz on 26 Shaʿbān 1260/10 September 1844, accompanied by Mollā Moḥammad ʿAlī Bārforūshī (q.v.) and an Ethiopian slave, heading for Mecca by way of Būshehr. After performing the *ḥajj* and visiting Medina, he returned to Būshehr on 8 Jomādā I 1261/15 May 1845 and stayed there until around mid-Rajab/July. Before leaving for the *ḥajj*, he had sent instructions to his followers to gather in Karbalāʾ to await his arrival there, which would be a signal for the appearance of the imam and the waging of the final *jehād*. For reasons that are still unclear, but which may be linked to the arrest and dispatch to Istanbul of his emissary to Karbalāʾ, Mollā ʿAlī Besṭāmī (q.v.), the Bāb decided to return instead to Shiraz. An incident there involving some Bābīs (including Bārforūshī, who had gone ahead from Būshehr) about mid-June led the governor, Mīrzā Ḥosayn Khan Moqaddam Marāghaʾī Ājūdānbāshī, to seek the Bāb's arrest; the latter was, accordingly, taken into custody while en route from Būshehr at the end of June. Placed under house-arrest in his uncle's home, the Bāb occupied himself with

writing and with meeting a stream of visitors now making their way to Shiraz, many of them Shaikhīs from Karbalāʾ. Kept thus in communication with his followers in Iran and Iraq, he was able to direct the course of the growing movement which had by now taken its name from his principal title. Although the leaders of the Bābī movement in the provinces played a significant part in the development of doctrine and the working out of policies, the role of the Bāb ought not to be underestimated. Successive imprisonments between 1261/1845 and 1267/1850 prevented him from active participation in the affairs of the sect, but his writings were copied and widely disseminated and large numbers of pilgrims succeeded in obtaining personal interviews with him, in spite of official disapproval. His authority over his followers remained supreme: Thus, during the controversies centered on the figure of Qorrat-al-ʿAyn (q.v.) which rocked the Bābī community of Karbalāʾ in the early period, final appeal was made to the Bāb in person (Balyuzi, *The Báb*, p. 68; MacEoin, *From Shaykhism*, pp. 203, 207).

There is evidence that, in Būshehr and again in Shiraz, the Bāb adopted a policy of *taqīya*, which involved the public renunciation of his original claims (see Fayẓī, *Khānedān*, pp. 25–28; Balyuzi, *The Báb*, pp. 94–98; Mīrzā Asad-Allāh Fāẓel Māzandarānī, *Asrār-al-āthār* I, Tehran, 124 B. (*Badīʿ*)/1968–69, pp. 179–82). In writings dating from this period and the one following, he denies that there can be an "appointed gate" (*Bāb manṣūṣa*) for the Hidden Imam after the first four gates and argues that any "revelation" (*waḥy*) claimed by him is not comparable to that given to Moḥammad (see ibid.). On one occasion, he was pressed to make a public appearance in the Wakīl mosque of Shiraz, in the course of which he denied all claim to *bābīya* (see Balyuzi, *The Báb*, pp. 94–98).

During an outbreak of cholera in Shiraz in September, 1846, the Bāb succeeded in escaping to Isfahan, where he had already sent a number of disciples to await his arrival, and where he was favorably received in the home of the *emām-e jomʿa*. For a brief period, he was involved in public discussions of his claims, but growing opposition from the *ʿolamāʾ* ended in the issue of a *fatwā* for his execution. At that point he was secretly transferred to the residence of the governor, Manūchehr Khān Moʿtamed-al-Dawla, whose interest in the Bāb's message may have also been tinged by political considerations. Moʿtamed-al-Dawla's plans, which included the introduction of the Bāb to Moḥammad Shāh (possibly with a view to his ultimately replacing Ḥājī Mīrzā Āqāsī [q.v.] as the king's advisor), collapsed on his death in February, 1847. The

loss of his supporter, who had already protected him from the *ʿolamāʾ* of Isfahan by concealing him in his own residence, was a serious blow to the Bāb. Gorgīn Khan, Moʿtamed-al-Dawla's nephew and successor, discovered the prophet and sent him under escort to Tehran, notifying the court of his action. At Kolayn near the capital, however, instructions came that the Bāb was to be taken to the town of Mākū in Azerbaijan, where he arrived, after a stay of forty days in Tabrīz, about July, 1847. It has been suggested that the prime minister, Ḥājī Mīrzā Āqāsī, prevented the Bāb's arrival in Tehran out of fear that he might supplant him as an influence on Moḥammad Shāh (Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 231–32). In Mākū the Bāb was placed under what was originally close confinement in the castle overlooking the town, but before long conditions were sufficiently relaxed to permit the arrival of visitors and the resumption of communications between him and his followers.

The Bāb's growing popularity and the ease with which he was still able to orchestrate the movement for which he was the figurehead gave considerable cause for concern to Ḥājī Mīrzā Āqāsī. At this point, the Russian Minister in Tehran, Dolgorukov, began to exert pressure on the Prime Minister to have the Bāb removed from Mākū, which was located dangerously close to the Russian border; a recent messianic movement in the Caucasus had caused serious problems for the Russians and their fears of renewed chiliastic agitation in the region seem to have been behind their request for the Bāb's removal (see Momen, *Bābī and Bahāʾī Religions*, p. 72). From Mākū, the Bāb, was, accordingly, transferred to Chahrīq near Urmia, at a fair distance from the sensitive border region but still sufficiently far from the heart of Iran. He arrived there in early May, 1848, and was placed under strict confinement.

During the later period of the Bāb's confinement in Mākū, he began to advance claims even more startling than those of *Bāb* and *nāʾeb*. In a letter written shortly before his transfer to Chahrīq, copies of which were soon distributed on his instructions among his followers, he proclaimed himself the Imam Mahdī in person and announced the abrogation of the laws of Islam (Māzandarānī, *Ẓohūr*, pp. 164–66). Not long after his arrival in Chahrīq, he was brought temporarily to Tabrīz, where he was examined by a tribunal of religious and civil dignitaries, including Nāṣer-al-Dīn Mīrzā, the crown prince, then governor of Azerbaijan. At this hearing, the Bāb made public his claim to be the return of the Hidden Imam and was unofficially sentenced to death by several of the *ʿolamāʾ* present. The charge of insanity was introduced in order to prevent his execution at this juncture.

In an account of the Bāb's interrogation possibly written by Amīr Aṣlān Khān Majd-al-Dawla, it is stated that, following his bastinado, the Bāb recanted his claims and gave a "sealed undertaking" that he would not repeat his errors. What appears to be the original of this latter document was discovered in the Iranian state archives after the deposition of Moḥammad-ʿAlī Shah in 1909; it is now understood to be preserved in the Majles Library. The authenticity of the recantation document seems to rest, not only on the handwriting, which bears comparison with that of the Bāb, but also on the explicit denial in it of specific viceregency (*nīāba khāṣṣa*) on behalf of the imam, something the Bāb had already denied several times before. (Facsimiles of both these documents are reproduced by Browne in *Materials*, pp. 248–56.) The implications of his claim to *qāʾemīya* had already been made clear to the authorities when he was brought through Urmia en route to Tabrīz. Several accounts, including some by American missionaries, indicate that large numbers of people turned out to greet him with an enthusiasm bordering on acceptance of him as the imām in person (Momen, op. cit., pp. 73–74). Repeated scenes of this kind, were they to be allowed, could only lead in one direction. That direction was further indicated (almost simultaneously with the Bāb's examination in Tabrīz, see above) at a gathering of some eighty Bābī activists in the village of Badasht [Bidasht] in Māzandarān, where the Bāb's claim to be the Hidden Imam was announced together with a proclamation abrogating the Islamic *sharīʿa*. The Badasht gathering seems to have acted as a signal, in concert with the Bāb's own announcement of his more developed claims, for the successive Bābī-led risings in Māzandarān, Neyrīz (Nīrīz) and Zanjān, between 1848 and 1850 (see Babism).

Following his return to Chahrīq in August, 1848, however, the Bāb devoted himself to the elaboration of a yet more radical development of his position. In the works written between then and his execution in July, 1850, notably in the later parts of the Persian *Bayān*, he claimed to be, not merely the Imam Mahdī, but a theophanic representation of the godhead, a divine manifestation (*maẓhar-e elāhī*) empowered to reveal a new *sharīʿa*, the basic outline of which may be found in the Persian and Arabic *Bayān*s. It is unlikely that these claims of the Bāb were widely known to his followers in the period before his death (the *Bayān*, for example, was not much distributed before then), but they proved an important influence on later Babism with its numerous theophanic claimants, and, in particular, on Bahaʾism as it developed this strand of the Bāb's teaching from the 1860s. Several of the Bāb's

writings during this period, such as the *Ketāb al-asmāʾ* and *Ketāb-e panj shaʾn* indicate growing doctrinal idiosyncrasy and a preoccupation with the amplification of ritual practices largely unrelated to the actual circumstances of the Bābī community.

The struggle between a group of Bābīs and state forces in Māzandarān (September, 1848–May, 1849) caused considerable anxiety in the early months of Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah's reign, but its eventual suppression and the fact that it had been restricted to a rural area lessened the fear of the government. When, however, violence broke out in the urban centers of Neyrīz and Zanjān in May, 1850, Mīrzā Taqī Khan Amīr Neẓām decided to take the extreme step of having the Bāb put to death. He was, accordingly, brought to Tabrīz at the end of June, 1850, and executed by firing squad in the barracks square there at noon on either July 8 or 9. (The Bahaʾis celebrate this event on 9 July, stating that it occurred on 28 Shaʿbān 1266, but several contemporary sources give the date as 8 July—see Momen, op. cit., p. 78 and n.) Accounts of the execution exist, but none is a direct eye-witness description, although there are a few second-hand versions based on the testimony of eyewitnesses. The Bāb survived the first volley, when the bullets cut ropes suspending him and Mīrzā Moḥammad-ʿAlī Zonūzī, a disciple, condemned to death with him; a second regiment had to be brought in to complete the task. The corpses of the Bāb and his fellow-victim were thrown together into a ditch, where they were said to have been eaten by dogs, an action which prompted Justin Sheil, then British Minister in Tehran, to address a note to the prime minister expressing outrage at its barbarity (Momen, *Bābī and Bahaʾi Religion*, p. 79). Bābī sources maintain, however, that the bodies were removed from the ditch through the efforts of a certain Ḥājī Solaymān Khān Mīlānī and eventually brought to Tehran, where they were buried in secret at the Emāmzāda Ḥasan, in which location some modern Bābīs believe them to remain (Nicolas, *Sayyed Ali Mohammed*, pp. 379–85). Bahaʾi accounts, however, state that the remains were at one point removed from the Emāmzāda on the instructions of Mīrzā Ḥosayn-ʿAlī Bahāʾ-Allāh (q.v.) and transferred from hiding-place to hiding-place for almost fifty years before being brought to Haifa in 1899. A shrine to house the remains was begun on Mt. Carmel by ʿAbbās Effendī ʿAbd-al-Bahāʾ (q.v.), who interred them there in 1908 (Balyuzi, *The Báb*, pp. 189–92). Some time later, a marble superstructure topped by a gold-tiled dome was erected over the original shrine and is today a well-known landmark in Haifa, forming the central feature of the complex of Bahaʾi buildings there [since 2008 a UNESCO World Heritage Site].

The Bāb's personality remains elusive in the absence of detailed contemporary descriptions and the presence of so much later hagiographical material. According to Dr. William Cormick, an Irish physician who treated the Bāb following his bastinado in Tabrīz in 1848, he was "a very mild and delicate-looking man, rather small in stature and very fair for a Persian, with a melodious soft voice, which struck me much. Being a Sayyid, he was dressed in the habits of that sect.... In fact his whole look and deportment went far to dispose me in his favour" (quoted in Browne, *Materials*, p. 262). This picture of the Bāb is borne out by more concrete evidence, such as a portrait preserved in the Baha'i archives in Haifa, clothing and other personal effects, and examples of penmanship all testify to a highly-developed aesthetic temperament. The influence of this love of delicacy and fine things is apparent in many of the Bāb's injunctions in the Persian *Bayān* and elsewhere, including regular bathing and depilation, the use of perfumes, rose-water, and henna, the wearing of precious stones, the use of the best paper and calligraphy for writing the scriptures, the detailed rules for the washing, adornment, and burial of the dead, and even in the prohibition on beating children. Such an image must be balanced, however, by reference to the Bāb's obvious harshness in such matters as *jehād*, the treatment of unbelievers and their property (including religious shrines), and the destruction of non-Bābī books.

During the nineteenth century, something of a myth of the Bāb was perpetuated in some intellectual and literary circles in Europe, largely owing to the widespread influence of the Comte de Gobineau's *Religions et philosophies dans l'Asie centrale* (Paris, 1865), which presented an extended and somewhat inaccurate picture of the Bāb not unlike that of Moḥammad popular during the French Enlightenment. This phenomenon is best described by the French journalist Jules Bois, who wrote of the Bāb's death: "All Europe was stirred to pity and indignation.... Among the litterateurs of my generation, in the Paris of 1890, the martyrdom of the Bāb was still as fresh a topic as had been the first news of his death. We wrote poems about him. Sarah Bernhardt entreated Catulle Mendes for a play on the theme of this historic tragedy" ("Babism and Baha'ism," *Forum* 74, 1925, quoted in Momen, op. cit., p. 50). Among others attracted to the Bāb in this period figured Matthew Arnold, Ernest Renan, and, in Russia, Turgenev and Tolstoy; little of this enthusiasm survived into the twentieth century (for further details, see Momen, op. cit., pp. 3–56).

The Bāb's fame has endured chiefly within the context of Baha'ism (see Baha'i faith) in which he plays an important role as an independent divine manifestation in some respects equal, in others subordinate to, Mīrzā Ḥosayn-ʿAlī Bahāʾ-Allāh, for whom he is held to act as a herald (*mobāshsher*). Although Baha'i accounts of the Bāb are more reliable than those of Gobineau and other early European writers, they are frequently edited in order to fit into the wider perspective of Bahaʾi history and are often hagiographic. The standard account, on which all later versions are based to a greater or lesser extent, is Mollā Moḥammad Nabīl Zarandī's history available only in English translation as *The Dawn-Breakers* and subtitled *Nabil's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahāʾī Revelation*. Among Western Baha'is the image of the Bāb is frequently compared to the Christ of popular devotion and made to figure as the saint par excellence of the religion. Few references are made in the published materials to his early claims, his laws, his ritual innovations, or other matters felt to be inconsistent with this image.

For details of the Bāb's works, see bayān.

*Doctrines*. It is difficult to summarize the doctrines taught by the Bāb, largely because these changed substantially between the earliest and latest periods of his career. In works written during the first years following his claim to be *Bāb al-emām*, considerable stress is laid on the theme that his teachings represent the "true Islam" (*al-dīn al-khāleṣ*). Thus, "this religion is, before God, the essence of the religion of Moḥammad" (*Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, fol. 78a), while God has "made this book the essence of the Koran, word for word" (ibid., fol. 72b; cf. fol. 53b) and "The pure faith is the Remembrance in security; whoever desires Islam, let him submit himself to his cause" (ibid., fol. 2a). The laws of Moḥammad and the imams were to remain binding "until the day of resurrection" (ibid., fol. 185b): Islamic injunctions as to what was *ḥarām* and *ḥalāl* were to remain in force (*Ṣaḥīfa-ye ʿadlīya*, pp. 5–6; cf. Balyuzi, *The Báb*, pp. 97–98). At the same time, the Bāb claimed authority to clarify obscure issues relating to the details of the *sharīʿa*, such as *ṣalāt, zakāt*, and *jehād*, and also introduced some ordinances extending or intensifying the standard Koranic regulations. According to one of his followers, in his early letters, the Bāb "put desirable matters (*mostaḥabbāt*) in the place of obligatory (*wājebāt*), and undesirable matters (*makrūhāt*) in the place of forbidden (*moḥarramāt*). Thus, for example, he regarded it as obligatory to have four tablets (*mohr*) from the soil (from the shrine) of the prince of martyrs, [i.e., Imam

Ḥosayn], on which to place the hands, forehead and nose during the prostration of *namāz*; he considered the pilgrimage of *ʿĀshūrā* (q.v.) a duty; he laid down prayers (*adʿīa*) and supererogatory observances (*taʿqībāt*); he proclaimed the obligation of Friday prayer…; and he fashioned amulets (*hayākel*), charms (*aḥrāz*), and talismans (*ṭelasmāt*) such as are prepared among the people.… All his companions acted with the utmost circumspection according to the *oṣūl* and *forūʿ* of Islam" (Moḥammad-ʿAlī Zonūzī, quoted by Māzandarānī, op. cit., pp. 31–32). Several important supererogatory injunctions are to be found in the *Khaṣāʾel-e sabʿa*, written by the Bāb during his *ḥajj* journey, and in another work of this period, the *Ṣaḥīfa bayn al-ḥaramayn*.

A wider picture of early doctrines may be found in the *Ṣaḥīfa-ye ʿadlīya*, which, among other things, condemns the concept of *waḥdat al-wojūd* as *sherk* (p. 16), lists the seven bases (*oṣūl*) of *maʿrefa* as *tawḥīd, maʿānī, abwāb, emāma, arkān, noqabāʾ*, and *nojabāʾ* (pp. 20–31); states that prayer through the imam or others is *kofr* (p. 20); denies that either Aḥsāʾī or Rashtī prayed through ʿAlī or thought him the Creator (p. 22); regards the station of the imams as higher than that of the prophets (p. 24); states that most Twelver Shiʿites, because of their ignorance of the station of the *noqabāʾ*, will go to hell (p. 31); declares the enemies of Aḥsāʾī and Rashtī to be unbelievers like the Sunnis (pp. 32–33); refers to the necessity of belief in a physical resurrection and *meʿrāj* (p. 34); condemns the idea of spiritual resurrection and maintains that Aḥsāʾī did not speak of it (p. 34); and, finally, speaks of obedience to himself, as the "servant" of the twelfth imam, as obligatory (p. 41).

Finally, it is worth noting that messianic expectation, although far from dominant in these early works, finds a place in them, notably in the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, where it is frequently joined with exhortation to wage *jehād*, a fact to which reference must be made in any attempt to understand the Bābī-state conflicts of 1848–50 (for full details, see MacEoin, "Bābī Concept of Holy War").

The Bāb's doctrines, which exhibit many of the gnostic and Neoplatonist features common to earlier Shiʿite sects such as the Ismaʿilis and Ḥorūfīs, tend to become more abstruse in the later periods. The crucial change occurs with the Bāb's abrogation of Islamic law in 1264/1848, followed by the elaboration of his own *sharīʿa* and doctrinal system. This highly elaborated body of ideas, frequently expressed in oblique and allusive language and lacking any real organization, is not easy to summarize. There have been no later Bābī theologians to analyze or systematize the elements of the Bāb's scattered thoughts. At the heart of

the system is the belief that the divine or eternal essence (*dhāt-e elāhī*, *dhāt-e azal*) is unknowable, indescribable, and inaccessible (*Bayān-e fārsī* 3:7, p. 81; 4:1, p. 105; 4:2, p. 110). The revelation of God (*ẓohūr Allāh*) in this world is that of the Tree of Reality (*Shajara-ye ḥaqīqat*) (ibid., 2:8, p. 37), a term frequently used for the Primal Will (*mashīyat-e awwalīya*) (ibid., 4:6, pp. 120–21) which has appeared in all the prophets (*Dalāʾel-e sabʿa*, pp. 2–3). The Bāb compares the Primal Will to the sun which remains single and unchanged, although appearing under different names and forms in the persons of the prophets in whom it is manifested, as if in a mirror (ibid.; *Chahār shaʾn*, quoted in *Āʾīn-e Bāb*, pp. 48–49; untitled *ṣaḥīfa*, quoted ibid., p. 49). This manifestation of the Primal Will is frequently referred to as the Point of Truth (*noqṭa-ye ḥaqīqat*) (*Bayān-e fārsī* 3:7, p. 81) or Primal Point (*noqṭa-ye ūlā*)—the latter term being the most common title used of the Bāb by his followers—from whom all things are originated (ibid., 1:1, p. 4; 3:8, p. 37) and by whom the prophets and books have been sent down (ibid., 2:8, p. 37). This Point possesses two stations; a divine station in which it is the manifestation of the divinity (*maẓhar-e olūhīyat*), and a human station in which it manifests its servitude (ibid., 4:1, pp. 105, 107). In his human form, the prophet is the apex of creation and the perfect man, since all things progress until they find their perfection in man and man develops until he culminates in the prophet (ibid., 2:1, pp. 14–15). It is only by meeting this theophany that man can be said to meet God (ibid., 2:7, p. 31; 2:6, p. 63; 3:7, p. 81); thus, references in the Koran to the meeting with God (*leqāʾ Allāh*) are, in reality, references to meeting Moḥammad (ibid., 3:7, p. 81). All things have been created to attain to this meeting (ibid., 6:232, p. 222; *Dalāʾel-e sabʿa*, p. 31). Since the time of the revelation of Adam to that of the Bāb, 12,210 years have elapsed, although God undoubtedly had unnumbered worlds and Adams before this cycle (*Bayān-e fārsī* 3:13, p. 95); but in every world, the manifestation of the Primal Will has always been the Point of the *Bayān*, the Bāb, for he is identical with Adam (ibid.); thus, "in the day of Noah, I was Noah, in the day of Abraham, I was Abraham" (untitled *ṣaḥīfa* quoted in *Āʾīn-e Bāb*, p. 49). Indeed, this same Point will appear again and again in future manifestations of the Primal Will (ibid.). Nevertheless, there is progress from one manifestation to the next: In each succeeding theophany, the appearance is nobler than in the one before; hence, all the revelations of the past were created for the appearance of Moḥammad, they and the revelation of Moḥammad were created for the appearance of the Bāb (Qāʾem), and so on into the

future (*Bayān-e fārsī* 4:12, p. 136). Adam is compared to the human being in the state of a seed in the womb, the Bāb to a twelve-year old child (ibid., 3:13, p. 95).

One of the most important elements in the Bāb's thought is his elaborate symbolic interpretation of eschatological terms. Thus, resurrection (*qīāma*) is the appearance of the Primal Will in its latest manifestation (ibid., 2:7, p. 30); just as all things were originally created in one person, so all will be resurrected in one person, whereupon they will be individually resurrected in their various places (ibid., 2:11, p. 47). Physical resurrection of bodies from their graves, however, will not take place (ibid.). The Day of Resurrection extends from the moment of the appearance of the Tree of Truth in each age until his disappearance; thus, the resurrection of Moses took place from the appearance of Jesus until his Ascension (ibid., 2:7, p. 30). The resurrection of Islam began with the Bāb's announcement of his mission two hours and eleven minutes after sunset on the evening of 5 Jomādā I 1260 and will end at his death (ibid.). In this resurrection, the return (*rajʿa*) of Moḥammad, the imams, Fāṭema, and the four *abwāb*, has taken place in the persons of the eighteen *ḥorūf al-ḥayy*, the Bāb's first disciples (ibid., 1:2–19, pp. 6–10). After the death of the prophet, a *fatrat* intervenes, during which there are witnesses (*Shohadāʾ*) until his return (ibid., 2:3, p. 22); during this *fatrat*, the Primal Will is within creation, but is not recognized outwardly (ibid., 2:9, pp. 44–45). When, however, the Point is again manifested, belief in him is paradise and unbelief hell (ibid., 2:9, p. 44); indeed, the first to believe is himself the essence of paradise and the first to disbelieve the essence of hell (ibid., 2:17, p. 68). All things are in a condition of either belief or denial (ibid., 2:3, p. 23), belonging to the "Letters of Exaltation" (*ḥorūf-e ʿelīyīn*) or their opposite (*ḥorūf-e dūn-e ʿelīyīn*) (ibid., 2:2, pp. 20–21). In another sense, all things find their paradise in their perfection (ibid., 5:4, p. 155). Other eschatological terms such as *qabr, ṣerāṭ, mīzān, ḥesāb, ketāb, sāʿa* are given similar interpretations (ibid., 2:10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18).

A constant theme of the Persian *Bayān*—and one which was to have important implications for later developments—is that of *man yoẓheroho'llāh* (him whom God shall make manifest) the next embodiment of the Primal Will, whose appearance is anticipated sometime between 1511 and 2001 years in the future, or sooner if God wills. Many of the prescriptions of the *Bayān* are connected in some way to respect for *man yoẓheroho'llāh* or preparation for his appearance.

The Bāb also developed a complex legal system, much of which was clearly intended for implementation in the theocratic Bābī state he anticipated; there is a marked contrast between regulations directed towards unbelievers and those applicable to Bābīs, the former being harsh, the latter milder than in Islam. There are regulations for marriage, burial, pilgrimage, prayer, and other devotional and ritual practices, often in detail. (Full descriptions of these may be found in MacEoin, "Ritual and Semi-Ritual Observances.")

# BABISM*

## The Bābī Movement

Babism was a 13th/19th-century messianic movement in Iran and Iraq under the overall charismatic leadership of Sayyed ʿAlī-Moḥammad Shīrāzī, the Bāb (1235/1819–1266/1850; q.v.). Babism was the only significant millenarian movement in Shiʿite Islam during the 13th/19th century and is of particular interest in that, unlike other Islamic messianic movements of approximately the same period, it involved, in its later stages, a wholesale break with Islam and an attempt to establish a new religious system. Although the Bābī movement as such was rapidly crushed and rendered politically and religiously insignificant, the impetus towards the proclamation of a post-Islamic revelation was continued in Bahāʾīsm (q.v.) which began as a Bābī sect in competition with that of the Azalī Babism (q.v.) during the 1860s. The relative success of Bahāʾīsm inside Iran (where it constitutes the largest religious minority) and in numerous other countries, where it claims the status of an independent religion, gives renewed significance to its Bābī origins; indeed, Bābī history and doctrine live on, albeit in a much revised form, in the literature and self-image of the modern Bahāʾīs.

The present article concerns itself with Babism up to about 1853, when the leadership of the sect moved from Iran to Iraq and internal developments began which led to the Bahāʾī/Azalī split. For our purposes, Babism may be divided into two main periods: 1) from 1250/1844 to 1264/1848, when the Bāb claimed to be the gate preparing the way for the return of the Hidden Imam and the movement around him was characterized by intense Islamic piety and observance of the *Sharīʿa* or Islamic law; and 2) from 1264/1848 to 1269/1853, beginning with the Bāb's claim to be the Imam in person and the abrogation of the Islamic *Sharīʿa*, through his assumption of the role of an independent theophany and his promulgation of a new religious law, to his execution in Tabrīz, the collapse of the leadership of the movement, the proliferation of authority claims, and the dispersal of a hard core of the sect

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to Baghdad. This second period also witnessed the outbreak of clashes between Babis and state in several parts of Iran and the physical defeat of the movement as a challenge to the religio-political system.

1. 1260–64/1844–48. At its inception, Babism was an intense expression of certain radical tendencies in the Shaikhi school of Shiʿism which had come to the fore during the leadership of Sayyed Kāẓem Rashtī (q.v.). During the seventeen years (1242–59/1826–44) that he acted as head of the school from its center in Karbalāʾ, Rashtī stressed the essential orthodoxy of Shaikhi belief as originally expounded by the founder, Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī (d. 1753/1826; q.v.), while teaching an elitist doctrine of the Shaikh as the *morawwej* or promoter of Islam in a new cycle of inward truth (*bāṭen*) following 1200 years of outward teaching (*ẓāher*). Rashtī's death on 11 Dhu'l-Ḥejja 1259/1 January 1854 precipitated a serious internal crisis in the movement, bringing to the surface many concealed tensions, disagreements, rivalries, and ambitions within the Shaikhi community. His failure to appoint a clear successor and the absence of an agreed system for the selection of one led, inevitably, to much fragmentation, out of which two major schools emerged: that around Ḥājj Mollā Moḥammad-Karīm Khan Kermānī (1225/1810–1288/1871; q.v.) and another around Sayyed ʿAlī-Moḥammad Shīrāzī. These two factions expressed diametrically opposed tendencies within the Shaikhism of the period, the first wishing to preserve the name and identity of the school, emphasizing the continuing role of the Prophet and the imams and seeking accommodation with the Shiʿite majority by stressing its total adherence to Twelver Shiʿite orthodoxy and playing down the more unorthodox aspects of Shaikhi teaching; the second also regarding itself as wholly orthodox but adopting the name Bābīya and moving away from the outward practice of Islam towards a concentration on the expression of its inner realities and, ultimately, a new revelation of divine truth. It was some time, however, before this divergence of tendencies became quite clear and, in the earliest period, emphasis must be placed less on specific doctrinal views and more on claims to charismatic authority within the wider context of Shiʿism as a whole. (For a detailed study of the role of charisma in early Shaikhism and Babism see MacEoin, *From Shaykhism to Babism*.)

There is evidence that a section of the Shaikhi community at this period regarded Aḥsāʾī and Rashtī as "gates" (*bābān*) of the imam, presumably fulfilling functions similar to those of the four *abwāb* (plur. of *bāb* "gate") traditionally regarded as channels of communica-

tion with the Hidden Imam during his "lesser occultation" (see Bāb) and possibly presaging the return of the imam himself. The development of a Bābīya school within Shaikhism may be regarded as having begun even before the announcement by Sayyed ʿAlī-Moḥammad of his own claim to be the *bāb*. Various statements attributed to Rashtī in the period just before his death suggest that chiliastic motifs were present in his teaching, and there is evidence that some of his followers expected the imminent appearance of an "affair" or "cause" (*amr*) somehow linked to the advent of the imam. It seems to have been a group of those Shaikhis most animated by messianic expectations who chose, in early Ṣafar, 1260/late February, 1844, to engage in prayerful withdrawal (*eʿtekāf*) in the main mosque of Kūfa, and it was from this group that the majority of the Bāb's earliest disciples emerged.

The first to enter *eʿtekāf* was Mollā Moḥammad-Ḥosayn Boshrūʾī (q.v.), a young Shaikhi *ʿālem* or mulla who had only recently returned to Iraq from a lengthy period in Iran and who was himself regarded by a section of the school as a potential successor to Rashtī. Leaving Kūfa with a brother and cousin on or just after 12 Rabīʿ I 1260/1 April 1844, Boshrūʾī set out for Kermān, where he planned to consult with Moḥammad Karīm Khan (for references see MacEoin, "From Shaykhism," p. 144). En route he passed through Shiraz where he renewed an earlier acquaintance with Sayyed ʿAlī-Moḥammad Shīrāzī, a young merchant who had studied briefly with Rashtī in Karbalāʾ a few years before and who had attracted some attention from a number of Shaikhis at the *ʿatabāt* (the Shiʿite holy shrines and cities in Iraq; q.v.) at that time. In recent months, Sayyed ʿAlī-Moḥammad had undergone a religious crisis culminating in at least two visions indicating a high spiritual station for himself. He had also begun the composition of works of a religious nature, including a commentary of sorts on the Koranic chapter (*sūra*) *al-Baqara*. After some weeks, during which Boshrūʾī seems to have read at least a part of these writings, on 5 Jomādā I/22 May, Sayyed ʿAlī-Moḥammad announced to him that he was the successor to Rashtī and the *bāb* of the Hidden Imam. Some time after this, a second group of Shaikhis arrived in Shiraz from Karbalāʾ. Thirteen of these (according to one version, the entire group numbered thirteen) met the Bāb through Boshrūʾī and were converted, together with Boshrūʾī's brother and cousin (Zarandi, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 69–70, 80–81). Among this second group was a brother-in-law of Fāṭema Khānom Baraghānī Qazvīnī (better known as Qorrat-al-ʿAyn and Janāb-e Ṭāhera; q.v.), a woman who had already won a reputation

as an outstanding and radical Shaikhi cleric while herself resident in Karbalāʾ. Although then in Qazvīn, she was enrolled by the Bāb in the group of his first disciples, whose number was brought to eighteen by the late arrival of Mollā Moḥammad-ʿAlī Bārforūshī (q.v.), a young Shaikhi who was en route to Būshehr on a *ḥajj* or pilgrimage journey.

These eighteen disciples known as the "Letters of the Living" (*ḥorūf al-ḥayy*) constituted, together with the Bāb, the first "unity" (*wāḥed* = 19) of a series of nineteen unities which would make up a body of three hundred and sixty-one individuals—a *kollo shayʾ* (= 361)—the first believers in the imam through the *bāb*. These *ḥorūf al-ḥayy* are regarded as identical with the "precursors" (*sābeqūn*) referred to in early works of the Bāb and his followers, both literally in preceding others in recognition of the Bāb and esoterically in being identified with the first group of mankind to respond to God's pre-eternal covenant, a group itself identified in Shiʿite belief with Moḥammad and the imams. It is, in fact, clear that the Bāb came to regard the *ḥorūf al-ḥayy* as incarnations of the Prophet, the twelve imams, the original four *abwāb* and Fāṭema, an identification which led to serious controversy in the early Bābī community of Karbalāʾ (see MacEoin, "Hierarchy," pp. 104–09).

After a short period of instruction ending in early July, 1844, the Bāb instructed sixteen of the *ḥorūf al-ḥayy* to disperse in various directions, carrying transcriptions of parts of his early writings, notably his commentary on the Koranic chapter *Yūsof*, the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*. They were not to reveal his name or identity but merely to announce that the gate or agent (*nāʾeb*) of the Hidden Imam had appeared. Through these disciples and the men they met and converted—almost all, like themselves, *ʿolamāʾ* or Muslim divines—the claims of the Bāb were rapidly disseminated, principally to the Shaikhi communities in the areas they visited. In this way, a growing section of the Shaikhi school followed the Bāb in the period of his earliest claims. The unity of Shaikhism was irretrievably shattered and a core of convinced Bābīs brought into existence, eager to put into practice the radical changes implicit in the Bāb's claims.

The most immediate impact made by the dissemination of Bābī propaganda on the Shiʿite world occurred at its heart in Karbalāʾ. The Bāb's message was brought to the region of the shrines in Iraq in the first instance by Mollā ʿAlī Besṭāmī (q.v.), whose preaching there precipitated a major uproar among both Shaikhis and non-Shaikhis, leading to his arrest, trial and eventual dispatch to Istanbul. During his stay in Iraq, however, as is attested by contemporary diplomatic reports, Besṭāmī

and other Babis awakened a widespread chiliastic fervor among the Shaikhis of the area (see Momen, *Bābī and Bahaʾi Religions*, pp. 83–89). The *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, portions of which now began to circulate there, indicated that the Bāb had appeared on earth to prepare men for the imminent arrival of the imam and the waging of the final *jehād* or holy war against unbelief (which was widely interpreted to include not only Sunnism but non-Bābī Shiʿism as well). News also arrived from Shiraz that the Bāb had left the town in September in order to perform the *ḥajj* and that, on his departure, he had said that he would reveal his cause in Mecca, after which he would enter Kūfa and Karbalāʾ and fulfill the prophecies. In various letters of this period, he called on his growing body of followers to assemble in Karbalāʾ in order to aid the imam on his appearance. A number of Babis appear to have traveled to Karbalāʾ with this hope and, following instructions in the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, to have purchased arms in readiness for the *jehād* that would follow the Bāb's appearance and the advent of the imam. In the end, the Bāb failed to reach Karbalāʾ as promised, returning instead to Shiraz via Būshehr in the summer of 1261/1845. His arrest en route to his home town by agents of the governor of Shiraz considerably restricted his freedom of action and prevented even a late arrival in Iraq. As a result, a number of the newly-converted abandoned their allegiance, leaving only a small core of believers, who were forced to begin the work of proselytization once more (al-Qatīl b. al-Karbalāʾī, letter in Māzandarānī, *Ẓohūr al-ḥaqq* III, p. 503).

Although the Bāb remained at the heart of the movement, his personal activities were now restricted. He remained under house arrest in Shiraz until September, 1262/1846, when he escaped to Isfahan following an outbreak of cholera. There, with the support of the governor, Manūchehr Khan Moʿtamad-al-Dawla, he had greater freedom to write and meet disciples, but this interlude ended abruptly with the governor's death in February, 1847. The Bāb was summoned by Moḥammad Shah to Tehran but en route diverted to Mākū in Azerbaijan, where he remained in confinement until his transfer in May, 1848 to the fortress of Chahrīq, his place of imprisonment until shortly before his execution in 1266/1850. Although communications between him and his followers were never entirely severed, they were, at times, difficult, and it was, in any case, impossible to refer to him all questions for elucidation or arbitration.

The exposition of Bābī doctrine (to the extent that we can speak of this in a period of considerable confusion) in a number of provincial

centers fell increasingly to the leading followers of the Bāb, both *ḥorūf al-ḥayy* and other *ʿolamāʾ* in those areas: in Mashhad, Mollā Moḥammad-Ḥosayn Boshrūʾī, who was expressly appointed by the Bāb to answer questions on his behalf for the community as a whole; in Borūjerd, Kurdistan, Tehran, Qazvīn, Isfahan, Qom, and elsewhere, the peripatetic Sayyed Yaḥyā Dārābī (Waḥīd) (q.v.); in Tehran and, later, Zanjān, Mollā Moḥammad-ʿAlī Zanjānī (Ḥojjat) (q.v.); in Qazvīn, Mollā Jalīl Orūmī; and, perhaps the most important, in Karbalāʾ and, for a time, Baghdad, Qorrat-al-ʿAyn. The role of these and a few other individuals must be stressed. Boshrūʾī, Dārābī, and Zanjānī were to lead the Bābī insurrections in Māzandarān, Neyrīz, and Zanjān, while Qorrat-al-ʿAyn was perhaps the guiding spirit behind the events at the enclave of BadaÞt (q.v.) in 1848, when a group of Babis proclaimed the abrogation of the Islamic *Sharīʿa*. More importantly, the main figures of the Bābī hierarchy formed what Berger calls a "charismatic field," playing roles of messianic significance ("From Sect to Church," pp. 161–62). Thus Boshrūʾī and Mollā Moḥammad-ʿAlī Bārforūshī Qoddūs were regarded by their followers at Ṭabarsī shrine as the "Qāʾem-e Khorāsānī" and "Qāʾem-e Jīlānī" respectively, while quasi-divine honors were paid to the latter (such as the circumambulation of his house and the direction of prayers towards him as the *qebla*). While in Karbalāʾ, Qorrat-al-ʿAyn claimed to be an incarnation of Fāṭema, whereas some regarded her as "the point of divine knowledge" after Rashtī. Unfortunately, with the exception of some interesting treatises by Qorrat-al-ʿAyn and a few fragments by Qoddūs, works penned by these individuals have been lost, and it is almost impossible to reconstruct the details of Bābī doctrine as actually taught by them or to determine how far this may have coincided with or differed from the doctrine taught by the Bāb and carefully preserved in his writings.

