

Tafsir as Mystical Experience: Intimacy and Ecstasy in Quran Commentary

TAFSĪR SŪRAT AL-BAQARA
OF
SAYYID ‘ALĪ MUḤAMMAD SHĪRĀZĪ, *THE BĀB* (1819–1850)



BY
TODD LAWSON

BRILL

Tafsir as Mystical Experience: Intimacy and Ecstasy in Quran Commentary

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by Sayyid ‘Alī Muḥammad Shīrāzī,
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Cover calligraphy by Burhan Zahrai of Quran 53:11

مَا كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأَىٰ

“The heart lied not of what it saw.”

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for
M. & M.A.
in fragrant remembrance



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The small but dedicated band of scholars who have over the years been especially concerned with the history and ideas of Shaykhism, the Babi religion and the eventual Baha'i Faith have, through publications, special conferences and informal discussions, offered numerous important insights, information and interpretations of events and texts that have left a lasting mark on this book. In many but not all cases, such has been indicated in the apparatus. I would like to mention here as especially germane and essential the work and generosity of Muhammad Afnan, Christopher Buck, Armin Eschraghi, Khazeh Fananapzir,

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Over the last forty or fifty years Shi'i scholarship has burgeoned and has provided much of great value in the attempt to understand the particular way of being human that characterizes the perspectives, orientation and presuppositions of the author of the Quran commentary which is at the center of this study. However, Shi'i scholarship has not really taken up the Babi phenomenon to the degree one might have predicted given its somewhat salient presence as a catalyst in the modern development of Iranian religion and to some degree, it may be argued, Islam as such. It is hoped that with the publication of this book it will be more acutely appreciated as an important feature both of the modern history of Twelver Shi'ism and as an example of how the oldest strata of Shi'i pietistic culture has combined with what is seen more generally as standard Sufi ideas, attitudes and mythemes to generate a powerful language and rhetoric of devotion and mystical encounter. The historian of religion will be interested to observe how together these two sometimes discrete sometimes melded influences continue to provide a foundation for religious thought and action in the world today in modes, settings and contexts which bear virtually no resemblance to their *Sitz im Leben*.

Abbreviations

AMNP	T. Lawson & O. Ghaemmaghami (eds.), <i>A most noble pattern: Collected essays on the writings of the Báb, ‘Alí Muhammad Shírazí (1819–1850)</i> , Oxford 2012.
Anwār	A.H. al-‘Āmilī al-Iṣfahānī, <i>Tafsīr mir’āt al-anwār wa mishkāt al-asrār</i> , Tehran, 1374/1954.
BSR	<i>Bahá’í Studies Review</i>
Burhān	S.H. al-Baḥrānī, <i>Kitāb al-burhān fī tafsīr al-Quran</i> , 4 vols. Tehran, 1375/1955.
Corbin	H. Corbin, <i>En Islam iranien</i> . 4 vols. Paris 1971–1972.
Dawn-breakers	M.M. Zarandī (<i>Nabīl-i A’zam</i>), <i>The dawn-breakers: Nabīl’s narrative of the early days of the Bahā’ī revelation</i> , ed. and trans. by Shoghi Effendi. Wilmette 1974.
Dharī’a	Āghā Buzurg, M.M. al-Ṭīhrānī, <i>al-Dharī’a ilā taṣānīf al-shī’a</i> , 25 vols. Tehran and Najaf, 1355/1936–1398/1978.
Dimensions	A.-M. Schimmel, <i>Mystical Dimensions of Islam</i> , Chapel Hill, NC 1975.
EI ¹	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> , first edition
EI ²	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> , second edition.
EI ³	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> , third edition.
Eir	<i>Encyclopaedia Iranica</i>
EQ	<i>Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān</i>
ER	<i>Encyclopedia of Religion</i>
Gnostic	T. Lawson, <i>Gnostic Apocalypse in Islam: Qur’ān, exegesis, messianism and the literary origins of the Babi religion</i> , London and New York 2012.
Guide	M.A. Amir-Moezzi, <i>Divine guide in early Shī’ism, The sources of esotericism in Islam</i> , trans. D. Streight, Albany, NY 1994.
HS	L. Lewisohn, (ed.), <i>The heritage of Sufism</i> , 3 vols. Oxford 1999.
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JQS	<i>Journal of Qur’ānic Studies</i>
JRAS	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
Kāfī	M. al-Kulaynī, <i>al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī</i> , 2 vols. Tehran, 1374/1954.
Mashāriq	R. al-Bursī, <i>Mashāriq anwār al-yaqīn fī asrār Amīr al-Mu’minīn</i> , Beirut 1978.
Messiah	D. MacEoin. <i>The messiah of Shiraz: Studies in early and middle Babism</i> . Boston: 2009
Momen	M. Momen, <i>An Introduction to Shī’ī Islam</i> , Oxford 1985.
Nūr	‘A.‘A. al-Ḥuwayzī, <i>Kitāb tafsīr nūr al-thaqalayn</i> , 5 vols. Edited by H. Maḥallati. Qum: 1383/1963–1385/1965.

<i>Qaṣīda</i>	K. Rashtī, <i>Sharḥ al-qaṣīda al-lāmīya</i> . Tehran 1270 [1853 or 1854].
<i>Rafati</i>	V. Rafati, <i>The Development of Shaykhi Thought in Shi'i Islam</i> , unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, U.C.L.A., 1979.
<i>Resurrection</i>	A. Amanat, <i>Resurrection and renewal: The making of the Bābī movement in Iran. 1844–1850</i> , Ithaca, N.Y. 1989.
<i>RtP</i>	Günther, S., T. Lawson & C. Mauder (eds.), <i>Roads to paradise: Eschatology and concepts of the hereafter in Islam</i> , 2 vols. Leiden and Boston 2017.
<i>Ṣāfi</i>	M.i.M. Fayḍ al-Kāshī, <i>Tafsīr al-ṣāfi</i> . 5 vols. Beirut: 1979.
<i>Sources</i>	D. MacEoin, <i>Sources for Early Babi History and Doctrine</i> . Leiden: 1992.
<i>Writings</i>	<i>Selections from the Writings of the Bab</i> , trans. by H. Taherzadeh et al., Haifa: 1978.
<i>Ziyāra</i>	A. al-Aḥsā'ī, <i>Sharḥ al-ziyārah al-jāmi'ah al-kabīrah</i> . 4 vols. Beirut: 1999.

Manuscripts

<i>Baqara</i>	<i>Tafsīr sūrat al-baqara</i> . Tehran Bahā'ī Archives, 6014.C.
<i>C</i>	<i>Tafsīr sūrat al-baqara</i> . Cambridge University Library, Browne Manuscript Collection, F10 (F8).
<i>I</i>	<i>Tafsīr sūrat al-baqara</i> in <i>Majmū'ah-ye āthār hadrat-i A'lā</i> , #69. Tehran, Badī 133/1976, (pp. 156–410).
<i>L</i>	<i>Tafsīr sūrat al-baqara</i> . Leiden University Library, Arabic manuscript Or.4791, #8.
<i>Risāla</i>	<i>Risāla fī sharḥ wa tafsīr ism allāh al-a'zam</i> (Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī) School of Oriental and African Studies Library, Ar. 92308 (ff. 271a–274a).
<i>Sulūk</i>	<i>Risāla fī al-sulūk</i> (The Bab) Tehran Bahā'ī Archives, 6006.C (pp. 73–74).

Stylistic Note

In an attempt to convey the distinctive method of commentary, in what follows Islamic scripture is distinguished from the words of the commentator through the use of colors: green is for the Quran and blue is for the hadith. Death dates CE appear in parentheses after the first mention of an author or scholar. Quran translations are usually those of Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, sometimes adapted.

Entering the House of Glory

Exegesis as Mystical Intimacy with the Divine

It is of some significance that the first major work by Sayyid ‘Alī Muḥammad Shīrāzī (d. 1850), known to history as *The Báb*, the founder of the influential yet short-lived Iranian Babi religion, is a commentary on the first two chapters of the Quran—the short *al-Fātiḥa* (the Opening) and the longest sura of the Quran, *al-Baqara* (the Cow). However, this work is known as the *Tafsīr sūrat al-baqara*. The second sura of the Quran is sometimes regarded by exegetes as “the Quran in miniature” because in it are found most of the same concerns, ordinances, conceits and images found throughout the entire Book. A commentary on this sura by any given author would therefore tend to reveal the way they would approach the Quran as such. It may be, also, that the Báb had intended to produce a commentary on the whole Quran at the time he wrote this commentary in late 1843, early 1844/1259–1260. After all, he is said to have later produced no less than nine complete *tafsīr* during his incarceration in Azerbaijan in the last months of his life. Why he would have suspended such a project at this earlier date is open to speculation. We do know, however, that it was shortly after the completion of this commentary on the first part (*juzʿ*) of the Quran that Mullā Ḥusayn Bushrūī (1849) made his visit to Shiraz, and the Babi religion may be said to have been born. It was during this visit that the Báb laid claim to a new revelation, an apocalyptic event very much in line with the traditional chiliastic expectations of Twelver Shiʿism inasmuch as it was now a thousand years since the last or 12th Imam had gone into occultation. The medium for this apocalypse was an unusual commentary on the 12th chapter of the Quran, the sura of Joseph, that was in fact written in the form of a simultaneously new and ancient (viz. *badīʿ*) Quran. The message to the Shiʿa was: this is the true Quran that has been in hiding with the 12th Imam until now and its appearance also entails the appearance of the hidden Imam. This second much more famous work, the *Tafsīr sūrat Yūsuf*, also known as the *Qayyūm al-asmāʾ* or the *Aḥsan al-qashaṣ* (perhaps a shortened form of an original title: *Tafsīr aḥsan al-qashaṣ*), appears to be the first work written after the commentary on *al-Baqara*. Its contents—which include in the course of things, a kind of commentary on most of the Quran—suggest that any desire on the part of the Báb to comment on the entire Quran might have been fulfilled in it and it therefore became unnecessary to compose an actual complete commentary in the more traditional style

of the *Tafsīr sūrat al-baqara*.¹ Further, such dramatic events as unfolded in the wake of the new messianic apocalypse possibly had the effect of diverting the Báb's attention from such a traditional, more purely scholastic project to concentrate upon newer and more dramatic developments. Whatever the case, it is important to recognize that, as such, the composition of the *Tafsīr sūrat al-baqara* by the Báb appears to have been interrupted never to be taken up again in precisely the same spirit even though the Báb composed numerous discrete works of scriptural commentary on specific, usually shorter, suras and individual passages from the Quran or the Hadith.

It will become clear that the *Tafsīr sūrat al-baqara*—with which we are solely concerned in what follows—provides invaluable information about the nature of the Báb's earliest religious ideas. There has been a tendency to regard the *Tafsīr sūrat Yūsuf* as the first work of any significance written by the Báb.² Through the invaluable research of Denis MacEoin on the sources for Babi doctrine and history, it has become clear that the Báb's *Tafsīr sūrat al-baqara* enjoys a unique and heretofore unappreciated significance for a study of the Babi religion.³ Insofar as this first major work was also a tafsir, its interest goes beyond the confines of a study of a specific "heresy" to engage with the greater Islamic tradition itself on the common ground of the Quran.⁴ Of the several topics and themes discussed in the Báb's commentary on *al-Baqara*, four emerge as the most characteristic: self-manifestation of divine glory—*tajallī*; elaborate hierarchies of being and existence; eschatology—*khurūj*, *qiyāma*, *zuhūr*; and "religious" authority—*walāya*. We will begin with a study of the way in which this last topic, which is also the single most important term in Shi'ism, is con-

1 See Lawson, *Gnostic* 21–45 for a fuller description of this later work.

2 Recounting the momentous meeting of Mullā Ḥusayn Bushrū'ī with the Báb, usually dated 23 May 1844/5 Jumādā 1, 1260, Abbas Amanat has written: "As far as can be verified, up to this time the Báb had not produced any work of significance." *Resurrection* 173. Here, we wish to demonstrate that the earlier work by the Báb, which is the subject of this study is, indeed, significant by any measure.

3 Furthermore, because it was written during the earliest period of the Báb's literary activity, MacEoin thinks that it is much less likely to have been corrupted by partisans of the later Bahai/Azalī dispute. *Sources* 41.

4 Several manuscripts of the *Tafsīr sūrat al-baqara* are known to exist. The interested reader is referred to *Sources* for details where 15 are listed with, in some cases, the name of the scribe and the date of transcription. *Sources* 201; see also the comments on the work *Sources* 33, 37, 46–47 and 74. One should add to MacEoin's list the Leiden manuscript that was mistakenly thought to contain only a commentary on a few verses, *Sources* 33: "verses 70–94 only", and a manuscript of the work, yet uncatalogued, in the Princeton "Bābī Collection". This last item bears a provisional shelf number 268 and is dated 1328 [1910]. It is bound in one volume with another manuscript entitled *Kitāb al-jazā' min nuqtat al-bā'*.

templated and understood by the Báb in this earliest of his major works. In the following chapters we will focus on the remainder of these topics beginning with an examination of the role and function of quaternary hierarchies (tetrads) in the work: Chapter 2, The Architecture of Glory I. This is followed by an examination of the heptadic or seven-layered hierarchies and structures, Chapter 3, The Architecture of Glory II. The pervasive and controlling idea of divine self-manifestation of glory, *tajallī* is the subject of Chapter 4: Divine Glory Encountered. Finally, Chapter 5: Divine Glory Embodied, examines the figure of the Qā'im, the central eschatological figure of 12er Shi'ism as treated by the Báb in this highly mystical Quran commentary. Without the Qā'im, the hidden or 12th Imam, and his expectation by the believers, 12er Shi'ism does not exist. At the time of writing, this all-important figure had been in occultation for 1,000 years and his absence and return discussed in numerous ways. The Báb's discussion reflects the deeply mystical and philosophical mode of the Shaykhi school of 12er Shi'ism.⁵ The final chapter will explore in some detail competing theories of time and history in the Báb's immediate milieu and try to account for the not always perfectly clear language of this tafsir. What does seem perfectly clear is that the center-piece of the Báb's commentary and therefore his understanding of the Quran as such is precisely the expectation of an encounter with this long-awaited divine guide. And here is where the mystical nature of the text comes into play.

The encounter is through love of the Imam who always symbolizes all of the Imams, those whom the Báb calls the Family of God (*āl Allāh*). As such love is perfected and purified—details of these considerations are more fully explicated below—the believer is granted admittance into a spiritual realm frequently mentioned in the text as the House of Glory (*bayt al-jalāl*). Within the House of Glory, the believer, now a lover (*muḥibb*) and a knower (*'arif*) seeks an ever more focused exclusive intimacy with the Family of God. Such intimacy is most frequently symbolized through a variety of water images. Thus, one may become immersed in the unplumbable depths of the divine exclusive unity (viz. *lujjat al-aḥadiyya*) represented by the spiritual rank and purity of the Family of God: Muḥammad, his daughter Fāṭima and the 12 Imams. To attain such a degree of love and knowledge is also, paradoxically to disappear, along the lines of the classical Sufi ideas of *fanā'* and *baqā'*: annihilation and immortality of the self (*nafs*). Indeed, this commentary is distinguished by the frequent use of such terminology from the lexicon of classical Sufism. The ecstatic experience is referred to as *wijdān* in this commentary. As we shall see, however,

5 Amir-Moezzi, Raj'a.

ecstasy is indicated through other terms as well. Because of the deeply existential grounding of the subject—an ontology trailing clouds of glory from the work of Islam's greatest mystic, Muḥyi ad-Dīn ibn al-ʿArabī (1240), hereafter Ibn Arabi,—the mere participation in the “being event” of creation also opens doors to such an ecstatic encounter. The mystic experience of the word as theophany represents a highly personal process of revelation.