The role played by Qorrat-al-ʿAyn in Karbalāʾ was, as we have noted above, particularly significant. Residing in Rashtī's home there, she assumed supreme control of the Shaikhi-Bābī community of the region, stressing her authority as one of the *ḥorūf al-ḥayy* and the incarnation of Fāṭema. This led to the first serious crisis of authority in the movement, when her position was challenged by Mollā Aḥmad Khorāsānī and his followers who were particularly opposed to the leadership role of the *ḥorūf al-ḥayy*. The rift produced in the Bābī community of Iraq by this conflict was further deepened by Qorrat-al-ʿAyn's increasingly radical and unconventional behaviour. In his early writings, the Bāb stressed the necessity for his followers to observe the laws of Islam and, indeed,

to perform acts of supererogatory piety, and there is some evidence that the Babis of this period were as noted for the zeal of their adherence to tradition as they were later to be known for their rejection of it (for details see MacEoin, "From Shaykhism," pp. 208–10). There were, however, elements inherent in the claim of the Bāb to an authority direct from God which threatened to conflict with this more conservative position. Qorrat-al-ʿAyn seems to have been particularly conscious of this and to have linked the concept of the Bāb's overriding authority in religious matters with ideas originating in Shaikhism, to which we have referred earlier—the advent of an age of inner truth succeeding that of outer observance. She seems to have made this link before the Bāb himself and by 1262/1846 had begun to stress the importance of inner realities at the expense of outward practice. In her classes attended by Bābī men, she appeared unveiled, and on one occasion chose to celebrate the birth of the Bāb during the early days of Moḥarram. Mīrzā Moḥammad-ʿAlī Zonūzī states that, with the Bāb's permission, Qorrat-al-ʿAyn "rendered all the previous laws and observances null and void" (letter in Māzandarānī, *Ẓohūr al-ḥaqq* III, p. 35). In a statement written after Rajab, 1262/June–July, 1846, she herself records that she began to call on her followers to "enter the gate of innovation" following the receipt of a letter from the Bāb in that month, which she interpreted to mean that Islam was to be abrogated (letter ibid., p. 349; for details, see MacEoin, "From Shaykhism," pp. 210–16).

Controversy ensued within the Bābī community. Many were scandalized by Qorrat-al-ʿAyn's behavior, particularly that of appearing before men without a veil, and wrote to the Bāb seeking support (which he would not give). Others, however, began to follow her example, and the controversy soon spread beyond the confines of the Bābī community proper. In the end, Qorrat-al-ʾAyn was arrested in Karbalāʾ, forced to leave the city for Baghdad in 1263/1847, kept there for several months in the home of the Mufti, Shaikh Maḥmūd al-Ālūsī, and finally expelled from Iraq on orders sent from Istanbul. Traveling through Hamadān and Kermānshāh, where she carried on an extensive campaign of proselytization, she returned in Qazvīn in the late summer of 1263/1847.

The controversy surrounding Qorrat-al-ʿAyn and the growing challenge presented by Bābī missionaries in all the major provinces of Iran, where the number of converts was growing rapidly, led to a hardening of attitudes towards the sect. In Kermān, Moḥammad Karīm Khan Kermānī, who had been acquainted with the Bāb's claims from an early date, was engaged in laying claim to the leadership of the Shaikhi school

for himself. Among his activities in this respect was the composition of several works refuting the Bāb and his claims. Not only was the Bāb a threat to Kermānī's position within the school itself, but the obvious heterodoxy of his doctrines and the activities of his followers threatened, because of their close association with the school he purported to represent, to further damage Shaikhism in the eyes of the Shiʿite *ʿolamāʾ* at large. Kermānī's efforts, reinforced by the Bāb's own rejection of "orthodox" Shaikhism, led to a growing sense of an absolute split between the two movements and a greater sense of independent identity for Babism, together with a hardening of attitudes on both sides. An analysis of later Bābī membership indicates that the original Shaikhi dominance within the sect began to decline and that Babism came to have a much wider appeal among the general Shiʿite public. The motives for conversion seem to have become less doctrinal and more social or economic as fewer *ʿolamāʾ* and greater numbers of the public at large entered the movement. This in itself, however, led to a growing attack on the sect from non-Shaikhi clergy confronted by the challenge of the Bābī missionary enterprise.

Matters began to come to a head in Dhū'l-Qaʿda, 1263/October, 1847. Until then, violence directed against the Babis had been limited and no one had died. The Babis, for their part, despite exhortations to *jehād* in several works of the Bāb, still awaited the appearance of the Mahdī before commencing the holy war (a possible indication in itself of doctrinal rather than social motivation) and, in the meantime, contented themselves with issuing challenges to *mobāhala* or mutual cursing (for the development of the themes of *mobāhala* and *jehād* in the movement and the escalation of violence against and on behalf of the sect see MacEoin, "Bābī Concept of Holy War," pp. 109–11. Some months after Qorrat-al-ʿAyn's return to Qazvīn in the late summer of 1263/1847, a group of three Babis attacked her uncle, Ḥājj Mollā Moḥammad-Taqī Baraghānī (q.v.), the leading cleric of the town; he died of his wounds three days later, on 16 Dhū'l-Qaʿda/27 October. There had already been a build-up of tension in Qazvīn, much aggravated by Baraghānī's preaching against both Shaikhis and Babis. Now, large numbers of Babis were arrested, houses were broken into and looted, and several individuals were eventually put to death in retaliation for what was held to be a general Bābī plot. At about the same time, relations between Babis and the civil authorities in Mashhad became strained, particularly after two incidents in which members of the movement tried to rescue two of their arrested coreligionists by force.

2. 1264–69/1848–53. The situation changed radically when, in the early months of 1848, the Bāb wrote a letter in which he proclaimed himself the promised imam in person and declared the abrogation of the laws of Islam. Announcement of the *qīāma* or resurrection, interpreted as a spiritual event, spread rapidly among the Bābī communities of Iraq and Iran. In July, 1848, a gathering of some eighty Bābī activists, including Qorrat-al-ʿAyn and Mollā Moḥammad-ʿAlī Bārforūshī, formally proclaimed the advent of the *qīāma*. Towards the end of the same month, the Bāb himself was brought from Chahrīq to Tabrīz, where he was interrogated by a council of *ʿolamāʾ* and state officials presided over by Nāṣer-al-Dīn Mīrzā (shortly to be made king). Conflicting accounts of this examination exist, but all are agreed that the Bāb insisted on his claim to be the Hidden Imam returned—a claim whose political implications would not have been missed.

Also in July, 1848, Boshrūʾī and a large body of followers left Mashhad, possibly headed for Azerbaijan to rescue the Bāb from prison. Swelled along the route by others, this band encountered opposition as they moved into Māzandarān in September. The residents of Bārforūsh (Bābol), alarmed by the arrival of a body of armed men immediately after the death of Moḥammad Shah, offered fierce resistance to their entry to the town. Forced to travel on and attacked by a band of local horsemen, the Babis finally reached the shrine of Shaikh Abū ʿAlī Faẓl Ṭabarsī, where they constructed a fort and were joined by other Babis from all parts of Iran, including Bārforūshī and seven other *ḥorūf al-ḥayy*, their numbers eventually reaching to near 500. A series of engagements soon ensued between the Babis and successive contingents of provincial and state troops until May, 1849, in the course of which all but a few of the defenders were killed. Two features of this incident stand out: the messianic overtones of the struggle, emphasized by the roles of Boshrūʾī and Bārforūshī as *qāʾem*, the carrying of a black standard, the identification of the fort with Karbalāʾ, its defenders with Ḥosayn and his followers, and their enemies with the Omayyad forces; and the related belief in the supreme authority of the Bāb and his lieutenants as against the illegitimacy of Qājār rule. Babism now clearly posed a direct threat to the established political and religious order.

Further outbreaks of mass violence followed after an interval in Neyrīz (Rajab-Shaʿbān, 1266/May–June, 1850) and Zanjān (Rajab, 1266–Rabīʿ I, 1267/May, 1850–January, 1851), although these differed from Shaikh Ṭabarsī in their distinctly urban character and in the relative absence (as far as our sources indicate) of messianic motifs. The

character of these struggles in particular has suggested to some commentators that they were more of an expression of social and political discontent than of religious fervor, and there is undoubtedly a measure of truth in this, particularly in the case of Zanjān. Nevertheless, in a recent study ("The Social Basis of the Bābī Upheavals"), Momen has shown that it is difficult to reach clear conclusions as to the social composition of these outbreaks or of the Bābī movement as a whole. Our emphasis must at present remain on the outwardly religious character of Babism, while recognizing the value of religious motifs as a means of socio-political expression in a society such as Qājār Iran. It should be stressed that the Bābī leadership and much of the membership was drawn from the ranks of the *ʿolamāʾ* class, particularly its lower strata (for further details see ibid.).

In July, 1850, the Bāb was again brought to Tabrīz, where he was executed by firing squad on the 8th or 9th. Coupled with the debacles of Māzandarān, Neyrīz, and Zanjān, in the course of which some 2,000 to 3,000 Babis, including most of the provincial leadership, perished (on these figures see MacEoin, "From Babism to Bahaʾism," p. 236), the Bāb's death spelt the end of the movement as a vital political force in Iran. That the "Mahdī" had been executed and his followers everywhere defeated seemed to most people clear evidence of the falsehood of the Bāb's claims, and the potential following which would certainly have accrued to the movement had even a measure of success attended its struggle with the state was drastically diminished. In a final act of desperation, on 15 August 1852, a small group of Babis attempted to assassinate Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah. A plot led by Shaikh Mollā ʿAlī Torshīzī was uncovered, large numbers of Babis in the capital and elsewhere arrested, and some fifty put to death. Among those arrested was Mīrzā Ḥosayn-ʿAlī Nūrī Bahāʾ-Allāh, a Bābī from a wealthy family connected with the Qajar court. Ḥosayn Nūrī's father, Mīrzā ʿAbbās Nūrī, had held various government posts (see Bāmdād, *Rejāl* VI, pp. 126–29), and he was distantly related to the prime minister, Mīrzā Āqā Khān Nūrī (Balyuzi, *Bahāʾuʾllāh*, p. 13). Released on the intervention of the Russian Minister in January, 1853 (Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 636), he was instructed to leave the country and chose to go to Baghdad, accompanied by members of his family and other Babis. Before long, he was followed by his younger half-brother, Mīrzā Yaḥyā Ṣobḥ-e Azal, appointed by the Bāb his successor and regarded by most of the surviving Babis as their leader. During the next decade, Baghdad became firmly established as the main center of Babism, giving refuge to a small

community of Iranian émigrés who sought to perpetuate the movement. There was considerable doctrinal confusion, in part due to the idiosyncratic teachings and legal prescriptions expounded by the Bāb in his later works, notably the Persian *Bayān*, in which he attempted to codify a religious system destined to supplant Islam, with himself as the latest in a line of divine revelators. The system propounded by the Bāb depended for its implementation on the establishment of a Bābī state, which was now only a very remote possibility. There was, moreover, a lack of certainty over the question of leadership. Although the consensus seemed to favor the acceptance of Ṣobḥ-e Azal as head of the faith, he appears to have lacked the qualities of a good leader and to have adopted a retiring mode of life. The concept of theophanies, already apparent in the roles ascribed to Bāb al-Bāb, Qoddūs, and Qorrat-al-ʿAyn, led to a succession of at least twenty-four claimants to supreme authority in the movement, few of whom obtained a substantial following. A growing section of the Baghdad community, however, was willing to grant a measure of authority to Ṣobḥ-e Azal's elder half-brother, Bahāʾ-Allāh, a more experienced man of much less retiring temperament with a leaning towards Sufism and political quietism. Sometime in the 1860s, he claimed the status of *man yoẓheroho'llāh* (he whom God shall make manifest), a messianic figure referred to frequently in the Persian *Bayān*. The ensuing quarrel between him and Ṣobḥ-e Azal resulted in the splitting of the movement into the Bahāʾī and Azalī factions, with the majority belonging to the former. Azalī Babism has remained essentially conservative, basing its tenets on the works of the Bāb and Ṣobḥ-e Azal, whereas Bahāʾīsm represents a radical solution to the problem of continuing the Bābī movement (see MacEoin, "From Babism to Baha'ism"). The harsher and less practical teachings of the *Bayān* are either abolished or toned down, immediate pressure to create a Bābī theocracy is transformed into a future Bahāʾī world state to be created through peaceful conversion and indefinitely postponable, and the Bābī legal system is extensively modified to suit "modern" conditions.

Babism is of considerable interest for the light it sheds on a number of problems in the sociology of religion, notably that of charismatic breakthrough. We can observe a process whereby an initial development of traditional charismatic roles is rapidly intensified by a more radical breakthrough still expressed in terms of traditional motifs but involving a sharp move away from established religious modes, leading finally to a wholesale charismatic renewal in which the norms

of the religious environment are replaced by a fresh set of doctrines and practices deriving their authority wholly from the charismatic authority of the prophet-figure. Within the overall spectrum from Shiʿism through Shaikhism and Babism to Bahāʾīsm, Berger ("Motif messianique") has delineated a process of messianic expectation—fulfillment—renewed expectation, which indicates the importance of Babism as a case study in millenarianism. Within the context of modern Shiʿism, Babism provides valuable evidence of extreme tendencies in the religious establishment of mid-13th/19th-century Iran. To see Babism as an aberration or side issue in Qājār Shiʿism (as does Algar, *Religion and State*, p. 151) is to ignore its original orthodoxy and the role within it of religious motifs central to the Shiʿite tradition. Careful retrospection will show not only that Babism came close to upsetting the balance of Qājār political life but that it owed its ability to shake the foundations of society so forcefully and in such a short period less to a chance concatenation of events and more to its character as a vital response to deep-rooted expectations and needs of the Iranian people of the time. Far from having been a maverick or aberrant outgrowth of post-Safavid Shiʿism, Babism—especially when its early, semi-orthodox phase is taken fully into consideration—may be regarded not only as a highly typical expression of certain strands of Shiʿite thought, but as particularly relevant to the social and religious circumstances of many Iranians at the time of its inception. It may, indeed, be argued that many later developments within the orthodox establishment (including the wide rejection of reformism) were reactions against Babism and the dangers it showed to be inherent in an extreme insistence on charismatic authority, in a situation where the religious hierarchy was engaged in a process of intensifying such authority (see further MacEoin, "Changes in Charismatic Authority"). Although extremist movements in other parts of the Muslim world in the nineteenth century (Tejānīya, Sudanese Mahdīya, even the Aḥmadīya) represented serious departures from orthodox norms and involved considerable *bedʿa*, or innovation, only Babism and its offshoot Bahāʾīsm present us with the phenomenon of outright severance from Islam and an attempt to introduce a new religious synthesis.

## Bābī executions and uprisings

In the 1840s and 1850s a series of violent incidents involving members of the Babi sect (see Babism) and Shiʿites took place in Iran, the most serious of which were four military encounters at Shaikh Ṭabarsī in Māzandarān, Zanjān, and Neyrīz (twice). At the inception of the Babi movement in 1260/1844, an uprising (*ḵorūj*) against unbelievers was keenly anticipated; it was at first believed that this event would begin in 1261/1845 in Karbalāʾ, when the Hidden Imam would appear to lead the *jehād* in person. The Bāb's earliest major work, the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, contains detailed regulations governing the conduct of *jehād* (*Qayyūm al-asmāʾ, sūra*s 96–101; see MacEoin, "Holy War," pp. 101–09). Up to 1264/1848, the sect's *jehād* doctrine was essentially that of orthodox Shiʿism, but after that date, with the Bāb's assumption of the role of Mahdī, a new legal system was promulgated in the Persian *Bayān* (q.v.) and other works. It appears that the entire Shiʿite population of Iran was now regarded as subject to *jehād*: non-Babis were to be forbidden to live in any of the five central provinces of Fārs, Iraq, Azerbaijan, Khorasan, and Māzandarān. More broadly, Babi law called for the destruction of the shrines and holy places of previous religions and, as one later Bahai source puts it, "the universal slaughter of all save those who believed and were faithful" (ʿAbbās Effendi, *Makātīb ʿAbd-al-Bahāʾ* II, Cairo, 1330/1912, p. 266).

From 1844 to 1848, tension between Babis and the rest of the population increased rapidly through several key incidents: the arrest and trial in Baghdad of the Bāb's emissary, Mollā ʿAlī Besṭāmī (q.v.) in 1260/1844–45; the arrest and punishment of three Babis in Shiraz in 1261/1845; the arrest of the Bāb on his return from the *ḥajj* in the same year; several challenges to *mobāhala* (mutual imprecation) issued by the Bāb and his followers to *ʿolamāʾ* in Iraq and Iran in 1262/1846 and 1263/1847; attacks on individual Babis in Hamadān, Qazvīn, Karbalāʾ, and Kermānšāh during the same period; and attacks on Babi merchants and *ʿolamāʾ* in Qazvīn in 1263/1847, leading to the assassination by three Babis of Mollā Moḥammad-Taqī Baraḡānī (q.v.) in October of that year. (For details of these incidents, see MacEoin, "Holy War," pp. 109–12).

Several sources indicate that Babis in different centers were collecting and manufacturing arms in readiness for the postponed *ḵorūj* on the

imam's appearance (ibid., pp. 111–12; Māzandarānī, *Ẓohūr al-ḥaqq*, p. 374). The first serious incidents occurred in 1264/1848 in Mašhad, where armed members of the large Babi community clashed on two occasions with local soldiery. Expelled from Mašhad in Šaʿbān, 1264/July, 1848, a party of Babis under the leadership of Mollā Moḥammad-Ḥosayn Bošrūʾī (q.v.) headed into Māzandarān and in October of that year established themselves near Bārforūšī at the shrine of Shaikh Abū ʿAlī al-Fażl Ṭabarsī, which they fortified. From an original total of about 300, the number of insurgents rose to between 540 and 600 (Momen, "Social Basis," pp. 161–65, esp. table 4). Leadership of the fort was in the hands of Bošrūʾī and another of the Bāb's original disciples, Mollā Moḥammad-ʿAlī Bārforūšī Qoddūs (q.v.). Between 14 Ḏuʾl-qaʿda 1264/13 October 1848 and 16 Jomādā II 1265/9 May 1849, the Babi defenders and state troops under the overall command of Mahdīqolī Mīrzā engaged in sporadic fighting, with heavy losses of life on both sides. The siege was finally ended by a ruse and the surviving Babis either executed or taken prisoner.

Following disturbances in Yazd, a prominent Babi *ʿālem* (scholar) named Sayyed Yaḥyā Dārābī Waḥīd (q.v.) moved to Neyrīz in Rajab, 1266/May, 1850; on his arrival he preached to large crowds and soon converted (or at least gained the support of) a sizeable part of the population of the Čenārsūḵta quarter. Existing tensions between the populace and the governor, Zayn-al-ʿĀbedīn Khan, seem to have been reformulated and exacerbated by Dārābī, who was regarded by his followers as an independent authority in the town. Fighting soon broke out, whereupon around 1,000 Babis occupied the fort of Ḵᵛāja outside Neyrīz, where they were besieged by troops sent by Fīrūz Mīrzā Noṣrat-al-Dawla (q.v.), the governor of Fārs. Hostilities continued until the capture of the fort by treachery in Šaʿbān/June; about 500 Babis were killed during the fighting and in the executions that followed.

The Zanjān episode of 1266–67/1850–51 was the most protracted and involved the largest numbers, with the town almost equally divided between the Babis and their opponents. The former, numbering over 2,000, were led by Mollā Moḥammad-ʿAlī Zanjānī Ḥojjat-al-Eslām (q.v.), a former Aḵbārī *ʿālem* who had already been the center of religious controversy before his conversion and who seems to have advocated radical social changes. In the course of heavy fighting between the Babis and several contingents of state troops, from 1,000 to 1,800 Babis lost their lives and parts of the town were badly damaged.

Following the assassination by Babis of the governor of Neyrīz Ḥājī Zayn-al-ʿĀbedīn Khan, early in 1269/1853, fighting continued for several months in the mountains outside the town, resulting in the deaths of some 350 Babis.

In addition to these outbreaks of large-scale violence, other incidents involving Babis occurred between 1850 and 1853: on 19 or 20 February 1850, seven Babis of relatively high social status were executed in Tehran; on 27 or 28 Šaʿbān 1266/8 or 9 July 1850, the Bāb himself was publicly shot with one companion in Tabrīz; in Ḏu'l-qaʿda, 1268/August-September, 1852, some 37 Babis, including leading figures such as Qorrat-al-ʿAyn Ṭāhera (q.v.), Mollā Shaikh ʿAlī Toršīzī, and Sayyed Ḥosayn Yazdī were executed in reprisal for the Babi attempt on the life of Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah on 28, Šawwāl/15, August; at the same period, there were further attacks on Babis in Mīlān near Tabrīz, Tākor in Māzandarān, Yazd, Neyrīz, and possibly elsewhere.

In all, something like 3,000 Babis died in these episodes, or, if we take the lower figure of 1,000 deaths at Zanjān, just over 2,000 in all. Later estimates of 20,000 and more found in some Bahai works do not, in fact, correspond to the more detailed figures given in Bahai historical sources. Similarly, the very high figures for both participants and casualties given in state chronicles like the *Nāseḵ al-tawārīḵ* are manifestly exaggerated, probably in order to explain away the failure of the government forces to put down the disturbances rapidly.

It is impossible to identify a consistent pattern in these events. Ivanov's (1939) Marxist analysis shows serious limitations in its treatment of motives and its portrayal of the Babi participants in the struggles as "peasants, artisans, urban poor, and small trades-people." More recent studies by Momen (1983), Smith (1982), and MacEoin (1982) reveal a more complex interplay of social, political, and religious factors at work. The Shaikh Ṭabarsī siege was the most markedly religious of the larger incidents, while the Zanjān and Neyrīz uprisings were more closely linked to local politics. It is arguable that, whereas those involved in the Shaikh Ṭabarsī struggle and in the smaller pogroms were convinced Babis, many of those who participated in the fighting at Zanjān, Yazd, or Neyrīz may have been vague about or indifferent to the specific religious issues propounded by the Babi leadership. At Shaikh Ṭabarsī, messianic ambitions were linked to a belief that, through martyrdom, the defenders were reenacting the events of Karbalāʾ; the Qajar state and its forces were condemned as illegitimate and a defensive *jehād*

proclaimed against them. At Zanjān, religious millenarianism was less marked, while puritan and egalitarian ideals were clearly in evidence.

Smallness of numbers, a limited social base, lack of a centralized or coordinated leadership, the absence of an agreed policy, and conflicts of motive all combined to rob the Babi uprisings of any potential they might otherwise have had of acting as catalysts for a broader movement for social, religious, or political change. Conversely, the military defeat of Babism all but stopped it in its tracks and forced the surviving leaders to reinterpret the religion and restate its goals, leading to the eventual emergence of Azalī Babism (q.v.) and Bahaism (q.v.). In the latter case, rejection of Babi militancy and the adoption of a pacifist orientation resulted initially in an emphasis on the absolute distinctiveness of the two movements; but as later doctrinal developments demanded increasing conflation of Babism and Bahaism, the Babi uprisings themselves were reinterpreted as defensive reactions to persecution by church and state (see, in particular, MacEoin, "From Babism to Bahaʾism").

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For details of histories of Shaikh Ṭabarsī found in manuscripts, Neyrīz, Zanjān, and other incidents, see D. M. MacEoin, *Sources for Early Babi Doctrine and History*.

# AZALĪ BABISM*

Designation of a religious faction which takes its name from Mīrzā Yaḥyā Nūrī Ṣobḥ-e Azal (about 1246–1330/1830–1912), considered by his followers to have been the legitimate successor to the Bāb (q.v.). A son of Mīrzā Bozorg Nūrī, a court official in the reign of Fatḥ-ʿAlī Shāh, Yaḥyā was converted to Babism around 1260/1844, probably by his older half-brother, Mīrzā Ḥosayn-ʿAlī, the future Bahāʾ Allāh (q.v.), founder of the Bahāʾī religion. From about 1848, Mīrzā Yaḥyā Ṣobḥ-e Azal was in regular contact with the Bāb, who was then in prison in Azerbaijan. His letters were well received by the Bāb, who claimed to find in them evidence of divine inspiration. Numerous references in writings by the Bāb from this period seem to provide strong evidence that Azal (also referred to as al-Waḥīd, Ṭalʿat al-Nūr, and al-Ṯamara) was regarded by him as his chief deputy following the deaths of most of the original Bābī hierarchy, and as the future head of the movement. Earlier criteria for leadership within the sect had been priority of belief and membership of the *ʿolamāʾ* class, but Azal appears to have been selected on account of his innate capacity (*feṭra*) to receive divine knowledge and his ability to reveal verses—as had been the case with the Bāb himself.

After the Bāb's death in 1266/1850, Ṣobḥ-e Azal came to be regarded as the central authority within the movement, to whom its followers looked for some form of continuing revelation. Recognition of his authority was, however, only one of a number of doctrinal positions adopted by Bābīs in the 1850s and early 1860s. Numerous other claimants to theophanic status emerged in this period, some of whom were seen by Azal as rivals, while others appear to have been regarded as reflections enhancing the prestige of the original theophany (in accordance with the Bāb's theories concerning limitless descending emanations or manifestations of the Primal Will). It is particularly significant that, with few exceptions, these claimants were from non-clerical backgrounds like the Bāb and Azal—an indication of the new social role now emerging for Babism in its second phase.

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* First published in *Encyclopedia Iranica* 3:2 (1988), pp. 179–81.

Following the attempt by several Bābīs on the life of Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shāh in 1852 and an abortive uprising organized by Azal in the same year, he and other Bābīs chose to go into exile in Baghdad. Here he lived as generally-acknowledged head of the community until their removal to Istanbul in 1863. By adopting a policy of seclusion (*ghayba*), Ṣobḥ-e Azal gradually alienated himself from a large proportion of the exiles, who began to give their allegiance to other claimants, notably Azal's half-brother, Bahāʾ Allāh. During this period, Azal set up a network of agents (termed *shohadāʾ*, "witnesses," i.e., of the Bayān) in Iraq and Iran. But this attempt to routinize further the charismatic authority of the faith seems to have clashed with the continuing appeal of original charisma within the movement and further weakened Azal's position.

In Edirne in 1866, Bahāʾ Allāh made public his claim to be *man yoẓheroho*ʾ *llāh* (he whom God shall manifest), the messianic figure of the Bayān (q.v.). Ṣobḥ-e Azal responded by asserting his own claims and resisting the wholesale changes in doctrine and practice introduced by his brother. His attempt to preserve traditional Babism proved largely unpopular, however, and his followers were soon in the minority. In 1868, bitter feuding between the two factions, leading to violence on both sides, induced Ottoman authorities to exile the Bābīs yet further. Bahāʾ Allāh and his followers (now known as Bahaʾis) were sent to Acre in southern Syria, and Azal with his family and some adherents to Famagusta in Cyprus, where he remained until his death on 29 April 1912.

Ṣobḥ-e Azal, like his brother, was a prolific writer, his works consisting primarily of interpretations and elaborations of existing Bābī doctrine, together with very large quantities of devotional pieces and poems. His best-known writings include the early *Ketāb-e nūr, Mostayqeẓ* (a refutation of claims advanced by Mīrzā Asadallāh Khūʾī Dayyān), the *Motammem-e Bayān* (a continuation of the Bāb's unfinished Persian *Bayān*), and the *Naghamāt al-rūḥ*. One list of his writings gives 102 titles, some in several volumes, others very short.

Azalī Babism represents the conservative core of the original Bābī movement, opposed to innovation and preaching a religion for a non-clerical gnostic elite rather than the masses. It also retains the original Bābī antagonism to the Qājār state and a commitment to political activism, in distinction to the quietist stance of Bahaʾism. Paradoxically, Azalī conservatism in religious matters seems to have provided a matrix within which radical social and political ideas could be propounded. If Babism represented the politicization of dissent within Shiʿism (Bayat, chap. 4) and Bahaʾism stood for a return to earlier Shiʿite ideals of

political quietism (MacEoin, "Babism to Bahaʾism"), the Azalī movement became a sort of bridge between earlier Bābī militancy and the secularizing reform movements of the late Qājār period.

The first generation of Azalīs were largely established Bābīs like Sayyed Moḥammad Eṣfahānī, Mollā Rajab-ʿAlī Qahīr Eṣfahānī, Mollā Moḥammad Jaʿfar Narāqī, and Ḥājī Mīrzā Aḥmad Kāshānī. In the writings of men like Qāher and Narāqī, as in those of Azal, we find an abiding concern with sometimes obscure religious themes that remain well within the tradition established in the Bāb's later writings. But for the second generation of Azal's followers, "Azalī Babism provided…a creed which seemingly justified their political activism and growing nationalist consciousness" (Bayat, p. 130). Often loosely applied, Bābī affiliation (which came increasingly to mean Azalī affiliation) was applied to or used as a badge by several important individuals active in demanding social change in Iran, in a manner paralleling the connection with Freemasonry used by Malkom Khan and others. It is, in fact, important to remember that the *farāmūsh-khāna*s were regarded by many as centre s for Bābī recruitment and proselytizing (Gobineau, *Religions et philosophies*, p. 274).

The best known of the early Azalī nationalist reformers were Shaikh Aḥmad Rūḥī Kermānī (1272/1856–1314/1896) and Mīrzā ʿAbd-al-Ḥosayn Kermānī (Āqā Khan Kermānī, q.v.), both of whom were executed along with Mīrzā Ḥasan Khan Kabīr al-Molk following the assassination of Nāṣer-al-dīn Shāh in 1896. Rūḥī's father, Mollā Moḥammad Jaʿfar Tahbāghallāhī Shaykh-al-ʿolamāʾ (1241/1826–1311/1893) was an eminent *ʿālem* from Kermān who had been an early convert to Babism; he is described by Browne as "one of the early promoters of the Liberal Movement in Persia" (*Persian Revolution*, p. 414). Rūḥī and Āqā Khan formed the core of a group of Azalīs resident in Istanbul in the 1880s and 90s who had close links with political activists such as Mīrzā Malkom Khān (q.v.) and Sayyed Jamāl-al-Dīn Afghānī (q.v.). A number of Azalīs, particularly Āqā Khan, were closely associated with the influential Persian-language newspaper *Akhtar* (q.v.), published in Istanbul under the editorship of Mīrzā Moḥammad Ṭāher Tabrīzī. Both Rūḥī and Āqā Khan wrote on Babism (they collaborated on the well-known work *Hasht behesht* and were married to daughters of Ṣobḥ-e Azal, but it would be a mistake to overstress the importance of their Bābī affiliation in their wider activities. Like other Azalīs of this period, they seem to have used Babism as a motif for dissent, much as Malkom Khan or Afghānī (and, indeed, Āqā Khan at times) used Islam.

It is chiefly (one might say, properly) as free-thinkers and secularist reformers rather than as thoroughgoing Bābīs that they made their impact on contemporary affairs.

Edward Browne noted that it was "a remarkable fact that several very prominent supporters of the Persian Constitutional Movement were, or had the reputation of being, Azalīs" (*Materials for the Study of the Bābī Religion*, p. 221). Notable among these were: Mīrzā Jahāngīr Khan Shīrāzī (1292/1875–1326/1908), a teacher at the Dār al-Fonūn in Tehran and a member of various *anjoman*s, who edited the important Constitutionalist newspaper *Ṣūr-e Esrāfīl* and was executed following the coup d'état of 1908; Mīrzā Naṣrallāh Eṣfahānī Malek-al-Motakallemīn (1277/1861–1326/1908), a pro-Constitution cleric also killed in 1908, who was active with other free-thinking *ʿolamāʾ* in promoting reform ideas; Shaikh Mahdī Sharīf Kāshānī (d. 1301 Sh./1922), author of the *Tārīkh-e Jaʿfarī* and *Tārīkh-e waqāyeʿ-e mashrūṭīyat* and a son of the important Azalī cleric Mollā Moḥammad Jaʿfar Narāqī, who was a member of the Anjoman-e Maʿāref in Tehran and head of the Sharaf school; Shaikh Moḥammad Afẓal-al-Molk Kermānī (1267/1851–1322/1904), a brother of Shaikh Aḥmad Rūḥī and a close associate of Afghānī in Istanbul; his brother Shaikh Mahdī Baḥr-al-ʿOlūm Kermānī, a member of the first and second Majlis; and Ḥājī Mīrzā Yaḥyā Dawlatābādī (1279/1862–1359/1939, q.v.), the well-known educationalist who served as a member of the second and fifth Majlis.

It is important to remember that these men, like their predecessors, acted as individuals rather than Azalīs and that their ideas were frequently more secularist than religious in orientation. It must also be stressed that many individuals who have been suspected of harbouring Bābī sympathies or even of being Bābīs, such as Sayyed Jamāl-al-Dīn Eṣfahānī, were hardly true converts: the mere suggestion of heretical leanings or association with known Azalīs were often enough to earn a man the name. Neither Jamāl-al-Dīn Afghānī nor Mīrzā Moḥammad Reẓā Kermānī, the assassin of Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shāh, were Bābīs, although both were often described as such. Abuʾ l-Ḥasan Mīrzā Shayk al-Raʾīs, a member of the Qājār family who was an outstanding reformer of the Constitutional period, has sometimes been called an Azalī, whereas there is ample evidence that he was, in fact, a Bahaʾi.

Yaḥyā Dawlatābādī was appointed Ṣobḥ-e Azal's successor after the death of his own father, Ḥājj Mīrzā Hādī, but there is little evidence that he was actively involved in organizing the affairs of the sect. He did not write on Bābī subjects, nor did any other Azalīs of note emerge

after the death of Azal to produce significant writing on the topic or to develop the original ideas of the religion. With the deaths of those Azalīs who were active in the Constitutional period, Azalī Babism entered a phase of stagnation from which it has never recovered. There is now no acknowledged leader nor, to the knowledge of the present writer, any central organization. Members tend to be secretive about their affiliation, converts are rare, and association appears to run along family lines. It is difficult to estimate current numbers, but these are unlikely to exceed one or two thousand, almost all of whom reside in Iran.

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# BĀBĪ SCHISMS*

Although it never developed much beyond the stage of a sectarian movement within Shiʿite Islam, Babism experienced a number of minor but interesting divisions, particularly in its early phase. The first of these involved the defection of three of the earliest converts of the Bāb, led by Mollā Javād Valīānī, who transferred their allegiance to Mollā Moḥammad Karīm Khān Kermānī (q.v.) as the authentic head of the Shaikhī school (q.v.). Although the scale of this defection was small, it did have repercussions on the Bābī community at Karbalāʾ, whose leader, Fāṭema Baraghānī (Qorrat-al-ʿAyn; q.v.), a maternal cousin of Valīānī, wrote a refutation of his allegations against the Bāb. Valīānī's concern centered on what he perceived as the Bāb's break with the more conservative wing of Shaikhism. By thus distancing themselves from the Bāb's claims, he and those who supported him helped sharpen the growing sense of division within the Shaikhī ranks and encouraged the Bāb and his followers to demonstrate a clearer identity for themselves. (See MacEoin, "From Shaykhism," pp. 199–203.)

A more serious split occurred soon after this at Karbalāʾ itself, where Qorrat-al-ʿAyn and a probable majority of the Bābīs of the region came into conflict with Mollā Aḥmad Khorāsānī and his supporters. The issues involved in this dispute were complex (and are dealt with in contemporary materials written by the chief participants), but the central point of contention appears to have been the status accorded Qorrat-al-ʿAyn and other Letters of the Living (*ḥorūf al-ḥayy*; see Babism). As with Valīānī, Khorāsānī's principal worry was that the Bāb and his chief followers were claiming (or, in the case of the former, having claimed for him) a quasi-divine status out of keeping with a more conservative Shiʿite interpretation. This quarrel appears not to have been fully resolved before Qorrat-al-ʿAyn was forced to leave Karbalāʾ for Baghdad and, eventually, Iran. (See MacEoin, "From Shaykhism," pp. 203–07.)

Apart from her dispute with Khorāsānī, Qorrat-al-ʿAyn came into conflict with other Bābīs over her radical interpretations of doctrine, in particular her tendency to push for the abolition of the Islamic religious

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Law (*sharīʿa*). Something of this division seems to have surfaced during the famous Bābī conclave held at Badasht [Bidasht] in Māzandarān in the summer of 1847, when Qorrat-al-ʿAyn led an abolitionist party in opposition to a poorly-defined group who resisted such a radical development. There are indications that a wider split occurred between the radicals at Badasht and the followers of Mollā Ḥosayn Boshrūʾī (q.v.) at Shaikh Ṭabarsī (see *Noqṭat al-kāf*, pp. 153–54, 155).

After the Bāb's death in 1850 and the death or dispersal of most of the Bābī leadership, divisions of a more complex nature occurred within the surviving community. In Iran and in Baghdad, where a core of sect members took up residence under the leadership of Mīrzā Yaḥyā Nūrī Ṣobḥ-e Azal (q.v.), over twenty individuals made separate claims to some form of divine inspiration, usually based on the ability to compose verses (*āyāt*). Most notable among these was the Azerbaijan-based Mīrzā Asad-Allāh Khoʾī Dayyān, whose followers became known as Dayyānīs. His movement was short-lived, however, ending after his assassination in 1856. The divisions of this period culminated in the increasingly bitter dispute between Ṣobḥ-e Azal and his half-brother Mīrzā Ḥosayn-ʿAlī Bahāʾ-Allāh (q.v.). From about 1866, this leadership quarrel hardened into a permanent division between Azalī and Bahāʾī Bābīs. (See MacEoin, "Divisions and Authority Claims.")

[The original article continues with an account of schisms in Bahaʾism.]

# BAYĀN (DECLARATION, ELUCIDATION)*

Term applied to the writings of the Bāb (q.v.) in general (*Bayān-e fārsī* 3:17, p. 102; 6:1, pp. 184–85) and to two late works in particular, the *Bayān-e fārsī* and *al-Bayān al-ʿarabī*. The Bāb's first full-length work was a *tafsīr* of the *sūra al-Baqara*, begun in late 1259/1843 or early 1260/1844 and finished several months later; the original manuscript of the second half was stolen during the Bāb's *ḥajj* journey of 1260–61/1844–45, but several copies of the first part have survived. This portion at least contains little of a strikingly heterodox nature, although the *tafsīr* itself is highly interpretative. More important is the *tafsīr* on the *sūra Yūsof*, known as the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* or *Aḥsan al-qeṣaṣ* or simply the *Tafsīr* par excellence. Dating of this work is somewhat problematic, but there is internal evidence that it was begun in 1260/1844 and completed later that year or in early 1261/1845; other accounts state that it was finished by June, 1844, and it is certain that disciples of the Bāb carried copies of the entire work or large portions of it when they left Shiraz that summer. The Bāb himself states that this work was widely distributed during the first year of his career (*Bayān-e farsī* 4:18, p. 148). Divided into 111 *sūra*s (each devoted to a verse of the *sūra Yūsof* ), this is a work of some 400 pages composed in a style similar to that of the Koran. It is described as having been sent down by God to the Hidden Imam and subsequently revealed by him to the Bāb (for details, see MacEoin *From Shaykhism to Babism*). Early copies, dated 1845 and 1846, are extant in Haifa and Tehran. The Bāb penned several shorter works during the year between the announcement of his claims in May, 1844, and his return to Būshehr from the *ḥajj* in May, 1845. There has been confusion as to what these works were, but they can be identified from detailed references in the *Ketāb al-fehrest*, written by the Bāb in Būshehr in Jomādā II, 1261/June, 1845. This short work lists the *Doʿā-ye ṣaḥīfa, Ṣaḥīfa bayn al-ḥaramayn, Tafsīr besmellāh, Ketāb al-rūḥ, Ṣaḥīfat aʿmāl al-sana*, thirty-eight letters to individuals, twelve *khoṭba*s delivered on the *ḥajj* journey, and replies to forty-one questions. The titles are also given of several works stolen in February, 1845, between Medina

* First published in *Encyclopedia Iranica* 3:8 (1988), pp. 878–882.

and Jedda. The *Doʿā-ya ṣaḥīfa* seems to have been contemporary with the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* and may be referred to in it (fol. 67b). It is also known as the *Ṣaḥīfa-ye makhzūna* and contains fourteen prayers for use on specific days or festivals; at least seven mss. are extant. The *Ṣaḥīfa bayn al-ḥaramayn* was written between Mecca and Medina for Mīrzā Moḥīṭ Kermānī and Sayyed ʿAlī Kermānī, two leading Shaikhis from Karbalāʾ also on the *ḥajj*. Only about 100 short pages long, it is an unsystematic collection of replies to questions together with prayers; it contains a particularly interesting passage detailing the daily routine of the seeker (*sālek*; pp. 66–84). Several mss. are extant, including two dated 1261/1845, in Haifa and Tehran. Several mss. exist of a *Tafsīr ḥorūf al-besmellāh*, which appears to be identical with the *Tafsīr besmellāh* referred to and which is a short allegorical commentary. The *Ketāb al-rūḥ*, composed at sea on the return journey from the *ḥajj*, was highly regarded by the Bāb, who described it as "the greatest of all books" (Māzandarānī, *Asrār* IV, p. 44); it was seized at the time of the Bāb's arrest in June, 1845, and thrown into a well in Shiraz, from which it was later rescued in a seriously damaged condition. Some five incomplete mss. are in existence. It is said to have consisted originally of 700 *sūra*s (*Ketāb al-fehrest*). The *Ṣaḥīfa aʿmāl al-sana* seems to have been written in Būshehr after the Bāb's return from the *ḥajj*, between May and June, 1845. It contains fourteen sections interspersed with unnumbered sections and deals with the observances and prayers for important dates in the Muslim calendar. Only two mss. of this breviary are known to exist. Not mentioned by name in the *Ketāb al-fehrest* is another work composed during the *ḥajj*, the *Khasāʾel-e sabʿa*, which includes seven interesting but scarcely radical rules prescribed for the Bāb's followers at this juncture. It is known to the present writer only through quotations in later works, but at least one ms. appears to exist in private hands.

Of considerable importance are two works probably composed shortly after the Bāb's return to Shiraz in July, 1845. These are two related treatises, the *Ṣaḥīfa-ye ʿadlīya* and the *Resāla forūʿ al-ʿadlīya*, the former dealing with *oṣūl al-dīn* and the latter with certain *forūʿ* of Shiʿite *feqh*. The first consists of five *abwāb*: 1. on the mention of God, 2. in explanation of the Balance, 3. on the knowledge of God and his *awlīāʾ*, 4. on the return to God, 5. on the prayer of devotion to God. It appears to have been the first Persian work of the Bāb's (see pp. 3–4) and is of particular importance in helping us form a clear picture of his thought at this juncture, especially since it seems to represent his

first effort at addressing a wider audience than the Shaikhi *ʿolamāʾ*. For details of some of its contents, See bāb. Some dozen mss. are extant. The second of these works is less common but has the distinction of being the earliest of the Bāb's works to have been translated (from Arabic to Persian between 1262/1846 and 1263/1847). It consists of seven chapters (*abwāb*): 1. a short prayer for all the imams (*zīāra jāmeʿa ṣaghīra*, 2. on daily prayer (*ṣalāt*), 3. on the regulations for prayer (*aḥkām al-ṣalāt*), 4. on the alms tax (*zakāt*), 5. on *khoms*, 6. on jihad, 7. on borrowing (*dayn*), all dealt with in the traditional manner. Only three mss. are known to the present writer. Another important work from this period is a *tafsīr* on the *Sūrat al-kawthar*, a commentary of over 200 pages written for Sayyed Yaḥyā Dārābī (q.v.) during a visit he made to Shiraz to interview the Bāb, possibly on behalf of Moḥammad Shah. This commentary consists largely of highly abstract and insubstantial speculations on the verses, words, and letters of the *sūra* in question. Of greater interest are numerous Hadiths quoted in a section toward the end, which indicate the Bāb's familiarity with works of tradition and his concern with prophecies relating to the advent of the Qāʾem. There is evidence that this work was highly regarded by the Bāb's followers and widely distributed by them. Some ten mss. are extant, including one in Cambridge and one in London. During this period, the Bāb wrote several short *tafsīr*s, including those on the *Āyat al-nūr*, the *Sūrat al-qadr*, the *Sūrat al-tawḥīd*, and various Hadiths; he also continued to pen replies to queries from a large number of correspondents and to write brief treatises on topics such as compulsion and free will (*jabr* and *tafwīẓ*), predestination (*qadar*), and even grammar and syntax (*naḥw wa ṣarf*). Mss. of most of this material are extant.

Only two works of any importance may be ascribed to the period of the Bāb's residence in Isfahan from September, 1846, to March, 1847: a *tafsīr* on the *Sūra wa'l-ʿaṣr* and a *resāla* on the topic of the *nobowwa khāṣṣa* of Moḥammad. The first of these was written for the *emām-e jomʿa* of Isfahan, Mīr Sayyed Moḥammad: some 100 pages in length, it was, apparently, penned in the space of about one day. Eight mss. are known, including one in Cambridge. The second was composed in two hours for Manūchehr Khan Moʿtamed-al-Dawla, governor of Isfahan. It is a short work of some fifty pages designed as an apologetic for the prophethood of Moḥammad. Some seven mss. are extant. Several surviving minor works—mostly letters—may also be dated from this period.

The style and content of the Bāb's works change markedly in the three-year period Rabīʿ II, 1263/March, 1847–Ramaḍān, 1266/July, 1850) of his imprisonment in Azerbaijan, when his claims and doctrines underwent a major transition (see bāb). The most important work of this period and, indeed, the central book of the Babi canon, is the *Bayān-e fārsī*, a lengthy but incomplete work of nine *wāḥed*s (units) each of nineteen *abwāb* (chapters), except for the last, which has only ten. It was originally intended to complete this work in nineteen *wāḥed*s, an aim which seems to have been frustrated by the Bāb's death. (A continuation entitled *Motammem-e Bayān* was later written by Mīrzā Yaḥyā Ṣobḥ-e Azal and has been published.) The *Bayān-e fārsī* was begun toward the end of the Bāb's stay in Mākū and contains a full expression of his doctrine as elaborated between then and his execution, together with the basic laws and regulations of the Babi *sharīʿa*. Its contents have been discussed in a number of places, to which reference may be made (Rosen, III, pp. 1–32; Browne, 1889, pp. 918–33; idem, *Nuqṭatu'l-kāf*, London, 1910, pp. LIV–XCV; Wilson, "The Bayan"). A lithograph edition of this work, based on several mss., was published in Tehran about 1946 by the Azalī Babis, but copies of it are now rare. A. L. M. Nicolas published a French translation between 1911 and 1914. Preliminary materials for a collated edition based on six mss. may be found among the Browne papers in Cambridge University Library. Some fifty mss. are known to this writer, including two in Cambridge, two in Leningrad, two in London, two in Paris, and a defective but important copy in the hand of the Bāb's amanuensis, Sayyed Ḥosayn Yazdī, preserved by the Bahaʾis in Haifa. The much shorter Arabic *Bayān* was also written in Mākū and, like the Persian *Bayān*, is incomplete, with only eleven *wāḥed*s. Each *wāḥed* has nineteen *abwāb*, but these latter are each little more than a verse in length, the overall effect being one of great compression with little or no logic in the sequence of subjects, dictated by the fact that this work is basically little more than a statement of the principal doctrines and regulations of the Persian *Bayān*. Gobineau's statement (*Religions et philosophies dans l'Asie centrale*, 10th ed., Paris, 1957, pp. 279–80) that there are three *Bayān*s, two in Arabic, is unfounded. Much rarer than its Persian equivalent, this work exists in some thirteen mss. (one an autograph), two of which are in Paris. It has been lithographed from the holograph ms. by the Azalī Babis in Tehran (n.d.), printed (in ʿAbd-al-Razzāq Ḥasanī, *al-Bābīyūn wa'l-Bahāʾīyūn*, Sidon, 1957, pp. 81–107), and twice translated into

French (Gobineau, *Religions*, appendix: "Ketab-è Hukkam," pp. 409–82 [incomplete and inaccurate]; Nicolas—see bibliography).

A related work, composed in the last period of the Bāb's life, is the *Haykal al-dīn*, originally written in two copies, one in the hand of the Bāb, one in that of Sayyed Ḥosayn Yazdī, both of which appear to have been lost. Other copies have since been located, however, and the text has been published in lithograph together with the Arabic *Bayān*. It is a compendium in eight *wāḥed*s of the laws of the Bāb and, although it parallels the contents of the Arabic *Bayān* in most particulars, it frequently gives fresh or modified regulations. Another short but important work is the Persian *Dalāʾel-e sabʿa*, supported, like the Persian *Bayān*, by an even briefer Arabic version. There has been disagreement as to the date of its composition, but clear internal evidence indicates that it was written at the end of 1264/1848 in Mākū. There has also been some controversy as to the identity of the recipient addressed in the text (the two main theories favouring either Sayyed Ḥosayn Yazdī or Mollā Moḥammad-Taqī Heravi), but all that can be said with certainty is that this individual was either not a believer or was a believer with doubts, had been a pupil of Sayyed Kāẓem Rashtī (q.v.), and had met Mollā Moḥammad Ḥosayn Boshrūʾī (q.v.). This work provides seven "proofs" of the Bāb's mission, discusses his claim to *qāʾemīya*, cites numerous Hadiths of a prophetic nature, and refers by name to several of the Bāb's followers. Thirteen mss. are known to me, of which two are in Cambridge, one in London, and one in Paris. A lithograph edition has been published.

An extremely lengthy work of this period is the *Ketāb al-asmāʾ* (also *Tafsīr al-asmāʾ* and *Ketāb asmāʾ koll shayʾ*) which consists largely of lengthy variations on the names of God, interspersed with doctrinal statements. It has been ascribed to the later Chahrīq period. Normally found in two volumes, the entire work consists of nineteen *wāḥed*s of nineteen *abwāb* each, but defective copies are almost standard. Its popularity is clear from the large number of extant mss., twenty-six of which are known to me (three in Cambridge, seven in London, four in Paris). Another of the Bāb's last works, similar in character to the last, is the *Ketāb-e panj shaʾn* or *Shoʾūn-e khamsa*. This originally consisted of seventeen sections of five passages each, arranged according to the "five grades" in which the Bāb stated his works to have been written (*Bayān-e fārsī* 3:17; 6:1; 9:2): *āyāt, monājāt, khoṭba* (= *ṣowar ʿelmīya*), *tafsīr*, and *fārsī*. The work was written over a seventeen-day period

during Jomādā I, 1266/March–April, 1850, completed sections being sent, apparently, to individuals named in them. Eleven mss. are extant, one in Cambridge, two in London, and one in Paris. Numerous letters and *zīārat-nāma*s from this period are also extant, as are examples of talismans (*dawāʾer, hayākel*) in the Bāb's hand or containing passages from his writings.

It is impossible to comment adequately on the Bāb's style without extensive quotation in the original languages, but some general remarks will be in order. Although there are major changes in style and form, the striking characteristic of the Bāb's writing at all periods is its opacity and the syntactical contortions of the language, something true of both Persian and Arabic works. The Bāb's Arabic grammar is consistently bad (a point often referred to in Muslim criticisms but dismissed by Babis as the prerogative of a prophet), as a result of which some passages are incomprehensible. The reader must be guided for the more by context and a developed feeling for the style than by strict reliance on grammar or syntax. Works like the *Bayān* are couched in an eccentric Persian style which often conceals the author's meaning, while others, such as the *Ketāb al-asmāʾ*, are unconnected and repetitive to an exaggerated degree. Much of this apparent incoherence seems to be a result of the considerable speed at which the Bāb composed (or "revealed") his works, a point to which he frequently alludes as evidence of divine inspiration. This inspirational quality—which may owe much to the disconnected nature of the Koran—becomes increasingly marked in the later works, where it is not infrequently linked to ideas and images of an exciting, vivid, and highly original nature. The effort required to penetrate the obscurities of the style of the Persian *Bayān* in particular is often rewarded by access to fresh insights, and it cannot be denied that the more developed works display an unusual genius that thoroughly justifies their study.

All of the writings of the Bāb were recorded in the first instance in his own hand or in that of one of a number of amanuenses, of whom Sayyed Ḥosayn Yazdī (a "Letter of the Living") was by far the most important. These original texts appear to have been written in some form of "revelation script" (*khaṭṭ-e waḥy*), a form of shorthand devised to accommodate the Bāb's rapid dictation; few examples of these appear to have survived, however. Transcription of these originals was carried out to a large extent under the supervision of the Bāb himself, principally by Mollā ʿAbd-al-Karīm Qazvīnī and Shaikh Ḥasan Zonūzī. Numerous copies were made from these transcriptions during

the Bāb's lifetime, an activity encouraged in the Persian *Bayān*, which makes the possession of a *ṣaḥīfa* of at least 1,000 verses obligatory for all Babis and gives instructions regarding the preparation of copies of the *Bayān* itself. There is evidence for wide distribution of copies of at least the major works of the Bāb before 1266/1850, but it is also clear that large numbers of manuscripts must have perished in the disturbed conditions of this and the immediately succeeding period. Those Babis who left Iran for Baghdad in 1853 seem to have carried a substantial number of texts with them and to have made efforts in later years to assemble copies of scriptural works in Iran for transfer to Iraq. Toward the end of the 13th/19th century, the British scholar Edward G. Browne was instrumental in having numerous Babi mss. transcribed for himself, largely by Azalī scribes; these now form an important part of the Browne collection in Cambridge University Library. Other Babi mss. were also acquired by the British Museum (now British Library), the Bibliothèque Nationale, and the Oriental Languages Institute in Petrograd. An important private collection belonging to the French scholar A. L. M. Nicolas was dispersed by sale in Paris in 1969; it seems that most (but not all) of it was purchased by the Baha'i World Center in Israel. By far the largest and most important collections of Babi mss. are those in the national Baha'i archives of Iran in Tehran and the international Baha'i archives in Haifa. The former collection is extensive but uncatalogued and remains inaccessible owing to the conditions pertaining for the Baha'is in Iran; its significance is considerable, however, in that it contains much extremely rare, even unique material. The latter is at present imperfectly catalogued and not freely accessible, although I am told that this situation may improve following the expansion of library facilities in coming years. There are also large numbers of mss. in the private collections of Azalī families in Iran, but these remain scattered and, for the most part, inaccessible. The Azalīs in Tehran have issued lithograph editions of a number of works of the Bāb, copies of which have become quite rare. The publication of properly edited complete texts of major works remains a sine qua non of future scholarship in this field.

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Browne on this subject are still invaluable: "The Bābīs of Persia II: Their Literature and Doctrines," *JRAS* 21, 1889, pp. 881–1009; "A Catalogue and Description of 27 Bābī Manuscripts," ibid., 24, 1892, pp. 433–99, 637–710; "Some Remarks on the Bābī Texts Edited by Baron Victor Rosen…," ibid., 24, 1892, pp. 259–332; "Further Notes on Bābī Literature," in *Materials for the Study of the Bābī Religion*, Cambridge, 1918, esp. pp. 198–208; "Writings of the Bāb and Ṣubḥ-i-Ezel," in *A Traveller's Narrative Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Bāb*, 2 vols., Cambridge, 1891, I, pp. 335–47; completed by R. A. Nicholson, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Oriental MSS Belonging to the Late E. G. Browne*, Cambridge, 1932, section F. Baron Victor Rosen's articles are also worth referring to: *Collections scientifiques de l'Institut des Langues Orientales du Ministère des Affaires Étrangeàres* I: *Manuscrits arabes*, St. Petersburg, 1877, pp. 179–212; III: *Manuscrits persans*, ibid., 1886, pp. 1–51; VI: *Manuscrits arabes*, ibid., 1891, pp. 141–255. The Azalī Babis in Tehran have published the following works of the Bāb: *Ṣaḥīfa-ye ʿadlīya*, n.d.; *Bayān*-e *fārsī*, n.d.; *Dalāʾel-e sabʿa ʿarabī wa fārsī*, n.d.; *al-Bayān al-ʿarabī* with *Ketāb-e Haykal al-dīn* and *Tafsīr-e do āya az Haykal al-dīn*, n.d.; *Qesmatī az alwāḥ-e khaṭṭ-e Noqṭa-ye Ūlā wa Āqā Sayyed Ḥosayn Kāteb*, n.d.; *Majmūʿaʾī az āthār-e Noqṭa-ye Ūlā wa Ṣobḥ-e Azal*, n.d. The Bahaʾis have published *Montakhabāt-e āyāt az āthār-e Haḍrat-e Noqṭa-ye Ūlā*, Tehran, 134 *Badīʿ*/1356 Sh./1977), together with an English translation by Habib Taherzadeh, *Selections from the Writings of the Bāb* (Haifa, 1976), a heavily edited selection of passages from major works.

The following mss. are among the most important: *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Baqara*, Cambridge University Library [CUL], Browne Or. Ms. F. 8; *Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar*, CUL, Browne Or. Ms. F. 10; *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, CUL, Browne Or. Ms. F. 11; Arabic letters, CUL, Browne Or. Ms. F. 21 and 28 (item 7); *Resāla fiʾl-solūk*, Iran National Bahaʾi Archives [INBA] 4011.C, pp. 123–27; *Ketāb al-rūḥ*, TBA, 4011.C, pp. 61–100, 7005.C; *Khoṭba fī Jedda*, INBA, 5006.C, pp. 330–35; *Ketāb ṣaḥīfat aʿmāl al-sana*, INBA, 5006.C, pp. 262–78; *Resāla forūʿ al-ʿAdlīya*, INBA, 5010.C, pp. 86–119; *Ketāb al-fehrest*, INBA, 6003.C, pp. 285–93; *al-Ṣaḥīfa al-makhzūna*, INBA, 6009.C, pp. 1–171, CUL, Add. 3704(6).

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# AḤSĀʾĪ, SHAIKH AḤMAD B. ZAYN-AL-DĪN, 1166–1241/1753–1826, SHIʿITE *ʿĀLEM* AND PHILOSOPHER AND UNINTENDING ORIGINATOR OF THE SHAYKHĪ SCHOOL OF SHIʿISM IN IRAN AND IRAQ*

## Life

He was born in Rajab, 1166/May, 1753 in the small Shiʿite village of al-Maṭayrafī in the oasis of al-Aḥsāʾ (al-Ḥasāʾ) near the east coast of the Arabian peninsula in the greater Baḥrayn region. His family, originally nomadic Sunnis, had converted to Shiʿism five generations before, at a time of widespread conversion in the area, and had settled in al-Aḥsāʾ at the same period. They belonged to the dominant Mahāsher clan of the ruling Banū Khāled, but do not appear to have been active in the politics of the region, and there is no evidence of links between them and the *ʿolamāʾ*. From two autobiographical accounts, it is clear that the young Shaikh Aḥmad was given little encouragement to study, but that, at his own insistence, he was able to complete his elementary studies under a shaikh in a nearby village. Later he found more advanced teachers and, by his twenties, seems to have made considerable progress in Shiʿite theology and philosophy. The identity of his teachers in this period is not known. He makes no mention of having travelled to Ḥofūf, al-Mobarraz, or any other large settlement in the region to find suitable teachers; in any case the obvious breadth and fundamental soundness of his learning by the time of his arrival in Iraq around 1205/1790 indicates that he must have had competent masters from an early stage. At the same time, it is possible that many of the original elements in his later doctrine owed much to his being in part self-taught. There is evidence of neo-Qarmaṭī influence in the al-Aḥsāʾ region after the 1760s, but the possibility of links with the shaikh remains purely speculative. He himself indicated that, from early childhood, he developed a predilection for introspection, seclusion, and asceticism. At an unspecified age—probably during adolescence—he experienced a series of dreams and visions, of the type familiar to Shiʿite piety, in which the Imams

* First published in *Encyclopedia Iranica* 1:7 (1984), pp. 674–79.

or the Prophet figured as transmitters of supernatural knowledge. In one dream recounted by him, he believed that he was granted *ejāza* or permission to transmit knowledge by each of the twelve Imams.

In 1186/1772–73, at the age of twenty, Shaikh Aḥmad left al-Aḥsāʾ for the ʿ*atabāt* or Shiʿite shrines in Arab Iraq, apparently with the aim of studying there under the ʿ*olamāʾ* who had congregated in the region under the general direction of Āqā-ye Behbahānī. Not long after his arrival, however, plague broke out in Iraq, and he was forced to return to al-Aḥsāʾ. He married his first wife shortly after this and appears to have abandoned any plans to return to the ʿ*atabāt*. The next twenty years or so were spent in al-Aḥsāʾ and in Baḥrayn proper (where he spent four years), during which period he studied Shiʿite *feqh* and *kalām* and read works on "theosophy" or "divine wisdom" (*ḥekma elāhīya*), including texts by Mollā Ṣadrā and Moḥsen Fayẓ [Kāshānī]. He received what seems to have been his first formal *ejāza* in 1205/1790 from Shaikh Aḥmad b. Ḥasan Baḥrānī Damastānī, a pupil of Shaikh Yūsof Baḥrānī. His earliest known works also date from about this time, among them *Ṣerāṭ al-yaqīn* (a commentary on the *Tabṣera* of Ḥellī) and *al-Resālat al-qadrīya* (on the subject of *qadr*). Now in his late thirties, he had succeeded in attracting some attention in the region, but apparently more as a saint than as a scholar.

The Wahhabi threat to the Baḥrayn region impelled the shaikh to leave al-Aḥsāʾ by the early 1790s, again in the direction of the shrines in Iraq. His stay was prolonged this time, and he studied under several Shiʿite ʿ*olamāʾ*, mostly pupils of Āqā§-ye Behbahānī, who had recently died. Before long he obtained comprehensive *ejāzāt* from at least five teachers: Sayyed Moḥammad-Mahdī Ṭabāṭabāʾī Baḥr-al-ʿolūm (1209/1794–95), Shaikh Jaʿfar Najafī, Sayyed ʿAlī Ṭabāṭabāʾī, Āqā Mīrzā Moḥammad-Mahdī b. Abi'l-Qāsem Mūsawī Shahrestānī (1209/1794–95), and Shaikh Ḥosayn b. Moḥammad Darāzī Baḥrānī, a nephew of Shaikh Yūsof Baḥrānī (1214/1799). After the receipt of this last *ejāza*, Aḥsāʾī began a period of shifting from place to place in southern Iraq, including three periods of residence in Baṣra.

In 1221/1806, he performed a pilgrimage to Mashhad. Returning through Yazd, he was persuaded by the populace to remain there; thus began a stay of almost twenty years in Iran, during which the shaikh's reputation spread throughout the country and beyond. By 1223/1808, Fatḥ-ʿAlī Shah began to correspond with him, probably at the suggestion of Ebrāhīm Khan Ẓahīr-al-Dawla, the governor of Kermān, who had become one of the shaikh's most devoted admirers. Aḥsāʾī spent

the winter of 1808–09 as a guest of the king in Tehran, but could not be persuaded to transfer his residence there permanently. Returning to Yazd, he settled down more seriously to write the letters and commentaries on which his growing fame was to be built.

By 1229/1814 tension seems to have developed between Aḥsāʾī and some of the notables of Yazd, probably because of his growing influence in the region. Leaving Yazd, he made for Kermānshāh, probably on the invitation of Moḥammad-ʿAlī Mīrzā, under whose patronage he remained, with occasional absences, until about one year after the prince's death in 1237/1821. Several of the shaikh's most important works belong to this period, including the *Sharḥ al-zīārat al-jāmeʿat al-kabīra* (1230/1815; Tehran, 1267/1850–51), regarded as his magnum opus; a commentary on the *Resālat al-ʿelmīya* of Moḥsen Fayẓ (1230/1815); the *Sharḥ al-fawāʾed* (1233/1818; Tabrīz[?], 1272/1856), a commentary on his earlier *Fawāʾed*; *al-Resālat al-solṭānīya* (1234/1818), in reply to questions from Fatḥ-ʿAlī Shah; the lengthy *Sharḥ al-mashāʿer* (1234/1818; Tabrīz, 1278/1861–62), a commentary on the *Mashāʿer* of Mollā Ṣadrā; and the even lengthier *Sharḥ al-ʿarshīya* (1236/1821; Tabrīz, 1278/1861–62), on Ṣadrā's *ʿArshīya*. In 1232/1817 he performed what seems to have been his first pilgrimage to Mecca, following which he stayed for eight months in Najaf and Karbalā.

With the death of Moḥammad-ʿAlī Mīrzā in 1821, Kermānshāh and the surrounding region fell into a rapid decline. In 1238/1822, Shaikh Aḥmad left for Mashhad, travelling via Qom and Qazvīn. In Qazvīn he was called a heretic for the first time, by Mollā Moḥammad-Taqī Baraghānī, who condemned certain passages of the shaikh's writings as contrary to orthodox teachings on resurrection (*maʿād*). Leaving the matter unresolved, Aḥsāʾī continued his pilgrimage, after which he visited Yazd and Isfahan. Here he stayed as the guest of ʿAbdallāh Khan Amīn-al-Dawla and was treated by both *ʿolamāʾ* and civic dignitaries as a visitor of considerable importance. Although several months had elapsed since the pronouncement of *takfīr* or condemnation by Baraghānī, it is clear from this reception in Isfahan that its effect had not yet made itself felt outside Qazvīn.

Returning to Kermānshāh in June 1823, Aḥsāʾī left after a year to settle in Karbalā. Now aged seventy, he probably planned to remain at the *ʿatabāt* for the remainder of his life. But Baraghānī had by this time gained a number of supporters at the shrines in Iraq, including Āqā Sayyed Moḥammad-Mahdī Ṭabāṭabāʾī, Shaikh Moḥammad-Ḥasan Najafī, and Āqā Sayyed Ebrāhīm Qazvīnī. Although many eminent

*ʿolamāʾ* in Iran and Iraq continued to express open admiration and support for Aḥsāʾī, his opponents mounted a successful campaign against him at the *ʿatabāt*. Threatened by these efforts, the shaikh was compelled to leave Karbalā for Mecca, travelling via Baghdad and Syria. Some two or three stages from Medina, he died on 21 Dhū'l-Qaʿda 1241/27 June 1826, aged seventy-three. His grave is in the Baqīʿ cemetery in Medina [but may have been destroyed in recent years during extensive vandalism to the cemetery by the Saudi authorities].

## Relationship to Shaikhism

Aḥsāʾī is generally regarded today as the founder of the Shaykhī school of Shiʿism, an essentially orthodox movement which is, nevertheless, still viewed with suspicion by the mass of Shiʿite *ʿolamāʾ*. In many ways this view is incorrect. There is no reason to believe that the shaikh sought to bring into existence a separate body, an ecclesiola as it were, within the system of Twelver Shiʿism. To the end of his life he stressed the orthodoxy of his views and saw his own function as essentially that of an *ʿālem* insisting on the revival of the primitive virtues of Shiʿite belief, particularly as expressed in personal devotion to the Imams. Granted that, as we shall note, some of his theories were unusual, there is no reason why they could not, like many of the concepts developed by the Eshrāqī school and the school of Isfahan, have been assimilated by the mainstream of Shiʿite thought. This possibility is put forward most strongly by Corbin, who stresses the continuity of Shaykhī metaphysical teaching with the theosophical traditional of Iranian Shiʿism and sees in Shaikhism a great resurgence of Shiʿite gnosis. It should not be forgotten, however, that the continuity is equally strong in less philosophical and metaphysical areas of belief. Shaikh Aḥmad's *Ḥayāt al-nafs*, for example, is a systematic outline of Shiʿite doctrine entirely consistent with the major tradition.

At the time of Aḥsāʾī's death in 1241/1826, there was no hint of an attempt to set up a separate school within Shiʿism, to create a division based either on doctrinal differences or on conflicting claims to authority. Despite the *takfīr* campaign originated by Baraghānī, the shaikh's position was still essentially that of one of the most respected and influential of the Shiʿite *ʿolamāʾ*, a *mojtahed* and *marjaʿ al-taqlīd* to whom a sizeable body of *ṭollāb* and older clergy gave allegiance. By no means all of his pupils and admirers later became identified as

"Shaykhīs" in the technical sense. Many, such as Mollā ʿAlī Nūrī and Ḥājj Ebrāhīm Kalbāsī, continued in later years as perfectly respectable *ʿolamāʾ* with no overt connections with the "Shaykhī school."

Given time and the support of prominent *mojtahed*s such as Mollā Moḥammad-Bāqer Shaftī, who refused to countenance the *takfīr*, it is probable that the heresy campaign would have faded away on the shaikh's death; once it was forgotten, his reputation as a Shiʿite *ʿālem* would have been assured. But the removal of Aḥsāʾī was, in fact, the trigger for the emergence of a coherent group of *ʿolamāʾ* who sought to defend his teachings against the *takfīr*. Before leaving Karbalā, the shaikh had given his leading pupil, Sayyed Kāzáem Rashtī, authority to teach there on his behalf. Remaining permanently in Karbalā, Rashtī and other pupils of the shaikh set out to demonstrate the orthodoxy of his views, thus providing a focus for continuing attacks by Sayyed Moḥammad-Mahdī Ṭabāṭabāʾī, Shaikh ʿAlī Najafī, and Sayyed Ebrāhīm Qazvīnī. Inevitably, in the course of the polemics which ensued between the two parties, the few relatively minor topics on which the *takfīr* had first been based were multiplied on the slightest pretext until the real issue was lost. Before long political rivalry increased the division between Rashtī and his supporters, popularly known as the Shaykhīya, and their opponents, who termed themselves Bālāsarīya (because they prayed above the head [*sar*] of Imam Ḥosayn, whereas the followers of Rashtī prayed at the foot of the tomb). Nevertheless, as late as 1258/1842, Rashtī persisted in denying the charge that he had established a new *madhhab* within Islam; he constantly represented himself as simply the expounder and defender of the views and person of his shaikh. The meaning of the term Shaykhīya, used to refer to what he calls *īn ferqa* (this sect), is simply "people who are adherents of (*mansūband bar*) this shaikh" (*Dalīl al-motaḥayyerīn*, p. 11).

Rashtī not only defended the orthodoxy of Aḥsāʾī's views, but also sought to emphasize the positive role of his teacher as an *ʿālem* endowed with more than usual authority. Significantly, the original *takfīr* made no mention of the role assigned to Aḥsāʾī either by himself or by his students, but it is here, rather than in any specific doctrinal issue or the interpretation of such issues, that the Shaykhī school found its true raison d'être. Aḥsāʾī's early dreams and visions have been noted above. On another occasion he dreamt that he was taught verses by Imam Ḥasan, to enable him to call on the Imams whenever he required an answer to any problem. On two occasions, once with Imam Ḥasan and once with Moḥammad, he claimed to have undergone what appears to

have been a form of initiatory ritual, involving the drinking of saliva from the mouth of the Imam or Prophet.

This belief that his knowledge was directly granted him by the Prophet and the Imams distinguishes Aḥsāʾī from contemporary religious leaders. The role of the Imams as spiritual guides is familiar in Shiʿism, but Aḥsāʾī seems to have taken this concept to an extreme degree. He claimed that since he derived his knowledge directly from the Prophet and the Imams in dreams, error could not find its way into his words and that he could easily answer any criticism leveled against him (*Sharḥ al-fawāʾed*, p. 4; *Sīra Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī*, pp. 19–20). In one place he describes these dreams as *elhām*, but more usually he speaks of *kashf* or *mokāshafa*; this last concept was given sufficient prominence to give rise to the use of the term *kashfīya* for the school.

As Aḥsāʾī's successor, Rashtī saw his shaikh as a possessor of knowledge from the Imams and as the revealer of the inward (*bāṭen*) truth of Islam. In his *Sharḥ al-qaṣīda*, Rashtī refers to two ages of the dispensation of Moḥammad—an age of outward observances (*zawāher*) and an age of inward realities (*bawāṭen*). The former age came to end after twelve centuries, and the second age then commenced. In every century of the first age, there appeared a promulgator (*morawwej*) of the outward laws; at the commencement of the first century of the second age, the first *morawwej* of the inward truth, i.e., Shaikh Aḥmad, appeared (quoted in Mīrzā Abu'l-Faẓl Golpāyagānī, *Ketāb al-farāʾed*, Cairo, 1315/1897–98, pp. 575–77). This conception of the role of Aḥsāʾī was, clearly, current among Rashtī's followers, as appears from an anonymous *resāla* written some time after 1261/1845; the author speaks of the beginning of the revelation (of inner truth) in the person of Aḥsāʾī at the end of 1,200 years, and refers to him as the *morawwej* of the first century of the second age and, indeed, of the 12th century of the first age of outward truth (ms. in Tehran Bahaʾi Archives, 6003. C, pp. 399, 407). The later Shaykhī school in Kermān has tended to play down this view of Aḥsāʾī, who is depicted as little more than an inspired reviver of Shiʿism.

## Doctrine

As has been stated above, Shaikh Aḥmad did not seek to introduce any innovations within the fundamental doctrinal structure of Twelver Shiʿism. His position on the essential Shiʿite doctrines can not be said to

differ radically from that of other *ʿolamāʾ*, as is particularly clear from his treatise on the *oṣūl* of the faith, the *Ḥayāt al-nafs*. Aḥsāʾī deals with *tawḥīd, ʿadl, nobūwa, emāma*, and *maʿād* in conventional terms, his position being essentially Muʿtazilite on the nature of God, the Koran, the justice of God, and so on.

Since God has not brought creation into existence for nothing, and since He Himself is not in need of anything, the benefit of creation must return to His creatures. This benefit depends on God's imposing religious obligations (*taklīf*) on men in order to make them worthy of eternal bliss. To show gratitude for God's benefits is impossible without knowing the one Who bestows them. The first duty of the *mokallafīn* is to become detached from creation; the second is to observe it and meditate on it. This will lead to the recognition of God. The meaning of knowledge of God is belief in the existence of an uncreated Creator, recognition of His attributes (both those of the divine essence and those of the divine actions), recognition of God's justice, recognition of the *nobūwa* of Moḥammad and all the prophets, who are the intermediaries between God and man, recognition of the coming to life of the *mokallafīn* on the Day of Judgment.

God exists; He is pre-existent (*qadīm*), eternal, alive, and knowing. His knowledge is of two kinds—eternal (*ʿelm qadīm*) and created (*ʿelm ḥādet*). He is all-powerful (*qāder*) and a free agent (*mokhtār*); He is single in His essence, attributes, acts, and worship. His will (*erāda*) is one of the attributes of his actions (*ṣefāt al-afʿāl*), not of His essence (*ṣefāt al-dhāt*); similarly, His speech is one of His actions and does not belong to the essence; it is, therefore, created (*ḥādet*). He is not a body, an accident, or an essence, and is neither compound, various, or situated in any place or direction, nor does He incarnate Himself. The vision of God is not possible with physical eyes, whether in this world or the next.

Divine justice (*ʿadl*) is the opposite of tyranny; God does not impose obligation (*taklīf*) beyond what man can endure, while reward exceeds the degree of *taklīf* in acts of obedience, and punishment exceeds it in acts of disobedience. Man is possessed of free will (*ekhtīār*) and is the performer of his own actions, but God preserves and provides assistance for these. Whoever says that God is the performer of men's acts, good or bad, attributes injustice to Him in compelling man to do wrong and punishing them for it. But to say (as do the Muʿtazilites) that man has absolute independence is to depose God from His dominion. Both *efrāṭ* and *tafrīṭ* are false; the true position is the medial one (i.e.,

*lā jabr wa lā tafwīẓ bal amr bayn al-amrayn*). Thus, man performs his actions freely and without compulsion, but the power to do so (*taqdīr*) comes from God.