The sources that meet in this extraordinary example of mystical scriptural commentary are varied. Certainly, the Quran functions as the major source. But as we shall see, the words of the Imams, preserved in hadith usually called *akhbār* in the Shiʿi context, acquire an extraordinary importance as objects of contemplation and understanding. Most of the verses of the Quran carry such explanatory material. Since Safavid times, massive Quran commentaries have been compiled by Shiʿi scholars which collect these statements from “The Family of God” and organize them according to Quranic verse and sometimes topic. The Báb freely uses these traditions in his tafsir and so this work has much in common with what may be called Akhbari Quran Commentary, a designation coined now some 30 years ago to distinguish such works from more speculative or “rationalistic” works of later Shiʿi Quranic exegesis.⁶ The Báb's commentary, however, differs from the classical works of Akhbari exegesis in numerous ways. These distinctions are largely apparent in the influence of the Shaykhi school, mentioned above. Nonetheless, what was said of the Akhbari works of exegesis may also be said of this work by the Báb. The Quran functions as something of an iconostasis upon which the all-important words of the Imams are displayed and contemplated. In such a way, every verse and word—better, every *āya* (divine sign)—of the Quran becomes a door to an encounter with the Family of God through their teaching and most importantly, their love (*walāya*).

The Family of God is most usually referred to as the *ahl al-bayt*—the people of the house of the prophet Muḥammad (632) including his cousin, son-in-law, close companion and spiritual brother, ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (661), his wife, the prophet's youngest child, Fāṭima bint Muḥammad (632) also known in the literature as the mother of the Imams and the mother of the believers. Her creative role and rank is sometimes expressed in more cosmogonic terms as when she is called *Fāṭima fāṭir*: Fāṭima creator. And, because of her great devotion to and care for her father, especially during those many occasions of hardship and persecution that he suffered at the hands of his enemies, cavers and rejecters, she is also known as *umm abihā*—mother of her father. The

6 Lawson, Akhbārī.

remaining members of the Family of God are, first, the two sons of 'Alī and Fāṭima, al-Ḥasan (670) and al-Ḥusayn (680), *the* martyr Imam of early Islam whose cruel murder is lamented and mourned by the Muslim world in general and especially by the Shi'ī community every year during the holy month of Muḥarram. The 4th Imam, 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn (712), *Zayn al-Ābidīn*, the 5th Imam, Muḥammad ibn 'Alī (732), *al-Bāqir*, the 6th Imam, Ja'far ibn Muḥammad (765) *al-Šādiq*, the source of the largest number of those above-mentioned *akhbār* and whose name is mentioned dozens of times in the following pages. The remaining members of the Family of God, those whose permanent abode is the House of Glory, are the 7th to the 12th Imams, Mūsā ibn Ja'far (799) *al-Kāzim*, 'Alī ibn Mūsā (817) *al-Riḍā*, Muḥammad ibn 'Alī (835) *al-Tāqī*, 'Alī ibn Muḥammad (868), *al-Hādī*, Ḥasan ibn 'Alī (874) *al-Askarī*, and Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan (occulted in 874) the hidden Imam, *al-Mahdī*, *al-Qā'im*, *al-Hujja*.

Entering the House of Glory

According to Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī (1826), founder of the Shaykhi school, the totality of the fourteen members of the *ahl al-bayt*, also known in Persian as the *chahār-deh ma'šūm*, the Fourteen Infallible Ones, is as a fire with fourteen flames. Each flame is identical to all other flames with regard to essence and function. Each member is, therefore, an equal bearer of the all-important quality of *walāya*—about which more in the first chapter. The prime focus of this commentary is to understand the return of the hidden Imam. But, in fact, his return (*al-raj'a*) also means the return of the entire company of this holy family, the Family of God.⁷ Since one hermeneutical presupposition is that every *āya* of the Quran speaks, in one way or another, to this return the Báb seems to suggest that a return may be accomplished through a focused and devout reading of the Quran. Through reading the Quran one enters into a deeper kinship (another understanding of the word *walāya*), and ultimately is welcomed in to the House of Glory, *bayt al-jalāl*. The reader returns home to find that the Qā'im has arisen. As mentioned earlier, *walāya* is encountered frequently throughout the tafsir where it connotes or denotes majesty, love, intimacy, power, glory and the protection such a house may be expected to enshrine. In some ways, the semantics of this glory overlap with the broad meaning of *tajallī* "self-manifestation of divine glory" and also the field of meaning represented by the

7 Amir-Moezzi, Raj'a.

word *walāya*. The particulars of such crossfertilization and overlap will be met with in the following chapters.

In addition to the words of the Imams, we find also various spiritual teachings and conceits associated more broadly with the greater Islamic Sufi tradition, whether this tradition be from the early days of the Baghdad school, or the later developments associated with the name of Ibn Arabi. The basic ontology expressed in the tafsir seems to have much in common with the notorious oneness of being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) propounded by so many Muslim mystics and philosophical theologians, both Sunni and Shi'i. The immediate precursors to the Báb's usage would be those Shi'i scholars considered responsible for bringing Ibn Arabi to a Shi'i readership: Ḥaydar Āmulī (1385), Ibn Abī Jumhūr (after 1401), Rajab Bursī (1411), Mulla Sadra (1635–1636) and others. Even those who would condemn Ibn Arabi, such as Shaykh Aḥmad himself, seem to have fallen under the spell of this later, and most enchanting "unified field theory" expressed in islamicate religious and philosophical terms. The Báb expresses his sympathy for the unity of being idea with the proviso that whatever it is we consider a manifestation of being, it must be understood that God cannot be directly implicated since God, as the classical Isma'ili philosophers would have it, is quite beyond both being and non-being. However, what we do experience as being is all encompassing and does contribute to the ontic tone of unity to all experience and existence. This apperception of divine unity is also expressed through the above-mentioned water imagery or symbolism ubiquitously employed throughout the tafsir. While it may be tempting to associate such a sense of oneness with what has come to be called an "oceanic feeling", it is also important to note that the vocabulary used by the Báb, namely *luj-jat*, is traceable to Avicenna's well-known discussion of mystical experience in his *Tanbihāt wa ishārāt* where the highest level of mystical knowledge is spoken of by the philosopher in experiential terms: the gnostic (*al-ʿarif*) arrives at (or is submerged in) the shining sea of reunion (*lujjat al-wuṣūl*). Both Ibn Sīnā's words here and the commentary of Ṭūsī explicate the use of the image pointing out that true knowledge occurs when knowledge itself is no longer the goal, but the object of knowledge is the goal. At this stage speech or discourse is futile in any attempt to describe the experience. Thus, the images of sea, ocean, depth provide a poetic and accurate reflection of the experience because immersed in the sea the senses are no longer effective, but the feeling of undifferentiated intimacy and nearness achieves apotheosis.⁸ As we shall see, the Quranic term

8 Brown, A Translation 230–232. See also, Hajjaji-Jarrah, *Āyat al-Nūr* 175 & 180–181. The translation and comments in Inati, *Ibn Sina* 88–89 seem slightly wide of the mark.

lujja (Q 27:44) is the most frequent of the oceanic metaphors for mystical experience, but it is not the only one. Understood with this background, it is possible to speak of an oceanic sensibility with regard to the mysticism of this tafsir and the Báb's frequent recourse to such terms as *lujjat al-aḥadiyya* (the profound and luminous pool of divine exclusive unity) or the *ṭamṭām al-wāḥidiyya* (the shimmering ocean of divine inclusive unity). In such figures water and light are joined with the ideas of love and allegiance, loyalty and protection—*walāya*—to convey the Báb's obvious experience of intimacy and ecstasy gained through his encounter with the Family of God in the House of Glory through reading and meditating on the Quran.

Enchanted unity of being (God being outside what is called "being") is also upheld and communicated through another set of unusual technical terms which derive directly from the *akhbār* or preserved words of the Imams. Just as the oceanic metaphors emphasize a unity of space, these will emphasize a unity of time. Time begins at the Day of the Covenant spoken of at Q 7:172. In order to understand how this pre-creational moment functions cosmogonically, the terms *dharr*, *ashbāḥ* and *aẓilla* (seeds, silouettes and shadows), among others, are found in the words of the Imams to explain that God must be understood as having two modes: (1) absolutely hidden and (2) revealed. The first mode is utterly inaccessible to humanity. The second mode is accessible through the prophets and imams. The word *dharr* is used in this commentary to speak to the precreational moments of generation. Thus *al-dharr al-awwal* is the time of the creation of the Prophet Muhammad and the Imams and the all important *walāya*. From this other prophets are created in whose composition their followers are nascent. In the time of the *dharr al-awwal* creation assumed an insubstantial form, indicated by the terms *ashbāḥ* and *aẓilla*. The Prophet and the Imams and their followers (*mu'minīn*) were originally made to occur "before creation" as silouettes of light. The term *aẓilla* is sometimes applied to the enemies of the Shi'a in their precreational form. In reality then, there has been no temporal interval between the primordial Day of the Covenant and the present time. This theory, which really calls out for a separate monograph, also is used to explain how it happened that even though all humanity ascended on the Day of the Covenant (the Day of Alast, *yawm al-dharr*, and so on) with the powerful and unambiguous response "Yea verily!" (*balā*) to God's question: "Am I not your Lord?" (Q 7:172) there came to be breakers of this primordial covenant (*nāqidīn*). The Shaykhi leader, Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī, used such terminology to explain, for example, that at the time of the above question, some responses were more sincere and enthusiastic than others. Ultimately, all pre-creational beings chose their lot through the nature of their response. We will encounter frequently the phrase "they were created

according to how they already were in pre-existence" (*'alā mā huway 'alayhi*). Shaykh Aḥmad's theories, for which there is no space to pursue further here, explain such conundrums in persuasive and reasonable language which preserves the mythic basis of the world-view in play.⁹ The Báb avails himself of this terminology and this worldview, one which sees the fundamental unity of time and space as a defining feature of consciousness. There is sequence and simultaneity. The ecstasy achieved, or at least spoken of in the text, is a result of such unity of experience and perception. It is an ecstasy, it might be argued, better thought of as instasy.¹⁰ For the Báb and his audience, history, including the metahistory or hierohistory of the Day of the Covenant, is not in the past but permanently surrounding and suffusing all consciousness if only one may purify the sight sufficiently to see this.

9 Kazemi, *Mysteries*, is an excellent treatment of this important material, especially as it pertains to Babi and Bahai thought. For the theories of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī see now Hamid, *Metaphysics* in addition to the pioneering, and for many years the only, discussion of the topic, by Henry Corbin: *Corbin*, iv:232–299 and Corbin, *Spiritual Body*. See also the indispensable discussion in Amir-Moezzi, *Cosmogony*.

10 Lewisohn, *Principles* 41 and Nwyia, *Exégèse* 254.

Walāya

Luminous Love and Intimacy

The heart of all Shi'ism centers on the strong veneration of the first Imam, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (661/40) as the guardian, protector, and true friend of those who have acknowledged his station as the immediate successor of the Prophet Muḥammad. For this reason, he is known as *walī*, and the quality of his authority is called *walāya*. Indeed, as indicated in an earlier study of the Báb's work, *walāya* may also be understood as a synonym for covenant (*'ahd/mīthāq*) itself.¹ There is in Shi'ism no notion more fundamental than this. It was by means of the breaking of the covenant between the prophet Muḥammad and a segment of the community that the early umma was divided into the categories now known as Sunni and Shi'i. The covenant is essential to Shi'i identity, both in its observance and in its breach. It is a much more prominent topic in Shi'i religious discourse than it is in Sunni religious discourse and may be considered one of the distinguishing features of Shi'ism as such.²

The study of this commentary by the Báb must begin, therefore, with an examination of the way in which the subject of *walāya*, and the concomitant idea of the covenant are treated. It will be seen, perhaps not surprisingly, that the idea was just as central to the Báb's thought as it is to Shi'ism in general. Also, it will be seen that belief or faith (*īmān*) is conditioned by the degree to which one accepts and affirms the authority, whether spiritual or worldly (it is difficult to draw such a line), guardianship and friendship—in a word *walāya* of 'Alī, and after him the Imams, to the extent that a deed, no matter how meritorious, is unacceptable unless it has been performed by one who has fully confessed the truth of this *walāya* and, in the language of Shi'ism, "entered into it". Moreover, such *walāya* has existed from eternity, much like the so-called "Muḥammadan light", and numbers among those who have recognized it the prophets Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. As an eternal principle, it

1 Lawson, Dangers 189–191; see now Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran* 121–125.

2 The covenant and what may be termed "covenant theology" in Islam has recently become a subject of growing interest, beginning with Böwering, *Mystical Vision*. See also Lawson, Seeing Double; al-Qāḍī, *Primordial*; Lumbard, Covenant; Lawson, *Quran* 43–47 and *passim*; Jaffer, Covenant.

remains an imperative for all would-be believers at all times: through acceptance or rejection of this spiritual authority, one determines the fate of one's soul.³

The radical interpretation of several passages in the *Sūrat al-baqara* as speaking directly to the subject of *walāya* is not an innovation of the Báb's but has characterized a strong tendency in Shi'i exegesis from the earliest times. Of some interest here is that such a commentary was written by one who was not a member of the ulama class, but rather a young merchant. The nature of the commentary shows that there was a need to reassert or "revalorize" and reorient this cardinal Shi'i doctrine in a perhaps unlikely milieu. Why such a need was felt at this particular time and within the Iranian merchant class, has been discussed at length by scholars concerned with the social history of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Iran and we may conclude that it has something to do with the conceptual contiguity of the two categories, religious authority (*walāya*) and apocalypse (*zuhūr*; *kashf*) a contiguity which was mirrored by the temporal contiguity of the date of the Shi'i eschaton and the literary activity of the Báb. The following description will illustrate the degree to which this need was felt, and the consequences it had for the interpretation of scripture.