Since God can not be comprehended and men can not derive the teachings of religion directly from Him, He must choose a mediator who knows Him through revelation (*waḥy*) and conveys to men those matters which conduce to their welfare. It is necessary to send a *rasūl* to each nation, according to their differing needs; this process ended, however, with Moḥammad, the seal of the prophets. The prophet ought to be possessed of perfections both physical and moral, he must be free (*maʿṣūm*) of great and small sins before and after his calling and to the end of his life, and he must be free of all other defects. The prophet of this people is Moḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh; after him there will be no prophet, so he must be the *rasūl* for all mankind. He has performed miracles, among which is the Koran, which is inimitable and will never be abrogated.

The condition of men is subject to change. Thus, in the absence of the Prophet, there must be a successor who will stand in his place to execute his laws and preserve his *sharīʿa*. This successor should have all the qualities of the Prophet. The word of the *waṣī* is that of God, his decree that of God and the Prophet, and obedience to him obligatory. No one can be appointed by men to this station; it can only be succeeded to by the decree of God. The Imams were appointed because they possessed the qualities of the Prophet. The Qāʾem is Moḥammad b. Ḥasan ʿAskarī; he is at present alive and will appear and fill the earth with justice. It is false to say that he is not in existence and will come into being later, or that he is Jesus.

There must be another world to which all return to receive their reward and punishment. When they leave this world, souls are of three kinds: 1. those of pure belief; 2. those of pure unbelief; 3. those who are weak, neither purely believing nor purely unbelieving. At the resurrection (*maʿād*) the souls of men will return to their bodies, as in this world. All things will be resurrected, even animals, trees, and stones. It is obligatory to believe in: the speaking of limbs to bear witness to their owners' acts; the book in which each man's deeds are recorded (called ʿIllīyūn); the balance; *ṣerāṭ* (although it is not necessary to know how it is, the meaning of ascent and descent on it, or its purpose); the pool of Kawtār; the intercession of Moḥammad, the Imams, other prophets, and the Shīʿa; the eightfold paradise; the fourteen degrees of hell; the eternity of paradise and hell; the return (*rajʿa*) of the Prophet and the

Imams. The events which will occur during the *rajʿa* are discussed in detail; the belief that the resurrection is only the return of the authority of the Qāʾem and not the return of individuals after their death is rejected as false (*Ḥayāt al-nafs*, tr. Sayyed Kāzáem Rashtī, 2nd ed., Kermān, 1353 Sh./1974, passim).

According to Tonokābonī, the reasons for the declaration of *takfīr* were three: Aḥsāʾī's views on *maʿād, meʿrāj*, and the nature of the Imams (*Qeṣaṣ al-ʿolamāʾ*, pp. 44–48). Although Baraghānī seems not to have referred to it, the shaikh had already been involved in discussions on the nature of the divine knowledge in Isfahan as early as 1228/1813 (*Sharḥ al-resālat al-ʿelmīya*, tr. Nicolas, *Essai sur le Chęïkhisme* IV, p. iv). As the *takfīr* was taken up by other *ʿolamāʾ*, the charges came to include further points. Rashtī mentions some of these in his *Dalīl al-motaḥayyerīn*: It was claimed that Aḥsāʾī had said all the *ʿolamāʾ* from Shaikh Mofīd to his own contemporaries were in error and that the Mojtahedī (Oṣūlī) school was false; that he regarded ʿAlī as the Creator; that he held all Koranic phrases referring to God as really being references to ʿAlī; that he spoke of God as uninformed of particulars and maintained that He had two forms of knowledge, one created and one eternal; and that he did not believe the Imam Ḥosayn to have been killed (p. 40). Rashtī refers to these charges as absurdities and cites a sermon attributed to the shaikh in which they are severally refuted. He also mentions as elements of the *takfīr* Aḥsāʾī's supposed denial of physical resurrection and the physical ascension of Moḥammad and states that the four main points of disagreement concerned *meʿrāj, maʿād, ʿelm*, and the belief in the Imams as the causes of creation (ibid., pp. 57–58). The accusation of *tafwīẓ* is the principal argument of an orthodox attack on Aḥsāʾī, *al-Bāreqat al-Ḥaydarīya* by Ḥaydar b. Ebrāhīm b. Moḥammad Ḥosaynī. After the death of Aḥsāʾī, however, an even greater number of heretical and quasi-heretical views were attributed to him. Moḥammad Ḥosayn Shahrestānī's *Teryāq-e fārūq* contains no fewer than forty points of disagreement, many of them extremely factitious.

It is not easy to summarize Aḥsāʾī's views on these and other topics, particularly where the question is one involving complex philosophical argument and where much depends on individual interpretation. Some of the major points should be briefly presented, however. We have noted that, in the *Ḥayāt al-nafs*, Shaikh Aḥmad discusses *maʿād* in traditional terms, without any heterodox elements. Elsewhere, however—notably in the *Sharḥ al-zīāra*—he presents an original doctrine of resurrection based on the theory that man is possessed of four bodies, two *jasad* and

two *jesm*. The first *jasad* (*al-jasad al-ʿonṣorī*) is the body of flesh, made up of terrestrial elements subject to the ravages of time. It resembles a garment put on and later cast off, and in itself it knows neither enjoyment nor suffering, fidelity nor rebellion. It is not, in reality, part of man at all. After death it returns to the elements from which it is composed and will not be recombined. The second *jasad* (*al-jasad al-bāqī*) is a spiritual body and is the reality of man; it is composed of the elements of Hūrqalyā, the interworld or *barzakh* between the material world and the realm of *malakūt*, and survives the dissolution of the body of flesh and the separation from it of all accidental matter. It can not be seen by men because of the opacity of their physical eyes. In this body men are returned to life in the resurrection and enter paradise or hell. When Esrāfīl blows the trumpet at the resurrection, the spirits of men will return to the second *jasad*, which will then rise from the tomb.

The first *jesm* is the body in which the human spirit leaves the physical body (the first *jasad*). The spirit remains with this astral body after death, being separated from the second *jasad*. The first *jesm* and the spirit remain in Hūrqalyā, in the earthly paradise (*jannat al-donyā*) or the earthly hell until the first blast of the trumpet, at which the spirits themselves are annihilated. At this blast the first *jesm* loses all opacity and is abandoned (since it, like the first *jasad*, is accidental, not essential). On the second blast, the spirits are resuscitated in their second *jesm* (*al-jesm al-aṣlī, al-ḥaqīqī*), a celestial and archetypal body, in which they descend to the tomb, penetrate into the second *jasad*, and are resurrected (*Sharḥ al-zīāra*, pp. 364–66; "al-Resālat al-khāqānīya" in *Jawāmeʿ al-kalem* I/1, pp. 122–24; *Sharḥ al-ʿarshīya*, pp. 179–80; see also Corbin, *Terre çeleste*, pp. 146–74).

According to Aḥsāʾī, the term Hūrqalyā, which he uses for the interworld between earth and *malakūt*, is a Syriac term in use among the Sabeans of Iraq. Hūrqalyā is situated in the eighth clime; its lower regions are the cities of Jābalqā and Jābarsā, and it is, in its entirety, the world of images and forms. The Qāʾem dwells in Hūrqalyā and will return from there ("Resāla Mollā Moḥammad-Ḥosayn Anṣārī" in *Jawāmeʿ al-kalem* I/3, pp. 8–10 [153–54]; "Resāla-ye Rashtīya," ibid., I/2, pp. 68–114, question 28).

With regard to the *meʿrāj* of the Prophet, Aḥsāʾī argued that, although this occurred in his physical body, in each sphere his body abandoned the accidental elements (*aʿrāzu*) of that sphere. As a result, tearing and repairing (*kharq wa eltīām*) of the spheres was not necessary. On his return, Moḥammad reassumed the elements he had left behind.

He stresses that this is not to be taken as meaning that the Prophet ascended in the spirit alone, since this would involve his physical death; it is simply that he cast aside his purely elemental body and ascended in his subtle form ("al-Resāla al-Qaṭīfīya" in *Jawāmeʿ al-kalem* I/2, pp. 144–66, question 26).

The concept of non-elementary bodies and its application to *maʿād* and *meʿrāj* is probably the most original contribution made by Aḥsāʾī to Shiʿite metaphysics, and it is clear from both Tonokābonī and the Shaikh himself that it was precisely this doctrine which caused the original break with Baraghānī.

Much attention has been drawn to the shaikh's view of the Imams, which has been somewhat unfairly criticized as resembling that of the *gholāt* (extremist Shiʿites). There is no doubt that the Imams are of singular importance for Aḥsāʾī, but his arguments regarding their station and attributes are generally based on Hadith and the type of Imamology which Corbin has discussed in several places. He himself explicitly rejects the position of the *gholāt* (*Sharḥ al-zīāra*, pp. 11, 76). For Aḥsāʾī, the Imams are the four causes of creation: active (*fāʿelīya*), in that they are the locations (*maḥāll*) of the divine will (*al-mashīya*); material (*māddīya*), in that all things have been created from the rays of their lights; formal (*ṣūrīya*), in that God created the forms of all creatures from the lights of their forms; and final (*ghāʾīya*), in that God created all things for them (*Sharḥ al-zīāra*, p. 64).

Objections were also raised, as we have noted, to the shaikh's views on the knowledge of God. Quite simply, he argued that God possesses two kinds of knowledge: eternal (*qadīm*) knowledge, which is the divine essence, and which could not be separate from it, since that would mean the existence of more than one eternal entity; and created (*ḥādet*) knowledge, which comes into being when its object (*al-maʿlūm*) comes into existence. If this knowledge existed before its object, it would not be knowledge, since created knowledge depends on its being in conformity with its object, which could not be the case if the object were non-existent. This created knowledge is an act of God and may be regarded as one of His creatures named "knowledge" (*Ḥayāt al-nafs*, pp. 27–28).

# COSMOGONY AND COSMOLOGY, THEORIES OF THE ORIGINS AND STRUCTURE OF THE UNIVERSE*

## In Shaikhism

It is in some respects redundant to speak of a "Shaikhī cosmology" distinct from that of Imami Shiʿism as a whole. Shaikhī ideas never developed independently of ordinary Shiʿite thought but were either part of it (during the lifetime of Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī, q.v.; 1166–1241/1753–1826) or in dialogue or conflict with it (during the periods of his successors, from Sayyed Kāẓem Rashtī to the present leadership of the school). For this reason, it is extremely difficult to form a picture of Shaikhī doctrine free of apologetic or obfuscation.

Shaikhī cosmology and cosmogony are rooted in the numerous Imami *akhbār* (reports) in which the origins and structure of the universe are set forth in detail. The distinctiveness of the Shaikhī worldview lies in a metaphysical interpretation of the standard Imami cosmological doctrines, a heavy emphasis on the role of the imams as creators and sustainers of the universe, and several innovative anthropogenic concepts having a direct bearing on individual eschatology.

Among the earliest charges laid against Aḥsāʾī was *tafwīẓ*, imputation of God's creative activity to the imams as demiurges (for the orthodox criticisms, see Hamadānī, pp. 23ff.; for Aḥsāʾī's defence against the charge of *gholūw*, exceeding proper boundaries, see 1355–56 Sh./1976–77, IV, pp. 59ff.). Using standard Aristotelian terminology, Aḥsāʾī described the imams as the four causes of the universe: the active cause (*al-ʿella al-fāʿelīya*), in that the world was brought into being through them as the loci of God's will (or of His actions); the material cause (*al-ʿella al-māddīya*), in that the universe is constructed from the residue of the rays of their light; the formal cause (*al-ʿella al-ṣūrīya*), in that God created the forms of all creatures from the lights of their bodies (*hayākel*); and the final cause (*al-ʿella al-ghāʾīya*), in that God created all things for them and will return all to them (Aḥsāʾī, 1355–56 Sh./1976–77, I, pp. 196–97, II, p. 193, IV, p. 47).

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More technically, the material of the world (*māddat jamīʿ boldān al-donyā*) is composed of all the elements from the residue (*fāẓel*) of the rays emanating from their physical bodies (*ajsād*). This residue is itself understood to take the form of additional rays, and the *ajsād* are themselves rays from their spiritual bodies (*ajsām*). Similarly, the forms of worldly things are created from the residue of the rays emanating from their phantom images (*ashbāḥ*); these phantom images are shadows or illuminated corporealities (*abdān nūrānīya*) without spirits. The souls (*nofūs*) of worldly things are created from the residue of the rays of the souls of their humanity (*nofūs basharīyātehem*; Aḥsāʾī, 1355–56 Sh./1976–77, I, p. 76). Elsewhere Aḥsāʾī wrote in more conventional terms, describing the material substances (*mawādd*) of things as having been brought into existence from the light of Moḥammad and their forms from that of ʿAlī (Aḥsāʾī, 1355–56 Sh./1976–77, I, pp. 39–40). He stressed, however, that the imams were not actually creators, the causes of men's actions, or sustainers of the world, such epithets being reserved for God (Aḥsāʾī, 1355–56 Sh./1976–77, IV, p. 57).

According to Aḥsāʾī, existence is entirely good (*enna'l-wojūd khayr kolloh*; Aḥsāʾī, 1355–56 Sh./1976–77, II, p. 185). Nevertheless, a sharp, almost Manichean division between good and evil, truth and falsehood exists. When God created universal reason (*al-ʿaql al-kollī*), the first of the spiritual existences, He immediately brought its opposite, universal ignorance (*al-jahl al-kollī*), into being. Aḥsāʾī rejected the view that darkness is merely the absence of light and in itself nonexistence, on the grounds that God had created it (Aḥsāʾī, 1355–56 Sh./1976–77, II, p. 181; cf. III, p. 9, on negation, *al-nafy*, as a created thing).

The imams are created from light, their enemies from darkness, and all others from a mixture of the two (Aḥsāʾī, 1355–56 Sh./1976–77, II, p. 68). Man is formed of reason and ignorance, having two "mirrors" within him, one facing reason, the other ignorance (Aḥsāʾī, 1355–56 Sh./1976–77, II, p. 18). As representations of good, the imams are in a state of perpetual confrontation with their counterparts, the "imams of error" (*aʾemmat al-ẓalāla*; Aḥsāʾī, 1355–56 Sh./1976–77, II, pp. 258, 260, 292). Heaven was created from love of the imams, hell from hatred of them (Aḥsāʾī, 1355–56 Sh./1976–77, II, p. 273; cf. IV, p. 157). This division of the world between the forces of affirmation and denial came to play a major role in the cosmological system of the Bāb (q.v.; see babism).

Aḥsāʾī divided the universe in conventional fashion into three principal parts: *al-donyā* or *al-molk* (the present world), *al-ākhera*

or *al-malakūt* (the transcendent world), and an interworld (*barzakh*) between them (Aḥsāʾī, 1355–56 Sh./1976–77, III, p. 41; idem, n.d., p. 308; in a more elaborate division he added a temporally prior *al-ʿālam al-awwal* "first world"; Aḥsāʾī, 1355–56 Sh./1976–77, IV, p. 201).

Similarly, the periods of the world are three: *al-donyā* (the present period), *al-rajʿa* (the time of the return of Moḥammad and the imams), and *al-qīāma* (the age of universal resurrection; Aḥsāʾī, 1355–56 Sh./1976–77, III, p. 183). This periodization corresponds to the parts of the universe, the age of *al-donyā* being equivalent to the physical realm of *al-donyā*, the time of the *rajʿa* to a *barzakh* between *al-donyā* and *al-qīāma*, and the age of *al-qīāma* to *al-ākhera* (*al-rajʿa* is sometimes said to correspond to *al-ākhera*, which is then considered to follow *al-donyā* immediately, without an interworld; Aḥsāʾī, 1273/1856, "*ʿEṣma wa rajʿa*," p. 102). Within these three periods time (*zamān*) itself is altered, growing more subtle as it moves from a worldly to an otherworldly state (Aḥsāʾī, 1355–56 Sh./1976–77, III, pp. 305, 357–58; Hamadānī, p. 340).

The *barzakh* between the spiritual and physical realms is generally referred to in Shaikhī literature as *hūrqalyā*. The term played an important role in the works of Aḥsāʾī, who claimed to have borrowed it from a Syriac word used by the Sabeans (Mandeans) of Iraq (Aḥsāʾī, n.d., p. 309). Moḥammad Moʿīn, however, has suggested (p. 84) that it was derived from the Hebrew phrase *habal qarnaīm* (doppelgänger) and that its correct pronunciation is *hawarqalyā*. Henry Corbin proposed an origin for the concept in the Mandean world of "celestial images" (*mshunia kushta*), though he admitted some difficulty in finding an etymological connection between the two terms (1971–72, II, p. 310 and n. 440). Aḥsāʾī was not the first Muslim author to use the term. Its earliest occurrence in an Islamic context seems to have been in the writings of Shehāb-al-Dīn Yaḥyā Sohravardī, who used it as an analogue for the celestial realm of similitudes (*ʿālam aflāk al-mothol*; Sohravardī, *Ketāb al-mashārīʿ wa 'l-moṭāraḥāt*, cited in Corbin, 1960, p. 195; Moʿīn, pp. 84–85). According to Aḥsāʾī, *hūrqalyā* is a *barzakh* between the realms of *molk* (*al-donyā*) and *malakūt*; he described it in one place as "another *molk*" (Aḥsāʾī, n.d., p. 308). Its lowest extension touches the "prime mover," the outermost of the celestial spheres, "in rank but not in direction." Images appearing in physical mirrors belong to this level of *hūrqalyā* (Aḥsāʾī, n.d., p. 309). In temporal terms it stands between the highest point of earthly time (*aʿlā al-zamān*) and the lowest level of eternity (*asfal al-dahr*; 1856, I/2, p. 136). *Hūrqalyā* is

situated in the "eighth clime" (*al-eqlīm al-thāmen*), of which it forms the highest part, with the cities of Jābalqā and Jābarsā forming the lower. The earthly paradise (*jannat al-donyā*) is located in the western part of *hūrqalyā* and the earthly hell (*nār al-donyā*) to the east (for an extended account of the Shaikhī concept of *hūrqalyā* and its antecedents, see Corbin, 1960).

The realm of *hūrqalyā* plays an important role in Shaikhī eschatology (q.v.). Although accounts of eschatological events in the works of Aḥsāʾī and later Shaikhī writers are structured on a traditional basis (see Aḥsāʾī, 1355–56 Sh./1976–77, III, pp. 54–121; idem, 1856, I/1, pp. 9–14, 38–111), a barrage of orthodox criticism has been leveled at their explanation of physical resurrection. For Aḥsāʾī, personal eschatology was rooted in a concept of man as a being possessed of four distinct "bodies": two *jasad* and two *jesm*. The former denotes "body" as an animate, organic substance, the latter "body" in the sense of something possessing mass and volume. According to Aḥsāʾī, man originally entered the physical realm from the unseen world (*ʿālam al-ghayb*). In his essence he consists of a "real self" (*al-ensān al-ḥaqīqī, al-jesm al-ḥaqīqī, al-jesm al-aṣlī*, referred to here as *al-jesm al-thānī*, or *jesm* II) made up of five constituent elements: intellect (*ʿaql*), soul (*nafs*), essential nature (*ṭabīʿa*), primal matter (*hayūlā*), and archetype (*methāl*; Aḥsāʾī, n.d., pp. 109–10; but cf. p. 112; spirit, *rūḥ*, is added to these five in Aḥsāʾī, 1355–56 Sh./1976–77, IV, p. 332). In his descent to *al-donyā*, this essential self acquired accidental blemishes (*aʿrāẓ*). Thus, in the world of similitudes (*hūrqalyā*), it acquired an accidental counterpart (*jesm* I), made up of the elements of *hūrqalyā*; this stage also appears to be the one at which the essential *jasad* (*al-jasad al-bāqī, jasad* II) attached itself. At the final level of descent the latter acquired its nonessential counterpart (*al-jasad al-ʿonṣorī, jasad* I), composed of the elements of *al-donyā* (Aḥsāʾī, n.d., p. 310).

This process becomes clearer when viewed in reverse. *Jasad* I is a wholly physical entity composed of the dense elements of this world. It is compared to the garment put on by the real man or to the density that renders silica and potash opaque in their natural state (in contrast to their transparent state when heated and transformed into glass). At death its constituent parts return to their origin in the grave, from which they will not be resurrected. *Jasad* II, however, is a subtle body composed of the elements of *hūrqalyā*. It represents the real man, with neither addition (e.g., from food) or depletion (e.g., through loss of limbs), and it will remain intact in the grave after the decomposition

of its gross counterpart. It is, of course, invisible to the fleshly eye. At the time of the resurrection a water will fill the earth, causing the limbs of *jasad* II to be reassembled. Thereupon a trumpet will blow, the spirits of men will rejoin their subtle bodies, and the latter will rise from the grave.

Of the two *jesm*s the grosser, *jesm* I, provides a vehicle for the spirit on its departure from the physical body. Unlike *jasad* II (which remains in the grave), *jesm* I remains with the spirit, accompanying it and the supracelestial body, *jesm* II, to the earthly paradise (*jannat al-donyā*) or hell (*nār al-donyā*), situated, as noted, in the realm of *hūrqalyā* (from which *jesm* I originated). Here they will all remain until the first blast of the trumpet of resurrection. At that point the relatively dense form of *jesm* I will be destroyed, leaving only the original *jesm* (*jesm* II), purified of all opacity. At the second blast of the trumpet the spirit and *jesm* II will descend together into the tomb, where they will penetrate into *jasad* II as a vehicle for their entry to paradise or hell. Man's "resurrected body" will therefore consist of a combination of the original *jesm* and original *jasad*.

Although this system of four bodies was not retained in either Babism or the Bahāʾī faith (q.v), its influence may still be discerned in the allegorized eschatology and spiritual survival detailed in the writings of both groups.

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# BĀLĀSARĪ*

A term popularly used to distinguish ordinary Shiʿites from members of the Shaikhi sect. The distinction is sometimes expressed by the alternative formulae of "Shaikhi/Motasharreʿ" and "Shaikhi/Oṣūlī," the latter example implying a continuity between Akhbārī Shiʿism and Shaikhism (qq.v.). The Shaikhi school itself was also known in the early period by the name "Kashfīya" in reference to the principle of *kashf* or the revelation of knowledge by supernatural means (Rashtī, *Dalīl*, p. 9; cf. Chahārdehī, *Shaykhīgarī*, pp. 51–52). The term "Bālāsarī" was applied to other Shiʿites by the Shaikhis on the grounds that, when in the shrine of the Imam Ḥosayn at Karbalāʾ, the former advanced to a position above the head of the imam in order to pray, whereas the Shaikhis, in imitation of their founder, Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī (d. 1241/1826; q.v.), remained below the head out of respect for the imam (Kermānī, *Hedāyat*, p. 83; Zarandī, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 84–85).

Disputes between Shaikhis and Bālāsarīs began with the excommunication (*takfīr*) of Aḥsāʾī by Mollā Moḥammad-Taqī Baraghānī (q.v.) and other *ʿolamāʾ* around 1238/1822 and intensified during the leadership of Aḥsāʾī's successor, Sayyed Kāẓem Rashtī (d. 1259/1844; q.v.; see MacEoin, *From Shaykhism*, pp. 75–81, 105–15). Both Aḥsāʾī and Rashtī insisted on the essential orthodoxy of their teaching, a position which was maintained by the two main branches of the school after Rashtī's death, those of Azerbaijan and Kermān. Broadly expressed, the Shaikhi position was that differences between them and their Bālāsarī opponents lay in the area of subsidiary religious matters (*forūʿ*) rather than basic principles (*oṣūl*) or that the two groups were divided by temperament (*mashrab*) rather than religion (*madhhab*) (Kermānī, *Hedāyat*; Jalālī, *Shaykhīya*, p. 126). Shaikhi *ʿolamāʾ* often held important posts within the religious establishment, and it was not always easy or useful to draw clear lines between them and other Shiʿites.

In Azerbaijan, the Shaikhi community was led by Ḥājī Mīrzā Shafīʿ Theqat-al-Eslām Tabrīzī (ca. 1218/1803–1301/1884; q.v.) and Ḥojjat-al-Eslām Mollā Moḥammad Mamaqānī (d. 1268/1851–52 or 1269/1852–53;

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q.v.) and included numbers of influential individuals among the *ʿolamāʾ*, merchants (*tojjār*), government officials, and nobility (see Chahārdehī, pp. 175–98). Although the Shaikhi establishment in Tabrīz asserted its orthodoxy by playing a central role in the condemnation and execution of Sayyed ʿAlī-Moḥammad the Bāb (q.v.) in 1264/1848 and 1266/1850 (see MacEoin, *From Shaykhism*, pp. 130–31 [and 'The Trial of the Bāb']), this did not result in an immediate resolution of the issue between the two parties. In 1266/1850, Mīrzā Aḥmad Tabrīzī declared *takfīr* against the Shaikhis and issued a *fatwā* banning them from the public baths. An altercation ensued and was followed by serious rioting throughout the city (Chahārdehī, pp. 49–50). Another outbreak of violence occurred in 1285/1868–69 following the death of Mamaqānī (Bāmdād, *Rejāl* VI, p. 83). In general, the Shaikhi and Bālāsarī communities remained religiously and socially divided, with separate mosques and baths, a ban on intermarriage, and restricted social relations. Efforts to reconcile the two groups were made by Mīrzā ʿAlī Theqat-al-Eslām (1277/1860–1330/1912; q.v.), a Shaikhi leader whose involvement in the Constitutional movement and death at the hands of the Russians were major factors in the reintegration of the Shaikhis into the orthodox community in the post-Constitutional period.

The situation in Kermān was equally complicated by political and social factors. The first head of the Shaikhi community there, Ḥājj Moḥammad-Karīm Khan Kermānī (1225/1810–1288/1870; q.v.), was the most successful of the claimants to overall leadership of the school in Iraq and Iran. Kermānī's father, Ebrāhīm Khan Ẓahīr-al-Dawla (q.v.), was a cousin and son-in-law of Fatḥ-ʿAlī Shah and served as governor of Kermān from 1218/1803 until his death in 1240/1824–25 (Aḥmadī, *Farmāndehān*, pp. 50–55). Ẓahīr-al-Dawla's descendants, known as the Ebrāhīmīs, remained one of the most important families in the region and were closely linked to the Shaikhi school through Karīm Khan, whose control over much of his father's inheritance gave him considerable influence within the family. During the period of Karīm Khan's leadership, relations between Shaikhis and non-Shaikhis in Kermān were relaxed, but conditions deteriorated after his death and the succession of his second son, Ḥājj Moḥammad Khan (1263/1846–1324/1906).

In 1294/1877, there was general unrest in Kermān following a rise in bread prices. At one point, attacks were made by a mob on houses belonging to Shaikhis (Scarcia, p. 223). Some months after the death of the town's leading *mojtahed*, Ḥājj Āqā Aḥmad Rafsanjānī, in the following year, trouble broke out between his son, Ḥājj Shaikh Abū

Jaʿfar, and Moḥammad-Raḥīm Khan, the older brother of the Shaikhi leader, Moḥammad Khan. According to Mostawfī, a group of Shaikhis initiated the violence that followed by launching an attack on the house of Shaikh Abū Jaʿfar (Jalālī, pp. 187–88). The dispute was only settled when Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah summoned both Abū Jaʿfar and Moḥammad-Raḥīm Khan to Tehran.

During the next thirty years or so, Moḥammad Khan remained the most influential religious figure in Kermān, combining spiritual authority with immense wealth and close links with the ruling dynasty. Although the total number of Shaikhis in Iran at this point was only about 50,000, of whom 7,000 lived in Kermān province (Sykes, *Ten Thousand Miles*, p. 197), the sect's influence was considerable. Moẓaffar-al-Dīn Mīrzā (shah from 1896) was known to have become a Shaikhi while living in Tabrīz (Bāmdād, *Rejāl* IV, p. 121), while many other Qajar notables were attached with varying degrees of closeness to the school and its leadership. Scarcia describes Shaikhism as "a sort of bland, innocuous, and quasi-snobbish type of anticlerical movement of the court" ("Kerman 1905," p. 201).

In Kermān itself, the influence of the Ebrāhīmī family was challenged by that of the Wakīlīs, descendants of Moḥammad-Esmāʿīl Khan Wakīl-al-Molk I (governor of Kermān from 1277/1860 to 1284/1868), many of whom held important posts in the local administration. The first sign of wider opposition to Ebrāhīmī/Shaikhi dominance came in the form of demonstrations against Moḥammad Khan in Torbat-e Ḥaydarīya and Mashhad during a pilgrimage made by him to the latter town in 1319/1901 (Jalālī, p. 191). Moḥammad Khan's unpopularity seems to have had less to do with religious animosity than with his role as a Qajar notable and his expressed disapproval of constitutionalism (Bayat, *Mysticism and Dissent*, p. 182), a position which contrasted markedly with that of Azerbaijani Shaikhis such as Ṯeqat-al-Eslām.

Matters reached a head in the Shaikhi-Bālāsarī "war" of 1323/1905, which has been described by some writers as "the spark that first set the fire of the Constitutional Revolution" (ibid., p. 183). Trouble began in 1321/1903 under the governorship of Sardār ʿAzīz-Allāh Mīrzā Ẓafar-al-Salṭana (q.v.), when protests about a rise in the price of bread were followed by attacks on the houses of the rich and on the Shaikhi *madrasa* (Scarcia, p. 224). Ẓafar-al-Salṭana was dismissed in Rabīʿ I, 1322/May–June, 1904, and replaced by ʿAlī-Naqī Mīrzā Rokn-al-Dawla, who quickly alienated much of the populace. The new governor entrusted the tax administration of the province to the Ebrāhīmī

family, thereby intensifying opposition, particularly on the part of the Wakīlīs (Kermānī, *Bīdārī*, p. 69). A sectarian dimension was introduced when a preacher from Mashhad, Shaikh Shamshīrī Barīnī, arrived in Kermān and, after agitating against Zoroastrians and Hindus, began to issue public condemnations of the Shaikhis. Barīnī was soon joined in his attacks by Ḥājj Mīrzā Moḥammad-Reżā, the son of the above-mentioned Shaikh Abū Jaʿfar, who arrived in Kermān in Rabīʿ I, 1323/May, 1905, after a fourteen-year absence and quickly allied himself with the Wakīlī family (ibid., pp. 70–71). Fighting broke out in Jomādā I, 1323/July, 1905, when an attempt was made to take control of the Shaikhi Bāzār-e Shāh mosque. The authorities in Tehran responded by dismissing Rokn-al-Dawla and replacing him by Ẓafar-al-Salṭana (ibid., pp. 72–73; Scarcia, pp. 228–29).

In Shaʿbān/October, Mīrzā Moḥammad-Reżā incurred the new governor's displeasure by provoking attacks on Jewish homes. An attempt to control the situation was met by a declaration of *jehād* against the Shaikhis and the Qajars. Brief fighting was followed by the arrest, bastinado, and expulsion of Moḥammad-Reżā and some of his colleagues. This led in turn to a boycott of the mosques by all of the town's *ʿolamāʾ* except for Moḥammad Khan (Scarcia, pp. 230–31). At this point, however, the Shaikhi/Bālāsarī element took a back seat as leading *ʿolamāʾ* in Tehran reacted to the bastinado of Mīrzā Moḥammad-Reżā. What had started as a local sectarian squabble now acquired a wider dimension as a factor in the agitation for a constitution (Kermānī, *Bīdārī*, pp. 78ff.). Moḥammad Khan's death in Moḥarram, 1324/February, 1906, served to reduce further the religious aspect of the quarrel, and with the end of the Qajar hegemony, Shaikhi influence on local politics diminished considerably. Anti-Shaikhi feeling has re-emerged occasionally in the modern period (Scarcia, pp. 236–37), but with none of its former intensity. The murder of the Shaikhi leader Abu'l-Qāsem Ebrāhīmī (q.v.) in 1979 led to the transfer of the school's leadership to Iraq, but otherwise the position of the Shaikhi communities of Iran appears to be little changed.

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# ORTHODOXY AND HETERODOXY IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY SHIʿISM: THE CASES OF SHAYKHISM AND BABISM*

Discussions of orthodoxy and heterodoxy often presuppose a dichotomy of major proportions. In reality, things are never so simple: relations between opposing viewpoints are characterized by dynamism rather than static confrontation. In a sense, heterodox movements may often be no more than extreme expressions of orthodox values.

In the case of Islam, the most extreme expression of an "orthodox" versus "heterodox" antagonism is provided by the emergence of Bahaʾism as a distinct religion from an originally orthodox Shīʿī matrix. An examination of the antecedents of Bahaʾism in the nineteenth century—Shaykhism and Babism—shows the ways in which heterodoxy was, in a sense, a development of orthodox belief, rather than an aberration.

Most discussions of orthodoxy and heterodoxy—whether of the concepts in general or of specific examples—presuppose an actual or supposed dichotomy of serious proportions. The terms used—"orthodoxy" and "heterodoxy," "church" and "sect," "official" and "unofficial"—state or imply a fully fledged contradiction that is by its very nature ineligible for compromise. Such terminology merely echoes or reproduces that of the religious world itself: "saved" and "damned," "true" and "false," "orthodox" and "heretical," "ecclesia" and "extra ecclesiam," "*īmān*" and "*kufr*," "*dār al-islām*" and "*dār al-kufr*," "*firqa nājiyya*" and "*firqa muḍilla*."[1]

At times, such dichotomizing seems to correspond to Durkheim's distinction between "sacred" and "profane," the heterogeneity of which he describes as "absolute": "In all the history of human thought there exists no other example of two categories of things so profoundly differentiated

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[1] An extremely useful sociological dichotomization is provided by Liston Pope in his formulation of twenty-one indices to measure the development that occurs when a sect becomes a church (see L. Pope, *Millhands and Preachers* [New Haven, 1942], and a summary of his twenty-one indices in Michael Hill, *A Sociology of Religion* [London, 1973], 65–66).

or so radically opposed to one another."[2] From the viewpoint of the Church, the sect has passed outside the realm of the sacred into that of the profane: *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, or else it has infringed on sacred space and profaned it; for the sect, the reverse is true, in that the Church has desacralized itself by effecting a compromise with the world. As Becker expresses it, the religious values of the Church clash with those derived from the social sphere, these two sets of values being "wholly alien to each other and often directly opposed."[3] The Church, in a sense, attempts to fuse the sacred and the profane, and is seen as failing in this endeavour by those who reject it.

This apparent link between the orthodox-heterodox dichotomy and that drawn by Durkheim between sacred and profane is further reinforced by the work of the American sociologist Peter Berger, who has defined the sect as "a religious grouping based on the belief that the spirit is immediately present" and the church as "a religious grouping based on the belief that the spirit is remote."[4] Berger links this division of things to Weber's theory of charismatic routinization: with the breakthrough of fresh charisma, the spirit is brought close, but as the charisma becomes routinized the sect takes on more worldly characteristics and becomes a church whose structure and methods presuppose a distancing of the spirit.

In reality, of course, no sociologist would ever imply that the dichotomy is so absolute—or, rather, that there is only dichotomy in the situation. If the irruption of charisma is often abrupt, the process of routinization is more measured. Between sect and church lies a broad spectrum of attitudes and structures; dynamism rather than static confrontation informs the process whereby the ends of the spectrum join up. The symbiosis of more than one form of religiosity within a single cultural or religious system is widely recognized. This may be seen at its broadest in multiple affiliation (as in Japan or China), more narrowly in the co-existence of Great and Little Traditions or in syncretism, and at its most organized in the Christian concept of the ecclesiola in ecclesia or the Islamic *ikhtilāf al-madhāhib*.

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[2] Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, 38.

[3] Howard Becker, *Systematic Sociology…of Leopold von Weiss* (New York, 1932), 617.

[4] Peter L. Berger, "The sociological study of sectarianism," *Social Research*, 21.4 (1954): 474.

To some extent, it is true to say that orthodoxies are eager to contain dissidence within their ranks, to appease, buy off, suborn, or otherwise undermine the fissiparous tendencies of those eager to know the spirit more intimately or (as Victor Turner would put it) to experience a deeper sense of community than that available in the stabilized and hierarchical society represented by the Church.[5] The histories of the Catholic Church and Sunni Islam reveal just how successful this strategy can be and how, given the right circumstances, it can prove extremely difficult to remain in opposition to orthodoxy. Indeed, the chequered history of Sufism—now tolerated, now condemned—reveals just how few real or intrinsic dichotomies may be at work and how far the pressures that result in orthodox-heterodox confrontations may come from more immediate social or political facts. It is, in particular, the case that only when an orthodoxy feels the need to define itself, to set the limits of the sacred universe, as it were,[6] will it adopt a less conciliatory attitude and pronounce charges of heresy against selected groups and individuals.

There is, of course, a tautology here: the conditions that make for uncertainty and loss of identity among the orthodox are precisely those likely to precipitate challenges to their authority or experiments with fresh modes of belief and action. Appeals to charismatic leadership, though by no means restricted to abnormal situations, do occur more readily in cases where the social routine has been disturbed.[7] Since orthodoxy is, almost by definition, society expressing its sense of self-identity, it is axiomatic that in periods when the social structure comes under threat, orthodoxy will respond by seeking to redefine itself.

In reality, sectarian movements are, as often as not, themselves expressions, not of some hypothetical counter-culture secreted within

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[5] Turner's theories concerning communitas and hierarchy as expressed in the notion of "liminality" are extremely useful for understanding certain types of religious and political dissent (see V. Turner, *The Ritual Process* [London, 1969]).

[6] For further comments on the links between concepts of sacred space and the church-sect division, see Berger, "Sociological study of sectarianism."

[7] See S. N. Eisenstadt, in his introduction to *Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building*, ed. S. N. Eisenstadt (Chicago, 1969), xxvii–xxix. Victor Turner says something similar with reference to liminality: "It is not tribal initiation . . . but the genesis of religious movements that concerns us here—though both may possibly be said to exhibit a 'liminal' character, in that they arise in times of radical social transition, when society itself seems to be moving from one fixed state to another, whether the terminus ad quem is believed to be on earth or in heaven" (*Ritual Process*, 121). See also ibid., 98–99.

(yet not part of) the fabric of the wider social structure, but of values held and sacralized by society at large, not least in the form of orthodox religious belief. Speaking of "communitas"—the sense of unstructured social relationships contrasted to the universe of structured, stratified society—Turner states that "both normal and ideological communitas are already within the domain of structure."[8] In rites of passage, the phase of liminality, in which the passenger moves outside the bounds of normal social relationships before re-entering society as a transformed person (the unbaptized babe become a Christian, the boy become a man, the virgin become a married woman), represents a temporary expression of the values deemed to underlie everyday structures. As Turner argues,[9] religious movements like the Franciscan Order or the Sahajīyā movement in Bengal are attempts to perpetuate such values, to create a "permanent liminality" in which structure and hierarchy would give way to the bonds of love and brotherhood for all time.

From this viewpoint, the movement of the sect away from established norms of thought and behaviour may be not only an attempt by orthodoxy to define itself by establishing a referent outside its own bounds (an "other" to which it can be contrasted), but equally an assertion by it of some of its own values and tensions which cannot be adequately expressed or resolved within the social structure into which it has become locked. Once the sect has been generated, however, it may acquire features and adopt goals that distance it ever further from the norms and ideals of the orthodoxy that spawned it.

An unusually clear example of such a process is provided by the emergence of Bahaʾism as a distinct religion out of a wholly orthodox Shīʿī Islamic matrix in a matter of about three generations. As foci for an examination of the links between orthodoxy and heterodoxy in an Islamic context, Bahaʾism and its antecedents are unusually valuable (and unusually neglected). Even if we must, as I have argued elsewhere,[10] treat Bahaʾism less as the "world religion" it claims to be and more as a new religious movement (NRM) on a par with the Unification Church or other internationally diffused cult groups, there can be no question that it has successfully transcended its Islamic origins to the point where it would be meaningless and frivolous to treat it as an Islamic sect or

[8] Ibid., 120, and cf. p. 116 on the dialectic of communitas and structure.
[9] Ibid., passim.
[10] D. MacEoin, "Bahaʾism," in *A Handbook of Living Religions*, ed. J. R. Hinnells (New York, 1984), 475–76, 494.

even to over-emphasize those origins. In the entire history of Islam, no previous movement has gone as far in asserting its independence of the mother creed, and in the modern period no religious community has been so universally or so vehemently anathematized by the ʿulamāʾ or by ordinary Muslims, above all in Iran. I cannot think of another instance in the Islamic context where the sense of dichotomy is so absolute.

What both Bahaʾi and Muslim accounts of the movement's origins ignore, however—and what I propose to examine in this paper—is the extent to which the roots of Bahaʾism lie in an attempt to re-express Shīʿī religiosity and to realize Shīʿī aspirations along what might in a different period have been perfectly normal, orthodox lines (or lines assimilable to orthodox norms). The development from Shiʿism to modern Bahaʾism reveals with exceptional clarity the stages whereby one form of orthodoxy may be transformed into another. What is particularly interesting about this example is that, although Bahaʾism appears to have travelled an enormous distance from its roots and to be in a state of irreducible antagonism to the modern Shīʿī establishment, the Bahāʾī Weltanschauung is made up of what are essentially Shīʿī or, in a broader sense, Islamic motifs. In other words, the expression of the most extreme heterodoxy imaginable in Islamic terms (namely, the establishment of a new prophetic religion after that of Muḥammad) is, in the end, little more than a reformulation of Islamic norms and ideals in which all sense of dichotomy is virtually eradicated."[11]

For the purposes of the present paper, I wish to concentrate, however, on the earliest stages of the historical process that can be identified in retrospect as leading from Shiʿism to Bahaʾism. But first, let me sketch in the chief phases of that development as a whole.

Out of controversies surrounding the teachings of a leading Shīʿī ʿālim of the early nineteenth century, Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Zayn al-Dīn al-Aḥsāʾī (1166–1241/1753–1826),[12] a school emerged under the leadership of Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī (d. 1259/1844), al-Aḥsāʾī's chief pupil. This school, which was known as Shaykhiyya or Kashfiyya,[13] was (and still is) in an ambiguous position with regard to Ithnāʾ ʿAsharī orthodoxy, in that it came to be regarded by a large section of the ʿulamāʾ

[11] See idem, "The Islamic Roots of Bahaʾism," in *The Bahaʾi Faith*, ed. A. Bausani and A. Lee, originally forthcoming from Yale University Press.

[12] See idem, "Shaikh Ahmad al-Ahsaʾi," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.

[13] For works on Shaykhism, see idem, "Shaykhism," in *A Bibliographical Guide to Iran*, ed. L. P. Elwell-Sutton (Brighton and Totowa, 1983).

as heterodox, while its own followers insisted on their belief in all the essentials of Shīʿī doctrine and expressed no desire to form a separate grouping outside the main Twelver body. Under Rashtī, the Shaykhī school expanded in Iraq and Iran, remaining in a precarious position between acceptance and condemnation.

On Rashtī's premature death at the beginning of 1844, splits began to appear within the Shaykhī ranks, leading by the end of that year to three major divisions: 1) a Kermani branch under the leadership of Ḥajj Mullā Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kermānī (1225–88/1809–70), which remains the only surviving school of Shaykhism today; 2) a Tabrizi branch under multiple leadership; and 3) a more geographically diffuse group known as Bābiyya, initiated by Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad Shīrāzī, the Bāb (1235–66/1819–50).[14]

The Bābī group rapidly grew in popularity and soon acquired a following outside the ranks of existing Shaykhī adherents. Although eccentric, the Bāb's early teachings called less for a break with established norms than for the intensification of Islamic practice. But in 1848, for reasons that are still not entirely clear, the Bāb and a significant section of the Bābī leadership decided to break away from Islam, abrogating the sharīʿa and replacing it with a new code based on writings of the Bāb.

The Bāb was executed in 1850, his movement became embroiled in a series of violent confrontations with state troops,[15] and by the 1850s it had ceased to exist as a viable religious alternative to mainstream Shiʿism. During the 1860s, however, a split in the ranks of what was now principally an exile community domiciled outside Iran, led to the emergence of the Bahaʾi sect,[16] which speedily grew in numbers. By the turn of the century, Bahaʾism had become the largest religious minority in Iran. More spectacularly, it had spread to Europe and America, where it won converts and began to portray itself as a "new world religion" with an international mission of peace and universal brotherhood. Today, with possibly three million [now said to be about 6 million] converts worldwide, the majority of whom are of non-Muslim origin,

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[14] For works on Babism, see idem, "Babism," in ibid. See also idem, "Babism," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, and idem, *Early Babi Doctrine and History*.

[15] See idem, "Babi Uprisings and Executions," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.

[16] See idem, "Bahaʾism," in Elwell-Sutton, *Bibliographical Guide*. See also idem, "Bahaʾism," in Hinnells, *Handbook* and J. Cole, "Bahaʾism," in *Encyclopedia Iranica*.

Baha'ism is one of the most successful of the new religions operating in the Third World mission field.

A new prophet, new books, new laws: obviously a lot has happened—much more than normally takes place on the emergence of a sectarian movement. Even the radical wing of the Aḥmadī sect, which regards Ghulām Ahmad as a prophet, has gone nowhere near so far in distancing itself from Islamic orthodoxy. It is quite obvious that early Shaykhism and modern Baha'ism have very little in common, yet they are inextricably linked by firm historical ties. We cannot account for Baha'ism without Babism, nor for the latter without Shaykhism, nor, indeed, for this last without orthodox Shī'ism of the period.

Twelver Shi'ism in Iran in the early nineteenth century was in a state of flux. The orthodoxy of the Safavid period had been shaken by the Afghan invasion and the ensuing interregnum, and the *'ulamā'* themselves physically dispersed to India, Iraq, and elsewhere. The new Uṣūlī synthesis that emerged at the Iraqi shrine centres in the late eighteenth century under Āqā Muḥammad Bāqir Bihbahānī and his students represented the first stirrings of an impetus towards the location of charismatic authority within the body of the senior *'ulamā'*—the *mujtahids* and, as the nineteenth century progressed, the *marāji' al-taqlīd*.[17] With the consolidation of the Qajar dynasty under Fatḥ 'Alī Shāh, the Uṣūlī hierocracy saw its way to becoming an establishment.

Since the Uṣūlīs invested so much in the role of the *mujtahid* as the ultimate authority in religious matters, it was essential that they rule out any real or potential challenges to clerical dominance. Bihbahānī had in his own lifetime successfully put an end to the Akhbārī or traditionalist school, whose rejection of *ijtihād* was a major obstacle to any expansion in the personal power of the *mujtahid* class. During Fatḥ 'Alī's reign, the revival of Ni'matallāhī Sufism, recently re-imported from India to Iran, was effectively smothered at birth. There remained, however, one very important source of potential rivalry, namely the gnostic and philosophical Shi'ism that had dominated religious circles in the mid-seventeenth century and which had lost ground to the rationalist *fuqahā'* in the late Safavid period.[18]

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[17] See D. MacEoin, "Changes in Charismatic Authority in Qajar Shi'ism," in *Qajar Iran: Political, Social and Cultural Change 1800–1925*, ed. E. Bosworth and C. Hillenbrand (Edinburgh, 1983), 148–76.

[18] For details of this shift, see Said Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam* (Chicago, 1984), 147–59.

It seems to have been in an attempt to preclude a revival of gnostic Shiʿism that a section of the Uṣūlī establishment pronounced *takfīr* against Shaykh Ahmad al-Aḥsāʾī from about 1822—a mere four years before his death. Al-Aḥsāʾī was an interesting choice for excommunication for a number of reasons. On the one hand, there is no question that his writings contained a particularly brilliant synthesis of theosophical and gnostic theories within a broad, orthodox Shīʿī context. According to Abbas Amanat,—"Shaykhism in itself is considered as the final outcome of a fusion between three major trends of thought in post-Safavid Shʿism; the theosophical school of Isfahan (*ḥikmat-i ilāhī*), which itself benefited from the theosophical Sufism of Ibn ʿArabī and the "Oriental" theosophy (*ḥikmat-i Ishrāq*) of Suhravardi, the Akhbārī "traditionalist" school of Bahrain which traced its chain of transmission to the early narrators of *ḥadīth* mostly by the way of "intuitive" perception and Gnosticism which was diffused in the Shīʿī milieu and was strongly influenced by crypto-Ismāʿīlī ideas as well as other heterodoxies of southern and southwestern Iran."[19]

Insofar as these strands can be picked out in al-Aḥsāʾī's thought, it is fair to regard him as the most important representative of esoteric Shiʿism since the School of Isfahan—a role assigned to him, indeed, by Henry Corbin. But al-Aḥsāʾī's more complex than that. For one thing, he openly attacked the views of men like Mulla Ṣadrā and Ibn al-ʿArabī as heretical and sought to bring them into line with more orthodox Shīʿī teaching. He himself had studied under leading representatives of the Uṣūlī school, including Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, and showed no inclination in his writings to challenge the authority of the *mujtahids*. His own position was, in fact, that of a popular and respected *ʿālim* specially favoured by Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh and his son Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā, who enjoyed close links with the other leading ʿulamāʾ of his day, and whose works were widely read. Even after the first declaration of *takfīr* by Mullā Muḥammad Taqī Baraghānī, many of al-Aḥsāʾī's admirers among the Uṣūlī hierarchy remained firmly convinced of his orthodoxy and continued to defend

[19] A. Amanat, "The Early Years of the Babi Movement: Background and Development" (Ph.D. dissertation, Oxford, 1981), 29. Cf. Henry Corbin: "…le shaykhisme rallie purement et simplement le camp des philosophes ou théosophes de l'ecole de Molla Sadra, avicenniens et ishraqiyun" ("L'Ecole Shaykhie en Theologie Shi'ite," *Annuaire de I'Ecole Pratique des Hautes Eludes: Section des Sciences Religieuses*, 1960–61, reprinted with Persian trans. [Tehran, 1967], 5). On the relationship between Shaykhism and orthodox Shiʿism, see D. MacEoin, "Bālāsarī," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.

him against the charges of his opponents. It is, indeed, significant that even to the present day, orthodox authors of *rijāl* works seldom speak disparagingly of al-Aḥsāʾī, but describe him rather as one of the great figures of early Qajar Shiʿism.

Although the charges laid against al-Aḥsāʾī included such matters as his views on the resurrection and the *miʿrāj*, I am of the opinion that the real reason for disquiet lay in the fact that the Shaykh had taken rather too far certain possibilities inherent in the Uṣūlī position itself. In departing from the strict Akhbārī position of reliance on texts, the Uṣūlīs had to rely, not only on deductive reasoning but also on non-rational modes of understanding in religious matters. In Amanat's words: "(The) very concept of *niyābat-i ʿāmm* (general deputyship), as it was assigned to the *mujtahids*, was not free from elements of non-rationality from which Usulism, at least in practice, could not escape."[20] Many Uṣūlīs, including al-Aḥsāʾī's teacher, Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, attempted to combine intuitive revelations (*kashf*) with reason—a tendency which Amanat sees as having developed "chiefly to compensate for the widening gap which had been produced by the growth of Uṣūlī rationalism."[21]

Al-Aḥsāʾī believed that his knowledge was granted him directly by the Prophet and the Imams (to which latter he attached great importance). This was not a wholly individual claim, but al-Aḥsāʾī seems to have carried it further than most: "The ʿulamāʾ," he wrote, "derive their knowledge one from the other, but I have never followed in their way. I have derived what I know from the Imams of guidance, and error cannot find its way into my words, since all that I confirm in my books is from them and they are preserved from sin and ignorance and error. Whosoever derives (his knowledge) from them shall not err, inasmuch as he has encountered the Imams."[22]

In a period when the charismatic authority of the individual mujtahid was being increasingly emphasized, al-Aḥsāʾī's claim to direct guidance may have threatened to put the whole system in jeopardy by sailing a little too close to the winds of original charisma. The notion of a single *marjaʿ al-taqlīd* to whom all other Shīʿīs would be *muqallid*[23] was still several decades in the future: in al-Ahsāʾī's day, it is clear

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[20] Amanat, "Early Years," 23.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Aḥmad al-Ahsaʾī, *Sharḥ al-Fawāʾiḍ* (n.p., 1272/1856), 4.
[23] In orthodox Shiʿism, there are two categories of person: the *mujtahid*, who can exercise independent reasoning in matters of religion, and everybody else, known as

that the Shīʿī establishment was still insufficiently restructured and the limits of Uṣūlī orthodoxy inadequately defined to sustain a charismatic claim of that order.

Al-Aḥsāʾī's successor, Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, drew less attention to his own role, although there are indications that, by the late 1830s, some of his followers viewed him as a chosen vehicle for pure knowledge from the Imams. The chief task he set himself, however, was the rehabilitation of al-Aḥsāʾī, to which end he argued that he had not sought to establish a new *madhhab* within Islam.[24] Inadvertently, however—by remaining in Karbala and gathering a large body of disciples around himself there—Rashtī did hasten the crystallization of the amorphous Shaykhiyya into a body somewhat outside the bounds of orthodox Shiʿism.

After Rashtī's death, the emergence of the more visibly heterodox Bābī movement—originally conceived of as the Bābiyya Shaykhiyya—pushed both the Tabriz and Kerman-based branches of the school to insist ever more volubly on their own orthodoxy. Certain Shaykhīs—in particular the head of the Kerman faction, Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān—were among the earliest and most vehement opponents of the Bāb and his followers. Although there were occasional incidents between the Shaykhīs and other Shīʿīs (Bālāsarīs) of Tabriz and Kerman (including riots in Tabriz in 1267/1850 and 1285/1868–69 and a major urban conflict in Kerman in 1323/1905), the exponents of the school never tired in their efforts to effect a rapprochement with the Uṣūlī mainstream.

Karīm Khān, for example, in answer to a request to "provide an explanation of the beliefs of Shaykhism," writes: "…our beliefs are the beliefs of all Twelver Shīʿīs; whatever the Shīʿīs agree upon in respect of the principles (*uṣūl*) of religion, we confess the same, and whatever they reject, we also reject. We regard the consensus (*ijmāʿ*) of the Shīʿīs on the bases and subsidiaries (*furūʿ*) of faith as evident and proven."[25]

The point here is that at no time did the Shaykhīs seek to exclude themselves from the broad church of Twelver Shiʿism: their doctrines did not challenge any of the essentials of the Shīʿī creed, nor was the

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*muqallids*, or imitators, who follow the rulings of the *mujtahids*. A *marjaʿ al-taqlīd* (focus of imitation) is one of a very tiny number of senior *mujtahids*, perhaps no more than two or three or even one at a time.

[24] Sayyid Kazim Rashtī, *Dalīl al-mutaḥayyirīn* (n.p., 1276/1859–60), 64.

[25] Ḥajj Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī, *Risāla-yi sī faṣl* (Kerman, 1368/1949), 86.

role ascribed to the later heads of the school incompatible with acceptance of the wider authority of the ʿulamāʾ. What prevented Shaykhism from becoming a recognized *ecclesiola* were largely extrinsic factors over which the school had little or no control: the stigma of *takfīr* attached to al-Aḥsāʾī by a group of clerics now dead, the rise of Babism directly out of the ranks of the school, the political role of the hereditary Shaykhī leadership in Kerman, and the continued instability of the orthodox camp.

By contrast, the break between orthodoxy and the Bābī movement seems quite clear. And yet the early phase of the movement does not reveal such clarity at all. It is true that some of the Bāb's earliest writings gave rise to the belief that he was claiming some form of divine revelation posterior to the Qurʾān.[26] But any such claims were heavily overshadowed during the first three years of the Bāb's career by much less radical ones. An early follower of the Bāb, Mīrzā Muḥammad ʿAlī Zunūzī, expresses these early claims as follows: "At the beginning of the cause, he made himself known by the title *bāb* and 'servant of the *baqiyyat Allāh*' (i.e., the hidden Imam), so that, as people say, he was regarded as having been sent by the hidden Imam, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan.... He established his verses below the words of the imams, but above those of the Shaykh (al-Aḥsāʾī) and the Sayyid (Rashtī)...and gave himself out as an interpreter (*mubayyin*) and promulgator (*murawwij*) of the Qurʾān and Islam...while all his followers...regarded him as the gate of divine knowledge and as superior to the Shaykh and the Sayyid."[27]

Many of the Bāb's own statements as to his status at this point echo this view. In the *Ṣaḥīfa-yi ʿadliyya*, he describes himself as a "servant" chosen by the hidden Imam "in order to protect the faith of God," regarding his own words as "utter nothingness" compared to the Qurʾān and the utterances of the imams.[28] In the slightly later *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Kawthar*, he states that he is merely a Persian chosen to protect the faith of the Prophet and the imams and a servant of God confirming

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[26] For early reactions to the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, see M. Momen, "The Trial of Mullā ʿAlī Bastāmī: A Combined Sunnī-Shīʿī Fatwā against the Bāb," *Iran* XX (1982): 113–43.

[27] Letter by Zunūzī quoted in Mirza Asad Allah Fāḍil Māzandarānī, *Kitāb-i ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 3 (n.p., n.d.), 31, 32.

[28] Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad, the Bāb, *Ṣaḥīfa-yi ʿadliyya* (n.p., n.d.), 7, 13.

the laws of the Qurʾān.[29] There is, of course, a large element of *taqiyya* at work here (at one point the Bāb denied making any claims at all), but that does not in any way invalidate the sense of restraint conveyed to the Bāb's early followers by such statements.

If later Babism became notorious for its abrogation of the Qurʾānic *sharīʿa*, the movement was in its early phase just as notable for its insistence on its strict application. In his first major work, the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, the Bāb states that "God has made the laws of Muḥammad and his *awliyāʾ* (i.e., the imams) binding in every book until the Resurrection…"[30] Similarly, in the *Ṣaḥīfa-yi ʿadliyya*, he states that "since no change may be decreed for (the faith of God), this blessed *sharīʿa* shall never be abrogated. Nay, what Muḥammad has declared lawful shall remain lawful to the day of resurrection, and what he has declared unlawful shall remain unlawful to the day of resurrection."[31] In an early letter to Qurrat al-ʿAyn, a female Bābī who was the *de facto* leader of the sect in Iraq, he wrote: "Rest assured that all the externals of the sharīʿa are observed. Whoever neglects the least of its laws, it shall be as if he has neglected all of them."[32]

In general, the Bāb seems to have seen his role as that of clarifying obscure or tangled issues related to the details of the *sharīʿa*. In the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Kawthar*, he refers to the inability of the *ʿulamāʾ* to supply correct rulings on matters of *furūʿ*,[33] and, in the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*. he states that he has clarified certain laws over which there had been disagreement.[34] Beyond this, he also recommended supererogatory observances, such as extra prayer and fasting.

Mīrza ʿAlī-Muḥammad Zunūzī writes that, in his early letters, the Bāb "put desirable matters (*mustaḥabbāt*) in the place of obligatory (*wājibāt*) (i.e., he made *mustaḥabb wājib*) and undesirable matters (*makrūhāt*) in the place of forbidden (*muḥarramat*). Thus, for example, he regarded it as obligatory to have four tablets of the soil (from the shrine) of the prince of martyrs (the Imam Ḥusayn) on which to place the hands, forehead, and nose during the prostration of *namāz*; he considered the

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[29] Idem, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Kawthar*, Cambridge University Library, Browne Or. Ms., F. 10, ff. 4b, 7b.

[30] Idem, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, Cambridge University Library, Browne Or. Ms., F. 11, f. 185b.

[31] Idem, *Ṣaḥīfa-yi ʿadliyya*, 5–6.

[32] Idem, letter quoted in Māzandarānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, 334.

[33] Idem, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar*, f. 4b.

[34] Idem, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, f. 185b.

pilgrimage of ʿAshūrā a duty; he laid down prayers and supererogatory observances (*taʿqībāt*); he proclaimed the obligation of Friday prayer…; and he fashioned amulets, charms and talismans such as are prepared among the people.… All his companions acted with the utmost circumspection according to the *uṣūl* and *furūʿ* of Islam."[35]

The sudden shift from this position of extreme pietism to one of abandoning the religious law altogether—a step which followed the Bāb's announcement of his claim to be the hidden Imam in person—has, to my knowledge, only one obvious parallel in Islamic history, namely the development of Nizarī Ismaʾīlism at ʿAlamūt. Nevertheless, it serves extremely well to illustrate the very close links that exist between an excessive devotion to rigorous practice on the one hand and a seemingly incongruous readiness to abandon that practice in favour of a doctrine of pure spirituality or even a new *sharīʿa*. In a situation where men may be experiencing a sense of frustration about the possibility of implementing the practice of the true faith in its fullness, the only way out may be to opt for a spiritualization of the law. (And, if we return to van Gennep's and Turner's theories about liminality, this may, in turn, act as a rite of passage back to society, but in the form of a new law.) In the Bābī case, several stages—not all of them discrete—may be observed: expectation of the imminent advent of the Imam to impose the full weight of the Islamic *sharīʿa* by force; self-imposed observance of the law within the ranks of the movement itself; a radical reinterpretation of the *sharīʿa* based on belief in the advent of an age of perfect spirituality; proclamation of the Qāʾim's advent in the person of the Bāb, at that point held in prison and unable to wage *jihād* against the world of unbelief; and the formulation in the Bāb's later writings of a new *sharīʿa* founded on the principles of perfectionism, the spiritualization of matter, and preparation for future messianic activity.[36]

Space precludes me from taking this argument further. It may suffice to draw attention to the possibility that Babism and, indeed, Bahaʾism represent something fundamental to the very existence of Shiʿism. Like

[35] Zunūzī, letter quoted by Māzandārānī, *Ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, 31–2. For some further examples of Bābī pietism, see D. MacEoin, "From Shaykhism to Babism: A Study in Charismatic Renewal in Shiʿi Islam" (Ph.D. dissertation, Cambridge University, 1979), 210.

[36] On perfectionism as a theme in the Bāb's writings, see, idem, "Hierarchy, Authority and Eschatology in Early Bābī Though," in *In Iran Studies in Bābī and Bahāʾī History III* ed. P. Smith (Los Angeles), 1986, p. 153 n. 190.

Shiʿism itself, they are responses to the ongoing tension created by the notion of prophetic finality in Islam. Whereas traditional Shiʿism was able to cope with this tension through the concept of *wilāya*, new pressures in the nineteenth century called for a more radical response. The orthodox reaction was an intensification of routinized charisma in the system of *mujtahids* and *marājiʿ al-taqlīd*—an intensification that reached its culmination in the rise to power of Ayatollah Khomeini. Babism and Bahaʾism went further by proposing wholly fresh revelations, the latter supplementing its prophetic teachings with ideas drawn from Western sources. It must be argued that, if traditional Shiʿism was and is under threat, it found an unusually successful means of saving itself by re-emerging in the form of Bahaʾism. That, unfortunately, is a thesis that will appeal neither to Shīʿīs nor to Bahaʾis.

# DECONSTRUCTING AND RECONSTRUCTING THE SHARĪʿA: THE BĀBĪ AND BAHĀʾĪ SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM OF IMMUTABILITY*

For well over a century now, Muslims have struggled in countless ways to reinterpret, protect, deconstruct, modernize or stabilize their faith in response to sometimes overwhelming pressures from an outside world intent on ceaseless material and social adventure. A majority have opted for a broadly conservative stance that tolerates technological and political change, but frowns on any radical reworking of social or intellectual structures, much less of religious or religio-legal forms. Others, fewer in number, have attempted a more far-reaching re-think of how Muslim communities should live, seeing modernity as a challenge that offers Islam the possibility of deep internal renewal.

Reformism of this kind, however, whether developed through innovative *tafsīr*, reinterpretation of classical legal rulings, or new approaches to the corpus of hadith, have generally foundered on one rock above all others: the sense of finality inherent in Muslim religious consciousness: Islam is the last religion, the *sharīʿa* is the ultimate *sharīʿa*, Muḥammad is the Seal of the Prophets, the Qurʾān is the final scripture, the Gate of Ijtihād is closed. There is, in a sense, nowhere to go. Reform of a certain kind is possible (and implicit in the Imami Shīʿī doctrine of continuing *ijtihād*), but far-reaching change seems ruled out by the finality clause written into the Muslim constitution.

As often as not, a modicum of revival has seemed adequate to the demands of the time, and the idea of *mujaddidūn* every century or so has been ample cause for reassurance. But every so often times get harder than that, and millennial dreams are dreamed. The nineteenth century witnessed a number of Muslim millenarian movements, from North Africa to China. Most of these advocated some form of violent overthrow of the status quo, mainly through *jihad*, but only one promulgated a wholesale dismantling and recreation of the *sharīʿa*. This was the Shiʿite sect of Babism, which produced the only religious

* Delivered at the British Society for Middle East Studies Conference, 1997 and later available online.

movement in Islamic history to have broken successfully with Islam, namely Bahāʾīsm.

Muslim writers, obsessed with what they see as Bābī and Bahāʾī heterodoxy, and unable to conceptualize a paradigm shift of this order, have generally failed to appreciate the significance of these two movements and their different responses to modernity. Babism, in a sense, delved to the depths of Islam and came out on the other side de-Islamicized and ready to adapt itself to reform thinking in ways no Muslim movement could have done.

It will help our understanding of this complex process if we summarize the stages through which the movement passed. In its inception, Babism resembled many other millenarian movements. Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad Shīrāzī, the Bāb, was a layman of intense religious conviction and charismatic qualities who, in 1844, began to attract to himself a following of mainly young clerics in search of someone capable of providing access to the Hidden Imam. In the initial phase of the new belief, the Bāb's self-proclaimed role was no more than that of a gate to the Imam and a commentator on the Qurʾān.

In keeping with this, both the Bāb and his early followers maintained a strict adherence to the sharīʿa. His first significant book, the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, ostensibly a commentary on the Sūra Yūsuf, is consciously modelled on the style of the Qurʾān and explicitly insists on strict observance of the *sharīʿa*: 'God has made the laws of Muḥammad and his *awliyāʾ* binding in every book until the resurrection').[1] Slightly later, in the *Ṣaḥīfa-yi ʿadliyya*, he writes: 'Since no change may be decreed (for the faith of God), this blessed *sharīʿa* shall never be abrogated. Nay, what Muḥammad has decreed lawful shall remain lawful to the day of resurrection, and what he has declared unlawful shall remain unlawful to the day of resurrection.'[2]

As if this were not enough, the Bāb insisted on all sorts of observations that were not strictly obligatory: he banned smoking, recommended supererogatory prayer and fasting, and introduced a range of practices to intensify the religious life. According to one of his followers, Mīrzā Muḥammad ʿAlī Zunūzī, the Bāb 'made desirable matters obligatory, and undesirable ones forbidden. Thus, for example, he regarded it

[1] Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad Shīrāzī, *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ*, Cambridge University Library, Browne Or. Ms. F. 11, f. 185b.

[2] Idem, *Ṣaḥīfa-yi ʿadliyya*, n.p. [Tehran?], n.d., pp. 5–6.

obligatory to have four tablets of the soil (from the shrine) of the Prince of Martyrs [Ḥusayn] on which to place the hands, forehead and nose during the prostration of formal prayer; he considered the pilgrimage of ʿĀshūrā a duty; he laid down prayers and supererogatory observances; he proclaimed Friday prayer obligatory…; and he fashioned amulets, charms, and talismans such as are prepared among the masses.… All his companions acted with the utmost circumspection according to the *uṣūl* and *furūʿ* of Islam.'[3]

The early Bābīs become known for their strict adherence to Islamic norms and the austerity of their religious life. This does not mean that they were treated as orthodox. Even in this period, many (including the Bāb himself) were arrested and mildly punished. Nor does it mean that all their behaviour was *sharīʿa*-based. One of the Bāb's earliest works, the *Khaṣāʾil-i sabʿa*, is reported to have called for seven observances that manifestly take us beyond regular Shiʿite practice. They include the addition to the *adhān* of the formula *ashhadu anna ʿAlīyan qablu Muḥammadin ʿabdu baqiyyati ʾllāh*, and a regulation requiring each believer to wear a ring of white agate bearing the words: 'There is no god but God. Muḥammad is the prophet of God. ʿAlī is the friend of God. 273' (where 273 refers to ʿAlī Muḥammad Bāb Allāh).[4]

One thing that is already clear (and which becomes extremely significant later on) is the extent to which the Bāb fusses about small matters. Another observance in the *Khaṣāʾil-i sabʿa* is that believers should drink tea with great cleanliness and delicacy. Many early Bābīs refused to wear black clothes or write with black ink, on the grounds that black is the colour of the ʿAbbasids. Having started out as a schism within the philosophically rarified but broadly orthodox Shaykhī school, Babism was quickly acquiring the characteristics of a pietist movement. Anyone reading the daily rule for the devotee set out in the Bāb's *al-Ṣaḥīfa bayna ʾl-ḥaramayn*, will see immediately that only the members of a strictly regulated religious order could have carried out their obligations.

In practice, Babism did not become the pietist clique it might have done. By 1848, it had genuine aspirations to being a mass movement in a number of provinces. Several factors were responsible for steering

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[3] Quoted in Mīrzā Asad Allāh Fāḍil-i Māzandarānī, *Kitāb-i ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq*, n.p., n.d., pp. 31–32.

[4] Translated in D. MacEoin, *Rituals in Babism and Bahaʾism*, Pembroke Persian Papers, British Academic Press and Centre of Middle Eastern Studies, University of Cambridge, 1994, pp. 93–97.

the sect away from its original, rather precious orientation. Among the most important were the opinions and interventions of an outstanding woman cleric called Fāṭima Khānum Qazvīnī, better known as Qurrat al-ʿAyn or Ḥaḍrat-i Ṭāhira. Belonging to an important clerical family of Qazvin, and long familiar with Shaykhī ideas, Qurrat al-ʿAyn embraced the Bāb's cause at an early date, and soon set up an important circle in Karbala, where she became the focus for what was almost her own sect, known as the Qurratiyya.

From an early stage, she showed a radicalism that suggests she knew exactly which way Babism was ultimately headed. By the summer of 1846 she seems to have inferred from the Bāb's writings that it was time to suspend the laws of Islam. Shaykh Maḥmūd al-Ālūsī, the well-known Sunni Muftī of Baghdad, with whom Qurrat al-ʿAyn stayed for two months in 1847, remarked that 'she was one of those who followed the Bāb after the death of [Sayyid Kāẓim] Rashtī, and then disobeyed him in some matters, among them religious obligations. It is said that she used to speak of permitting women to be seen by men, and the suspension of all religious obligations whatsoever.'[5]

At this stage, Qurrat al-ʿAyn's motivation for suspending the *sharīʿa* was tightly linked to her perception that it was time for the revelation of the inner meaning of Islam, transcending and displacing the twelve-hundred-year age of outward truth. There is, as yet, no hint that Islam itself has been abrogated, or that a new *sharīʿa* is to replace that of Muḥammad.

Qurrat al-ʿAyn remained in Karbala for another year, then embarked on a series of moves which culminated, in the summer of 1848, in her arrival at a small gathering of Bābīs at Bidasht in Māzandarān. Just prior to this conclave, the Bāb, now in prison in Azerbaijan, had announced himself to be the Mahdī in person. This proved the trigger Qurrat al-ʿAyn was looking for. Now she proclaimed the *sharīʿa* wholly abrogated, and spearheaded an antinomian faction within Babism.

By now, things were moving with great speed. In a number of places, chiefly the Māzandarān countryside, and the towns of Nayrīz and Zanjān, Bābīs came into violent conflict with government forces. In Azerbaijan, the Bāb, still two years away from his execution, busied

[5] *Rūḥ al-maʿānī*, cited ʿAlī al-Wardī, *Lamaḥāt ijtimāʿiyya min taʾrīkh al-ʿIrāq al-ḥadīth*, vol. 2, Baghdad 1969, p. 169.

himself with the composition of numerous books, including three works of varying length in which he tried to set out the laws of a new *sharīʿa*.

In these three books—the short *Haykal al-dīn* and *al-Bayān al-ʿArabī*, and the lengthier Bayān-i Fārsī—the Bāb created a hybrid in religious literature,[6] a sort of cross between Qurʾān, Talmud, and *risāla fiqhiyya*, weaving doctrine, personal comment, scriptural commentary, and legal ordinances together in an inspired but at times incoherent medley. Insofar as we can separate laws from ritual injunctions, the picture that emerges from these books is one of missed opportunity. The millenarian radicalism of Babism and the desire for social reform evident in some of the Bābī-state struggles,[7] are smothered by a mishmash of rules and regulations that at times are little more than mere whimsy, revolving around some of the Bāb's own obsessions about cleanliness, polite behaviour, and elegance. It is a sharīʿa, but not in any practical sense. Certainly, it does not seem to be going anywhere.

Let me try to illustrate this briefly. Here and there we find indications that the Bāb had been impressed by Europeans and that he wanted his followers to emulate them: thus, carrying arms is permissible only in times of necessity, sitting on chairs is made obligatory, the cleanliness displayed by Christians is advocated, animals are not to be cruelly treated or overworked, children should not be severely beaten, the printing of books, even scripture, is recommended, there is a prohibition on the study of logic or dead languages, some forms of legal uncleannness are abolished, and a limited form of interest is allowed to merchants.

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[6] The Bāb, *Bayān-i Fārsī*, n.p. (Iran), n.d.; idem *al-Bayān al-ʿArabī* with *Lawḥ-i haykal al-dīn* in one vol., n.p. [Iran], n.d. See further D. MacEoin, *Early Bābī Doctrine and History: A Survey of Source Materials*, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1992. The Persian and Arabic *Bayāns* have been translated into French by A. L. M. Nicolas: *Le Béyan Persan*., Paris: Librairie Paul Geuthner, 1911–1914; *Le Béyan arabe. Le livre sacrée du Bâbysme*. Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1905. An abstract of the Persian *Bayān* by E. G. Browne is published in M. Momen (ed.), *Selections from the Writings of E. G. Browne*, Oxford, 1987, pp. 316–406. The laws of the *Bayān* are summarized in *Mukhtaṣarī az dastūrāt-i Bayān*, Tehran: n.d. 7. On Bābī ritual, see D. MacEoin, *Rituals in Babism and Bahāʾīsm*.

[7] See Peter Smith and Moojan Momen, 'The Bābī Movement: A Resource Mobilization Perspective', in *In Iran*, ed. P. Smith, Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 1986, pp. 33–93. 3; and Moojan Momen, 'The Social Basis of the Bābī Upheavals in Iran (1848–53): A Preliminary Analysis,' *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 15 (1983): pp. 157–83.

On their own, these seem as though they should be part of a more wide-ranging scheme for social change—not altogether systematic, perhaps, but recognizable as such. On the contrary, they are smothered by a vast range of other legislation that either shows a different face or concerns itself with ritual and other minutiae.

The apparent tolerance shown in the many positive statements made in the *Bayān* is quite contradicted by a string of very harsh regulations governing relations with non-believers. The latter are forbidden to live in the five central provinces of Iran; the shrines and holy places of previous religions (including the Shīʿī shrines in Kūfa and elsewhere, together with the Kaʿba) are to be demolished; all non-Bābī books are to be destroyed; believers are not to sit in the company of non-believers, nor marry them; the property of unbelievers can legitimately be taken from them by believers.

Once in the realm of worship and ritual, no holds are barred. There are elaborate regulations for pilgrimage, fasting, the drawing and use of talismans, the manufacture of rings, engraved stones, and tattoos, the use of perfume, the washing and disposal of the dead, and so on. Here, more than anywhere, the Bāb gives free rein to his tendency to surrealism. Instituting his house in Shiraz as the new Kaʾba, he writes that it is to measure thirty-six cubits long and wide. If it were possible, his followers would be commanded to fill it to the top with diamonds, to replace its earth with elixir, and its water with red perfume. Since that isn't possible, mirrors will do instead. Believers are expected to wear or carry any number of inscribed rings, stones, and talismans. Coffins are to be made from crystal, marble, or polished stone. And so on.

One comes away from the *Bayān* with a strong sense that very little of this is to be taken seriously. It is a form of game, never actually intended to be put into practice, much in the same way that whole sections of the Bāb's later books don't in fact mean anything very much, but are elaborate exercises in interesting things you can do with Arabic roots. Or the way so many of the Bāb's early writings, described as *tafsīrs* on this or that sūra of the Qurʾān, are really not commentaries at all.