Absolute Walāya

The subject of *walāya* is introduced very early in the tafsir where reference is made to the absolute *walāya* (*walāyatuhu al-muṭlaqa*) of 'Alī, although the statement is not free of ambiguity. It comes in the course of the Báb's commentary on the second verse of the *Fātiḥa*: **Praise be to God the Lord of all the world** [Q 1:2]. The verse is said to be the book (*kitāb*) of 'Alī, in which God has placed all the principles (*aḥkām*) of absolute *walāya*. Employing words from Ibn Arabi's technical lexicon, it is called here, the **Garden** of the inclusive unity (*jannat al-wāḥidiyya*), whose protection (*zill*, lit. "shade") has been reserved for all those who affirm 'Alī's *walāya*.⁴

3 See Landolt, Walāyah; Karamustafa, *Walāyah* and now the excellent study by Dakake, *Charismatic*. See also the appropriate passages in *Guide* (q.v. index *walāya*, *walī*, *awliyā'*) and Amir-Moezzi, Notes. On the topic of *walāya* in the early Sufi/Sunni milieu and al-Tirmidhī (ca. 910) is Radtke and O'Kane, *Concept*, and also Radtke's brief summary in *HS*, i, 483–495. A recent study of *walāya* in Ibn Arabi has implications for the present discussion: Lawson, *Friendship*.

4 *Baqara* 8 and *I* 156: *qad ja'alāhā allāhu ṣillahā li-man aqarra bi-walāyatihī*; *C f. 2b*: *qad ja'ala*

In this very brief statement, certain important terms are introduced which play a key role throughout the rest of the tafsir. Apart from the word *walāya* (guardianship, friendship, authority, intimacy), repeated reference throughout this commentary to *aḥadiyya*, *wāḥidiyya*, *raḥmāniyya*, and so on, constitutes one of its more distinguishing characteristics. The terminology comes originally from Ibn Arabi and perhaps later Shi'i devotional literature (see below *passim*). Its use here by the Báb offers yet another example of how the work, if not the thought, of one of history's greatest mystics had thoroughly permeated Iranian Shi'i spiritual discourse (*irfān*) by this time. The term *aḥadiyya* "exclusive divine unity" represents the highest aspect of the Absolute about which man can notion (if one may use a noun as a verb), but does not, of course, define the Absolute which must always be beyond whatever occurs about It in the human mind. The term *wāḥidiyya* "inclusive divine unity" refers to the next highest aspect of the Absolute, the aspect which involves the "appearance" of the divine names and attributes.⁵ The proper understanding of this technical terminology has been a subject of scholarly debate in Iran for centuries. The term *wāḥidiyya* recurs over and over again in the course of this commentary. It appears to be descriptive of one of the degrees of divinity that constitutes the whole hierarchical metaphysical structure of the cosmos. It is the degree immediately inferior to the divine exclusive unity (*aḥadiyya*). Again, such terminology betrays the influence of the so-called *waḥdat al-wujūd* school associated with Ibn Arabi. Suffice it here to say that absolute *walāya* represents a theoretical position at least one remove from The Ultimate: that utterly transcendent "reality" that is totally beyond any conceptualization; what the classical Isma'ili philosophers referred to as "beyond being and not being".⁶

The choice of the word "principles" (*aḥkām*) has several connotations. In his short introductory sentence to the tafsir on the *Fātiḥa*, the Báb characterizes the opening chapter of the Quran as containing seven **clear verses** (*āyāt muḥkamāt*). The hermeneutic polarities, *mutashābihāt/muḥkamāt* represent one of the oldest concerns of tafsir in general, and have been the cause of much speculation on the part of exegetes of all schools and attitudes. The primary

allāhu ... For a study of these terms as they were received by Ibn Arabi's student Ṣadr al-Dīn Qunāwī (1274/673) and others, see Chittick, Five. See also 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī, *Iṣtilāḥāt* 25 and 47.

5 For a study of these terms as they were received by Ibn Arabi's student Ṣadr al-Dīn Qunāwī (1274/673) and others, see Chittick, Five. See also 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī, *Iṣtilāḥāt* 25 and 47. One form of the argument is analyzed in Landolt, Der Briefwechsel in H. Landolt, *Recherches* esp. 257–278.

6 See Lawson, Structure.

idea is that the Quran contains both ambiguous and unambiguous verses. At the most basic level these are thought to be divided between straightforward legal prescriptions and the rest of the Book. The terminology here is taken from Q 3:7:

It is he who sent down upon thee the book, wherein are verses clear [*muḥkamāt*] that are the essence of the book [*umm al-kitāb*], and others ambiguous [*mutashābihāt*]. As for those in whose hearts is swerving, they follow the ambiguous part, desiring dissension, and desiring its interpretation [*ta'wīl*]; and none knows its interpretation [*ta'wīl*], save only God. And those firmly rooted in knowledge say,

‘we believe in it; all is from our Lord’; yet none remembers, but men possessed of minds.⁷ [Q 3:7]

With this verse comes one of the more fundamental disagreements between the Sunni and Shi'i exegetes who differ about its sentence structure. The above translation represents the “Sunni” reading. A Shi'i reading would be: *and none knows its interpretation save God and those firmly rooted in knowledge* (*al-rāsikhūn fi'l-ilm*). These *rāsikhūn* are of course the Imams, in the first place, and in the second place, at least amongst the Uṣūlīs, the *mujtahids*, sometimes so-called “rationalists”.⁸ So understood, the designation of the verses of the *Fātiḥa* as unambiguous and precise strongly suggests that the Báb read them as having a positive and binding relationship with a true understanding of the Book. Seen in this light, his statement that Q 1:2 ordains belief in the absolute *walāya* of ‘Alī must be taken as divine law, binding upon the believer in the same way as legal prescriptions for the terms of inheritance, or even prayer and fasting, are obligatory.⁹

7 This and all subsequent Quran quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from the Arberry translation (see bibliography), sometimes slightly adapted, though the verse numbering is that of the standard Egyptian edition.

8 A good summary of the general Sunni/Shi'i debate on this topic may be found in Shah, *The Imam* 71 n. 14. On the question of *muḥkamāt/mutashābihāt*, see Berg, *Polysemy* and also MacAuliffe, *Text*, which concentrates on al-Rāzī's interpretation of this very verse, becoming something of a statement of method in which various points of view are mentioned. For a discussion of the issue within a tradition more akin to the one in which the Báb wrote, see the apposite remarks on Mulla Sadra's, *Mutashābihāt al-Qur'ān* in Rustom, *Nature* 124–126.

9 Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, the 6th Imam, is said to have glossed *āyāt muḥkamāt hunna umm al-kitāb* as “the Commander of the Faithful and the Imams” and *al-mutashābihāt* as “*fulān wa fulān*”, i.e., Abū Bakr and ‘Umar. See *Anwār* 132.

At verse 3 of *Sūrat al-baqara*, the subject of absolute *walāya* is once again encountered. Here the Quranic statement **those who perform the prayer** is said by the Báb to imply general obedience (*al-idh'ān*) to Muḥammad and his Trustees (*awṣiyā*, i.e., the Imams) and his daughter (*bintihi*) through the most great absolute *walāya* (*al-walāyat al-muṭlaqa al-kubrā*).¹⁰ While in the previous statement this absolute *walāya* was linked with 'Alī alone, here it includes all of the Imams and this doubtless is in line with the added feminine modifier *al-kubrā*—"most great" in the description which also provides the opportunity to mention Fāṭima. In the same section *walāya* is identified with *tawhīd*, the affirmation or realization of divine unity. The Báb says that the act of prayer "from beginning to end" is the "form of affirming divine uniqueness" (*ṣūrat al-tafrīd*), the "temple (*haykal*) of *tawhīd*", and the "shadow (*shabaḥ*) of *walāya*".¹¹ This being the case, only the actual bearers or, more precisely, places of appearance¹² of *walāya* are able to perform it properly because it is the first (*awwal*) station of distinction between Beloved (*maḥbūb*, i.e., God) and the lover (*ḥabīb*, in this case Muḥammad and the Imams). The Family of God (*āl allāh* = Muḥammad, Fāṭima and the 12 Imams) are the true bearers of the meaning and reality (*ma'na*) of the divine love mentioned in the famous *ḥadīth qudsī*: "I was a hidden treasure and desired to be known, therefore I created humankind in order to be known." This love (*maḥabba*) was manifested (*tajallā*) by God to them by means of their own selves (*la-hum bi-him*), to such a degree of exclusivity that this divine love subsists only through them, and pure servitude appears only in them.¹³ It should be noted that the translation of *tajallā* as "he manifested" is insufficient because it does not convey the element of glory that is implicated in the Arabic word. "Ingloriated" comes a little closer, but as an awkward neologism is rejected. One must finally endeavor to bear in mind that any divine manifestation entails an existention of glory.

¹⁰ *Baqara* 25.

¹¹ On *shabaḥ* (pl. *ashbāḥ*), often encountered here with a companion word *zill* ("phantom", "shadow" pl. *aẓilla*) see Halm, *Die islamische Gnosis*, q.v. index, *zill*, *ashbāḥ*; see also *Guide* 32, 33 and 40 where the translation of *ashbāḥ nūr* is given as "silhouettes of light". These "silhouettes of light" represent the ontological modalities of the Imams themselves during the "time" of pre-existence, the time prior to the originary covenant, the so-called Day of Alast indicated at Q 7:172.

¹² *Mazāhir* (sing. *mazhar*) lit: "the place where *walāya* appears" or "is manifest". It may be translated directly as manifestations as long as it is remembered that the manifestations themselves are not the agents or manifestors, but the vehicles by means of which the manifestation takes place as a result of God's manifesting activity.

¹³ *Baqara* 25. Note here the echo of Ibn Arabi's thought in the prepositional construction. We see this construction in words ascribed to the Imams. Such raises again the question of Ibn Arabi's indebtedness to Shi'ism.

The Báb continues to say that the Family of God (*āl allāh*) are the places (*maḥāll*) of all servitude and all lordship (*ʿubūdiyyāt* and *rubūbiyyāt*), implying that it is through their act of servitude that they have been invested with the rank of lordship in relation to others. Whoever, then, confesses the truth of their *walāya* in the “area of servitude” (*ṣuqʿ al-ʿubūdiyya*), has in fact performed the prayer according to all the stations of the Merciful One. And he who performs the prayer and “lifts the ‘veils of vainglory’ and enters the truly glorious house (*bayt al-jalāl*), such a one will dwell in the protection, solace and comfort (*ẓill*) of their *walāya*.”¹⁴

At Q 2:24, one of the *taḥaddī* or “challenge” verses, absolute *walāya* is explained negatively, as not being acknowledged by those who were challenged to bring a sura comparable to those in the Quran.¹⁵ In short, those guilty of *kufṛ* (disbelief) are all those who have failed to recognize the absolute *walāya* of ʿAlī. Inasmuch as these unbelievers are said to be those who have been given the love of Abū Bakr (*maḥabbat al-awwal*) that is in fact a fire,¹⁶ it seems here that “absolute” refers not first of all to any philosophical or metaphysical absoluteness, but rather to exclusivity. That is, true *walāya* cannot be shared during a given period of time. In this connection, it may be added that there appears to be no difference in the quality of the *walāya* born by any of the Imams. At verse 60 of *Sūrat al-baqara*, for example, the **water** which **gushed forth** from the **rock** at **twelve** different places after Moses **struck** it with his **staff**, is said to represent the *walāya* of all the Imams. The Báb says that although the **water** issued from these various places, it was in fact the same **water**.¹⁷

Walāya of God

A cognate notion of absolute *walāya* is the *walāya* of God, *walāyat al-ḥaqq*. It is first encountered at Q 2:34, which is one of the longer commentaries on an

14 *Baqara* 26. “the veils of glory”—*kashf subūḥāt al-jalāl*—is a reference to the celebrated *Ḥadith Kumayl* (ibn Ziyād, ca. 701–702) ascribed to the devoted follower of ʿAlī, the first imam. It is doubtless a much later composition dating probably from the 11–12th centuries CE. The Báb, as have many before and after him, wrote a commentary on this hadith. See *Sources* 72. See the translation of this hadith in Lawson, *Sulūk*, 240.

15 *Baqara* 75. Other *taḥaddī* verses are Q 10:39, 11:16, 17:90, and 28:49.

16 On such epithets as “The First” as a reference to Abū Bakr in Ismaʿīli literature, see Strothmann, *Korankommentar*, Introduction 20. An excellent study of the cultural and political genesis of such epithets is Gruber, *Curse*; Lawson, *Note*. See now, also, Kohlberg and Amir-Moezzi, *Revelation* 359, 283*, 474*, 522, 616*, 617, 621, 660, 672*, 684, and 698.

17 *Baqara* 295–297.

individual verse in the tafsir. Explaining the command of God to the angels: **bow yourselves to Adam!**, the Báb says that the esoteric interpretation (*tafsīr al-bāṭin*) understands the speaker of the command to be not God but Muḥammad, while the **angels** are the seeds of all created things at the place of primordial witnessing (*dharr al-ashyāʾ fī mashhad al-ūlā*), a prelude to the Quranic Day of the Covenant (*yawm al-mīthāq*) mentioned at Q 7:172.¹⁸

When thy Lord drew forth from the Children of Adam, from their loins—their descendants [*dhurriyatahum*] and made them testify concerning themselves (saying): “am I not your Lord (who cherishes you and sustains you)?” —they said: “Yea! We do testify!” (this), lest ye should say on the day of judgment: “of this we were never mindful.” (Yusuf Ali translation)

The act of prostration is the confession of servitude to the *walāya* of God, which is equated with allegiance to ‘Alī, and the disavowal of all else.

Adam, furthermore, is none other than ‘Alī, and **Iblīs** is none other than Abū Bakr. At this level the type of *walāya* under discussion is also characterized as the *walāya* of the exclusive unity belonging to ‘Alī (*walāyat al-aḥadiyya li-‘Alī*). The Báb’s use of this term, originally from the lexicon of Ibn Arabī’s technical vocabulary, where it seems to indicate purely metaphysical realities, is brought “down to earth” to indicate the exclusive right claimed by ‘Alī and the Shīʿa—an interesting terminological development. The entire drama, it should be emphasized, occurs before “creation”. Thus Abū Bakr (almost always referred to as Abū al-Dawāhī “Father of Iniquities”) is the symbol of primordial infidelity and ingratitude—*kufṛ*, just as ‘Alī is the symbol of primordial faith and knowledge—*īmān*. The **angels**, as mentioned above, are taken as the seeds or potential of all created things destined to develop into actuality. They are also referred to as the pre-existent shadow forms (*ashbāḥ*) and phantoms (*azilla*).

According to the Báb, the primordial drama had its historical re-enactment or analogue on the day of al-Ghadīr, 18 Dhu ’l-Ḥijja 10/16 March 632 when Muḥammad appointed ‘Alī as his successor. At that time the **angels** were Sal-mān, al-Jundub and Miqdād, the early stalwart supporters of ‘Alī.¹⁹ It is important to note, however, that here we use the word “re-enactment” rather inappropriately. It is obvious that for the author of this commentary it is the event

18 *Baqara* 131. The term *mashhad al-ūlā* is determined by the fact that *al-ūlā* (“pre-existence”) is one of three technical terms, which refer to separate historico-spiritual cycles. The other two are *al-dunyā* and *al-ākhirā*. These words occur in a verse of a visitation prayer for the Imams and are commented upon at length by Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī in *Ziyāra*, i:156–161.

19 *Baqara* 131. See Vecchia Vaglieri, Ghadīr. Jundub is better known as *Abū Dharr*.

of al-Ghadīr which gives meaning to the primordial drama described in Q 7:172, so from this point of view it is actually prior in spiritual value. This is an interesting and compelling instance of a new kind of “apocalyptic reversal” in which not only the wretchedness of the persecuted and the superiority of the persecutors are reversed, but time itself is reversed in the sense that primacy is given to a chronologically later event.²⁰ The covenantal “renewal” of al-Ghadīr will shortly be re-enacted in the revelation of the *Tafsīr sūrat Yūsuf* whose sura and verse numbering are arranged to represent the numerical value of the response word “*balā*” “Yea!” of Q 7:172. Such would seem to be a perfect, if rather distinctive, instance of apocalyptic reversal. Here it is the events of earthly history which trump the events of metahistory. Though the events of al-Ghadīr came later than the originary Quranic Day of the Covenant, the true value and identity of this day rests in what appears to be the chronologically later event in which ‘Alī was appointed the center of Muḥammad’s covenant. This appointment has the strictest implications for how the “original” Day of the Covenant is to be understood.²¹ Ultimately, the two events fuse through the “magic” of typological figuration. The ensuing deployment and release of imaginal energy is remarkable, creative and, as will be seen in the rise and mobilization of the Babi religion, unstoppable.

In the commentary on Q 2:62, the term absolute *walāya* is associated with the entire Family of God, because they are sanctified servants who do nothing of their own wills, but only through the will of God.

Surely they that believe, and those of Jewry, and the Christians, and those Sabaeans, whoso believes in God and the last day, and works righteousness—their reward awaits them with their Lord, and no fear shall be on them, neither shall they sorrow. [Q 2:62]

The *works of righteousness* mentioned in this verse therefore are described as being all included in the act of recognizing (*i’tirāf*) the Family of God’s absolute *walāya*. The Báb here glosses the verse as *their reward awaits them with ‘Alī*. In the context of the verse itself, the suggestion is that even non-Muslims are implicated in the responsibility of recognizing ‘Alī. This may offer a fur-

20 Cf. Baumgarten, *Apocalyptic Time* where this type of reversal is not noted.

21 A survey of what we are calling here Akhbari Tafsīr discloses that there is general agreement that numerous traditions from the Imams hold that the original wording of Q 7:172 mentioned the name of both Muḥammad and ‘Alī in the covenant imposed upon humanity by God at the Day of Alast. See Lawson, *New testament*. For a fuller description of the “covenantal structure” of the later *Tafsīr sūrat Yūsuf*, see Lawson, *Gnostic* 1–20.

ther indication of the way in which “absolute” (*muṭlaqa*) is to be understood. It should be noted that the last phrase of the above verse is repeated at Q 10:62, where it is specifically the **friends of god** (*awliyā’ allāh*) who will neither grieve nor sorrow.²² Such cross-references and correspondences are quite likely not accidental, particularly in this case where the later verse corroborates by its vocabulary (*awliyā’* plural of *walī*) the theme of *walāya*.

In the commentary on verse 83, which also refers to the covenant—**compact**—, the term Universal *walāya* occurs:

And when we took compact with the Children of Israel: ‘you shall not serve any save God; and to be good to parents, and the near kinsman, and to orphans, and to the needy; and speak good to men, and perform the prayer, and pay the alms.’ Then you turned away, all but a few of you, swerving aside. [Q 2:83]

The Báb says that God is speaking here about His **taking compact** with all created things “throughout the eight paradises”, to recognize the *walāya* of ‘Alī.²³ The first of these paradises is the shoreless and bottomless Sea of Unity (*lujjat al-wahda*), and is characterized by the command: **you shall not serve any save God** “[and this] without reference [to anything else]”.²⁴ In the second paradise the **compact** was taken by means of recognizing the universal *walāya* (*al-walāyat al-kullīyya*) of the **parents**, i.e., Muḥammad and ‘Alī who are respectively, the symbols of universal fatherhood and motherhood. Such recognition, the Báb says, is in reality the **good** mentioned in the verse, because to do good means to do good to all according to what each merit. The **good** that these particular **parents** deserve has only been hinted at, because were the Báb openly (*bī’l-taṣrīḥ*) to describe it, the prattling naysayers (*mubṭilūn*) would cavil at it.²⁵

Throughout the tafsir there are numerous statements indicating that absolute *walāya* is in fact the same as *walāya* per se. The following presents the various aspects of this all-important notion and includes material related to the ideas of Prophethood (*nubuwwa*), Messengership (*risāla*), Trusteeship (*waṣīyya*) and Leadership (*imāma*).

22 *Baqara* 195–196.

23 *Baqara* 223.

24 *Bī-lā ishāra*, another allusion to the *Hadith Kumayl*. The distinctive term *lujja* as one of several other “oceanic images” used frequently in this work, was discussed in the Introduction. The hermeneutic focus on water and other liquids bespeaks a specific vision of the overall structure and nature of *walāya* recently described in Lawson, Friendship. We will return to this below in the Conclusion.

25 *Baqara* 224.

False Walāya

The idea that *walāya* can be either true or false may be traced to the Quran itself. In such verses as Q 8:73, for example, reference is made to the **unbelievers** who are **friends (*awliyā'*) of one another**, or Q 62:6 where the Jews are criticized for their claim to be the **friends (*awliyā'*) of God, apart from other men**. The two opposing groups, *ḥizb Allāh* and *ḥizb al-Shayṭān* mentioned respectively in Q 5:56 and 58:19, represent a basic division which provides at least theoretical support for the ideas presented in this tafsir. This distinction between two fundamentally opposed groups is most evident in Medinese suras and has been seen to be related to the different concerns that faced the Prophet after his departure from Mecca, where *walāya* was purely God-oriented.²⁶

‘Alī is presented as the bearer, par excellence, of this True *walāya*, although it has already been emphasized that the quality of this *walāya* is not changed, regardless of whom its (rightful) bearer might be. As we have seen, True *walāya*, or the *walāya* of God (*walāyat al-ḥaqq*), had its beginning in pre-eternity, or pre-existence when the atomic potential existential identities or *dharr* (lit. tiny particles, atoms, specks; coll. pl. *dhurriyyah* = progeny, offspring; cf. Q 7:172), of all things were commanded to acknowledge the authority of ‘Alī. It was also at this time that its opposite, the *walāya* of the False One (*walāyat al-bāṭil*) and Falsehood acquired potential existence. Just as ‘Alī is the bearer of true *walāya*, Abū Bakr is designated as the bearer of false *walāya*.

Such a statement is of course indicative of the milieu in which the Báb was writing. It is remarkable that this kind of denigration of important proto-Sunni personalities is absent from the Báb's *Tafsīr sūrat Yūsuf*, written shortly after this commentary. The theme is an old and definitive one in Shi‘i literature and was given new life and energy during the Safavid period. By the time the Báb was writing it had become a standard element of religious vocabulary and identity in the socio-historical setting, and one which lends concrete and immediate meaning to various passages in the Quran read in this Shi‘i milieu. Akhbari Quran interpretation took for granted the perfidy of the first three Caliphs, as did other schools of Shi‘i exegesis.²⁷

One of the earliest occurrences of the idea of False *walāya* is at verse Q 2:58:

And when We said, ‘enter this township, and eat easefully of it wherever you will, and enter in at the gate, prostrating, and say, “unburden us”; We

²⁶ Landolt, *Walāya* 317.

²⁷ Gruber, *Curse*; Lawson, *Akhbārī*.

will forgive you your transgressions, and increase the good-doers.' [Q 2:58]
(translation slightly adapted)

Because the commentary on this verse contains several typical and significant elements, and because it is relatively concise, it is reproduced here in its entirety.²⁸

That which is intended (*wa'l-murād*) by **township** is the shoreless and bottomless sea of the exclusive unity (*hujjat al-aḥadiyya*) and the **gate** (*bāb*) is 'Alī, upon him be peace.²⁹

Verily the Messenger of God, may God bless him and his family, has said: "I am the city of wisdom (*ḥikma*) and 'Alī is its gate."²⁸ God commanded all people (*ahl al-imkān wa'l-akwān*) to **enter the township** of the sign of the prophethood of Muḥammad, may God bless him and his family, through allegiance to 'Alī, upon him be peace, **prostrating** to God and magnifying Him **and saying** at the time of their confession of the *walāya* of 'Alī, upon him be peace, "**unburden us**" (*ḥiṭṭatun*). That is to say: "[Give us] freedom (*barā'atun*) from allegiance to the First (*walāyat al-awwal*) and his followers, may God curse them."

We will forgive you your transgressions resulting from allegiance to the False One (*walāyat al-bāṭil*) and **we will increase** the recognition (*ma'rifa*) of the secrets (*asrār*) of 'Alī, upon him be peace, ... **For those who do good** (*al-muḥsinīn*). The [true] muslim is the one who submits, with his whole being (*bi-kullihī*), to him ('Alī).

God has put in all created things a sign (*āya*) pertaining to His own self (*'an nafsihī*) and a city (*madīna*) pertaining to His prophet (*'an nabihī*). And He (God or Muḥammad?) fashioned the form of 'Alī, upon him be peace, with His own hand at (*'alā*) the **gate** of the city. And He commanded those who attain [the gate] to **prostrate** to him (*li-nafsihī* = 'Alī) through "the lifting of veils and allusions (*bi-kashf al-subuḥāt wa'l-ishārāt*)" and to enter through this **gate** by renouncing all but him ('Alī).

He who obeys his Lord according to these allusions (*ishārāt*) is the one who truly says, "**unburden us**" [in the way the Quran intends it]. And verily God will **forgive** him to the extent that His knowledge encompasses the sin of the one who says, "**unburden us**" and He will **increase**, through His power, his potential as much as such is possible in the contingent

²⁸ The following passage is found at *Baqara* 190–191.

²⁹ Cf. a later Babi understanding of *al-qurā*, mentioned in MacEoin, *Messiah* 195 & 348.

world.³⁰ There is no ceasing of the bounty of God (*ḥayd allāh*). And he who enters through this **gate** the Merciful will make lawful for him whatever he wants.³¹ And to the grace of God there is no cease. And in this **gate** he wants only what the Merciful wants. Therefore, at the time of the [“creation of”] Will, the object of the Will is also created concomitantly (*bi-lā faṣl*). This is one of the bounties of God for the **good-doers**.

The Imam al-Bāqir, upon whom be peace, said: “We are the **gate** of your **repentance/forgiveness** (*ḥiṭṭatikum*).”³²

He who understands His [divine] speech (i.e. the Quran) is the one who has understood the melody of his allusion: “I testify that they [all the Imams] are the **gate of repentance** in all the worlds. And we submit to them.”³³

The implications this passage has for an understanding of the Báb's eventual appropriations of the title **Gate** are obvious and this topic has been dealt with elsewhere.³⁴ It is clear from this interpretation, however, that False *walāya* pertains not only to what the Shi'a consider to have been the tragic turn in the history of Islam, but that it has implications for the inner life of the soul. Here the reference to Abū Bakr is read as a convenient symbol or personification of the otherwise abstract idea of misdirected belief.

The next specific mention of false *walāya* appears in the Báb's commentary on Q 2:61. This long verse is one of the few that the Báb quotes and comments on in sections. The commentary in question occurs at the third and final section:

‘Get you down to Egypt; you shall have there what you demanded.’ and abasement and poverty were pitched upon them, and they were laden with the burden of God's anger; that, because they had disbelieved the signs of God and slain the prophets unrightfully; that, because they disobeyed, and were transgressors. [Q 2:61]

30 *Baqara* 191: *fi ḥaqq al-imkān*.

31 *Faqad ḥallala lahu al-rahmān mā shā'a*. Cf. “The friends of God will have whatever they want” theme in the Quran, e.g. at Q 16:31.

32 See *Burhān*, i:104 #3 and *Nūr*, i:70 #210. This verse also carries an “original Quran” tradition, cf. *Burhān*, i:104 #2 *Nūr*, i:70 #214.

33 *Ashhadu an ... inna naḥnu la-hum muslimūn*. (*Baqara* 191) I have not found the source for this quotation. It sounds like a verse from a devotional work such as *Ziyārat al-jāmi'at al-kabīra*. It may also be the Báb speaking in the first person, a rare but not unknown occurrence in this work.

34 *Gnostic* 46–74.

When the people of the fathomless shoreless sea of the divine inclusive unity accepted that which was meaner than the most exalted land (*balad al-a'lā*), God **cast them down** [variation on **get you down**] from the depth of *walāya* to the **Egypt** of contingency.

And the abasement of [mere] allusions (*ishārāt*) and the poverty of limitations (*ḥudūdāt*) were pitched upon them. They merited [only] the false *walāya* (*walāya bāṭila*) [at the time of] origination (*bi-ibdā'*) of the true *walāya* (*walāyat al-ḥaqq*) of truth because they disbelieved in the *walāya* of 'Alī, the origin of all signs. Whoever disbelieves in his *walāya*, disbelieves in the signs of the exclusive unity and the tokens of the divine inclusive unity and the stations of *nubuwwa*. It is because of this disbelief that **they killed the prophets wrongfully**. Because God made all the Prophets as rays of the sign of His *walī*, he who rejects his *walāya* has, at the time of such rejection, in fact **killed the prophets**.³⁵

Such a statement transposes the whole painful Sunni/Shi'i polemic, in which the first three caliphs suffer so much derision, to a metaphysical register quite beyond, though not necessarily excluding, the concerns of a comparatively narrow communalism. The "historical location" of the events referred to in Q 2:61 is meaningful for the Báb insofar as it permits him to speak about more fundamental spiritual issues. By use of the term inclusive unity, it would appear that false *walāya* here does not represent pure unalloyed evil; rather, it is seen as a lesser unity. And, it was because the "people of the inclusive (or restricted) unity" themselves desired a lower station, that they were cast out by God from the true *walāya* of allegiance to 'Alī into the "**Egypt** of the contingent world" (*miṣr al-imkān*). Thus, they brought upon themselves those afflictions mentioned in the verse. As such, these comments seem to offer something like an Islamic theory of "original sin". One should also note the somewhat disconcerting usage "cast down from the depth of *walāya* (*hujjat al-walāya*)" and bear in mind that even if the verb may be translated as "cast out" the paradox of being "sent down" or degraded by being caused to come *up* out of the depth of *walāya* is probably not accidental.³⁶

False *walāya* is further indicated at Q 2:67, which the Báb has divided in two for the purposes of his commentary. Here the Quran tells the story of Moses leading the Children of Israel through the wilderness. In particular, it tells of

35 *Baqara* 194.