But there is something else here too, that becomes important at a later date. The Bāb was a cleric manqué, versed in *fiqh* and other religious sciences, but almost entirely self-taught. We see this in those idiosyncratic compositions in Arabic, where he puts the language through permutations no grammarian would have contemplated. It appears again in his usurpation of what were really clerical privileges:

to write Qurʾān commentary,[8] to expound matters of religious law, to reply to questions from his followers, and, more radically, to create a sharīʿa of his own.

Inevitably, the Bābī legal code remained largely a dead letter. The average Bābī could hardly hope to afford the three diamonds, four yellow rubies, six emeralds, and six red rubies that he was expected to give to the Bābī Messiah, let alone find time to observe all the rules and regulations laid down in the book. For all that, the Bābī sharīʿa made an impact.

Above all, it stated very clearly that the Islamic code could be replaced. It was a question of how best to do it. In a subtle way, the Bayān will have got across the fact that a religiously-focused code, which replaced one Islamic injunction with another of its own making, just ended up perpetuating Islamic sharīʿa problems. Interestingly enough, this may have been a very precise influence on a large section of the Iranian reformers who straddle the last years of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh's reign and the Constitutional Revolution. For reasons that have as yet been only imperfectly studied, many of the leading nationalist reformers of this period were or had been Azalī Bābīs.[9] The Azalī branch of Babism was the most conservative, and did not offer an obviously propitious breeding ground for men of such sentiments. Nevertheless, the fact remains that a substantial number of those who agitated for a constitution or called for wider reform in the late Qājār period will have read and believed in the *Bayān*. Two of the leading lights of this movement, Shaykh Aḥmad Rūḥī Kirmānī and Āqā Khān Kirmānī even wrote a book in which they tried (rather artificially it must be said) to link the Bābī *sharīʿa* to progressivism.[10]

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[8] For discussion of these works, see B. Todd Lawson, 'Interpretation as Revelation: The Qurʾān Commentary of Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad Shīrāzī, the Bāb (1819–1850)'. In Andrew Rippin (ed.), *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qurʾān*, Oxford University Press, 1988; idem, 'The Qurʾān Commentary of Sayyid 'Ali Muḥammad Shirazi, the Bāb', Ph.D., McGill University, 1987.

[9] The most important contributions to our understanding of this phenomenon are Nikkie Keddie's essay, 'Religion and Irreligion in Early Iranian Nationalism', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 4, 1962, pp. 265–95 (esp. pp. 273–4, 284–9, and 292–5; and Mangol Bayat, *Mysticism and Dissent*, Syracuse, 1982, pp. 87, 129–31, 140–42, 149, 157–62, 1 67, 179, 180–83. See also D. MacEoin, 'Azalī Babism', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.

[10] Sayyid Aḥmad Rūḥī Kirmānī and Āqā Khān Kirmānī, *Hasht Bihisht*, n.p., n.d. The book is a curious mixture of liberal principles (absolute freedom for all men, the

The predominant direction taken by these men was towards a broadly secular reinterpretation of Shiʿite society, a route which took them some distance away from the Bayānic norms within which they had started.

Their original rivals, who played next to no role within the reformist movement, were the Bahāʾīs, followers of Mīrzā Ḥusayn ʿAli Bahāʾ Allāh, from whose early works we can detect no trace of the *madrasa* yearnings that influence the work of the young Bāb.[11] Here instead, we have Sufism and classical literature, a predominance of Persian, an easy, lucid prose style, sprinklings of poetry, and a concern with broader themes. The Bāb was a merchant who had unfulfilled yearnings to be a *mujtahid*. Bahaʾ Allah is a member of the ruling class with pretensions to be a Sufi *pīr*.

And more than that. In a forthcoming study of Bahāʾ Allāh,[12] Professor Juan Cole marshals an impressive range of evidence to show how the Bahāʾī prophet was deeply influenced by reformist ideas, in particular those circulating among the Young Ottomans. It is largely in his later works, written in Ottoman Syria, that we see earlier religious concerns sidetracked by topics that would be at home in any secularist library: the separation of church and state, the need for democratic parliaments, constitutional monarchy, women's rights, religious liberty, freedom of conscience, and compulsory education.

Cole's portrayal leans heavily towards the reformer, which is all to the good, since official biographies have always emphasized the prophet. The Young Ottoman Bahāʾ Allāh is a figure who deserves to be better recognized by historians of the Middle East. Nevertheless, the prophet was never displaced by the proponent of reform. Quite the opposite.

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equality of men and women, a universal language, universal peace) and progressive measures (constitutional government, the use of modern inventions, the need for properly regulated public institutions) with the trivial (everyone must keep a diary, kings are to erect vast edifices with 95 rooms), the bizarre (men may have up to 19 wives, children are to be taken from their mothers at birth and placed in special schools), and the illiberal (unbelievers may be killed, past shrines are to be destroyed). Drawing heavily on the *Bayān*, it manages to surpass it in its picture of a utopia governed by little more than caprice.

[11] As a matter of fact, his Arabic was never as bad as his Muslim critics have suggested. There is something enticingly Dadaist about his defiance of linguistic tradition and his explosion of Arabic roots past all ordinary meaning.

[12] I am grateful to Professor Cole for kindly letting me read a copy of the typescript, entitled *Modernity and the Millennium: The Genesis of the Bahāʾī Faith in the Nineteenth Century Middle East*. This has now been published under the same title, New York, Columbia University Press, 1998.

We find him laying claim, not only to prophethood, but to a quasi-divinity that not infrequently is indistinguishable from out-and-out Godhood.

In 1873, Bahāʾ Allāh, now living in Palestine [then southern Syria], completed the text of the Arabic *Kitāb al-aqdas*, a short work that has come to be regarded as the basic outline for the Bahāʾī *sharīʿa*.[13] Quite a few laws of the *Bayān* remain, but almost all the petty regulations have been dropped or modified. The result is a terse resume of basic laws affecting prayer, fasting, marriage, divorce, inheritance, religious tax, the use of alcohol and opium, gambling, hunting, murder, arson, and a number of other matters.

Given its centrality within the Bahāʾī canon, the *Aqdas* on its own is a surprisingly disappointing book. When placed within the context of Bahāʾ Allāh's more reformist writing, however, it does show signs of consciously lightening the weight of existing Islamic norms, removing or modifying problematic *sharīʿa* rulings like those on ritual purity, avoidance of close association with non-believers, holy war, slavery, adultery, theft, the prohibition of music, and the permissibility of interest. It also does away with several of the more restrictive measures of the Bābī *sharīʿa*, including the mass slaughter of non-believers, the destruction of books and shrines, compulsory marriage at the age of 11, the confiscation of the property of unbelievers, and the prohibition on travel except for purposes of trade.[14]

Oddly enough, there are occasional inconsistencies between the reformist letters of Bahāʾ Allāh's later period and the legalist text of the *Aqdas*. The liberalizing emphasis on the equality of men and women is ill-matched by the law of marriage (which allows a man two wives), or regulations such as that awarding a man's house and clothing to his

[13] The following editions may be consulted: Bombay, 1308/1890 and from moveable type, 1314/1896; ed. and trans. A. Tumanskii, *Kitabe Akdas*, in *Memoires de l'Academie Imperiale des Sciences de St. Petersbourg*, 8me serie, 3/vi, St. Petersburg, 1899; as an appendix to Mīrzā Muḥammad Mahdī Khān Zaʿīm al-Dawla, *Miftāḥ Bāb al-abwāb*, Cairo 1321/1903; by Khadūrī IlyāsInāyat, Baghdad 1913; as appendix to ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ḥasanī, *al-Bābīyūn wa'l-Bahāʾīyūn fī māḍīhim wa ḥāḍirihim*, 2nd. ed., Sidon, 1381/1962 (based on 1890 ed.)

[14] A (generally unhelpful) resume of the laws of the *Aqdas* may be found in The Universal House of Justice, *A Synopsis and Codification of the Laws and Ordinances of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas the Most Holy Book of Bahá'u'lláh*, Haifa, 1973, now reprinted alongside the English translation of the text. For a full account of ritual legislation, see MacEoin, *Rituals*.

male, not female, heirs, even should there be no male offspring;[15] the tolerance towards other religions that is shown in the injunction to mix freely with their followers jars with the law that disallows a teacher from taking his share in an inheritance should he be a non-Bahāʾī; and the general distaste for violence shown in the abolition of jihad and wider exhortations to peaceful behaviour sit a little uneasily with the ruling that arsonists are themselves to be burned.

It is, perhaps, overly optimistic to have expected a wholly consistent programme of reform. Although we have clearly travelled a long distance in a short time, we are still in the world of arbitrary religious revelation, rather than reasoned planning or democratic debate. Bahāʾ Allāh was less a reformer than a religious despot with total power over his followers. It will be obvious that, although this provides some of the strength for his reform project, it is also the Achilles heel of his legislation.

Ernest Gellner has argued very convincingly that those Islamic movements that adapt best to modernity come from the rightist end of the spectrum: he gives the particular examples of the Ismailis and the Murids of Senegal. Gellner's left and right wings, it may be remembered, are a reflection of the Catholic/Protestant division in Christianity, with Shiʿism and Sufism typified by a reliance on authority figures, images, shrines, pilgrimages, and mysticism.

Gellner writes: 'A "right-wing" theology, in terms of the Islamic spectrum, continued to be invaluable. A "left" community which requires consensus, mediated by the guild of scholars, makes reform, and in particular drastic and rapid reform, extremely difficult or impossible. Some of the scholars will always see heretical innovation in any change, and if you try to push through some reform, the community will tear itself apart in inner conflict. But if the leader is authoritative and near-divine, if the person of the leader, rather than Book or consensus, is the heart of the faith, reform becomes relatively easy, always assuming that the leader is inclined in that direction.'[16]

The Bahāʾīs, of course, went much further than anyone else, in that they rapidly moved to declare their faith separate from Islam and to widen the intake of adherents by proselytizing in Europe and North

[15] In that case, they revert to the Bahāʾī authorities.

[16] 'Post-traditional forms in Islam: the turf and trade, and votes and peanuts', in *Muslim Society*, Cambridge, 1981, p. 108.

America, among people who wouldn't have known a Bābī talisman from a Tibetan mandala, and wouldn't have cared. For Bahāʾīs themselves, this distancing from Islam was a happy path to tread, in that it gave them the incentive and justification to develop what was slowly becoming a world-wide missionary enterprise.

Oddly, however, the first victim of this new direction was the *sharīʿa* itself. The *Aqdas*—a book of some 70 pages—was not made available to believers in English or any language other than Arabic until 1993.[17] Some of the rulings of the new *sharīʿa* were put into practice in Iran, but virtually none in the West or, as the movement grew, in Africa, India, or Latin America.

In reality, only personal laws can be enforced at present, and even here the official policy still seems to be one of waiting and seeing. Nevertheless, with the publication of the *Aqdas*, it looks as if there will now be a gradual move towards implementation.

Whether helped by the *Aqdas* or simply by virtue of having been born into liberal societies, most Bahāʾīs have adapted well to modernity. Bahāʾī women are well educated and encouraged to have careers, monogamy is universal, female cirumcision does not seem to occur, and women do serve in large numbers on councils and committees, even in the Third World. Bahāʾīs are, on the whole, free of religious and racial prejudice, advocate modern education, are not overly restricted in what they may read or watch, and are active in setting up radio stations, schools, and agricultural institutes in parts of the developing world.[18]

Ironically, their success in these matters may have had a negative impact elsewhere. For would-be reformers of the Islamic *sharīʿa*, the Bahāʾī experience has been unhelpful. To proceed too far with modification of the *sharīʿa* is, for many conservatives, to run the risk of leaving Islam entirely, as the Bahāʾīs demonstrate. The reforming zeal of the early Iranian parliament was often blunted by accusations that one

[17] [Bahāʾ Allāh], *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas: The Most Holy Book*, London, 1993. This edition contains supplementary texts (including the important *Questions and Answers*), the synopsis and codification, notes, and indexes. An earlier English translation by Earl E. Elder, *Al-Kitab al-Aqdas or The Most Holy Book*, was published in London in 1961, but Bahāʾīs were dissuaded from buying or reading it. The Arabic text became scarce even in Iran, and there was no official Persian translation. Iranians did have access to virtually the whole of the text, however, via two compilations: ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Ganjīna-yi ḥudūd wa aḥkām*, 3rd. ed. (Tehran, 1971–72); Mīrzā Asad Allāh Fāḍil-i Māzandarānī, *Amr wa khalq*, vols. 3 and 4 (Tehran, 1971–72, 1974–75).

[18] These last activities seem to be inspired mainly by the demands of proselytization.

deputy or another was a Bābī or a Bahāʾī, or that a piece of legislation was Bahāʾī in inspiration. This continues, even to the point of absurdity. Not many years ago, an attempt was made to introduce Mother's Day celebrations into a number of Muslim countries, including some of the Gulf states. There were loud protests. The day chosen, March 21, was widely known to be the Bahāʾī New Year, and so the whole thing was denounced as a Bahāʾī plot. The fact that Naw Rūz is also the traditional Iranian New Year was wholly disregarded.

The point here is simple: to leave Islam is the greatest of all possible sins, and so legal reformism is a type of brinkmanship that cannot be tolerated. A link between, let us say, legislation in favour of compulsory education for girls, and apostasy can most easily be created by direct reference to the Bahāʾīs.

So far, as we have noted above, the Bahāʾīs themselves have been almost blissfully unaware of having a *sharīʿa*. The great question, of course, is 'how does a nineteenth-century *sharīʿa*, however progressive, adapt to the rapid changes of the twenty-first century?' Official Bahāʾī policy states that the present laws 'constitute the kernel of a vast range of law that will arise in centuries to come.'[19] In principle, the Universal House of Justice, a ruling body of nine men first set up in 1963, possesses the right to introduce fresh legislation as and when it sees fit, or to abrogate its own laws. So far it has not done so. What it cannot do is abrogate any of the laws of the *Aqdas*.

There are already signs that this is causing tension within sections of the Bahāʾī community, particularly in North America. Two issues have come to the fore in recent years. Some Bahāʾī feminists have objected to the ruling that only men may be elected to the Universal House of Justice, while there is growing opposition to the law forbidding homosexuality.

Bahāʾī institutions are generally conservative, and it is unlikely that these or other complaints will receive a sympathetic hearing at any level. As for abrogating either law, it is simply out of the question. And that brings us back more or less to where we started.

It is difficult to evaluate all this. Muslim animosity towards the Bahāʾīs on the one hand and Bahāʾī aspirations to be a world religion on the

[19] *The Kitab-i-Aqdas*, introduction, pp. 4, 21. This is surprising, since several important topics are currently not legislated for, among them female circumcision, abortion, birth control, in vitro fertilization, and other (often female-related) issues, whereas trivial matters like the length of a man's hair are already catered for in the Aqdas.

other have meant that the introduction of the Bahāʾī *sharīʿa* has often been divorced from its true context, as a response to contemporary dissatisfactions with its Islamic predecessor. Bahāʾ Allāh's very evident concern with wider reform issues guarantees that he will have taken into consideration a growing sense that the Islamic sharīʿa was dated.

The Bāb's brief experiment had nothing to do with secular demand for change, and belonged to the very narrow world of Iranian Shiʿism. With Bahāʾ Allāh, however, we are breathing the atmosphere of the Tanzimat, the Young Ottomans, the *farāmūshkhānas*, the *ʿadālatkhānas*, and the emergent constitutionalist movement. For those who wanted to break with the Islamic past yet had no wish to forfeit religion entirely, the option of a new *sharīʿa* will have seemed tempting. In the end, of course, it proved an option that foreclosed others. The Bahāʾīs became marginalized in every Muslim country, and no-one has since dared to emulate their radicalism.

## BAYĀN-I FĀRSĪ
## EXORDIUM. TRANSLATION

In the Name of God, the Inaccessible, the Most Holy.

Praise and sanctification are due to the regal substance of holiness, glory, and majesty, Who has existed eternally and will continue to exist in the being of His own Essence, Who has always been and always will be exalted in His own eternity, far above the comprehension of all things. He did not create the sign of His knowledge within any other being other than by means of the incapacity of all things to know Him; nor did He shine forth upon any other thing other than through His own Self. He has, therefore, always been lifted high above association with any other thing, and He brought all things into existence in order that they might all confess before Him on the Day of Resurrection within the being of their true selves that He has neither peer nor equal, nor rival, nor likeness, nor similitude.

No, He has been and remains alone in the dominion of His own Godhood, He has been and remains glorified in the sovereignty of His own Lordship. Nothing else has ever recognized Him as He deserves to be recognized, nor can anything ever hope to do so, for whatever mention of existence they might apply to Him would itself have already been created by the sovereign power of His own Will, and He Himself would already have shone forth on it with His own Self upon the exalted heights of His Throne. He created the sign of His knowledge within the depths of all things in order that they might be sure that He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden, the Creator and the Sustainer, the Powerful and the Knowing, the Hearing and the Seeing, the One Who Buries and the One Who Raises the Dead, the Giver of Life and the Giver of Death, the Mighty and the Inaccessible, the Exalted and the All-Highest. He it is Who has never guided and will never guide anyone unless it be to the exaltation of His glorification and the sublimity of His praise and the inaccessibility of His Oneness and the elevation of His magnification.

No beginning is there for Him save in His own primacy, and no end is there for Him save in His own finality. And all things have acquired their essences according to what He has ordained or shall ordain

within them through His own Essence, and they have taken on reality through His Being. Through It God began the creation of all things, and through It He will return the creation of all things to Himself. All the beautiful names have existed for Its sake, and it is for Its sake that they continue to exist. The depths of His Essence are sanctified from all names and descriptions, and the purity of His Reality is lifted up above every splendour and every exaltation, and His naked Essence is far above any inaccessibility or altitude. He is the First, but He cannot be known as such; He is the Last, but He cannot be adequately described as such; He is the Outward, but He cannot be characterized as such; He is the Inward, but He cannot be grasped as such.

And He is the first to believe in Him Whom God Shall Manifest (*man yuẓhiruhu 'llāh*), and He is the first to have believed in him who has appeared. He is a single thing, through whose creation all things are created, and through whose sustenance all things are sustained, and through whose death the death of all things is manifested, and through whose life the life of all things is manifested, and through whose resurrection the resurrection of all things is manifested.

The eye of creation has never seen nor shall it ever see anything like Him, whether in the past or in the future. He is the Name of the Essence (*ism al-huwiyya*) and the Face of Lordship that resides within the shadow of the Countenance of Divinity and gives token of the sovereignty of the Divine Singleness. If I only knew that all things might taste His love, I would not even mention the Fire, for Hell was created in its essence according to what is within it and what is upon it, for the sole reason that it did not bow down before Him. Otherwise, were all things to taste His love, they would be light created from light within light unto light upon light. God guides to His light whomever He wishes, and God lifts up to His light whomever He wills. He is the One Who begins and the One to Whom all things return in the end.

He it is for Whom God, the One, the Single, through the manifestation of His own Self, created seventeen persons who were brought into being before the creation of all other things, out of His own Person. He then caused the sign of their recognition to reside in the realities of all beings, in order that all things might bear witness in their inmost essences to the truth that He is the primal Unity, the One who lives for all eternity. He has not commanded anyone among the contingent beings other than to know its own self and the singleness of the depths of its own reality. For all others but Him are nothing but His creatures, brought into being through His command. Both creation and com-

mand belong to Him, in the past and in the future. He is Lord of all the worlds.

Wherefore, let it not be concealed from anyone who looks on these words that God has caused the creation of the Qurʾān to return on the Day of Judgement through the manifestation of His own Self upon that Day. Whereupon, He has created all things freshly, as if they had all just been brought into existence at that very instant. For all that has ever been created was for the Day of the appearance of God, for He it is in which all things reach their end, and He it is in Whom they achieve their destiny. After He manifested Himself through the appearance of the signs of His power, there can be no doubt at all that all things have reached the Divine Presence in that state of perfection which they are capable of attaining. God, may He be praised and glorified, has created the Primal Will once more, and through It He has created all things. And, since all things have been mentioned in a new creation, this is a proof that His creation has neither beginning nor end. Wherefore, there has never been a situation in which God was Lord and there were no created beings to worship Him. God has existed eternally in the exaltation of His Holiness, and all others have existed in the degradation of their own limitations.

The beginning of the creation of all things at this instant, which is a Friday, has taken place through the words God has uttered. His Holiness, the Lord of Glory, brought this new creation into being through His own decree and caused it to rest beneath His shadow in order that it may return to Him. For there can be no doubt that God brings that creation into existence and then makes it return to Himself. God, indeed, is powerful over all things. He structured the creation of all things according to the number of 'All Things', through the decrees which He caused to come down from the court of His holiness and which He caused to shine forth from the sun of His own bounty, in order that all things, through the mention of all things, might reach a state of perfection for the sake of the manifestation of the next resurrection, so that He might reward each thing with the reward due to all things. If this reward should turn out to be that of rejection, it will be part of His justice; if it should turn out to be that of acceptance, that will be on account of His grace, for His knowledge of all things before the existence of all things is identical to His knowledge of them after their coming into being; and His power over all things before their creation is the same as His power over them after their creation. From all eternity, God has possessed knowledge of all things and power over them. To

Him belong the most beautiful names, both before and after; all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth and all that lies between them recites His praise. No god is there but He, the Powerful, the Beloved. Behold with the eyes of certitude how the gates of the religion of the Bayān have been arranged according to the number of All Things. In the shadow of each gate, by God's permission, the angels that belong to the heavens and to the earth and to all that lies between, are bowing down, praising, sanctifying, glorifying, and magnifying Him, as they carry out their tasks on His behalf. On the day of the appearance of God, which is the appearance of the Point of the Bayān, all things shall return to Him when it draws to its close. And if blessed individuals to the number of All Things should return to Him, the fruit of all things will have been manifested in His presence. Blessed be he that is raised up on the Day of Resurrection before God, for God will welcome him from one of the gates of all things, inasmuch as he is the essence of that soul to which anyone who has believed in the Bayān shall return, on account of what he has performed in that gate. Wherefore, listen to that, then hasten, then hasten, then hasten, then hasten, for God is the swiftest of reckoners.

If all the gates of all things should not appear before Him, then He will decree the return of the creation of the Bayān, and will fold up in His hand all the heavens that have been lifted up within it, just as in the Qurʾān a multiplicity of gates without number were rendered even more numerous before those who believed in Him, and yet at the moment when God decreed the return of the creation of the Qurʾān, there was no-one in His presence but a single individual, who becomes one of the gates of the decree of the Remembrance before Him. Thus God performs whatever He wishes and decrees whatever He desires. He shall not be asked of His doings, but all shall be asked of all that they do.

At the moment when the creation of the Qurʾān returned and the creation of all things in the Bayān commenced, the dwelling-place of the Point, who is the Manifestation of Lordship, was upon the Land of the name Basit. Whereupon, the heavens that had been raised up in the Qurʾān were all folded up and returned to the Primal Point. None bears witness to that but God and he that is with Him, although He did not send down in the Qurʾān any subject more important than that of the resurrection and its revelation. God is the Reckoner of the number of souls who had believed in the religion of the Qurʾān. And at the moment of return, out of all these souls, there was only one soul

in God's presence, who became the number of All Things; and the creation of all things took place in a second creation at the command of God, the Exalted. Wherefore, watch over your souls, O people of the Bayān, lest you be veiled from God your Lord, though you desire day and night to sanctify yourselves.

## Chapter One, Gate One

In the first chapter of the number of All Things, the decree which God—praised be He and glorified—has rendered obligatory is the declaration: 'there is no god but God, truly, truly'.

Wherefore, the whole of the Bayān shall return to this declaration, and the appearance of a new creation shall take place from it. The recognition of this declaration is conditional on recognition of the Point of the Bayān, which God has made the essence of the Letters of the Seven. Whoever realizes that he is the Point of the Qurʾān in his end and the Point of the Bayān in his beginning, and that he is the Primal Will that exists in its own self, through whose decree all things are created and in whom they subsist, his essence has borne witness to the singleness of his Lord. But whoever has not believed in him is rejected and shall enter the fire. What fire is further removed than he who has not believed in him? And he who has believed shall enter into affirmation. What paradise is more exalted than the one who believes in him? It is a declaration that has praised and magnified and extolled and sanctified and glorified its Lord at morn and eventide.

Regard not this declaration except as you look upon the sun in the heavens, and regard not him who believes in him except as you regard the mirror. Indeed, whosoever believes in the essence of the Letters of the Seven, his inner being shall be given assistance by one of the names of God, praised be He and glorified, and his outer being shall be a leaf among the leaves of the Tree of Affirmation. All things return to this one thing, and all things are created through this one thing. This one thing shall be, in the next resurrection, none other than he whom God shall manifest, who, in every degree, utters the words, 'Verily, I am God, no god is there beside Me, the Lord of all things. All save Me is my creation. Wherefore, O My Creation, worship Me!' And know that he is the mirror of God, from whom the mirror of the physical universe (*mulk*) is rendered luminous, which is made up of the Letters of the Living. In him none can be seen except God Himself. Whoever

in the Bayān utters the declaration, 'there is no god but God', turns towards God through him, for his creation began in him and to him his creation shall return.

The fruit of this knowledge is that, at the time of the appearance of him whom God shall manifest, you should not say, 'we say "there is no god but God" and this is the basis of religion'. For what you say is but a reflection from his sun, which has shone forth in his first manifestation. He is more worthy of this declaration in his own self than are the realities of all created things, for if the mirror should say 'the sun is in me', it is evident to the sun that it is but its reflection speaking.

O creation of the Bayān, we have caused you to know the exaltation of your existence in the declaration of your Lord, that you may not be veiled by the truth from him whom God shall manifest on the Day of Resurrection. That of which you speak resembles its appearance in your hearts and that concerning which he speaks. That it is to which God has borne witness in Himself, that there is no god but He, the Preserver, the Self-Subsistent. In this day, whoever in the Qurʾān should utter this declaration, which is the essence of the faith, it cannot be doubted that he shall have uttered what Muḥammad, the Messenger of God, uttered before this. The sun of this declaration was in his (Muḥammad's) heart, and its reflection shone forth in those who utter (that declaration) today. Wherefore, it returns to him in his second appearance, which is the appearance of the Point of the Bayān, not in his first appearance, for in his first revelation the tree of oneness had not been raised up in the realities of created beings. Now that one thousand two hundred and seventy years have passed, this tree has reached the stage of fruition. Everyone in whom there is a reflection of that sun of the Point of the Qurʾān, which is identical with the Point of the Bayān, must needs be manifested before him.

I have used as an example the highest declaration, upon which the faith of all men depends. The beginning of faith is confirmed through its utterance, and all speak it at the moment of death and finally return to it. Wherefore, the reflections of the mirrors return only to that in which they had their origin. If the mirror should remove that portion of the sun's reflection that lies within it, it will return to it [the sun], for that is where it had its inception. Both its return and its going back exist in nothing but the limitation imposed upon it by being nothing more than a mirror.

Since the exaltation of the word of the Qurʾān in former times and the elevation of the word of the Bayān after it may be considered thus

when face to face with the Sun of Reality, what is the state of those matters that are derived from that word, matters such as the recognition of God's names, or those of the Prophet, the Imams of Guidance, the Gates of Guidance, as well as secondary questions without number or end? Anyone who has been veiled by one of these things from the reality that is the source of his existence, and unto which it returns, should he belong to the Tree of Affirmation and should the sign of his oneness be a token of the Sun, well and good; but, God forbid, should it not be a token of it, he would be unworthy of any mention.

For how often did those individuals who associated themselves with the Qur'ān issue decrees contrary to what God had revealed. This was mentioned with respect to their realities, not with regard to what is connected to the realities; for whatever connects itself to anything but God will return to the reality of that thing. And since its reality is not a token of God, it is not mentioned in His presence. But whatever is connected to true realities will return to them. If they are signs (naturally) situated within the mirrors of their own hearts and not (artificially) placed there, they will return to their own seats in the beginning and at the end. Since the sun has been shining from eternity, those mirrors have at all times been tokens of it; God's grace has never been interrupted under any conditions, nor shall it ever come to an end.

Whosoever says: 'God, God is my Lord, and I associate no-one with my Lord. The Essence of the Letters of the Seven is the Gate of God [*bāb Allāh*], and I do not believe in any gate other than him'; (whoever says this) and believes in the one God shall manifest, such a man has attained to this first gate of the first unity. Blessed be they who have attained to the bounty of a mighty day, the day on which all shall bring themselves into the presence of God, their Lord.

## Chapter One, Gate Two

The substance of this chapter is that Muḥammad and the manifestations of his self have returned to the world. They were the first servants who presented themselves before God on the Day of Judgement and who, after confessing to His singleness, brought the verses of His Gate to all men. And God made them Imams, according to His promise in the Qur'ān: 'We desire to show Our bounty unto them that have been brought low upon the earth, and to make them Imams and to render them the inheritors'.

By that same proof whereby the prophethood of Muḥammad was established in days gone by, his return to the world has been made clear in the eyes of God and those who possess knowledge. That proof consists of the verses of God, verses whose like cannot be produced by all who dwell on the earth. There can be no doubt that the honour of the servant consists in affirming the singleness of his Lord, in recognizing Him, in confessing to His justice, in obedience to Him, and in (obtaining) His good-pleasure. Nor is there any doubt that these holy souls attained to the essence of all exaltation and grandeur before all other men. For any being endowed with spirit who reflects will see no glory in anything except in the good-pleasure of God. There can be no doubt that they were the first lights to bow down before God, to accept the verses that had been sent down upon His Gate, and to spread them abroad among men. There is no exaltation higher than this in the world of creation, than for man's heart to show the way to God, and for him to never to be veiled from his Beloved, even for so much as a ninth of a ninth of a tenth of a tenth of a ninth part.

For whatever any soul may perform during its lifetime, it seeks for nothing but the good-pleasure of God, since that is the ultimate goal to which all things aspire. Nor can there be any doubt but that God's good-pleasure is no revealed in anything but the contentment of that individual to whom God has given His proof. Nor can there be any doubt that these holy lights were content with God's good-pleasure before anything else came into existence. This is the highest exaltation, above all other exaltation, and the most splendid elevation, above all other elevation. No doubt is there that their return in the second revelation is mightier in God's sight that their first appearance in days gone by.

In this day, the station of the Imam (*wilāya*) is established by the very same thing that established the station of the Prophet in former days, even though the manifestation of the Point of the Bayān is absolutely identical with that of Muḥammad, which has been brought back to life. Nevertheless, since he has appeared in the (form of the) revelation of God Himself, all the names beneath his shadow are God's tokens, for he is the First and the Last, the Outward and the Inward, and the Beautiful Names belong to him. In this dispensation (*kur*), God has singled out their names as the Letters of the Living, for there were fourteen holy souls, as well as the hidden and guarded name, which is known by the names of the Four Gates, or the Lights of the Throne, or the Bearers of Creation, Sustenance, Death, and Life. All of these together form the number of 'the Living' (*ḥayy*), who were the nearest of the Names to God.

All others were guided by their guidance, for God started the creation of the Bayān through them, and through them He shall cause it to return. They were the lights that bowed themselves down from all eternity before God's Throne, and they are still there in prostration. In every revelation, they have been known to God by a (different) name, and in every revelation their physical names have been altered. But the names of their real selves, which are God's tokens, which are manifest in their hearts, and without which they would be unable to present themselves before God in the nearness of their realities, have ever been and continue to be (exactly the same). God possesses Names infinite and without end, but all things have been illumined by these names, for all things are guided by their guidance. Within the hearts of these names, nothing but God can be seen; indeed, within the heart of any believer whatsoever, be it man or woman, nothing can be seen but that name through which the heart receives assistance from God, and in that name nothing can be seen but God and God alone, except that creation and command are His, in the past and in the future. No God is there save He, the Living, the Self-Subsisting. Every soul who has been a believer in Muḥammad or in someone other than him, has returned in his shadow. Each one shall have his reward for what he has done. God is witness over all things.

### Chapter One, Gate Three

Concerning this, that ʿAlī[1] has returned to the world, together with those who believed in him and those who believed in someone else. He was the second to believe in the Point, after the Letter *Sīn*.

### Chapter One, Gate Four

Concerning this, that Fāṭima has returned to the life of the world, with those who believed in her, and those who believed in someone else.

### Chapter One, Gate Five

Concerning this, that Ḥasan has returned to the life of the world, with those who believed in him, and those who believed in someone else.

[1] From this point, the Bāb lists the twelve imams, Fatima, and the four gates.

### Chapter One, Gate Six

Concerning this, that Ḥusayn has returned to the life of the world, with those who believed in him, and those who believed in someone else.

### Chapter One, Gate Seven

Concerning this, that ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn has returned to the life of the world, with those who believed in him, and those who believed in someone else.

### Chapter One, Gate Eight

Concerning this, that Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī has returned to the life of the world, with those who believed in him, and those who believed in someone else.

### Chapter One, Gate Nine

Concerning this, that Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad has returned to the life of the world, with those who believed in him, and those who believed in someone else.

### Chapter One, Gate Ten

Concerning this, that Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar has returned to the life of the world, with those who believed in him, and those who believed in someone else.

### Chapter One, Gate Eleven

Concerning this, that ʿAlī ibn Mūsā has returned to the life of the world, with those who believed in him, and those who believed in someone else.

### Chapter One, Gate Twelve

Concerning this, that Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī has returned to the life of the world, with those who believed in him, and those who believed in someone else.

### Chapter One, Gate Thirteen

Concerning this, that ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad has returned to the life of the world, with those who believed in him, and those who believed in someone else.

### Chapter One, Gate Fourteen

Concerning this, that Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī has returned to the life of the world, with those who believed in him, and those who believed in someone else.

### Chapter One, Gate Fifteen

Concerning this, that His Holiness the Proof has appeared with signs and explanations in the revelation of the Point of the Bayān, which is identical to the revelation of the Point of the Qurʾān, although the Point of the Bayān was mentioned in the first place and that of the Qurʾān in the second, while the revelation of His Holiness was mentioned in the fifteenth chapter.

The hidden meaning of this is that the Point, in the station of absolute nakedness, which is the pure revelation of God, in which it manifests itself as God [in person], was mentioned in the first station; and in the station of determination, which is the Primal Will, it was mentioned in the second station; and in the station of rising up above all souls, which is the special privilege of the fourteenth revelation, it was mentioned in the fifteenth station.

But the Point itself has ever been and shall ever be in the station of primacy, and is more worthy of the mention of all names than are the names themselves. For example, when the name of divinity exists, there also exists that of lordship and all the (other names), despite the fact that appearance in the name of divinity has always been and shall

always be mentioned in the station of the Point. The likenesses of all the names appear in the elevation of their own places.

Wherefore, He is the First at the same time that He is the Last, and He is the Hidden at the same time He is the Manifest, and He it is Who is mentioned by every name at the same time as He is not mentioned by any name. No god is there but He, the One Who arises, the Self-Subsisting.

### Chapter One, Gate Sixteen

Concerning this, that the First Gate has returned to the world with everyone who believed in him, whether truly or not.

### Chapter One, Gate Seventeen

Concerning this, that the Second Gate has returned to the world with everyone who believed in him, whether truly or not.

### Chapter One, Gate Eighteen

Concerning this, that the Third Gate has returned to the world with everyone who believed in him, whether truly or not.

### Chapter One, Gate Nineteen

Concerning this, that the Fourth Gate has returned to the world with everyone who believed in him, whether truly or not.

### Chapter Two, Gate One

In explanation of the recognition of the Proof and the Evidence.

The substance of this chapter is that God, the Knowing, glorified be His station, sends down His Proof in every dispensation according to whatever is the highest degree of exaltation wherein the people of that dispensation pride themselves. Thus, for example, in the time when the Qur'ān was sent down, all prided themselves in eloquent speech. God, therefore, revealed the Qur'ān in the highest degree of eloquence

and made it the miracle of His Prophet. In the Qurʾān, God has not established the truth of His Prophet or of the religion of Islam by any means other than its verses, which are the mightiest of explanations.

The proof of their might is that all men speak using the letters of the alphabet, whereas God, the Knowing, sent down the words of the Qurʾān in such a manner that, if all that are on earth were to gather together, desiring to produce a single verse with which to confront the verses of the Qurʾān, they would be unable to do so and would all remain powerless.

The hidden reason for this is that God sent down the Qurʾān from the Tree of His Will, which is the Reality of Muḥammad, by the Prophet's own tongue. That inaccessible Tree does no cause a single word to descend unless it takes the spirit from it at the moment of its descent. Thus, for, example, should He reveal the words We have originated that creation through a command from Our own Self. We are, indeed, powerful over all things, the mention of 'origination' refers to whatever may be called by the name of 'all things'; for none save God can encompass all things, in that His Word is the protector of all things, and by it all things are originated.

It is the same if God should reveal the words We shall cause that creation to return, as a promise binding upon Us; We are, indeed, Mighty over all things, for, at the time of their revelation, the spirits of the return of all things are taken away in the manifestation of this verse, in order that they may appear before God on the Day of Resurrection, that the return of all things may be rendered true. None but God is capable of achieving this, for whatever God utters from the Tree of Reality, the true self of that thing is brought into being. Should it be non-paradisaical, it will become a letter of negation; but if it should be one of the letters of paradise, it will become a letter of affirmation. For the Word of God is true.

Wherefore was it revealed previously that 'hell is a reality, and paradise is a reality'. The explanation of the creation of the spirit of the word 'reality' has been given in its proper place.

Whoever ponders upon that will see with certainty that the true spirits are realized in their essences through the appearance of the Primal Point in the verses of God within the realities of the souls and the horizons, as was mentioned by God before this in the Qurʾān, in the verse We shall show them Our signs in the horizons and in their souls, that it may be made clear to them that He is the Truth. So long as anyone fails to behold the inner reality of all things, which is the spirit

of his own heart, he shall not attain to an understanding of the holy words the word of God is the truth, since it is by the (mere) mention of the word that the reality is realized within the inner being of the thing. This refers to God alone, exalted and glorified be He, for none but He is a creator of anything, or a sustainer of anything, or a slayer of anything, or a vivifier of anything.

Any word through which, in the realm of His dominion, negation is negated or affirmation affirmed, will be resurrected in the shadow of whatever He has sent down of His verses. Nay, those words are not in their essences anything but what is manifested from the manifestations of God's verses and His words. For, at the moment when God mentions a believer, his creation takes place through the medium of that act of mentioning. And at the moment when He sends down the non-paradisical letters, the creation of their spirits takes place through the medium of that revelation. This is the secret behind the fact that God's verses are a proof for all created things, and that they are the mightiest of explanations and the greatest of revelations affirming His power and His knowledge.

No doubt is there that, in the dispensation of the Point of the Bayān, the intellectuals prided themselves on the science of divine unity, the subtleties of gnosis, and the exalted matters taught by the Imams. For this reason, God, the Knowing, placed the proof [of the Bāb], like that of the Prophet of God, within the verses themselves. There streamed forth from his tongue words concerning the exaltation of divine unity and the elevation of divine singleness, before which everyone possessed of the spirit of oneness bowed down, except for those who has failed to comprehend that concerning which he had spoken about with his Beloved. And limitless philosophical and scientific explanations appeared from him, whose number is known and understood by God alone.

The Sun of Reality is, in itself, the director of the affairs of all contingent beings, from the elevation of its own understanding; and yet, through the words and verses that God has placed within it, it draws all things to the light of its own utterances. Does He have a peer, that He may be comprehended? Or a rival, that He may be described through him? Or a likeness, that he may be compared to it? Or a partner, that He may be associated with him? Or a resemblance, that He may be likened to it? Exalted be He above that, in the height of exaltation. For nothing may be seen in Him but God, and we are all His worshippers.

In this dispensation, God, the Knowing, has bestowed his verses and explanations upon the Point of the Bayān, and made him the exalted

Proof for all things. Should all that are on earth gather together, they would be unable to produce a single verse like the verses which God has caused to flow from his tongue. Everyone possessed of spirit who considers with the eye of certitude will see that these verses are not within the capacity of a human being, but are, on the contrary, attributable solely to God, the One, the Single, He Who causes them to flow upon the tongue of anyone He pleases. He has never caused such verses to flow, nor will He ever make them flow, from anyone but the Point of the Divine Will, for He it is Who has despatched every Messenger and sent down every holy book.

If this had been something that could have been manifested by the power of a human being, someone would have brought forth a verse from the time of the revelation of the Qur'ān until the time of the revelation of the Bayān—a period of one thousand, two hundred, and seventy years. But, even though all men desired to extinguish God's word with the exaltation of their own power, they were powerless and were incapable of doing so.

In this day, if anyone ponders closely, he will certainly see that, from the beginning of the revelation of the Bayān to this moment, those who have confessed to the evidentiary nature of the verses, and who have carried them to all men, have been the proofs of God. Although it was not evident that they were proofs, the exaltation of their understanding is not hidden from anyone. For the lowliest student of the late Sayyid trod underfoot the most exalted of the scholars and philosophers upon the face of the earth. There can be no doubt in the mind of anyone concerning the elevation of the piety of those men who have recognized the evidentiary nature of the verses, whether they belonged to this school or not.

This is mentioned only in view of the weakness of men. Otherwise, the testimony borne by God can never be compared with that of all that are on earth. And there can be no doubt but that the testimony of God is only manifested through the testimony of that individual whom He makes His Proof. The testimony of the verses themselves is sufficient proof of the inadequacy of all that are on earth, for this is a proof that will remain constant on the part of God until the Day of Resurrection.

Should anyone consider the revelation of this Tree, he will without doubt testify to the exaltation of the cause of God, inasmuch as, for someone of twenty-four years of age and devoid of those branches of learning in which others are well-versed, to receive verses in this

manner, with neither thought nor hesitation, and to write one thousand verses of devotions in the space of five hours, without lifting his pen from the page, and to reveal Qurʾānic commentaries and scientific treatises in the highest degrees of gnosis and divine unity, when the divines and philosophers have confessed their inability to comprehend these matters, is unquestionably entirely the work of God. To what a degree do scholars who, from the beginning to the end of their lives, have exercised independent reasoning, take care over the writing of a single line of Arabic; yet, when all is said and done, their words are not fit to be mentioned.

All of this is for the sake of providing evidence to men. Otherwise, God's cause is too glorious and too exalted to be recognized through anything but itself. Indeed, all other things are themselves recognizewd through it. I swear by the essence of God, Who was and is alone in His singleness, that His words are brighter than the light of the sun at midday, and the words of those who have been guided by the exaltation of His guidance, should they attain to the highest rank of knowledge and understanding, are like the stars in the night.

Nay, I ask forgiveness of God for such a suggestion. How can the ocean of eternity be grasped through the ocean of temporal existence, and how can the mention of the First be known through the mention of limitations? Praised be God and exalted be He above all the references that are made to Him within the kingdom of the earth and the heavens. All such references have been made with regard for the limited degrees of created things. Otherwise, this is what will be advanced as a proof on the Day of Resurrection (to come), just as the same proof was advanced in this Resurrection. When God asked by the tongue of His Tongue, 'Whose Book is the Qurʾān?', all those who believed in it said. 'it is the Book of God'. They were then asked, 'can you see any difference between the Qurʾān and the Bayān?', and those possessed of hearts replied, 'No, by God! Both are from God. None but those possessed of clear vision shall take heed.'

God, the Knowing, then revealed these words: 'The first (of these two books) was My word sent down by the tongue of Muḥammad, the Messenger of God, and the second is My word sent down by the tongue of the Essence of the Seven Letters, the Gate of God. Whosoever has believed in the first has no choice but to believe in the second, if he wishes to remain constant in faith. He must either believe in these verses or render his own reality and his own deeds valueless, as on the

day when nothing was mentioned before God.' He then revealed the following: 'O My creatures, you strive to the full extent of your ability from the beginning to the end of your lives in order to attain to My good-pleasure. If you perform any secondary act, it is because I Myself revealed it in My Book. And if you have believed in the Imams of Guidance, or have sought nearness to Me by visiting their graves, it is because their names have been sent down in cipher in the Qurʾān.

'If you testify to the prophethood of Muḥammad, the Messenger of God, it is because he was My Messenger. And if you circumambulate the Kaʾba, it is because I called it My House. And if you hold the Qurʾān in esteem, it is because it is My Word. Whatever action a man performs, even though he be of the community of Adam (the first Prophet), it is necessarily performed because of his relationship to Me, as he has understood within himself. Yet now he has become veiled, and has imagined things that are contrary to reality, and has failed to recognize My subsequent manifestations. For there is nothing whatever whose decree does not return to this human temple, which has been created at My command. And that temple returns by decrees until it reaches My Prophet. And My Prophet is only confirmed by a Book sent down on Him and a Proof granted unto him.

'Today, which is the Day of My revelation, in which I have appeared in person—and this mention of "in person" is like the mention of the word "Kaʿba", which I called "My House"; otherwise, My Essence has neither beginning nor end, manifestation nor concealment—yes, today, whatever returns to this personage who recites My verses on My behalf, shall return to Me. And whatever fails to return to him, shall not return to Me. This is My appearance in My own person and My concealment in My own Essence. For anything else is impossible in the realm of contingent being, nor can anything more exalted than this be expressed in words.

'How veiled you are, O creatures, that all of you imagine you enjoy My good-pleasure, through your relationship to me in your own places. Yet the Sign that is My token and that recites by My permission the verses of My power, whose treasuries are his true nature, you have unjustly placed upon a mountain, none of whose inhabitants is fit to be spoken of. With him—that is to say, with Me—there is only one other person, who is one of the Letters of the Living of My Book, and in front of him—that is to say, in front of Me—there burns in the night but a single lamp. Yet in the seats that by degrees return to him,

innumerable lamps are shining, while all that are on earth, who were created for his sake, enjoy his benefits, although they are veiled from him to the extent of a single lamp.

'Thus do I bear witness in this day against My creatures, for the testimony of any other than Myself counts for nothing in My sight. There is no higher paradise for My creatures than that they should appear before Me and believe in My verses. Nor is any hellfire fiercer than the veiling of these creatures from the manifestation of My self or their failure to believe in My verses. If you should ask how he speaks on My behalf—do you not behold My verses? Are you not ashamed to repeat what you said in former days concerning My Book (the Qur'ān)? And yet you have seen that My Book was confirmed and that today you are all believers in Me because of it. You shall soon see that your glory would reside in your belief in these verses, but today, when the demonstration of faith would benefit your souls, you have remained veiled by what neither benefits nor harms.

'No harm has befallen, nor can any befall the manifestation of My self. Any harm that has befallen and that shall befall (him) shall (in reality) return to your own souls. Have pity on yourselves, and soar into that heaven wherein you imagine My good-pleasure resides. While My good-pleasure has been realized through that proof whereby the religion of all men is confirmed, you have remained vailed by them that associate themselves with the Qur'ān. I swear by My own holy Essence that there is no higher paradise for these creatures than my revelation and My verses, no is there any hellfire fiercer than being veiled from Me and My verses.

'If you should say, "our failure has not been demonstrated conclusively to us," why don't you travel the earth from East to West (and see the evidence)? And yet these words of Mine are meaningless, for in this day the truth of all that is on earth is referred back to the decree of Islam. So, if the eloquent among (the people of) this decree have failed, it proves that all other men must have failed as well.

'If they should say, "We have not failed", why do they not produce a single verse resembling Our verses, out of innate capacity, and not through study or by stealing from one another? Although they ought to reveal whatever lies within them, alongside each and every truth, to the same degree demonstrated by the magicians in Moses's day, yet, God be praised, from the beginning of the revelation till now, not even that much has been manifested by the learned men of this religion. They themselves claim that they are soaring in the heights of

God's good-pleasure, whereas they are, in fact, veiled from that which confirms God through the verses of His power. This alone is sufficient to disgrace the divines of Islam, that, with respect to Islam, they show forth the learning of that faith, yet remain veiled from him whose word is its confirmation.

'Had they been content with their own condition of being wrapped in veils; had they done injustice to no other souls; and had they not decreed things that had not been sent down in the Qur'ān—they would have cast nobody but themselves into hell. But both they and those that have considered them the learned ones of Islam, indeed all men, have been and still are veiled from God's revelation. Yet the punishment of these others shall fall upon them too. Had they pondered upon the verses of God, they would have recognized their own powerlessness, and, in that case, neither the king of Islam nor they that dwelt beneath his shadow would have been content to be veiled from the truth, for the glory of all men resides in following the truth. Had the divines not caused them to go astray, matters would not have reached this point, for there can be no doubt that, in the end, God shall manifest the truth unto all men through His proof.

'Thus, in this day, should someone who associates himself with Islam, whether he be a state official of a divine, wish to confirm the evidentiary nature of the verses, he may do so in the twinkling of an eye. For, if he possesses the power to do so, he is capable of summoning all the divines together (in one place) and saying to them: "I remained veiled from him who is the Possessor of Verses, on account of your decrees. Now let the matter be put to the test: either you should produce a book yourselves, to compare with his verses. Or, if you are incapable of doing so, you should be content with the following verse, written in this connection: Praise be to Thee, O my God! You are the King of Kings. You grant dominion to anyone you wish, and you take it away from anyone you wish. You glorify anyone you wish, and you abase anyone you wish. You make victorious anyone you wish, and you bring defeat on anyone you wish. You bestow wealth on anyone you wish, and you cast into poverty anyone you wish. You make manifest anyone you wish to anyone you wish. In your grasp is the kingdom of all things. You create whatever you wish by your command. You are, indeed, All-Knowing, Mighty, and Powerful.

'Speak as he has spoken, by your innate nature. And write as he has written, without hesitation and without lifting your pen from the page. But, if you cannot do so, that proves that what you have done was done

unjustly, and that the Possessor of these verses is a truth from God. There is no doubt that God has sent these verses down on him, just as he sent them down (previously) on His Prophet. Verses like these have now been spread about among men to the number of one hundred thousand, apart from his epistles and prayers, or his scientific and philosophical treatises. Within the space of five hours, one thousand verses are revealed by him, or else he dictates the verses of God as fast as the scribe beside him can write them down. You may use this as a basis on which to calculate just how many of his writings would have been distributed by now, had he been given the liberty to do so.

'If you should say that these verses are not, in themselves, any sort of proof, take a look at the Qurʾān. Were it the case that God demanded anything but the verses (of that book) as a means of proving the prophethood of His Messenger, then you might well hesitate when it comes to these verses. But, on the contrary, God revealed the following words:

'Only those who have disbelieved in Him dispute God's verses. Do not let their sudden fortune in the land catch you out. The people of Noah and then the Confederates cried "lies!" before them; and every people plotted against its prophet in order to take violent hold of him, and they disputed (with him) by means of falsehood, hoping that they might refute the truth. So, I laid hold of them, and how great was My punishment! Thus was the truth of the Word of your Lord brought home to those who did not believe. They are now residing in hell.

'And He has also revealed the following verse, regarding the self-suficiency of the Book: Is it not enough for them that We have sent the Book down upon you, that it may be recited to them? It contains a mercy, as well as a warning for people who believe. Since God has testified that the self-sufficiency of the Book consists in the verses in and of themselves, how can anyone say that the evidentiary nature of the Book is not an adequate proof of its truth?

'If someone should repeat what the people of former days said about the verses, there are two possibilities. It may be that he is not setting out to establish the truth at all; in that case, no proof will have any effect on him whatsoever, just as God has revealed: If they saw every sign they would not believe in one of them or, again, Those against whom the Word of your Lord has come to pass will never believe, not even if every sign reached them, until they catch sight of the severe punishment (that awaits them).

'If, on the other hand, he merely wants to be cautious in matters of religion—something which is quite understandable—than, in what statement will they believe, if not in God and His verses? Either such a person should come in person and ask whatever he wants about any subject, to be answered in the form of verses, so that he may hear for himself how the Source does not hesitate and does not compose artificially and does not consciously the order of the words he writes. Or he should send someone else, in order to sit with him [i.e. the Bāb] for an hour and write down whatever he recites of God's verses, after which he may ponder on them until it is clear to him that they have not been put together by conscious thought or deliberate ordering of words, one after the other. If this had taken place from the beginning of the Islamic faith until the present day, it would have occurred with respect to the Qurʾān, and from the beginning of this revelation until today someone would have challenegd me in precisely this way.

'Should someone criticize my use of vocalization or textual readings or Arabic grammar, I would reject their criticism. For such (grammatical) rules are based on the verses, not vice versa. It cannot be doubted that he has rejected for himself all such rules and the learning that is based on them. Indeed, in the eyes of thinking people, no proof is greater than being ignorant of such rules, when ignorance is combined with the ability to reveal such words and verses as these. This is because the fruit of these sciences is (real) understanding of God's Book, although it is quite unnecessary for the Tree on which the Book of God in person has alighted to have the slightest knowledge of them.

'On the contrary, all the grammatical rules and the systems of vocalization are established by what God has revealed. How many individuals there are who have acquired every conceivable form of learning, even though their faith (in God) is established through their faith in His verses, since the fruit of learning is to know the laws of God and nothing else, provided such knowledge is combined with conformity to His good-pleasure. For, if the sciences (of Arabic grammar and syntax) were capable of bearing fruit purely by themselves, there would be more experts in that field among the Arabs than among the (Persian-speaking) Iranians, wherever the fact is that the former lack any real distinction in this area. Indeed, distinction consists in obtaining God's good-pleasure, in knowing the nature of divine unity, and in dwelling beneath the shadow of His obedience and good-pleasure.

'There is no doubt that whatever they accomplish between Him and themselves, they have no aim other than to make themselves pleasing

to Him. And yet few are aware of His good-pleasure, with the exception of those who are informed of the good-pleasure of him who is His Proof [i.e. the Bāb]. In this day, God's good-pleasure is confined to that of His Proof and of them who dwell in his shadow. Although other men imagine they are guided, yet whatever God bears witness to endures, whereas whatever is done by those who do not follow the divine command will become as nothing.

'In the same way that mention is still made in this day of those people who called the Qurʾān a lie in the early days of Islam, including Christian monks and the eloquent among the Arabs, in this day the mention of those who are shut out as though by a veil will also endure. Today, no-one can perform a more profitable action for himself than to look justly on the verses of the Bayān, so he may see the truth of God with the eye of certainty and may not remain veiled from the presence of the manifestation, whose presence is equivalent to the presence of God, and whose good-pleasure is God's good-pleasure. For all men have been created to this end, even as God has revealed: God it is Who has raised up the heavens without visible pillars, then seated Himself upon the Throne, and the sun and the moon, that each of them may run to an appointed decree. He controls the affair and makes clear the verses, that you may be sure of meeting your Lord (Qurʾān). No doubt is there that any mirror that should be placed in front of the sun will light up (with its reflection); otherwise the sun itself rises and sets again.

'The glory of all beings lies in their attainment to the fruit of their own existence—and that is for them to reach God's presence and to have faith in His verses. Otherwise, anything is worthless in itself. It is this very tree that planted the tree of the Qurʾān in the hearts of mankind for the sake of this day; today all men pride themselves in it and glory in their relationship to it—yet they are doing what they are doing. This is the meaning of the words: No power nor strength is there save in God (Qurʾān) in the holy religion; otherwise, if men were to divest themselves of this relationship—a relationship which actually has no reality—they would not have as much as the strength of a housefly. This is sufficient disgrace for those who are shut out as though by a veil, who commit what they commit by asserting this (spurious) relationship to Him, and who, instead of attaining to the fruit of their existence—which in this day means coming to his assistance [*nuṣrat-i amr*]—have failed to help him at all.

'Indeed, they are not content with their failure to render him aid, for had they been content with that, this Tree would never have been

placed upon this mountain. God is sufficient for all His servants. He shall issue a decisive decree, and His decree is that self-same decree that has been made manifest at this moment in these words, that shall distinguish until the Day of Resurrection between them that have turned towards Him and them that have failed to do so. Whatsoever things God decrees shall come to pass. He is the Best of Helpers and the Best of Protectors, the Best of Guardians and the Best of Judges.'

## Chapter Two, Gate Two

Concerning this, that none shall comprehend fully what God has sent down in the Bayān, except those whom He wishes.

The substance of this chapter is that no-one shall grasp what God has revealed in the Bayān except him whom He shall manifest or him to whom He has given knowledge. This is just like the Tree from which the Bayān sprang forth [i.e. the Qurʾān], for, were all the oceans of the heavens and the earth to become ink and were all things pens and all souls enumerators, even then they would be unable to provide an adequate interpretation of a single word from among all the words of the Bayān, for God has created neither a beginning nor an ending for any of His words.

None is permitted to interpret what God has sent down in the Bayān, other than to relate all the letters of paradise to him whom God shall manifest or to his Letters of the Living, and all the letters of hellfire to the gates of his inferno. For all the letters of paradise shall be resurrected beneath his shadow while all the letters of hell shall be raised up again in the shadow of rejection. What has gone before resembles what is yet to come: there is no alteration in the Cause of God, just as what preceded what went before resembles what shall follow that which is yet to come.

The whole Qurʾān was one hundred and fourteen suras, and every six suras were sent down according to the exaltation of the station of each letter of the letter 'In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate' [*Bismi ʾllāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*]. Thus, the first six suras were from the Point and the last six from the *mīm* [?], and all the letters of paradise return unto these nineteen manifestations, while the letters of hell return to the nineteen manifestations of the gates of hell, just as all the gates of hell return to their first gate, in the same manner that all the gates of paradise return to their first gate—for all of them

are joined together in the phrase 'No god is there but God' (*lā ilāha illā 'llāh*]: whatever belongs to the letters of hell is connected to the (words of) rejection [i.e. *lā ilāha*], and whatever belongs to the letters of paradise is connected to the (words of) affirmation [i.e. *illā 'llāh*]. All the letters of hell in the Qur'ān were extinguished in the shadow of the first gate of hell, and all the letters of paradise in the Qur'ān endured in the shadow of the word of affirmation. Thus does God cause to perish whatever He wills and thus does He cause to endure whatever He wishes. He, indeed, is Powerful, Mighty, and Strong.

It is not permissible to interpret the Bayān other than in accordance with the interpretation given by its Tree [i.e. the Bāb]. All its goodly words may be fittingly applied to the lights of the hearts of them that believe in it, while all its letters of hell may be construed as referring to the realities of those who do not believe in it.

The Bayān has ever been and ever will be like the soul of a man who is alive; and all its letters of light and fire provide explanations of (what is in) the horizons and the souls of men. Thus, in this day, whoever wishes to make distinction [*tamyīz dahad*] is able to do so, since this is the day of the appearance of God; but once the Tree has been uprooted [i.e. after the Bāb's death] no-one shall be able to distinguish (matters) in accordance with their reality, other than in the outward sense. He in whom the limits of God are no numbered [?] belongs to the letters of paradise, and he in whom they are numbered belongs to the letters of hell, that God may cause all created things to rejoice in that through the appearance of His own Self on the Day of Resurrection. Wherefore, the Point of the Bayān shall not decree at its end according to what was decreed at its beginning. Whoso believes in it is one of the letters of paradise. And whoso does no believe in it is one of the letters of hell. God shall dinstinguish in truth between them both. He, indeed, is the best of distinguishers.

Matters have reached the point where there shall be no further mention of the letters of hell, except in the pages of the Book. The Tree of Negation imagines itself to be one of the Letters of Paradise and curses itself, all the time unaware that it is doing so. (Things shall continue like this) until the Sun of Truth rises up; at that moment, his lack of true faith shall be revealed, for whoever lives during that resurrection shall see things with the eye of certitude. This is similar to the way in which all men in this day say 'we are believers in God and in the verses of the Qur'ān', whereas the Tree of Truth who actually sent the Qur'ān down, dwells on this mountain with only a single companion.

Thus, at the time of the reappearance of the Sun of Truth, its realities have been uncovered and the veils that concealed it have been raised. Men who have had no thought other than to obtain the good-pleasure of God have issued decrees for actions that the pen is ashamed to mention, all directed against the Treasury of the divine good-pleasure, through whom alone God's good-pleasure is shown to men. Wherefore, O men of insight, take heed and fear God's command.

## Chapter Two, Gate Three

In explanation of what is in the Bayān, there being within it the decree of all things.

The substance of this chapter is that God provides two proofs for all men: the divine verses and the individual to whom those verses are revealed. The first proof endures and remains visible until the Day of resurrection, whereas the second is only manifest as long as the period of revelation lasts; during the period of concealment he is a proof unto all things while remaining known to no-one.

From the time of the setting of the sun, he has witnesses who guide men unto the abiding proof, which is the word of God [Bayān], so that they may act as proofs through his utterance until the day of his reappearance. But woe to them if, when he appears to them again, they should be veiled from the one for whom they acted as proofs. Even so, in this day, the divines have regarded themselves as arbitrators (*ḥakam*) on behalf of the Imam, according to the words of one of the imams: consider whosoever relates our traditions; and they attribute to themselves unworthy names. Yet, if they were sincere in what they say, they would not have been veiled from the one through whose word both the Imamate and the rank of Prophet have been confirmed. But, since they saw that the appearance of the truth conflicted with their position—according to the relationship which they themselves have decreed and which they have assigned to themselves—they went so far as to issue a decree against God, even though God has not revealed in the Qurʾān anything more terrible than the one who was mentioned by the verses of God and yet turned aside from them.

No doubt is there that the verses of God are verses that shine forth from this Tree, for the Eternal Essence has ever existed in His state of singleness, whereas the verses are a matter for creativity, which is the work of the Primal Will, in whom none can be seen save God alone.

Although, in his day men do not look upon the verses of God, yet before long these same verses shall be recited in the most exalted manner and Bayāns worth one thousand *mithqāl*s of gold shall be written; men shall pride themselves thereon and regard themselves as related to God.

In the same way, the Qurʾān was revealed over a period of twenty-three years, yet there was no-one to write down the original text, until the Prince of the Believers wrote it on the shoulder blades of sheep and other available tablets (*alwāḥ-i mumkina*), as is mentioned in the Tradition of the Cloak. And today one may see how innumerable Qurʾāns are written, in values ranging from one thousand thousand (*alf alf*) to one thousand dinars, just as printed copies at this price are in the possession of most people. This is the limit of created beings (*ḥadd-i khalq*) in the eyes of God.

No doubt is there that God has made distinctions between all things in the most high degree, according to the abiding proof. Whosoever should say that there is something whose decree has not been revealed in the Bayān according to its proper state and station, such a man has, without any shadow of a doubt, failed to believe in it. For all things fall into one or two categories: they are either mentioned in the category of rejection or in that of affirmation. Whatever God does not like returns to the former and whatever He likes returns to the latter. Every false name is mentioned in the first, and every true name in the second. This is the pivot round which all things form in the Bayān. Whoever testifies unto that, let him also bear witness that we have not neglected anything therein. God, indeed, encompasses all things.

There is no condition in which God has not decreed for the silent book a speaking book. The latter would not exist but for the former, nor would the former exist but for the latter. He that does not transgress what is in the silent book, he is the speaking book. And the speaking book is he whom God shall manifest, unto whom all things return. If any man should refrain from passing beyond the limits set down in the Bayān, he is a servant who has obeyed him and who is a witness on his behalf before his appearance. But when he appears, faith shall be removed from all who possess it, save those who believe in him. And if faith be cut off, how will testimony remain for men that are witnesses? For bearing witness is itself but an offshoot of faith. Wherefore, fear God, O witnesses, lest you should pass judgement against your Lord, even as they that are witnesses on behalf of the Qurʾān passed judgement against me. Whoever passes judgement against me has but

passed judgement against God his Lord. For such as here, God has but a ninth of a ninth of a tenth of a tenth of a goodly mention. Such are the transgressors.

## Chapter Two, Gate Four

In explanation of the mention of the Letters of Paradise and the Letters of Hell.

The substance of this chapter is that God has not sent down any letter other than with its own spirit, which is connected to it. It is for this reason that the believer rejoices in the mention of paradise and the good-pleasure of God, but is depressed by the mention of hell and God's displeasure. And this is to such a degree that you might say the first (mention) is a cause of pleasure and the second a cause of pain.

All the words that God has sent down in the Bayān fall into two categories: They either belong to the words of paradise or to those of hell. The spirits of the former are in paradise, while those of the latter are in the fire. All the letters of hell return to the phrase 'there is no God', whereas all the letters of paradise return to the words 'save Him'. In the same way, all the letters of hell originated from the first phrase, whereas all the letters of paradise had their origin in the second. From eternity, the former have been raised up in the highest seats of paradise, while the latter have disappeared beneath the dust.

Similarly, if in this day someone should look upon the origin of the Tree of the Qurʾān, he shall behold with certainty how the five letters of negation disappeared beneath the dust—these being the first, second, third, fourth and fifth. And how the five letters that lead unto affirmation were raised up in the highest place in paradise, these being Muḥammad, ʿAlī, Fāṭima, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn.

When the five words of fire are broken down into their separate letters, they are nineteen, as God has revealed: 'Over it are nineteen' (Qurʾān 74:30). In the same way, when the letters of the five names are split up, they make up the number of unity (i.e. 19). Just as the letters of hell return to this word, so do all the letters of paradise return to the word of affirmation.

God, the Knowing, has created negation and decreed the fire for it, and He has created affirmation and decreed paradise for it. For negation does not give any indication of Him, whereas affirmation does. This

refers to the bring into being of negation and affirmation within the natural realm (*takwīn*); their existence in the realm of religion (*tadwīn*) is on the same basis.

Whatever branched out from the word of negation has on the Day of Resurrection, returned unto it. All the letters of hell, together with the spirits attached to them, have been raised up in the shadow of that same word. In like manner, all that has branched out from the word of affirmation has, on the Day of Resurrection, returned into it, and all the letters of paradise and the spirits attached to them have been raised up in its shadow. Whatever individual has entered into negation, shall remain in the divine fire until the day of him whom God shall manifest. But whoever has dwelt in the shadow of affirmation shall remain in the divine paradise until the day of him whom God shall manifest.

The exaltation of the servant consists in paying heed to what branches forth from these two words, how the one is endlessly made as nothing, and how the other is endlessly raised up. The proof of God is the same for both, for His verses are made clear to both. The manifestations of negation having failed to accept them, they have been rejected, and the manifestations of affirmation having accepted them, they have been brought to dwell in the shadow of affirmation. No fire is fiercer than a manifestation of the word of negation, nor is any paradise greater than a manifestation of affirmation, for the letters of hell circle about the former, while the letters of paradise turn around the latter until all shall return to him whom God shall manifest on the day of his appearance. Those that accept him shall belong to paradise, and if not, to hell. Blessed be he that clings to the cord of God and relies upon his Lord, that he may not enter into hell, but may come into paradise by his Lord's permission. That, indeed, is the mighty grace.

It is for this reason that, when a servant recites the letter of paradise he is made content, for their spirits attach themselves unto him. This is the highest paradise of them that render God's praise, them that sanctify Him, them that proclaim His unity, them that magnify Him, and them that extol His greatness. But if a servant should recite the letters of hell, he wishes for God's justice to descend upon them, for their spirits may attach themselves to him. He must take refuge at such times in God, glorified be His name, that he may be protected from their spirits. For everyone whom God in the Qurʾān has promised paradise on the Day of Resurrection, He has caused to return to the tree of His love, which is the highest of the ranks of paradise, where they may attain unto His good-pleasure and take delight in conferring to His singleness. Whereas

everyone whom God has promised hell, He has caused to return to the word of negation, wherein they have tasted their punishment, for there is no torment greater than to be shut out as by a veil from God and from faith in Him. But there is no paradise greater than belief in God and His verses.

Should anyone possessed of insight behold, he will see how the people of paradise have preceded the rest into heaven, even though their food was no more than the leaf of a tree; whereas the people of hell have entered therein by their own consent, bringing with them those things (*shuʾūn*) in which they benefited from the word of negation, in which they pride themselves, and by which they are tormented in the fire, although they are unaware of that. Even as God has revealed: 'they eat a fire within their own interiors'. (Qurʾān 4:10) In this way, the letters of hell return to their own spirits, while the letters of paradise return to theirs.

There is no-one but that, should he mention the letter of paradise, the spirits of the angels connected to them shall at that moment, gaze upon him and bless him on behalf of God. But when someone mentions the letters of hell, should he do so out of love for them, the spirits of the satans of hell shall gaze upon him. If he does not seek refuge with God, they shall bring upon him whatever they are capable of, even if it be only a perturbation of the heart. But if he should seek refuge with God, and invoke his anger against them, they shall be unable to find any faith into him, nor shall they be able to have his faith even to the extent of nine ninths of ten tenths of a grain of mustard-seed.

Yet, it is as if I can see that the letters of negation shall, at the time of the appearance of him whom God shall manifest, seek refuge in negation, even though they are themselves its very source. At that time, none shall provide them with refuge from their own hell save he whom God shall manifest. For, at the moment when a servant says 'I take refuge with God', if he does not enter within the religion of the Bayān, he shall not be granted refuge from hell. Nay, he shall not pronounce those words except through his entry into the faith, even as those individuals who have not entered into faith in the Qurʾān do not say it. For taking refuge with God means taking refuge with His proof. Whoever believed in Muhammed before this was granted refuge from the fire of God. Although the letters of hell themselves say these very words, it is of no benefit to them, for they do not seek refuge with the Proof, an account of what God has revealed in the Qurʾān: 'He who does not believe in God' (48:13) and joined to the word that

follows it. And yet he reads the words themselves while failing to take heed of them. In the same way, at the beginning of Islam, this phrase was interpreted as meaning the second, yet while he read the entire Qurʾān, the manifestation of the sign of divinity was ʿAlī, the Prince of the Believers. If he had taken refuge in him, he would have been saved from the words that follow it.

Thus it is that, until the day of him whom God shall manifest, all will seek refuge with God and with the Point of the Bayān, but when that day comes it shall not be of any benefit to them, for on that day taking refuge with God will mean taking refuge with him (whom he shall manifest), and taking refuge with the Point of the Bayān will be the same. Even as, from the beginning of the appearance of this tree, all have uttered the words 'I seek refuge with God', and yet they are dwelling in the midst of hell, save those whom God has willed, who have recognised the manifestation of His name and, having taken refuge with him, have been preserved from the absolute fire.

Otherwise, everyone says these word unnumbered times every day, and yet there can be no salvation for him, for God has associated the taking of refuge with him with seeking refuge in His Messenger, and linked this latter with seeking refuge in his Successors, and linked this again with seeking refuge in the Gates of his Successors. The first of these is of absolutely no benefit without the last, nor is the outward of any use without the inward. For taking refuge in the Messenger is identical to taking refuge in God, and seeking refuge with the Imam is identical to seeking refuge with the Messenger, and taking refuge in the Gates is identical to taking refuge in the Imams. In this day, whoever enters into the Bayān shall be granted refuge from hell, just as the letters of the Gospel were not granted refuge from it unless they entered the letters of the Qurʾān. The letters of paradise from among the letters of the Bayān shall remain in heaven until the day of him whom God shall manifest, while its letters of hell shall be in their own stations. When his day comes, whoever enters into his book shall be saved from the fire, or else his continuing in the Bayān shall prove of no benefit to him whatsoever, just as remaining in the Gospel was of no benefit to the letters thereof after the revelation of the Qurʾān; and the same was true of the letters of the Qurʾān after the revelation of the Bayān. And the letters of paradise shall progress in the highest exaltation unto whatsoever God desires. And the letters of hell shall be rejected to the limit of their non-existence. Blessed be he that gives his heart nourishment from the letters of paradise. And should the letter

of hell be mentioned, let him take refuge with God, his Lord, who shall render him sinless. They that make mention must, of necessity, refer to them, but the mention of them shall not harm them. Even so did they that believed in the Qurʾān mention them that had been given the earth before them. Thus does God make clear the signs that you may be confident in the verses of God.

## Chapter Two, Gate Five

Concerning this, that every good name sent down by God in the Bayān refers to him whom God shall manifest, in the primary reality, and every evil name sent down by God in the Bayān refers to him who shall in that day be the Letter of Negation confronting him, in the primary reality.

The substance of this chapter is that every goodly name that has been sent down in the Bayān refers to him whom God shall manifest, in the primary reality. Then, in the secondary reality, it refers to the first to believe in him, and so on until the furthest limits of existence. Thus, where the earth has been mentioned, the meaning is the earth of his person, and so on down until it reaches the earth of dust which is related to him and wherever he dwells, which constitutes the highest chamber of paradise in the Book of God. In the same manner is this true of every evil name, that has been sent down in it (the Bayān). In the primary reality, it refers to the tree that has been rejected before him. And if there should be a mention of 'earth' in a context relating to hell, its meaning is the earth of his person, and so on down until it reaches the earth of dust which is his abode, which is the uttermost limit of hell, in the earth of hell, even though there should rest upon it a throne of glory.

In the same way, whatever goodly mention was sent down by God in the Qurʾān, in its primary reality it is a reference to the Messenger of God, whereas every inauspicious mention is a reference to the first Negation, which stood face to face with the first Affirmation. If there was any mention of the earth of paradise, it was a reference to his person, and so on down to the earth of dust which was the abode of his physical body. All of these things refer back to the Qāʾim of the Family of Muḥammad, on whom be peace, for whatever goodly mention there may be in the Qurʾān is a reference to him in the primary reality, even as in the Bayān such mention is interpreted as him whom God shall

manifest. And whatever ill mention was revealed in the Qurʾān, even though it was just a reference to the earth, was a reference to the earth of the person of him who was the first to fail to recognise him. In the same manner that this was realised in the Qurʾān, so it has been confirmed before God in the Bayān. Whatever goodly name resides in the knowledge of God is a reference in the primary reality to the Point of the Will, and its opposite refers to him who did not recognise him.

In this manner, whatever mention has been made of the earth within the realm of existence returns in this day to the Point of the Bayān, so that it may descend from the earth of the heart to the earth of the spirit, and from the earth of the spirit to the earth of the soul (*nafs*), and from the earth of the soul to the earth of the body (*jasad*), and from the earth of the body unto all things, the nearer relating to the nearer, until it finally reaches that earth situated above the mountain, which is but three feet by four: this is, at this moment the essence of all the physical earths. If the place whereupon he sits should be altered, then the situation would likewise alter (in this respect), until he should dwell where there is no alteration.

It is likewise in the shadow of the (letters of) paradise, letter for letter, point for point. This is the most exalted earth of paradise (*al-riḍwān*), and that is the lowest earth of hell; I seek refuge with God from what He does not love, and I beg of Him all that He loves—He, indeed, is the Gracious, the Bountiful.

The goodly names of the Qurʾān from the Prophet onwards gradually shone forth in their degrees in each one of his successors. And it was the same with the names of hell, until the highest exaltation of the earth of paradise attained to the place of the martrydom of the Prince of Martyrs (Ḥusayn), while the lowest earth of hell reached the place of the dominion of him that opposed him (Yazīd). Thus was it decreed by God. And thus is His decree put into operation in the manifestation of each one of the proofs of God.

In this day, all the goodly names are, in the primary reality, contained in the person of the Point, even the mention of the earth, which was used as an analogy. And in the second reality, they are contained in the letter *Sīn*, and so on to the furthest limit of existence. Wherefore, fear God, O you people, all of you together.

## Chapter Two, Gate Six

Concerning this, that the Bayān is the balance on the part of God until the day of him whom He shall manifest. Whoever follows him is light, and whosoever turns away from him is fire.

The substance of this chapter is that the Bayān is the balance of God until the Day of Resurrection, which is the day of him whom God shall manifest. Whoso acts in accordance with whatsoever is therein is in paradise and he shall be resurrected beneath the shadow of Affirmation and the letters of Paradise. But whoso turns aside, be it even to the extent of a grain of barley is in hell and shall be resurrected beneath the shadow of Negation.

This same concept was likewise made manifest in the Qurʾān, for in numerous places God has revealed that whoso decrees other than what God has sent down is an infidel (*kāfir*). Whatever returns to that word belongs to its degrees. The decree of someone who transgresses the decree of God is thus. How, then, shall he be should he transgress against the very person of God's own appearance? For God has revealed: 'I have not created jinn and men but that they should worship Me.'

No doubt is there that obedience is unacceptable except through obedience to the Proof of God. Had that not been so, then the deeds of them that showed enmity towards the People of the House would have been mentioned before God, whereas in this day, all decree that none should worship them, nor have their deeds borne any fruit. In this way, the non-Shiʿis today act in accordance with the decrees of the Qurʾān, whereas, since they have turned aside from the Imamate (*vilāyat*), these deeds are worthless in the sight of God.