36 Note the interesting parallel in Shaykh Aḥmad's discussion of *tafawwāqa* and *ta'ammaqa* in connection with the "veiled secret/*sirr mastūr*" (see Chapter 2): its meaning is simultaneously too high and too deep. *Ziyāra*, iii:208.

the rebelliousness of those who were given certain commandments by God through Moses. The specific command is to sacrifice a cow, and the episode itself is the subject of several successive verses. An excerpt from this commentary follows the citation of the entire verse:

And when Moses said to his people, 'God commands you to sacrifice a cow.' They said, 'dost thou take us in mockery?' He said, 'I take refuge with God, lest I should be one of the ignorant.' [Q 2:67]

When God commanded Muḥammad to communicate to the people of the contingent world [the order to] sacrifice the concerns and affairs of the self (*al-shu'ūnāt wa'l-aṭwār al-naḥsāniyya*) and to turn their backs (*idbār*) to the False *walāya* which is the cow, he communicated [it] on the eighteenth day of the month of pilgrimage that which he was commanded to [communicate] by his Lord.³⁷

The Báb then cites a portion of the Farewell Pilgrimage sermon, which represents for him, it seems, not only a re-articulation of the basic theme of the verse but more importantly, the true type of covenant-taking by which all others must be measured, including the primordial event described at Q 7:172.³⁸ The implication here is that while the verse in one of its intentions actually refers to the history of Moses' ordeal in the wilderness with the querulous Children of Israel, its more important significance should be seen in connection with the so-called salvation history of the Shi'a. In this way, history itself is seen to be unified: Moses is Muḥammad and the Children of Israel are the Muslim community through the legal sorcery of typological figuration. Typology, as mentioned earlier, indicates that in some ways the passage of historical time is actually an illusion altogether in the sense that time itself is an illusion and that all these apparently separate and discrete events share the same meta-temporal ground: the Day of the Covenant. The celebrated passage from the prophet Muḥammad's Farewell Pilgrimage is:

Whoever I am the master of [The Báb adds here: 'in the worlds of unity (*awālim al-waḥda*)'] then this man 'Alī is his master (*mawlāhu*). O God,

37 *Baqara* 201. Note here the use of *idbār*, a possible allusion to the famous [the first thing God created was 'aql'](#) tradition on which now see Crow, *Islam and Reason*.

38 The association of the *walāya* of 'Alī with the primordial covenant is a reading common to Akhbari tafsīr: *Burhān*, ii:46–51 *ad* Q 7:172: [And when the Lord took from the Children of Adam, from their loins, their seed, and made them testify ...](#); cf. also *Burhān*, i:463–467 *ad* Q 5:3: [today I have perfected your religion for you ...](#)

befriend him who befriends him and be an enemy to him who is enemy to him. Assist to victory whoever assists him to victory, and abandon (*kha-dhala*) him whoever abandons him.³⁹

Both Sunni and Shi'i sources cite this tradition (and several variants) as a sound report. It has, however, been subject to various interpretations due, mainly, to the wide semantic range of the word *mawlā*. However, because of its status as a widely attested report (*mutawātir*) this passage has been cited by the Shi'a from the earliest times as a proof-text for their claims.⁴⁰

Walāya is that by and upon which a human's distinctive and sacred faculty of choice (*ikhtiyār*) is exercised. In this respect, all human beings, it would appear, are created equal. Several verses are interpreted by the Báb as upholding this principle, for example his commentary on the following:

So woe to those who write the book with their hands, then say, 'this is from God,' that they may sell it for a little price; so woe to them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for their earnings. [Q 2:79]

Here the Báb says that all created things were **writing** the excellence (*fadl*) of 'Alī **with their hands** "by means of what they chose for themselves". At some point, however, certain ones abandoned the exclusive unity of the *walāya* of 'Alī and brought **woe** upon themselves by **writing** his excellence with their own hands. That is, they distorted his excellence by ascribing it to someone else. The *walāya* of 'Alī, for having been acknowledged but rejected by them, will destroy them. This is the meaning of **selling for a little price**. On the other hand, those who remained in this exclusive unity continued to benefit from this virtue or excellence. The Quranic **woe** (*al-wayl*) is itself a direct reference to and synonym for False *walāya*, and the fact that it is mentioned three times refers to the successive caliphates of "the First, Second, and Third".⁴¹ Here it is clear that False *walāya* is not restricted to one personality, but like absolute *walāya*, it represents an enduring perhaps even ontic principle. The following passages present the same "dangerous" aspects of the *walāya* of 'Alī. In the first example it is characterized as a punishment:

39 *Baqara* 201. See al-Mufid, *Kitāb al-irshād* 124.

40 See Landolt, *Walāyah*, and the reference there to the *Hāshimīyyāt* of al-Kumayt b. Zayd al-Asadī (743/126), 318. See also Veccia Vaglieri, *Ghadir*.

41 *Baqara* 219–220. It is surely not accidental to the tafsir offered here that the word *wayl* may be seen as a "corruption/*muḥarraf bihi*" or even reversal of the word *walī*.

And they say, ‘the fire shall not touch us save a number of days.’ [Q 2:80]

Those who love the false *walāya* [or; the *walāya* of the false one] have indeed worshipped the *CALF* (*al-‘ijl*). And they say, ‘the fire shall not touch us’ that is (*ay*) the *walāya* of ‘Alī, ‘save a number of days’ during the lifetime of the Messenger of God.⁴²

This refers to the duplicity of those who accepted the Prophet’s nomination of ‘Alī at Ghadīr Khumm, only to renege later. Among them, according to Shi‘i tradition, was the arch villain ‘Umar himself:

Among those who were profuse in their congratulations on [‘Alī’s] position was ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. He gave a public appearance of great joy at it, saying: “Bravo, bravo, ‘Alī, you have become my master and the master of every believing man and woman.”⁴³

The subject arises again in the commentary on the following verse:

When there has come to them a messenger from God confirming what was with them, a party of them that were given the book reject the book of God behind their backs, as though they knew not. [Q 2:101]

This verse is interpreted as referring to Muḥammad’s bringing the imperative of “servitude to [‘Alī’s] self” (*bi’l-‘ubūdiyya li-naḥsihi*) in the realm of timeless origination—the Day of the Covenant, which confirms not only that which is with you, but “that which came before and that which will come after you”. However, a party of those to whom God had given the “possibility of shining by following the *walāya* of ‘Alī”, reject the book of his *walāya* behind the false *walāya*.⁴⁴

At verse 102, the Báb makes a series of comments relevant to the frequently encountered notions of Exclusive and Inclusive unity. Here the terms are seen to refer to True and False *walāya* respectively. It is interesting that in this passage, even false *walāya*, as noted earlier, has some positive aspects:

Solomon disbelieved not, but the satans disbelieved, teaching the people sorcery, and that which was sent down upon Babylon’s two angels, Harut and Marut; they taught not any man, without they said, ‘we are

42 *Baqara* 220. Note how *fire* is transformed into a positive factor as the “*walāya* of ‘Alī”.

43 al-Mufid, *Kitāb al-irshād* 125.

44 *Baqara* 242.

but a temptation (*fitnatun*); do not disbelieve.' From them they learned how they might divide a man and his wife, yet they did not hurt any man thereby, save by the leave of God, and they learned what hurt them, and did not profit them, knowing well that whoso buys it shall have no share in the world to come; evil then was that which they sold themselves for, if they had but known. [Q 2:102]

And that which was sent down upon Babylon's two angels, Harut and Marut; they learned, from the two, how they might divide a man and his wife, is an allusion to the one who abides in the land of the Two Gulfs⁴⁵ because it is he who understands [the relationship between] the Exclusively Unitary Lordship and the servitude of the self.⁴⁶ Yet they, i.e., the people of the inclusive unity, did no harm in the place (*mash'ar*) where the perception of his Lord occurs,⁴⁷ namely through the *walāya* of any one of the infernal imams, save by the leave of God, that is (*ay*) by the *walāya* of 'Alī.

And he who follows the *walāya* of the False One, has indeed learned what hurt him, from hating the Truth⁴⁸ and [that the only thing which] profits him (i.e., the only thing he gains) is Hell and the deprivation (*hirmān*) of the meeting with God.⁴⁹

Some notice of the way the Báb introduces these comments is in order, inasmuch as they may reveal something of the way he saw himself at this time:

As for the tafsir of this blessed verse, it is as profound as the profundity of Origination itself, glorified be its Originator. And behold! I am the one who can explain its reality and wisdom.⁵⁰

45 I.e., 'Alī: *al-wāqif fī arḍ al-tuṭunjayn*. On the famous, influential and highly abstruse Sermon of the Two Gulfs (*Khuṭbat al-taṭanjīyya* or *tuṭunjīyya* or *tuṭanjīyya*) see the pioneering study of Corbin in *Intineraire* 113–118. See also the comments in Lawson, *Dawning* 269–270. For the importance of this motif in the Báb's *Tafsīr sūrat Yūsuf*, see *Gnostic* 84–92. For a discussion of the vocabulary, see McCants, *A grammar* esp. 75.

46 *L* 18: *mush'ir bi'l-rubūbiyya al-aḥadiyya wa'l-'ubūdiyya al-naḥsāniyya*; *Baqara* 245: *mush'iraturun*.

47 *Fī mash'ari al-naẓari bi-rabbi-hi min aḥadin*. On the translation of *mash'ar* see Corbin, *Pénétrations* 41–44.

48 So *L* 18: *mā yaḍurruhu 'an bughḍ al-ḥaqq*; *Baqara* 245 and *I* 338: *mā yaḍurruhu 'an bu'd al-ḥaqq*; *C* f. 91b: *mā yaḍurruhu ba'd al-ḥaqq*.

49 *Baqara* 245.

50 *Baqara* 244. Such statements, though not frequent, occur several times in the tafsir.

Walāya of the First, Second, and Third

In the above discussion of false *walāya*, the term *walāya* of the first (*walāyat al-awwal*) was encountered. As mentioned above, this designation has a double reference. On the historical level, it alludes to the fact of Abū Bakr's acceptance of the caliphate upon the death of Muḥammad, becoming thereby the first successor to the Prophet. In what Corbin calls the metahistorical dimension, we have already seen that this primacy also refers to the first act of disobedience at the time of the creation of Adam, when God commanded the angels to prostrate themselves before the first man. Taken in this sense, the figure of Abū Bakr acquires the features of the symbol of a cosmic principle of rebelliousness to God's command, which puts him quite beyond the concerns of simple sectarian polemic while at the same time not being completely innocent of the same.⁵¹ In addition to these two aspects of the designation "First", the term carries with it a certain element of irony in that as a theological term, it is one of the recognized names (*asmā'*) of God.⁵² Furthermore, in normal discourse, it is used as a positive adjective of primacy in the sense of "foremost" or "most important". Is this another case of apocalyptic reversal at the level of semantics/rhetoric? The word is used frequently in this last sense in the tafsir, as for example at verse 3, in the Báb's discussion of the ritual prayer (*ṣalāt*), where the Báb says that *ṣalāt* is the first or foremost station of distinction between God and the lover.⁵³

By way of further clarification, the Báb discusses the Quranic *al-ākhirā*, usually **the hereafter**, which may also be thought of as the opposite of *al-awwal*. At verse 4, the Báb says of the word **hereafter** that it is in fact a designation of 'Alī. His *walāya* is the thing that was revealed to Muḥammad, and God has raised no prophet, nor revealed any book or command, except through the *walāya* of 'Alī.⁵⁴ Thus it would appear to carry the idea of "I am the alpha and the omega" with the emphasis here on omega. 'Alī, thus designated, is the ultimate goal or telos of creation, as in the famous hadith *qudsī*: "If it were not for thee,

51 For example, his identification as Iblīs brings with it a whole series of extremely complex questions revolving around the problem of the way this figure is to be understood in: [1] The Quran, [2] Islamic Theology, [3] Mysticism and Theosophy, and the implications all this might have for an adequate appreciation of the problem of evil in Islamic philosophy. For an introduction to the figure of "the devil" in Islam, see Awn, *Satan's*.

52 E.g., Q 57:3: He is the First and the Last, the Outward and the Inward.

53 *Baqara* 25.

54 *Baqara* 35.

I would not have created the heavens” known as the hadith *law-lak*, the hadith of “if not for thee.”⁵⁵

One of the earliest allusions to the *walāya* of the First is found in the Báb’s commentary at verse 24. This is one of the so-called *taḥaddī* verses in which those who doubt the divine source of Muḥammad’s revelation are challenged to produce something comparable:

If you do not—and you will not—then fear the fire, whose fuel is men and stones, prepared for unbelievers. [Q 2:24]

Interestingly, the Báb shifts the reference away from the Quranic challenge, and discusses the verse in the following terms:

God [here] provides information [*akhbara*] about their *kufr* [and His statement may be phrased this way]: if you do not accept the *hujja* of the exclusive unity in the contingent dimension of your beings (*imkānikum*) then you will never recognize the absolute *walāya* of ‘Alī in the actualized dimension of your beings (*akwānikum*). Then fear [heed > *ittaqū*] the fire of the call (*da‘wa*) of Ḥusayn on the Day of Ashura. And if you do not heed, God will make this retreat (*idbār*) the fire of the love of the First (*maḥabbat al-awwal*) whose fuel, is the Second (‘Umar) and stones [will be] the Third (‘Uthmān). God has prepared the love (*ḥubb*) of these three for unbelievers.⁵⁶

Although the word *walāya* is not used here, a substitute or related term “love” (*maḥabba*, i.e., of “the First”), is clearly opposed to the idea of the absolute *walāya* of ‘Alī. The commentary on this verse also carries one of the earliest references to the related negative designations of “the second” and “the third” and illustrates one of the more frequent exegetical techniques used by the Báb, who many times exploits a series of substantives in order to more fully elaborate his theme. Here the Quranic fire, fuel, and stones are each considered separately. Through the sin of ingratitude (*kufr*), love is transformed into an infernal flame. It is not clear whether the equating of ‘Umar with fuel, while ‘Uthmān is associated with stones, represents a significant gradation. One of the more important aspects of this section of the Báb’s commentary is the equivalence *walāya*/*maḥabba*. Either term can be positive or negative, as in the case here

⁵⁵ A very well-known tradition.

⁵⁶ *Baqara* 85. Note the Quranic *‘u’iddat* / prepared.

of wrongly-directed love, which ultimately becomes **fire**. Love as a synonym for *walāya* is of course not new with the Báb,⁵⁷ but it is important that this aspect of *walāya* be constantly kept in mind as a means of holding the other connotations of the term, such as “authority” and “power” in perspective.⁵⁸ It is this equivalence that led Corbin to state that Shi‘ism is pre-eminently a religion of love.⁵⁹ This is, of course, a very large assertion and one that must be considered in the somewhat rarified context of Corbin’s key sources. However, insofar as devotion to the *walāya* of the Imam represents, in essence, an act of love, the assertion stands as long as it is remembered that the corresponding “sacred hatred” (*tabarra*) is frequently equally prominent.⁶⁰ In the commentary immediately preceding this section, the idea of primal evil is also brought out:

And if you are in doubt concerning what we have revealed to Our servant, then bring a sura like it, and call your witnesses, apart from God, if you are truthful. [Q 2:23] (translation adjusted)

Doubt (*rayb*), we are told, is the quality of the First (*ṣifat al-awwal*) and his followers.⁶¹ The verse is then paraphrased:

O those of **you who are in doubt** and non-recognition⁶² **concerning that which was revealed to our servant** Muḥammad touching the *walāya* of ‘Alī! [If you are in doubt] **then** search through all the contingent worlds. Is it possible that there is anyone equal to ‘Alī in the matter of the caliphate? If it is possible, then prove it through your witnesses (*fa-‘tarifū bi-shuhadā’i-kum*) from among those you have set up as signs of your Lord (*āyāt rabbikum*) aside from ‘Alī, **if you are truthful**.⁶³

57 E.g. the discussion of *walāya* in *Anwār* 337–338. The author also says that *wilāya* means “[divine] assistance [therefore victory]” (*al-nuṣra*), and *walāya* means “sovereignty” (*al-imāra, al-sulṭān*). On *maḥabba* as descriptive of the dynamic which binds the believer to his Imam, whether true or false, see *Ziyāra*, ii:201–208.

58 “Love” here corresponds to allegiance, i.e., *tawallā*, or “following”—the Quranic opposite of “disowning/rejecting”, i.e. *tabarra*. It goes from the lower to the higher. “Authority” proceeds from the higher to the lower. On the several intentions of *walāya*, see Landolt, *Walāyah*.

59 *Corbin*, i:329.

60 *Guide* 87–88.

61 *Baqara* 84. *Furū’uḥu* = “his followers”.

62 *Inkār*, “non recognition” is the classic term used to describe the attitude of early enemies of the Shi‘a, and is based on a frequent Quranic root.

63 *Baqara* 84.

At this commentary “love” is also associated with *walāya*. The Báb says:

None can attain to the *lujja* of the exclusive divine unity except by means of his (‘Alī’s) *walāya*. It is the goal (*maqṣūd*) of your existence (*wujūdikum*), because God has made you for the sake of this love (*maḥabba*). And He has put His life (*ḥayātuhu*) and His glory (*‘izzuhu*) in it, to the extent that such is possible in the contingent world—if only you were truthful—(meaning) if only you knew.⁶⁴

At verse 27, the First is identified as the one who first broke the covenant of God (not in historical time but in primordial time), and as such has significance for the above-mentioned metahistorical dimension of sacred history:

Such as break the covenant of God after its solemn binding, and such as cut what God has commanded should be joined, and such as do corruption in the land—they shall be the losers. [Q 2:27]

The Báb says that the phrase: *those who broke the covenant* refers to the *covenant* (*‘ahd*) of Muḥammad, about the signs of ‘Alī and was instituted in the unseen, spiritual world referred to in the Quran as *al-ghayb*:

These signs were placed within (*fī*) the atoms (*dharr*) of the hearts [which represents] the station (*maqām*) of *tawḥīd*, and [in] the atoms of the intellects [which represents] the level (*rutba*) of *nubuwwa*, and [in] the atoms of souls [which represents] the abode of *imāma*, and [in] the atoms of the bodies [which represents] the place (*maḥall*) of the love of the Shi‘a *after* God imposed this *solemn binding* upon all created things [which is] faith in Muḥammad, ‘Alī Ḥasan, Ḥusayn, Ja‘far, Mūsā, and Fāṭima. *They shall be* the disbelievers (*kāfirūn* instead of the Quranic *khāsirūn*, all *mss.*).⁶⁵

This statement is of course an affirmation of the doctrine of the four supports for which the Shaykhiyya are well known. Such presence of the doctrine in this work contradicts the view that it appeared in its robust form only with such later Shaykhi leaders as Karīm Khān Kirmānī (1873) as suggested in the com-

64 *Baqara* 84–85.

65 *Baqara* 94.

ments of the later Shaykhi leader Abu'l-Qāsim Khān Ibrāhīmī (1969).⁶⁶ “Atoms” is not a completely satisfactory translation, “seeds” being more suited to the idea of “development” which is intended here. The technical vocabulary is very old in Shi‘ism, reaching as far back as Saffār al-Qummī’s (903) *Baṣā’ir al-darajāt*. His usages of *‘ālam al-dharr*, *al-aẓilla*, *al-ashbāḥ*, are studied in *Guide*.⁶⁷ It is quite possible that the best “translation” is, finally, the Greek *logoi spermatikoi*/λόγοι σπερματικοί.⁶⁸

The Báb continues:

The first who **broke the covenant** of God in the contingent world in all of its stations, from the sign of *tawhīd* to the last limit of multiplicity was Abū al-Dawāhī, may God curse him. He **broke the covenant** of God concerning His friends in the worlds of *al-ghayb* and **cut** the *walāya* of ‘Alī in its visible manifestations (*fī mazāhirihi*, *sic*) namely the Imams of the visible world (*a’immat al-shahāda*) ...⁶⁹

With this commentary we encounter the designation of Abū Bakr—Abū al-Dawāhī, “Father of Iniquities”. The Báb refers to the first Caliph this way throughout the commentary, just as ‘Umar is often called Abū al-Shurūr, “Father of Evils”. These derogatory names are most assuredly not inventions of the Báb and have been part of the ancient Shi‘i “institution” of *ṣabb al-ṣaḥāba* “insulting the Companions [who did not recognize Imamate]” from the earliest days.⁷⁰ At verse 34, in one of the several brief citations of the famous *Khuṭbat al-shiqshiqiyya* that appear in the tafsir, the *khuṭba* is quoted in connection with the Divine command to the angels to prostrate before Adam. All of the angels bowed except Iblis, “that is the First, and he is the one about whom ‘Alī said: ‘Verily Ibn Abī Quhāfa,’—and he is Abū al-Dawāhī—‘assumed the man-

66 Added in his pioneering treatment of the doctrine: Amir-Moezzi, Une absence 2. On the spiritual significance of *dharr* in early Sufism, see Böwering, *Mystical* q.v. index *dharr*.

67 *Guide* 16, 32, 33, 37, 162, 163, 165, 222, 224.

68 Kazemi, *Mysteries*.

69 *Baqara* 94–95.

70 The first three Caliphs are frequently called *fulān* in the Akhbari literature which has been published. Whether the manuscript sources of this literature contain other less neutral names is something that can only be speculated upon. See the relevant discussion of *fulān* in Kohlberg, Some *Ṣaḥāba*. Goldziher, Spottnamen, e.g. *Die drei Frevler*, 322. See also *Guide* 87–88, 150 (where there is an interesting connection asserted between *ṣabb al-ṣaḥāba* and the return of the hidden Imam), 203–204.

tle (*la-qad taqammaṣahā* [i.e., of the caliphate]).⁷¹ This *Khuṭba* is found in the canonical *Nahj al-balāgha* and is referred to often by Shi'i writers. It begins as follows:

By God! that man snatched the caliphate as if it were a garment which could be put on by him, while all the while he knew that my station was like that of the pivot (*quṭb*) of the grinding stone.⁷²

Although no name, apart from *fulān* ("so-and-so") is mentioned here, the statement is universally understood as referring to Abū Bakr, as the editor of the *Nahj al-balāgha*, Muḥammad 'Abduh, points out. The *Khuṭba* continues to explain how the next two Caliphs wrongfully usurped 'Alī's position and the reasons for which this was tolerated by the Imam. The title of the sermon is derived in the following way. 'Alī's condemnation and lament was interrupted by the arrival of a messenger with a letter which 'Alī then read, breaking off the impassioned complaint. After 'Alī had read the letter, Ibn 'Abbās asked him to resume his theme to which the Imam replied: "In no way, in no way. It was like the foam on the camel's mouth (*shiqshiqā*) as it opens its mouth to bellow and then falls silent."⁷³ It is interesting to note here the presence of the root *Q-M-Ṣ* from which derives *qamīṣ*, "garment, robe, shirt, cloak". The word figures as the centerpiece in the Sura of Joseph and symbolizes authority, revelation, *walāya*, betrayal, filial love, paternal love, obedience, beauty and interpretation that will be drawn out in the Báb's slightly later *Tafsīr sūrat Yūsuf*.⁷⁴ Apart from this, the "shirt of Joseph" is important to commentators in a variety of ways throughout the long history of Quran commentary.⁷⁵

The next mention of the First occurs at verses 41 and 42, which are separated in the text by their respective commentaries, but are presented together here for convenience:

And believe in that which I have sent down, confirming that which is with you, and be not the first to disbelieve in it. And sell not My signs for a little price; and fear you Me. [Q 2:41] and do not confound the truth with vanity, and do not conceal the truth wittingly. [Q 2:42]

⁷¹ *Baqara* 131–132.

⁷² *Nahj al-balāgha*, i:30–38, material translated 30–31. Cf. al-Mufid, *Kitāb al-irshād* 212, where Ibn Abī Quḥāfa (Abū Bakr) is mentioned by name.

⁷³ *Nahj al-balāgha*, i:37 as translated in al-Mufid, *Kitāb al-Irshād* 213.

⁷⁴ *Gnostic* 93–139.

⁷⁵ Lawson, *Quran* 58–62.

The **first** [here positive!] that was sent down from God was the sign of the Divine Ipseity (*āyat hūwīyya*). And it⁷⁶ is the sign of the *walāya* belonging to ‘Alī (*li- ‘Alī*). And it is this sign⁷⁷ that is **confirming**⁷⁸ **that which is with you** through servitude to God.

And God placed the pre-existent form⁷⁹ of this sign in all created things, for [effecting] faith thereby in order that he [the individual thing] might pass away⁸⁰ and forget all things through its undying holiness (*li-baqā’i-hā*) and its (the *āya*’s) **remembrance**.

And he who turned away from it (*a’raḍa ‘anhā*), was **the first to disbelieve in it**⁸¹ (*walāya* or *āya*). {And none in *al-inkān* but Abū al-Dawāhī, may the curse of God be upon him, turned away from it **first**. And for that reason, he became **the first to disbelieve in him/it**}.⁸²

And God commanded His servants to **be not** (*lā takūnū*) like him, because whoever turns away from the sign of the Family of God becomes (*fa-huwa*) a sign of the First, and becomes [also] **the first to disbelieve in it**.⁸³

This particular *khavar* is of some interest. It is preserved in ‘Ayyāshī’s tafsir on the authority of the father of the important disciple of al-Šādiq, Mufaḍḍal al-Ju’fī, namely one Jābir al-Ju’fī (745) who asked the Imam al-Bāqir about the explanation of this same verse from the esoteric point of view (*sa’altu Abā Ja’far ‘an tafsīr hādhihi ‘l-āyat fi bāṭin al-Qur’ān*). The Imam’s response helps us understand exactly how the word *bāṭin* was used: “**and be not the first to disbelieve in**

76 *Baqara* 169; *I* 278 and *L* 5 = *hīya*; *C* f. 69a = *huwa*.

77 It is important to bear in mind the two meanings of *āya*: sign or verse. The statement undoubtedly connotes a reference to those verses which are interpreted by the Shi’a to be “explicit and unambiguous (cf. *muḥkam*)” confirmations of ‘Alī’s appointment by Muḥammad, e.g., *Q* 5:55. For more on such verses, see Rajab al-Bursī, *al-Durr al-thamīn*, which is a study of the 500 Quran verses said by the author to be directly concerned with ‘Alī.

78 *C* f. 69a = *muṣaddiq^{an}* as Quran. All other *mss.*: *muṣaddiqat^{an}* to agree with *āya*.

79 *Shabāḥ*, but it is susceptible of eventual life or existentialiation. By this time, these *aṣḥbāḥ* quite possibly function as a bowdlerized equivalent to Ibn Arabis *a’yān thābita*.

80 *Baqara* 169; *yafnā*; *C* f. 63b: *naḥā*. Here is a typical example of the use in this commentary of Sufi technical terminology by the Báb, i.e., *fanā’ wa baqā’*.

81 *C* f. 63b: *bi-hi*; all other *mss.* = *bi-hā*.

82 {---} represents a lacuna in *C* f. 63b. This folio contains several errors or variants and it is therefore doubtful that this gap represents any attempt at sanitization. Other errors on this folio to be found are at lines 4–6, which present an exact duplication of the previous four lines and the variants mentioned in the two previous notes. Perhaps this portion of the *ms.* was written under some kind of stress.

83 *Baqara* 169. Cf. *Burhān*, i:91, #2 where a similar idea is conveyed by referring to Abū Bakr as “*fulān*”.

him/it, that is, so-and-so and his companion (*ṣāḥib*), and whoever follows him and subjects himself to their claim (*wa man dāna bi-dīni-him*). God reproves such by saying **be not the first to disbelieve in him**, that is [the pronoun stands for] ‘Alī.”

And those who **sell the signs** of God by looking to other than the Family of God, have **sold for a small price** [which is the price of] the vision of *walāya* itself (or, the *āya* itself: *bi-ru’yati naḥsi-hā*).⁸⁴

Verily he who accepts (*al-rāḍi*) permanence (*baqā’*) throughout the degrees (*aṭwār*) of the *ṭamṭām* of the inclusive unity of the stations (*maqāmāt*) of Mercifulness, such a one has then **sold** the signs of the exclusive unity for the **price of** the inclusive unity. And this is [a] **small [price]**.⁸⁵

And **me** (*īyāya*) is (*ay*) the depth (*luḡja*) of the exclusive unity.

And **fear ye** [refers to the fact] that the servant will never perfect pious fear (*taqwā*) except when he is firmly established in the cloud (*‘amā*) of the Eternal Refuge (*al-ṣamadiyya*). Otherwise, as long as he continues to travel throughout the degrees of the inclusive unity he will continue to abide (*huwa al-wāqif*) in the station of limitation (*mash’ar al-ḥadd*). And God has forbidden the People of Love (*aḥl al-maḥabba*) from this station (*al-mawqif*) with His statement **fear you me**.⁸⁶

84 I.e., they have lost the vision of ‘Alī and gained a **small price** instead. *Baqara* 169–170. The act of regarding anything else, since anything else is incapable of satisfying spiritual need, is a trifling recompense. N.b. C f. 63b: *bi-āyati naḥsihi*.

85 The Báb adapts the grammar of the Quran to mean that **price** is now the thing acquired, *Baqara* 170. These terms have been dealt with elsewhere in these pages except for *aṭwār*, plural of *ṭawr*. On this word in ‘*Ayn al-Quḍāt*’ see T. Izutsu, *Creation*, 126; cf. Isfarāyīnī, *Le Rélévateur*, q.v. index “coeur, sphères du, *aṭwār-i dil*”.

86 The term “cloud” (*‘amā*) has a rich and complex history. As this word is frequently encountered in the writings of the Báb, some reference to this history is in order. The word figures in a hadith ascribed to the Prophet:

He was asked: “Where was our Lord before He created creation?” The Prophet answered: “In *al-‘amā* having no air above or beneath it.”