But today there are few who act in accordance with the balance of the Qurʾān, indeed one can only see men whom God has willed (so to act). And if there should be such a person, if he fails to enter within the balance of the Bayān, then his piety shall not be of the least benefit to him, even as the piety of the monks of the Gospel (*alif*) did not benefit them when they clung to it as their balance on the appearance of the Messenger of God. Had they acted according to the balance of the Qurʾān, such decrees would not have been issued concerning the tree of truth. 'The heavens might almost cleave apart [at that: *minhu* omitted], and the earth split asunder, and the mountains collapse in tiny pieces' (19:90). Their hearts are harder than these mountains, for they are not at all affected.

There is no paradise more exalted in the eyes of God than to be in His good-pleasure. Praised be He that, in this day, this bounty is restricted to the people of the Bayān. Hereafter, whoso does not transgress its limits shall remain in this bounty until the day of him whom God shall manifest. But if—I seek refuge with God—he should turn aside, he shall have harmed only his own self. God is independent of all the worlds. At the beginning of his revelation, the whole of the Bayān is (simply) obedience to him and to none other, in the same way that the whole religion of the day of the Gospel at the time of the appearance of the Prophet of God was to follow him and not to remain in one's own balance. For, in that case, the decree of falsehood would be passed against remaining therein. Whosoever is guided, (he is guided) for his own self; and whoever remains, remains veiled, that rests upon his own self. God is independent of all the worlds.

## Chapter Two, Gate Seven

Concerning the explanation of the Day of Resurrection.

The substance of this chapter is that the meaning of 'the Day of Resurrection' is the day of the appearance of the Tree of Reality. It is clear that none of the adherents of the Shiʿi sect have understood (the meaning of) the Day of Resurrection. On the contrary, they have all vainly imagined something that possesses no reality in the eyes of God. The meaning of 'the Day of Resurrection' in the sight of God and in the terminology of the people of truth is that, from the moment of the appearance of the Tree of Reality in every age and in every name, until the time of its disappearance, constitutes the Day of Resurrection.

Thus, for example, from the day on which Jesus was sent (by God) until the day of his Ascension was the Resurrection of Moses, for the revelation of God was manifest during that period through the revelation of that Reality, who rewarded by his words everyone who was a believer in Moses and punished by his words everyone who did not believe in him. For whatsoever God had witnessed in that age (of Moses) is what He witnessed in the Gospel. And from the day on which the Messenger of God (Muḥammad) was sent until the day of his death (*ʿurūj-i ān*) was the Resurrection of Jesus, for the Tree of Reality was manifest in the (human) temple of Muḥammad, who rewarded all who believed in Jesus and punished by his words all who did not believe in him.

Similarly, from the time of the appearance of the Tree of the Bayān until its disappearance in the Resurrection of the Messenger of God, which was promised by God in the Qurʾān. For it began when two hours and eleven minutes had passed on the night of the fifth of Jumādā I of the year one thousand two hundred and sixty (1260), which is the year one thousand two hundred and seventy from the beginning of (Muḥammad's) mission. This was the beginning of the resurrection of the Qurʾān, and it will last until the disappearance of the Tree of Reality, for, until a thing has attained the stage of perfection, it cannot be resurrected. The perfection of the religion of Islam took until the beginning of the revelation, and from then until the time of disappearance the fruits of the tree of Islam will be manifested, whatever they may be.

The Resurrection of the Bayān will take place on the appearance of him whom God shall manifest, for today the Bayān is in a state of seed, but at the beginning of the revelation of him whom God shall manifest, the Bayān will be in the final stage of perfection. It will become apparent that the fruits of the trees that were planted are to be plucked, just as the revelation of the Qāʾim of the Family of Muḥammad is identical to the revelation of the Messenger of God himself; but this does not become apparent except through the plucking of the fruits of Islam from the Quʾranic verses that were planted in the hearts of men. This plucking of the fruit of Islam consists only in faith in him and affirmation of his truth, and yet the only fruit that has been given has been in the contrary sense.

He manifested himself in the very heart of Islam, where all declare themselves Muslims through their relationship to him. Yet they have brought him without any right to dwell on the mountain of Mākū. And this despite the fact that, in the Qurʾān, God promised all men that the Day of Resurrection would come, for that is a day whereon all shall be presented before God, which means their being presented before the Tree of Reality; and all shall attain to the presence of God, which means his presence. This is because men cannot be presented before the Most Holy Essence, nor is it possible to conceive of entering into its presence. What is possible in terms of presentation and meeting refers to the primal Tree.

God has established the clay (*tīn-rā*) as His own House (i.e. the Kaʿba) so that whoever presents himself on the Day of Resurrection before the Tree of Reality shall not regard himself as far removed from

admitting that he has been presented before God or from meeting with Him through entering into his presence.

A ninth of a ninth of a tenth of a tenth of a moment in the Day of Resurrection is better than years spent between resurrections, for the fruit of more years shall be manifested upon the Day of Resurrection. In this way, the fruit of the one thousand two hundred and seventy years of Islam will appear from the beginning of this revelation until its end, which is the beginning of the setting of the Sun of Reality. The fruits of the period from the beginning of this revelation until the revelation of him whom God shall manifest shall return to the next resurrection, which is his appearance.

O people of the Bayān! Have mercy on yourselves, and do not render worthless your long night when the day of resurrection appears, even as was done by those who remained veiled among the people of the Qurʾān. For one thousand two hundred and seventy years they prided themselves on (being believers in) Islam, and yet, when the day came when the fruit was to be plucked, which was the Day of Resurrection, the decree of unbelief in Islam was passed against them. They were rendered worthless by this decree until the next resurrection.

How many individuals have undergone mortification from the beginning of their lives and have striven earnestly for the good pleasure of God, and have taken pride in their dreams if they beheld the Qāʾim of the Family of Muḥammad in them. And yet, now that he has appeared in the revelation of God, which is the most manifest of revelations, bringing the verses and explanations upon which the religion of Islam is established, they do not present themselves before God, nor do they manifest the fruit of their faith, nor do they arise unto that for which they were created, and they even issue decrees against him through whom they turned to God by night and by day, saying 'Thee do we worship'. If they only contented themselves with that, but they do not. On the contrary, they desire to cause distress unto the Friends of God.

O people of the Bayān! Do not commit what the people of the Qurʾān have committed, in rendering worthless the fruits of your might. If you are believers in the Bayān, at the time of the appearance of his verses say: 'God is our Lord, with whom we associate no-one. This is what God promised us of the manifestation of His own self. We call upon none beside Him.' Obey him in whatever you do, for then you shall have manifested the fruit of the Bayān. If you do not do so, you shall be unworthy of mention before God. Have mercy on yourselves! If you do not arise to aid the manifestation of Lordship, do not, at least, cause

him any sadness, for he shall manifest himself much as I manifested myself, and he shall cause the creation of the Bayān to return to life. Yet you have in your hearts considered nothing but (the possibility) of your own faith (in him). Hasten to respond to God and to affirm the truth of his verses, for that wil be to respond to him whom God shall manifest and to affirm the truth of his words. Let not yourselves be veiled from your beloved by anything whatsoever, for if a decree should issue forth from his utterance it will last until the Day of Resurrection, and through it the people of paradise shall enjoy its pleasures, while the people of hell shall be tormented in it.

In this day, which is the Day of Resurrection, the locus of the distinction of (men's) fate (*maḥall-i faṣl-i qaḍā*) resides upon this mountain. All do what they do, imagining that it is done for his good-pleasure, yet they accept for him what they would not accept for their own selves. Should you enter into a covenant with God that you will not accept for anyone anything but what you would accept for yourselves, maybe in the next resurrection, even if you don't attain to God's presence, you will not bring sadness upon His sign. It would pass beyond even the benefit of all that believe in the Bayān were you to avoid bringing harm upon him—and yet I know that you will not do so. Even so have I, in this resurrection, passed beyond the benefit of them that believe in the Qur'ān, but you have not avoided doing me harm. There is no hell fiercer for you before God than that you should turn through me towards God by night and by day, while decreeing for me what you would no accept for yourselves. God shall judge between me and you in truth. He, indeed, is the best of judges.

## Chapter Two, Gate Eight

In explanation of the reality of death, that it is a reality.

The substance of this chapter is that there are in the sight of God, unnumbered meanings of 'death', which none but He can remunerate. One of these meanings in outward terminology is the death that all men shall taste, which takes place at the time when the spirit is taken away from the human soul. Whatever meaning is given to death before God is true.

But the 'death' to the truth of which all are obliged to testify is not this death which is well known to men, but rather that death in the presence of the tree of reality (which involves dying to) all save him.

This death is established only in five degrees: either the phrase there is no God but He (*lā ilāha illā huwa*) or there is no God but I (*lā ilāha illā anā*) or, there is no God but God (*lā ilāha illā 'llāh*), or there is no God but thee (*lā ilāha illā anta*) or, there is no God but He in whom all are confident (*lā ilāha illā 'lladhī kullun bihi mawqinūn*). The reality of death is that at the time of the appearance of the Tree Of Oneness, unto whom these five degrees belong, all beings die, whether by negating negation or affirming affirmation. Even if the oceans of the heavens and the earth and what lies between them were to become ink, it would not be sufficient to recount all that lies hidden in this subtle mystery.

The essence of the matter is that whoso possesses no will but the will of him who God shall manifest, and no volition but his volition, and no destiny but his destiny, and no fate but his fate, and no premonition but his premonition, and no time appointed but his time appointed and no book but his book, such a man has at that moment understood the meaning of death. For his will is the essence of the will of God, and his volition the essence of the volition of God, and his destiny the essence of the destiny of God, and his fate the essence of the fate of God, and his premonition the essence of the premonition of God, and his appointed time the essence of the appointed time of God, and his book the essence of the book of God.

Likewise, in the case of the point of the Bayān, whoso died testified that death is a reality otherwise what he had read of the Qurʾān and of prayers would have been of no benefit to him. How many individuals said that death was a reality, and yet their wills were not his will, so that they became worthless and the falsity of their words was made manifest in the sight of God. And so it continued until it reached the degree of the book, so that his book, which is identical to the book of God, was sent down upon those individuals who regarded themselves as the most learned of their age. The pen is ashamed to mention what they committed, and yet by night and by day they said death is a reality and acted in accordance with his previous book and proclaimed themselves as believers in the face of Islam, and expended their knowledge, and took hold of whatever God had decreed for him in the Qurʾān, through the relationship which they claimed for themselves (with God?), but which had, in fact, been severed. And all the time their very breaths were not lawful for them, for they did not draw them out of faith in God. Such is the fruit of knowledge of the book of God that is not accompanied by action. As they understood (the meaning of) death, they were not opposed to their own confession, for they confess that it is a reality, yet

remained veiled from the conditions of him through whom that reality is itself made real. This is that very death that benefits all men upon the day of resurrection and afterwards in the interworld (Barzakh), until the reappearance of the Sun of Reality. The term 'interworld' refers to (the period) between two revelations and not to the popular meaning related to the condition of men after their physical death. This latter (i.e. their fate after death) is not a matter (the knowledge of which) has been imposed on men as a duty (by God), for, after their deaths, God alone knows what shall be their destiny but they are obliged to know that in which they believe. Should anyone voyage upon the ocean of death, he shall become wondrous things that are neither number nor end. Thus, for example, had someone died in the days of the messenger of God, he would have beheld all the conditions relating to who so did not believe in Muḥammad: from the world of pure abstraction (*tajarrud*) to that of limitation (*taḥaddud*), they are nothing but absolute negation and the essence of hell fire. (And he would have beheld) all the conditions relating to who so believed in Muḥammad: from the world of pure abstraction to the furthest limits of (the realm of) limitation, they are the conditions of the Tree of Affirmation and the Paradise of Prophet hood. The first of these was not dead but the second was but because the second had not died he had passed into nothingness within negation, whereas, since the second had died, he had endured in affirmation. So, in this day there has been manifested the fruit of the deaths of them that believe in the degree to which they mention is loved by God and by his creation that believes in him. All the believers in this day originate from the multiplication of such as them. (Also manifest) is the fruit of the failure of the unbelievers to die, in that no mention whatever is made of them. And should the numbers be multiplied, those who would be thus produced would not be pleased with such a relationship and would even declare themselves free of any connection with them. Or, in this day, should they utter falsehoods against the primal tree their very words shall seek to be free of them and shall demand God's punishment upon them.

When, in the year 1270 (i.e. 1260), just as the Tree of Reality had advanced so had they (the unbelievers) become lower and even more severe (in their disbelief). But, since the manifestations have become numerous, only the Proof that is manifested (directly) on the part of God is able to distinguish between them, for he recognizes all things in their own places and should he wish to distinguish between an atom of hell and an atom of paradise, he is able to do so.

Should unworthy thoughts concerning the point of the Bayān enter the mind of anyone, at that very instant he shall not be decreed as dead. The matter is as delicate as that—nay, it is even more delicate. None shall take heed save they that are possessed of insight.

The signification of death is valid from the essence of the exultation of God's singleness down to the furthest degree of limitation, to such an extent that, should someone find a letter 'B' [*bā'*] or an 'A' [*alif*] should have been written, and should he proceed to remove the 'B' and write the word correctly such an action is a deed of the angel of death for he is manifest in it but if he leaves things as they are, the letter 'B' shall cease loosely, call upon God, its Lord, saying: 'take my spirit from me and cause me to live'. And, if God should wish to answer its prayer, he shall inspire one of his holy ones to take from the letter its spirit as a 'B' (ب) and to give it the spirit of an 'A' (ا) whereupon it will be possible 'to read the word for before that its meaning had been altered. Thus, after the word 'Allah', the word 'Aʿẓam' (greater) requires an 'A', but, if it is written with a 'B' the meaning will not be apparent. The same holds true in every general and every particular interest as the people of insight are aware.

Even if there were to be found on this paper a tiny mention of non-whiteness, were you to erase it that would be a death wherein would lie the life of this tablet. In its own degree, this is the same as removing from a man's soul something that causes harm to his faith. Should someone who does not believe in God possess a tablet, he who says 'I am dead' must be dead to it, nor should he pay any attention to it, for it belongs to the degrees of hellfire and rests therein. But if he should behold a tablet in the possession of one who believes in God, he must preserve it as he preserves his own self, or it belongs to the degrees of light. This is a matter of which, at the same moment that it is more manifest than any revelation, is more hidden than any concealment.

Whoso understands death is eternally dead in the presence of God, for he wishes only what God wishes, and that is to die in the presence of the point of the Bayān, for that which God wills may only be manifested through his will. This is the reality of death unto who so has desired to die in God. God is not created in the world of existence anything more glorious than death with him.

All believe that their will is the will of him whom God shall manifest, but when he appears they will not remain faithful to their love and to their word. In the same way, those who believed in the Qurʾān convince themselves that, if Muḥammad were to return to this world, they

would not respond to his words by saying 'why' or 'wherefore'. But he did return in a more exultant manner than that of his first appearance which was his 'second creation' after his 'first creation', whereupon all who said 'Muḥammad is the messenger of God' remained veiled from him and failed to believe in him. They did not even accept for him what they accept for their own selves concerning their relationship to Islam. Had they accepted even that, they would not have committed what they committed, for that is what no Muslim would accept for another Muslim. This is the state of men in the eyes of God.

His prophet hood is confirmed in this day are the same things whereby it was confirmed previously and yet all were unveiled from him. The number of those who relate themselves to his faith can't be computed, and yet when he returns there believed in him only those whom God willed, until there appeared what appeared. For them that had failed to recognize him, there is no hell fiercer than their condition of being veiled from him who made Islam their religion and the Qurʾān their book. There is no honour for anyone in the next life unless he has attained to the presence of his Lord and spread abroad his messages and detached himself from all but him, so far as he was able. This is an honour whereon all pride themselves.

If someone should say 'we did not recognize him at the beginning of his revelation', it will be replied that 'it has been confirmed before all men that he was the first to respond in the world of pre-existence (*fi 'l-dharr*), when God said unto him 'Am I not your Lord?' and he replied 'Yes. Praised be thee. No God is there but thee; thou, indeed, art the Lord of all worlds''. And if they should say 'we did not recognize the revelation of God', (it would be pointed out that) the Qurʾān, which is the book of God, and which all declare in this day to be the book of God, is in the possession of all men. As soon as they heard or saw that the verses of God have been revealed by a certain person, no doubt or uncertainty remained for the possessors of intellect that that individual was the manifest person of God and that the previous verses had been (revealed) by him, even if the later verses were his.

The first to respond is the first of created beings, even as was said in the past, that the first to respond was Muḥammad, who was the first to be created. So all in this day confess that, if they say that the response took place in the world of pre-existence, this is that same world, for the realm above the throne of heaven is identical to the earth on which the manifestation of God dwells. From eternity God has regarded his nearness to his creation and his distance from them as being the same.

No single thing is nearer to him than any other thing, nor is anything further removed from him than any other, whether it be the throne that rests above the heavens, as the possessors of fantasies claim, or the dwelling place of the tree that speaks forth on behalf of God. This belief [that some are nearer and some further] is pure fancy and imagination. In the terminology of them that dwell among the concourse of reality, the meaning (of the throne) is that same place of revelation [i.e. the body of the manifestation]. In the same way, all say, when they perform the pilgrimage to (the shrine of) the Prince of Martyrs [Ḥusayn], those words that are written in the tradition: 'whoso visits Ḥusayn with a full understanding, it is as if he has visited God upon his throne'. It is manifest to the possessors of intelligence that that is the very locus of the throne of God, and that he is the throne of Muḥammad, the messenger of God. It is as if no-one has been observed to progress beyond the world of limitations.

Whatever is heard concerning all the worlds is realized within this world. Thus, for example, the Prince of Believers (ʿAlī), on whom be peace, became the first to believe in Muḥammad within this world. This is an evidence that he was a believer in all the worlds. All these latter are made real beneath the shadow of this world and to manifest here before them that are possessed of intelligence. Blessed be he who beholds all things in their reality and does not imagine a fanciful matter that has no reality in the eyes of God or of them that possess intelligence. The outward appearance of the divine essence has ever been and ever shall be identical with its concealment and its concealment identical with its outward appearance. Whatever is mentioned concerning the 'appearance' of God (*ẓuhūr Allāh*) refers to the Tree of Reality, which is a token of none but him. That is a tree which has been and is responsible for sending forth all the divine messengers and causing all the books to descend. He has been and ever shall be the throne of God's revelation and concealment in the world of creation. In every age, God has manifested him in accordance with his own desire, just as at the time of the revelation of the Qurʾān, he revealed his power through the manifestation of Muḥammad. Likewise, at the time of the revelation of the Bayān, he revealed his power through the point of the Bayān, and he shall affirm his religion through him whom he shall manifest at the time of his appearance, as he wishes, for what he wishes, unto what he wishes.

He it is who has been with all things, although nothing has been with him; and he it is who is within nothing nor is he above anything, nor

is he with anything. What has been mentioned concerning his seating himself upon the throne (Qurʾān) refers to the seating of his manifestation of his power, and not this physical throne which is a chair or a seat set above the earth or the crystalline sphere (*falak-i aṭlas*) or the sphere of the throne within the heavens.

He has been and ever shall be without beginning or end, and none has known or every shall know him, for all save him have been created by his command and shall be created thereby. He is exalted above every mention and station, and sanctified above every description and likeness. Nothing can comprehend him, but he comprehends all things. Indeed, the words 'nothing can comprehend him' refer to the mirror of his revelation, which is he whom he shall manifest. [or 'whom he manifests']. He is too glorious and too exalted for any indicator to point towards him.

He whom he shall manifest is the first being whom he created, and any mention of his Heart refers to his heart. Both he and his heart were created by him from all eternity, God was Lord with none over whom to exercise his Lordship; from eternity God was a divinity with none to worship him as such; from eternity, God was powerful, was none over whom to exercise his power; from eternity, God was knowing, with none whom he might know; from eternity God was single, with none to be numerated besides him. These last words, 'from eternity, God was single, with to be enumerated besides him' apply to the time when, in the revelation of him whom God shall manifest the number of unity (i.e. 19) will have placed a faith in him and made their hearts tokens of his singleness (*vaḥdāniyyat*)—none shall be enumerated save them. All (other) names and attributes are the same. Do not gaze upon the limitations, for from all eternity, God was single.

If you have not attained to servitude concerning this is revelation, you do at least confess to the truth of the first revelation (i.e. of Muḥammad), and you behold all names and attributes in the Messenger of God. If you should wish to say He is the King, you will see that there are those in his community who consider themselves his servants, and yet the sovereignty of his own self is exalted above being mentioned in the same breath as this king (Muḥammad Shāh?). And if you should wish to say he is powerful, you will behold the possessors of might dwelling beneath the shadow of obedience unto him and priding themselves in the confession that they belong to his community. And yet the power of his own essence is exalted above any connection with this power. And if you should wish to say He is knowing, you will see them that

are possessed of knowledge priding themselves on the relationship to him, and yet the knowledge that belongs to his essence is exalted above any connection with even the most learned of these scholars. And if you should wish to say He is a judge you will see a great many possessors of judgement who pride themselves on ruling beneath the shadow of his decree. And yet the judgement of his role of nature is exalted above any connection with the manifestations of these judges who rule on his behalf. Look with your own eye in the same manner upon all the names and attributes. At the moment when uncertainties 'knowing', there is, nevertheless, none who knows but he. Or if he has power in a certain matter, there is, nevertheless, none with power but he. For in every revelation, that which guides men to that revelation are his conditions. Thus, for example, should you consider from the first revelation, which was that of the first Adam, to the end which has no end, you will behold nothing possessed of existence save through God nor will you be able to recognise the manifestation of divinity except through the tree of his revelation which is the Primal Will. Nothing else is possible within the contingent realm.

This is the meaning of the words of the Prince of Martyrs, upon who be peace? 'O, my God, I have realized through the diversity of things and the shifting of conditions that your intention with me is to make yourself known to me in all things, that I may not remain ignorant of you in anything.' For this is the fruit of the existence of all things that one should regard all things as coming into existence (*qā'im*) through the primal will, and that one should not behold anything else but the manifestation of God, in accordance with the capacity of the thing which is the bearer of his self revelation. This (difference of capacity) apart, the relationship of God's revelation is the same to any one thing as to another. One kind of revelation consists of the verses of God; and from that same source out of which the divine verse is issued concerning the prophethood of a prophet, there are also sent down concerning his opponent, according to what is fitting. The relationship of these two revelations to these two things (i.e. the prophet and his opponent) is exactly the same, except that the first belongs to the highest rank of affirmation, whereas the second is of the lowest abasement of negation.

If you have observed this truth in the revelation of (mere) words, then you shall also behold it realized in the revelation of the actuality. I do not mean to suggest that you can see the essence of God in everything, for that would be impossible, since he, may his mention be praised, is

exalted above being contained within anyone thing or being connected with it or preceding it, or following it, or being above it or beneath it. That unto which the quality of being a 'thing' may correctly be applied is God's will (*mashiyyat*) which subsists through its own self. From all eternity unto all eternity all names have been beneath its shadow, while it itself dwells in the shadow of God.

The station of the will is that of the point of the Bayān, for there is not manifest within anything ought but one of the conditions of his revelation. He who speaks these words does not intend by them that the essence of the (divine) will may be seen in everything, which essence is that of the Messenger of God, but rather that within everything one may see how its quality of being an existent thing is realized through that essence. For example, if someone should expend 1000 *mithqāls* of gold in travelling to the house of God, in such an action nothing may be seen but the command issued by the Messenger of God on God's behalf. In this same way, if you should ask, 'how was the true nature of the gold brought about?' it must refer back to a command, which in its turn refers back to the tree of reality, even though it be in only one of its manifestations.

For there is nothing which can be termed a 'thing' except by being made truly a thing through the will. This latter is self subsistent in God, may he be praised and glorified. It is the circling *kāf* (i.e. the first letter of the creative word *kun*, 'be'), which from all eternity revolves about its own self. It has been and is a token of God alone, praised and glorified be he, who possesses the most beautiful names in the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and what lies between them. No God is there but he, the mighty, the beloved.

Every name possesses a referent to which it applies. If, for example, one should say God, praise be he and glorified, then he must have reference to the loci of manifestation which are mentioned before the Primal Will, and which have from all eternity been established as tokens of him and him alone. Blessed be he that sees nothing unless he beholds therein the manifestation of his Lord, who dwells not in anything except through God, who sees nothing but him, and who believes not concerning God what he believes concerning his creatures. For God, praised and glorified be he, is not within anything, nor does he come from anything, nor does he rest upon anything, nor does he go towards anything, nor is he mentioned by anything. All save him are his creatures. None but he may know him in the depth of his being, nor may any other than he extol the oneness of his essence.

To the extent that you have recognized the will, you have recognized none but its own reality, but to the extent that you have recognized the created beings, you have only recognized the emanations of the will within them. God, praised be he and glorified, cannot be known in his essence, nor can he be comprehended or praised or sanctified. None may find a path under him, unless by reason of his failure to know him, or by coming to dwell within the shadow of his singleness and independence. All things have ever belonged to him in his true nature, his essence, his pure being, his absoluteness, his firstness, his lastness, his outwardness, his inwardness, his purity, and his simplicity. He is, in the highest degree of the sovereignty of his might, and the brightest elevation of the dominion of his holiness, exalted above all mention and praise and sanctified above all description and exaltation.

From all eternity God was a divinity, single, unique, eternal, alone, living, mighty, everlasting, unending and trustworthy. He does not take any consort for himself, nor any Son. All save him are his creatures who have been brought into being at his command. He is and ever has been independent of all things in and by himself. How could he not be able to dispense with all but himself when he is independent in and by his essence? And how could he not be independent of all but him? Praised be he and exalted be he as befits the exaltation of his holiness and the elevation of his mention. He is exalted, exalted.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

## Introduction

The following bibliography contains all the books, articles, and manuscripts listed in my original thesis. However, since much time has passed, new books and articles have been published, and I have wanted to draw the attention of my readers to these. To round things out, I have also added earlier academic and quasi-academic materials that were not in the original bibliography, but which have a direct relationship to Shaykhism, Babism, or both. Given the surge in interest in Shiʿite Islam since 1979, it has not been remotely possible to include here more than a tiny portion of materials published on that subject in the intervening years. Many items are now available on a number of websites, including some assiduously compiled by various Bahaʾi organizations and individuals: my thanks to everyone involved for the hard work they and their helpers have put into this. Accessing facsimiles of manuscripts and rare books in this way was simply unimaginable when I was doing my research for this book: I wish the next generation of researchers well of it.

I have made a point of including here practically everything I have written and published on the Shaykhis and Babis since 1979, for no other reason than to make these titles available to the younger generation, who are often in ignorance of my contribution to the field. That, and a sense of rounding things up as I approach the advanced age of sixty.

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University of Chicago Library
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The Shaykhi Collection consists of 7 sections, each one containing the works of a different author. The authors are, in order of appearance, Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Zayn al-Din al-Aḥsāʾī, Sayyid Kāẓim ibn Qāsim Rashtī, Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī, Muḥammad Khān Kirmānī, Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn Khān Kirmānī, Abu ʾl-Qāsim Khān Kirmānī, and ʿAbd al-Riḍā Khān Ibrāhīmī. Please note that one author's work can end, with a second author's work beginning on the same reel.

Reel 1: *Fihrist*
Reel 2: Books 1–7

** *Alif*: Writings of Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Zayn al-Din al-Aḥsāʾī **
Book 1, *alif* 2: *Mukhtaṣar al-Risāla al-Ḥaydariyya*
Book 2, *alif* 3: *Majmūʿa risālāt*
Book 3, *alif* 4: *Dīwan mīrāthī*
Book 4, *alif* 5–7: *Majmūʿa risālāt*
Book 5, *alif* 9: *al-Kashkūl*, vol. 1
Book 6, *alif* 10: *al-Kashkūl*, vol. 2
Book 7, *alif* 14: *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 1
Reel 3: Books 8–14
Book 8, *alif* 15: *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 2
Book 9, *alif* 16: *Sharḥ al-ziyāra*, vol. 3

** *Bāʾ*: Writings of Sayyid Kāẓim ibn Qāsim Rashtī
Book 10, *bāʾ* 2–4: *Rasāʾil*
Book 11, *bāʾ* 5: *Rasāʾil*

** Jīm: Writings of Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī **
Book 12, *jīm* 1: *Rasāʾil*
Book 13, *jīm* 2: *Rasāʾil*
Book 14, *jīm* 3: *Rasāʾil*
Reel 4: Books 15–20
Book 15, *jīm* 4: *Rasāʾil*
Book 16, *jīm* 5: *Salwah* [sic] *fī faṣl al-khiṭāb*
Book 17, *jīm* 6: *al-Fiṭra al-salīma*
Book 18, *jīm* 7: *Rasāʾil*
Book 19, *jīm* 8: *Rasāʾil*
Book 20, *jīm* 9: *Rasāʾil*
Reel 5: Books 21–25
Book 21, *jīm* 10: *Rasāʾil*
Book 22, *jīm* 11: *Rasāʾil*
Book 23, *jīm* 12: *Rasāʾil*
Book 24, *jīm* 13: *Rasāʾil*
Book 25, *jīm* 14: *Rasāʾil*
Reel 6: Books 26–31
Book 26, *jīm* 15: *Rasāʾil*
Book 27, *jīm* 16: *Rasāʾil*
Book 28, *jīm* 17: *Rasāʾil*
Book 29, *jīm* 18: *Rasāʾil*
Book 30, *jīm* 19: *Daqāʾiq al-ʿilāj fi ʾl-ṭibb*
Book 31, *jīm* 20: *Rasāʾil*
Reel 7: Books 32–36
Book 32, *jīm* 21: *Irshād al-ʿAwāmm*, vol. 1
Book 33, *jīm* 22: *Irshād al-ʿAwāmm*, vol. 2
Book 34, *jīm* 23: *Irshād al-ʿAwāmm*, vol. 3
Book 35, *jīm* 24: *Irshād al-ʿAwāmm*, vol. 4
Book 36, *jīm* 25: *Rasāʾil*
Reel 8: Books 37–43
Book 37, *jīm* 26: *Rasāʾil*
Book 38, *jīm* 27: *Faṣl al-khiṭāb al-ṣaghīr* and *Arbaʿa fawāʾiḍ*
Book 39, *jīm* 28: *Rasāʾil*
Book 40, *jīm* 29: *Dīwān al-mirāthī*

Book 41, *jīm* 30: *Rasāʾil*
Book 42, *jīm* 31: *Ṭarīq al-najāh*, vol. 1
Book 43, *jīm* 32: *Ṭarīq al-najāh*, vol. 2
Reel 9: Books 44–50
Book 44, *jīm* 33: *Ṭarīq al-najāh*, vol. 3
Book 45, *jīm* 34: *al-Risala al-jāmiʿa fi ʾl-aḥkām al-sharāyiʿ*
Book 46, *jīm* 35: *Kutub al-jāmiʿ*
Book 47, *jīm* 36: *Rasāʾil*
Book 48, *jīm* 37: *Fiqh al-salwah* [sic]
Book 49, *jīm* 38: *al-Fiṭra al-salīma*, vol. 1
Book 50, *jīm* 39: *Rasāʾil*
Reel 10: Books 51–57
Book 51, *jīm* 40: *Rasāʾil*
Book 52, *jīm* 41: *Nuṣrat al-dīn*
Book 53, *jīm* 42 and 47: *Rasāʾil*
Book 54, *jīm* 43–44: *Rasāʾil*
Book 55, *jīm* 45: *Rasāʾil*
Book 56, *jīm* 46: *Rasāʾil*
Book 57, *jīm* 48: *Sharḥ al-natāʾij*, vol. 1
Reel 11: Books 58–67
Book 58, *jīm* 49: *Sharḥ al-natāʾij*, vol. 2
Book 59, *jīm* 50: *al-Tadhkira fī ʿilm al-naḥw*
Book 60, *jīm* 51: *Kashkūl dar maṭālib-i mutafarriqa*
Book 61, *jīm* 52: *Jung dar maṭālib-i mutafarriqa*
Book 62, *jīm* 53: *Kitāb al-fuṣul fi ʾl-sanāʿa wa ʾl-falsafa*
Book 63, *jīm* 54: *Rasāʾil*
Book 64, *jīm* 55: *Daʿawāt*
Book 65, *jīm* 57: *Risāla hidayat al-ʿawamm*
Book 66, *jīm* 58: *Risālatayn*

** *Dāl*: Writings of Muḥammad Khān Kirmānī **
Book 67, *dāl* 1: *Rasāʾil*
Reel 12: Books 68–73
Book 68, *dāl* 2: *Rasāʾil*
Book 69, *dāl* 3: *Rasāʾil*
Book 70, *dāl* 4: *Rasāʾil*
Book 71, *dāl* 5: *Rasāʾil*
Book 72, *dāl* 6: *Rasāʾil*
Book 73, *dāl* 7: *Rasāʾil*
Reel 13: Books 74–77
Book 74, *dāl* 8: *Risālatayn*
Book 75, *dāl* 9: *Rasāʾil*
Book 76, *dāl* 10: *Rasāʾil*
Book 77, *dāl* 11: *Rasāʾil*
Reel 14: Books 78–82
Book 78, *dāl* 12: *Rasāʾil*
Book 79, *dāl* 13: *Rasāʾil*
Book 80, *dāl* 14: *Rasāʾil*
Book 81, *dāl* 15: *Rasāʾil*
Book 82, *dāl* 16: *Rasāʾil*
Reel 15: Books 83–87
Book 83, *dāl* 17: *Rasāʾil*
Book 84, *dāl* 18: *Rasāʾil*
Book 85, *dāl* 19: *Rasāʾil*

Book 86, *dāl* 20: *Risāla li-Muḥammad Khān Kirmānī wa rasāʾil li Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī*
Book 87, *dāl* 21: *Rasāʾil*
Reel 16: Books 88–91
Book 88, *dāl* 22: *Burhān-i qāṭiʿ*
Book 89, *dāl* 23: *Yanābiʿ al-ḥikma*, vol. 1
Book 90, *dāl* 24: *Yanābiʿ al-ḥikma*, vol. 2
Book 91, *dāl* 25: *Yanābiʿ al-ḥikma*, vol. 3
Reel 17: Books 92–103
Book 92, *dāl* 26: *Wajīzat al-aḥkam*
Book 93, *dāl* 27: *Sharḥ al-duʿāʾ al-rajabiyya*
Book 94, *dāl* 28: *al-Ḥujja al-sāṭiʿa*
Book 95, *dāl* 29: *Risālat al-rawāh* [sic]
Book 96, *dāl* 30–31: *Risālat al-durur* and *al-Muntakhab fi ʾl-adʾiyya*
Book 97, *dāl* 32: *Risāla-yi falāḥat*
Book 98, *dāl* 33: *Kashkūl-i buzurg*, vol. 3
Book 99, *dāl* 34: *Luʾluʾ-i manṣūr*
Book 100, *dāl* 35: *Kashkūl*, vol. 1
Book 101, *dāl* 36: *Durūs*
Book 102, *dāl* 37: *Kashkūl*, vol. 2
Book 103, *dāl* 38: *Tarjuma-yi risāla-yi Wajīzat al-aḥkam*
Reel 18: Books 104–108

** *Hāʾ*: Writings of Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn Khān Kirmānī **
Book 104, *hāʾ* 1: *Rasāʾil*
Book 105, *hāʾ* 2: *Rasāʾil*
Book 106, *hāʾ* 3: *Rasāʾil*
Book 107, *hāʾ* 4: *Rasāʾil*
Book 108, *hāʾ* 5: *Rasāʾil*
Reel 19: Books 109–114
Book 109, *hāʾ* 6: *Rasāʾil*
Book 110, *hāʾ* 7: *Rasāʾil*
Book 111, *hāʾ* 8: *Rasāʾil*
Book 112, *hāʾ* 9: *Rasāʾil*
Book 113, *hāʾ* 10: *Rasāʾil*
Book 114, *hāʾ* 11: *Rasāʾil*
Reel 20: Books 115–118
Book 115, *hāʾ* 12: *Rasāʾil*
Book 116, *hāʾ* 13: *Mujāz* (in Arabic and Persian)
Book 117, *hāʾ* 14: *Sawāʾiq al-burhān*
Book 118, *hāʾ* 15: *Kitāb al-tijāra*, vol. 1
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Book 123, *hāʾ* 20: *Kitāb al-ṭahāra*, vol. 3
Book 124, *hāʾ* 21: *Nūr al-ʿuyūn*
Book 125, *hāʾ* 22: *Uṣūl al-fiqh*
Book 126, *hāʾ* 23: *Majmaʿ al-fatāwā*
Book 127, *hāʾ* 24: *Kashkūl*

** Wāw: Writings of Abū ʾl-Qāsim Khān Kirmānī **
Book 128, *hāʾ* 25: *Tanzīh al-awliyāʾ*

Reel 22: Books 129–137
Book 129, *wāw* 2: *Wādī al-Islām*
Book 130, *wāw* 3: *Rasāʾil*
Book 131, *wāw* 4: *Rasāʾil*
Book 132, *wāw* 5: *Rasāʾil*
Book 133, *wāw* 6: *Rasāʾil* (*Iḍāḥ al-ishtibāh* and *Shikāyat-nāma*)
Book 134, *wāw* 7: *Rasāʾil*
Book 135, *wāw* 8: *Fihrist kutub Mashāyikh*, vol. 2
Book 136, *wāw* 9: *Rasāʾil*

** Zā: Writings of ʿAbd al-Riḍa Khān Ibrāhīmī **
Book 137, *zāʾ* 1: *Rasāʾil*
Reel 23: Books 138–142
Book 138, *zāʾ* 2: *Darhā-yi bihisht*
Book 139, *zāʾ* 3: *Rasāʾil*
Book 140, *zāʾ* 4: *Rasāʾil*
Book 141, *zāʾ* 5: *Rasāʾil*
Book 142, *zāʾ* 6: *Rasāʾil*
Reel 24: Books 143–150
Book 143, *zāʾ* 7: *Rasāʾil*
Book 144, *zāʾ* 8: *Dūstī-yi dūstān*
Book 145, *zāʾ* 9: *Rasāʾil*
Book 146, *zāʾ* 10–12, 14–15: *Rasāʾil*
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http://www.alawhad.net/
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