A part of this tradition is quoted by Ibn Arabi (*Fuṣūṣ* 1, 111) and al-Kāshānī, who cites it in a shorter form (the editor of *al-Iṣṭilāḥāt* gives a variant: “... having air above it and beneath it.”) in the above form, comments as follows:

[A]l-‘*amā* is the level (*ḥaḍra*) of the exclusive unity, according to us ... It is said that it is the level of the inclusive unity which is the place where the divine names and attributes appear, because *al-‘amā* is a thin cloud (*al-ghaim al-raḥīq*), and this cloud is a screen between heaven and earth. Therefore, this level is a screen between the heaven of the

As this word is something of a technical term in the writings of the Báb, some reference to its history is in order. Its locus classicus is a hadith ascribed to the Prophet:

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[A] *l-‘amā* is the level (*ḥaḍra*) of the exclusive unity (*al-aḥadiyya*), according to us ... It is said that it is the level of the inclusive unity (*al-wāḥidiyya*) which is the place where the divine names and attributes appear, because *al-‘amā*’ is a thin cloud (*al-ghaim al-raqīq*), and this cloud is a screen between heaven and earth. Therefore, this level is a screen between the heaven of the exclusive unity and the earth of creaturely multiplicity, about which not even the [above] hadith from the Prophet is very helpful.⁸⁷

Izutsu’s translation, “abysmal darkness” (*Sufism* 119) and Austin’s “The Dark Cloud” (*Bezels* 134) do not convey the diaphanous quality which al-Kāshānī emphasizes, suggesting a thin cloud at such a high altitude that it seems to appear and disappear from one moment to the next.⁸⁸

The Báb continues:

The word of God (*kalām al-ḥaqq*) is the creation (*ijād*) of the thing. And the **truth** (*al-ḥaqq*) is the *walāya* of ‘Alī and the **vanity** (*al-bāṭil*) is the

exclusive unity and the earth of creaturely multiplicity, about which not even the [above] hadith from the Prophet is very helpful. (al-Kāshānī, *al-Iṣṭilāḥāt* 131–132.)

Izutsu’s translation, “abysmal darkness” (*Sufism and Taoism* 119) and Austin’s “The Dark Cloud” (*The Bezels of Wisdom* 134) do not convey the diaphanous quality which al-Kāshānī emphasizes, suggesting a thin cloud at such a high altitude that it seems to appear and disappear from one moment to the next. (My thanks to Dr. Muhammad Afnan for this insight, personal communication, June 1980.) An important discussion of the use of the term in Babi and Bahai literature is Lambden, *An Early Poem*.

87 al-Kāshānī, *al-Iṣṭilāḥāt* 131–132, the editor gives a variant: “... having air above it and beneath it.”

88 My thanks to the late Dr. Muhammad Afnan for this insight, personal communication, June 1980. An important discussion of the use of the term in Babi and Bahai literature is Lambden, *An Early Poem*.

walāya of the First. God commanded His servants: “Do not try to understand the sign of your own *tawhīd* by means of a quality of the contingent world (*ṣifat al-imkān*), nor be oblivious of the depth of the exclusive unity, *wittingly*”.

Verily, whatever is other than it is *vanity*, while it is the *truth* and the ultimate goal of the bounty of the Lord (*ḥayd al-rabb*).

And the one who looks with other than the eye of God *confounds truth with vanity* and *conceals the truth* after God had taught him the *walāya* of ‘Alī, ... *Then how are you turned about* [Q 10:32].⁸⁹

Another mention of the First, in connection with the topic of *walāya*, is at verse 51:

And when We appointed with Moses forty nights, then you took to yourselves the calf after him and you were evildoers. [Q 2:51]

Here *Moses* means Muḥammad and the *forty nights* represent ‘Alī, who lived for “thirty years after the death of Muḥammad” plus the ten “Proofs” (*ḥujaj*) who were his progeny and successors. Together these eleven Imams represent the period when “their glory was concealed by the darkness of disbelief” (i.e., the *forty nights*). The *calf* (*al-‘iḥl*) is none other than Abū al-Dawāhī. Finally, this darkness of disbelief will be relieved by the advent (*ẓuhūr*) of the Day of the Qā’im. The Báb says here: “When God makes his *cause* (*amr*) to come forth, what I have only hinted at will clearly appear.”⁹⁰

Similar comments may be found throughout the tafsir, notably at Q 2:58, where the *transgressions* which God promises to *forgive* are precisely those resulting from the *walāyat al-bāṭil*. Here *walāya* would seem to mean the “act” of following the wrong Imam.⁹¹ Reference is again made to the *Khutbat al-shiqshiqiyya* in the commentary on Q 2:59, where the *evildoers* are those who *substituted a saying* (*qawl*) by following the one who *wrongly* “assumed

89 *Baqara* 170–171. The complete verse is: *that then is God, your Lord, the true; what is there, after truth, but error? Then how are you turned about?* The allusion is particularly deft because of the obvious similarity in terminology, obvious only to those who “swim in the sea of the Quran”, because the first part of the verse is not mentioned.

90 This is a possible reference to the Báb’s future claims. *Baqara* 183–184. On the connotations of *ẓuhūr* see *Anwār* 227.

91 *Baqara* 190. See below, however, where the Báb says that disbelief in the *walāya* of ‘Alī will never be forgiven.

the mantle (*qamīs*) of the caliphate". Here the Báb also invokes the distinctive Shi'i *tahrīf al-Quran* tradition:

Abū Ja'far said: "Gabriel originally brought this verse to Muḥammad in the following way: *'The evildoers substituted the right of the family of Muḥammad with a statement which had not been said to them. So We sent down upon those who perpetrated evil against the family of Muḥammad wrath out of heaven for their ungodliness.'*"⁹²

This particular *khbar* is found in three of the four major Akhbari commentaries studied at length elsewhere.⁹³ Not only does its use here by the Báb indicate that our author probably consulted other commentaries while writing this one, but it presents a good example of the way in which Akhbari commentators bolstered their claim that "the Quran which we have in our hands is not the whole Quran".⁹⁴ Added rhetorical power resides in the fact that this is an example of *tahrīf* being committed upon a verse whose subject is *tahrīf* (textual corruption).

The commentary on verse Q 2:79 identifies the three separate mentions of *woe* (*al- wayl*) with the first three caliphs.⁹⁵ Elsewhere we are told that the refusal to recognize (*inkār*) the *walāya* of 'Alī is accounted by God as equivalent to "all transgressions". He who, in verse Q 2:81 is described as being *encompassed by his transgression* is in this condition because he *earned* "the *walāya* of the First". Similarly, the *fire of hell* is the subsequent "*walāya* of the Second." To explain further this verse, the Báb quotes a hadith from an anonymous Imam:

⁹² *Baqara* 192.

⁹³ Lawson, Akhbārī. See also Lawson, Note. On the problem of a Shi'i Quran, see the recent and more thorough discussion of the problem from a cultural history perspective by Gruber, The 'restored'. See also Bar Asher, *Scripture* 104; Sayyārī 63, 81.

⁹⁴ For this particular report ascribed to the fifth Imam, see: *Ṣaḥīḥ* i:132; *Burhān* i: 104, #2; *Nūr* i:70, #214. Curiously, the only hadith presented for this verse in *Nūr* is the one mentioned here from *Burhān*. The *isnād* may be of some interest: Muḥammad bin Ya'qūb (i.e. Kulaynī); Aḥmad bin Mihrān (3rd cent. traditionist); 'Abd al-'A'im bin 'Abd Allāh; Muḥammad ibn al-Fuḍayl (follower of al-Ṣādiq, Mūsā and Riḍā, regarded as reliable); Abū Hamza (Naṣīr al-Khādim seems to have been a servant of al-'Askarī); or, al-Thumālī (Thābit b. Dīnār) follower of 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, al-Bāqir and al-Ṣādiq; al-Bāqir. (Information on these figures is taken from al-Mufid, *Kitāb al- irshād*, q.v. biographical index.)

Al-Qummī, *Tafsīr* 25, speaks of Jews and Christians as the *fāsiqīn* intended here. Somewhat closer to the tradition in the Báb's tafsīr is al-'Askarī, margin of al-Qummī, *Tafsīr* 87. He identifies the wrongdoers as those who were not accounted in the *walāya* of Muḥammad and 'Alī, and their descendants.

⁹⁵ *Baqara* 219–220, quoted above, page 23.

When they disputed the Imamate of the Commander of the Faithful **those were the inhabitants of the fire, there they shall dwell forever.**⁹⁶

The Báb then says:

And the essence of the thing I will now explain. It is that the Garden which the Merciful promised to His servants, to all others equally, [including] the Family of God, is the shadow of the body of Ḥusayn.

And the seven hells are similarly for the First and his manifestation (*maẓhar*). Verily God created them from the *kufr* of the body of al-Yazīd⁹⁷ (*sic*) may he be accursed and chastised.⁹⁸

He who confesses the *walāya* of ‘Alī will have entered the [paradise of the] **good pleasure** [of God] (*al-riḍwān*), and he who rejects will have entered the Fires [of Hell] (*al-nayrān*). And that is the order of things firmly established (*taqdīr maḥtūm*) by one Mighty, Wise.⁹⁹

At the commentary on verse 85, we find another mention of these three:

Then there you are killing one another, and expelling a party of you from their habitations, conspiring against them in sin and enmity; and if they come to you as captives, you ransom them; yet their expulsion was forbidden you. What, do you believe in part of the book, and disbelieve in part? What shall be the recompense of those of you who do that, but degradation in the present life, and on the day of resurrection to be returned unto the most terrible of chastisement? And God is not heedless of the things you do. [Q 2:85]

Here, the addressee (*al-mukhāṭab*) is the First and his companions [with the meaning]: **you killed the** sign of ‘Alī, despite what God placed in **your souls** (*anfusi-kum*) after the Messenger of God had already taught

96 *Baqara* 221. This hadith is found in *Burhān*, i:160, #2 and *Nūr*, i:79, #258.

97 *Sic*. The reference is to Yazīd (683/64), son of and successor to the first Umayyad caliph Mu‘awiyya. He was the caliph responsible for the massacre of Ḥusayn, his family and entourage at Karbala in 681. On the importance of this event in Shi‘i sacred history, see Ayoub, *Redemptive*.

98 *Baqara* 222, and all mss.: *min kufr jismi-’l-Yazīd*.

99 *Baqara* 221–222. Quite apart from its content, the tone of this first-person statement by the Báb could suggest that he is claiming access to divine knowledge, the so-called *‘ilm ladunnī* “knowledge from the divine presence”, cf. Q 18:65: **wa ‘allamnāhu min ladunnā ‘ilm^{an}/we had taught him knowledge proceeding from Us.**

you, “who of you knows best his self, is he who knows best his Lord”¹⁰⁰ ... But, you were conspiring against them with the polytheists by means of the *walāya* of sin and enmity. And sin is the Second and enmity is the Third.

And if they come to you as captives—namely the people who do not know the Imam—you ransom them with the *walāya* of yourselves. And in the estimation of God, this has been forbidden (*muḥarram*) to you. Thus, you expelled them from the *walāya* of ‘Alī, after you had acquainted them with the *nubuwwa* of Muḥammad, for the sake of your own trusteeship (*wiṣāya*).

What, do you believe in some of the book after God has already taught you that it (*innahā* = “false *wiṣāya*”) is an accursed tree [Q 17:60] in the Quran?¹⁰¹

and disbelieve in part after God had already taught you that in the mother of the book, with us it/he is ‘Alī indeed, Wise.¹⁰² and God is not heedless of the things you do in “donning the mantle” of *walāya* (*taqam-maṣa qamīṣ al-walāya*) by usurping it for themselves.¹⁰³

And they will meet with the justice of ‘Alī for their wrongdoing. He who veils anyone from the Remembrance of God, or the Remembrance of the Family of God, or the Remembrance of their Shi’a, then [‘Alī] will expel him from his habitations, and his reward on the day of resurrection will be the most terrible chastisement, for what their hands have earned.¹⁰⁴ and God is not heedless of the things they do.

100 *Baqara* 226–227: *a’rafukum bi-naḥsihi a’rafukum bi-rabbihi*, a slight variation on the widely attested Sufi apothegm.

101 Cf. Goldziher, *Die Richtungen* 266–267 / *Schools* 169, where Goldziher points out that the “*shajaratun ma’lūnātun*” is identified in some early Shi’i tafsir with the Umayyads.

102 *Baqara* 227. The reference here is to Q 43:4: *wa innahu fī ummi ‘l-kitābi ladaynā la-‘alīyun ḥakīmūn*. In the Quran, the pronoun refers to *al-kitāb al-mubīn* and *qur’ān^{an} ‘arabiyy^{an}*. It seems clear from the context that this translation is justified. See *Guide* 30, and material upholding the idea that the name ‘Alī is directly derived from the divine name al-‘Alī and that such a derivation has permanent consequences for the spiritual dignity or charge of the name. The Báb depends upon such traditions throughout his commentary both here and in later works. See also Bursī, *al-Durr al-thamīn* 201.

103 *Baqara* 227. N.b. the direct reference to the *Khuṭbat al-shiqshiqiyya* and the oblique one to the story of Joseph in the verb *taqammaṣa* > *qamīṣ*/ shirt (or coat) of Joseph.

104 *Baqara* 228. Notice the prominence of “Remembrance” (*dhikr*) here. The Báb was later to assume *dhikr* as a title. See *Gnostic* 52–61.

And verily al-Ṣādiq said, concerning the obvious (*ẓāhir*) meaning, that this verse was sent down about Abū Dharr, may God be merciful to him, and ‘Uthmān.¹⁰⁵

This hadith deals only with the exoteric aspects (*wa amru-hu ẓāhirun*), and this is not the place (*al-maqām*) for the (full) revelation of its meaning (*li-izhāri amri-hi*). The point is that the universal fundamental principles (*qawā’idu kullīyyatun*) have rained down (*tarashshaha*) in this verse. The believer recognizes his (‘Alī’s) cause through these **habitations** (*fī khilālī tilka al-diyār*).¹⁰⁶

Beginning at Q 2:90, a series of verses gives rise to comments in which the First, Second and Third are mentioned:

Evil is the thing they have sold themselves for, disbelieving in that which God sent down, grudging that God should send down of His bounty on whomsoever He will of His servants, and they were laden with anger upon anger; and for unbelievers awaits a humbling chastisement. [Q 2:90]

In the ensuing comments it emerges that true Shi’ism is, perhaps paradoxically, more universal than the divine inclusive unity itself:

Verily, those who desire the sign of the inclusive unity over the sign of the exclusive unity: **evil is the thing they have sold themselves for**, namely, that sign of the Lord which is intended in the statement “**He who knows it, knows God**”.¹⁰⁷ Namely, that **their** polytheistic **souls** (*bi-anfusi-him al-mushrikati*) are the [collective] sign of the Infernal Caliphs (*khulafā’ al-nār*). They call upon the armies of Satan¹⁰⁸ to disbelieve in **what God has sent down** concerning the *walāya* of ‘Alī, **grudging** stubbornly that which **God sends down out of his bounty**, that is, his (‘Alī’s) *walāya*,¹⁰⁹ **on whom-**

105 Cf. *Burhān*, i:124 #3 where in the tafsir of Qummī, this verse is said to have come down about Abū Dharr and ‘Uthmān. A very long report on this verse in which Abū Dharr and ‘Uthmān figure prominently may be found in *Nūr*, i:80–83, #271. See also Qummī, *Tafsīr al-Qummī* 27–28.

106 Or: “The believer in his *amr* recognizes them (the *qawā’id*) within these habitations.” *Baqara* 228.

107 *Baqara* 232: *man ‘arafa-hā fa-qad ‘arafa allāha*. The feminine pronoun may refer either to *āya* or *naḥs*. In either case this statement is another deployment of the distinctive and highly popular Sufi ‘**Who knows the self knows their Lord**’ tradition.

108 *Wa hum yad’ūna junūda ‘l-shayṭān*; cf. Q 62:95.

109 *Min faḍli-hi = walāyata-hi*.

soever he will. And the Lord wills only to send it down upon the Family of God [who are] his servants. As for the other one, if they want his *walāya*, they will be laden with anger that is the Second, upon anger, that is the Third, and for those who swerved from the *walāya* of ‘Alī, there awaits a humbling chastisement. And that is the *walāya* of the First.¹¹⁰

Abū Ja’far said: “Gabriel originally came down to the Messenger of God with this verse: *Evil is the thing they have sold themselves for, that they disbelieve in what God has sent down concerning ‘Alī grudgingly.*” [Q 2:90]¹¹¹

[The Báb:]

I testify that this is the intention (*al-maqṣūd*) of these verses according to the Merciful, and exalted is God above what the polytheists say.

Conclusion

Enough examples have now been examined to support the following conclusions: *walāya* is one of the major themes of the commentary. The radical interpretation of Quranic passages as speaking directly to the subject of *walāya* has its roots in traditional Shi’i literature. The nature of the commentary on this theme exhibits certain features in common with the so-called *ghulāt*, so-called, that is by those who esteemed themselves the upholders of sound Shi’i doctrine in contradistinction to the ideas upheld by the *ghulāt*. In this regard the following summary from the *Kitāb al-irjā’*, written by the erstwhile leader of the *Mukhtāriyya*, al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyya (99/717) is pertinent. Although the term *ghulāt* is not used, the group is condemned for holding the following views:

1. The belief that religion meant allegiance to the house of ‘Alī, so that people ought to be loved or hated inasmuch as they were loyal or disloyal to that house. To this could be added the excommunication (*bara’a*) of the opponents of ‘Alī among the Companions (*ṣaḥāba*), especially the first three caliphs;

¹¹⁰ *Baqara* 232–233.

¹¹¹ Also in *Burhān* i:69, #2 (= *Nūr* i:86, #286, cf. also #282). The *isnād* in *Burhān* is: Kulaynī, Qummī, Aḥmad bin Muḥammad al-Barqī, his father, Muḥammad bin Sunān ‘Ammār bin Marwān, al-Munkhal, Jābir, Bāqir. The variant #3 in *Burhān* relates the last half of the verse to the Umayyads. Cf. Qummī, *Tafsīr* 28, where there is no trace of this tradition in the appropriate place. The tradition, however, is also acknowledged in *Ṣāfi* i: 162–163.

2. The belief that the Prophet hid (*katama*) nine tenths of the Quran and that they were guided to a new revelation (i.e., the claim that prophecy was possible after Muḥammad);
3. The hope for a state that would be established in their favor in the future, in a general resurrection preceding the Day of Judgment.¹¹²

While the second item is never stated in these terms in the Báb's tafsir, the several references to the corruption of the Quran, i.e., as when the Báb quotes a tradition that says "Gabriel came down with this verse thus", would seem to offer a functional parallel. The last, item 3, figures in the eventual claims of the Báb, but we have seen, particularly in the commentary on Q 2:51, that the establishment of the "sovereignty" (*salṭana*) of the Qā'im is one of the themes of the commentary, as it is in "orthodox" Twelver Shi'ism. It is clear, however, that the belief in the return of the hidden Imam was adopted as an "orthodox" doctrine by leading Shi'i scholars in the 'Abbasid period, precisely because of the feeling that the interests of the Shi'a as a whole had been betrayed¹¹³ and as an emblem or shibboleth affirming non-Isma'ili allegiance.

The Shaykhis themselves were of course accused of *ghuluww* by their mostly Uṣūlī adversaries.¹¹⁴ It is interesting to note here that Shaykh Aḥmad takes pains to disassociate his teaching on the subject of *walāya* from what the *hyperbolistes* (*ghulāt*) say.¹¹⁵ That the Báb himself was sensitive to such accusations may be seen in his citation of a hadith from al-Bāqir, the fifth Imam, which runs as follows:

O company of the Shi'a! Be ye a middle position (*al-numruqat al-wuṣṭā*) so that the one who has gone beyond (*al-ghālī*) might return to you and the one who has lagged behind (*al-talī*) might catch up with you.¹¹⁶

That such beliefs and doctrines as those described above (and which inform much of Akhbari Quran commentary) were susceptible of being labeled "extremist" is supported by the long section in *Anwār*, a late Safavid glossary of Quranic vocabulary with a strong Akhbari orientation, in which the charges of *tafwīḍ* and *ghuluww* (which might otherwise be leveled against the work) are

¹¹² Quoted from al-Qāḍī, Development 297.

¹¹³ al-Qāḍī, Development 306.

¹¹⁴ *Rafati* 194–195 and 214.

¹¹⁵ *Ziyāra*, i:50 is one of many examples.

¹¹⁶ *Baqara* 20.

discussed and explained away.¹¹⁷ Here the author says that those who occupy a “middle position” (*al-numruqat al-wuṣṭā*) are those who are able to appreciate the subtleties (*daqāʾiq*) of this doctrine of the Imamate.¹¹⁸ Appeal is made to the famous tradition in which the Prophet declared:

The teaching (lit. “words” > ḥadīth) of the family of Muḥammad is mighty, exceedingly abstruse (*ṣaʿb mustaṣʿab*). None can have faith in it except those angels who have been brought near (*al-muqarrabūn*), a sent (or true) prophet (*al-nabī al-mursal*), or a faithful servant whose heart has been tested by God and proven worthy for faith (*īmān*). So, whatever comes to you of the teaching of the Family of Muḥammad your hearts will yield to and you will know it and accept it and whatever your hearts are repelled by, then reject it and leave it to God and the Apostle and the learned one from among the Family of Muḥammad, upon them peace¹¹⁹

This idea of the knowledge (*ʿilm*) of the Imams being “exceedingly difficult” is found in a very long hadith quoted by the Báb in the course of his commentary on Q 2:27.¹²⁰ It is important to acknowledge these so-called *ghuluww* aspects of the Báb’s tafsir in order to better understand the kinds of conditions in which he wrote, conditions which ultimately led to his own claim to *imāma*. It would appear that the Báb is more involved in an internal Shiʿi debate, namely the one between the Akhbaris and the Uṣūlīs, which by this time had become more of a *Shaykhi/Bālā-sarī* argument, than a direct criticism of Sunni Islam, though this would not be absent from the discourse. The term *bālā-sarī*, “above the head”, refers to the main body of the Shiʿa because of their common method of performing ritual visitation to the holy shrines (*ziyāra*). It denotes the practice of standing at the head of the tomb, a practice that the Shaykhis condemned as being disrespectful. The Shaykhis became known, therefore, also as *pusht-i sarīs* for their distinctive habit of standing at the foot of a sacred tomb, rather than circumambulating it, while reciting prayers.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ *Anwār* 59–69.

¹¹⁸ *Anwār* 60.

¹¹⁹ *Anwār* 61. The report is taken from the *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt* with the *isnād*: Jābir > al-Bāqir. See also the discussion of this report in the context of vision of the heart in *Guide* 55, 182 n. 283. See also the discussion of this hadith in Crow, Teaching 119–120 n. 86. A more recent discussion of the report is Parsa A. & A. Tohidī, A Study.

¹²⁰ *Baqara* 97.

¹²¹ See *Momen* 227 and Scarcia, Interno.

More pertinent to this study however, are the methods by which the Báb radicalized the meaning of the Quran on the issue of *walāya*. These include the exegetical tools of allegory and typology. One particularly lucid discussion of typology as a method of reading scripture appears to have implications for this study. Although the main subject in this work is the typological interpretation of the New Testament as the fulfillment of the Old Testament, the argument may be applied, with a few structural considerations, to general Akhbari Shi'i interpretation of the Quran. At bottom, the argument in Shi'i tafsir is the vindication of the claim of the Shi'a against the Sunnis, whereas in the case of the Bible, a similar argument was put forth by the authors of the New Testament against the Jews. The point to be made however would appear to be applicable in both cases:

Typology is a figure of speech that moves in time: the type exists in the past and the antitype in the present, or the type exists in the present and the antitype in the future. What typology really is as a mode of thought, what it both assumes and leads to, is a theory of history, or more accurately of historical process: an assumption that there is some meaning and point to history, and that sooner or later some event or events will occur which will indicate what that meaning or point is, and so become an antitype of what has happened previously.¹²²

We have seen for example, how the Báb interpreted the events of the primordial Day of the Covenant indicated at Q 7:172, to support in however "extremist" terms, the central belief of orthodox Shi'ism, namely that 'Alī's rightful position was usurped by Abū Bakr. In this and many other contexts, it might be argued that the Quran fulfills the function of the Old Testament "as prophecy", while the *akhbār* of the Imams represents the New Testament as "fulfillment". This analogy is of course not perfect because of the many important differences between the respective elements. Given however, the course which future Bābism was to take as a result of acknowledging the return of the Qā'im in the person of the Báb, Frye's argument seems even more compelling:

Typology points to future events that are often thought of as transcending time, so that they contain a vertical lift as well as a horizontal move forward. The metaphorical kernel of this is the experience of waking up from a dream ... When we wake up from sleep, one world is simply abolished

¹²² Frye, *Great* 80–81.

and replaced by another. This suggests a clue to the origin of typology: it is essentially a revolutionary form of thought and rhetoric. We have revolutionary thought whenever the feeling “life is a dream” becomes geared to an impulse to waken from it.¹²³

The similarities between the themes described above in the Báb’s tafsir, with those ascribed to the members of the *Mukhtariyya* or *Kaysaniyya* would support Frye’s insight. In addition, because the figure of the Qā’im is interpreted by the Báb as a timeless, esoteric principle, Frye’s allusion to a “vertical” dimension of typological exegesis is also apposite. In any case, it has been demonstrated that the Quran itself functions through typological figuration, as when the various themes of prophethood, community, reward, retribution are spread across in symmetrical fashion the entire expanse of prophetic history.¹²⁴ What applies to revelation, also applies to its exegesis as a recent study of typological figuration in the story and interpretation of the sura of Joseph has demonstrated.¹²⁵ It seems fair to surmise that viewing the world through the lense of typological figuration should be taken as a component of what was referred to many years ago as a “quranization of consciousness”.¹²⁶

With this survey of the use of the term *walāya* in the Báb’s commentary on the first *juz’* of the Quran, it is possible to identify the Báb’s thinking on this subject only partly with the teachings of Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī (1844), which in turn may be thought to represent a kind of Akhbari synthesis of several intellectual and spiritual tendencies.¹²⁷ But it is certainly not possible to say that the Báb depended upon Shaykhi works for the main thrust of his argument, which would appear to be as old as Islam itself. It would be interesting to compare this view of *walāya* with that of Shaykh Aḥmad’s older Persian contemporary, Nūr ‘Alī-Shāh (1798), whose writings on the subject seem to be much less “Shi’i” than the former’s, although there are certain common features shared between the two.¹²⁸ Such a comparison would probably further explain Shaykh Aḥmad’s great popularity in Iran during his lifetime.

The term *walī* may mean friend, helper, protector, superior or guardian. In basic legal theory it designates the primary heir. We see all of these aspects of

123 Frye, *Great* 82–83.

124 Zwettler, *Mantic*.

125 Lawson, *Quran* 63–75.

126 Nwyia, *Ibn ‘Atā’* 3.

127 For the views of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsā’ī see his, *Ziyāra*, iv:19–20, or his short handbook of doctrine *Kitāb ḥayāt al-naḥs* 14–20. See also *Rafati* 191 ff.

128 de Miras, *La méthode*, q.v. “lexique”: *walāyat* & *walī*.

the word as it is applied by the Báb to ‘Alī, and by extension, to the other Imams. The legal idea of primary heir is one of the more interesting in this regard and may be seen reflected not only in statements made by the Báb, but also in the hadith literature itself. One of the more striking features of the above material is the delineating of False *walāya* as a polar opposite of the True *walāya*. As Landolt has noted, this idea may be traced to the earliest hadith collections and the Quran itself (e.g., Q 4:76) in which the world is divided into two major groups: those who do battle in the way of God (*sabīl Allāh*) [Q *passim*], and those who do battle in the way of Idols (*sabīl al-ṭāghūt*) [Q 4:76 & 2:257 *awliyā’ al-ṭāghūt*], the friends of Satan (*awliyā’ al-Shayṭān*) [Q 4:76]. The position of *walī* as a kind of “intercessor” for those too weak to act on their own behalf in matters of inheritance, and presumably other legal matters,¹²⁹ is one which is also reflected in those traditions quoted by the Báb in which, for example, Paradise is the reward or “inheritance” of those whose *walī* is ‘Alī.

Walāya was the central fact of meaning in the Báb’s universe, which was of course, an “enchanted” one. It is because of, and by means of *walāya*, that God communicates with creation, if not that principle because of which and by means of which creation is “creation”. Throughout this tafsir it is clear that it is this same *walāya* that circulates as spiritual energy through all the various hierarchies of being and existence uniting them and enchanting them with life. The metaphorical and imaginal equivalence *walāya* ~ water is perhaps the most important message here. Its poetic syllogistic arises from the incessant images of water encountered throughout the tafsir: the “sea” (*lujāt, ṭamtām, yamm*) of *walāya*. Water and its circulation emerges as the most effective “trope” in communicating the nature, structure and life-giving qualities of true *walāya*. The bearer of *walāya* is the bearer of the water of life.¹³⁰

In this work it is also *walāya* that is central to divine self-manifestation—*tajallī*, and that is also the central fact of the Shi‘i eschaton and the subject of chapter four. Thus, it is without doubt the most important fact, idea and reality of the Báb’s universe. For Shi‘ism, *walāya* provides a means for facing the otherwise imponderable problem: transcendence or immanence. In short, the answer is “both”. But it is not a “mere” metaphysical accomplishment. Recent historical events have shown us the profound and powerful place occupied by *walāya/wilāya/vilāyat* in the *imaginaire* of Iranian Shi‘ism. Khomeini rose to popularity as the leader of one of the most surprisingly successful revolutions in history on the appeal of a religious work entitled *Vilāyat al-faqīh*, a title which

129 Landolt, *Walāyah* esp. 318.

130 See Lawson, *Friendship*, for a more detailed study of the Akbarian background of this poetics.

spoke to and triggered many of the associations and historical-religious themes encountered above. Through the Báb's prolonged contemplation of this most powerful of all forces it is as if he himself was somehow conditioned by it, came to embody it and thus continued to the next stage of his brief, remarkable and tragic life.

A symbol of this embodiment and entrainment may be seen in a vision experienced by the Báb which he wrote about in at least two different places in his voluminous writings.

Know that the appearance (*zuhūr*) of verses (*āyāt*), prayers (*munājāt*), and divinely inspired knowledge/sciences (*ʿulūm ladunī-ye*) began after a dream I had (*nawmā ast keh mushāhadeh-ye namūdeh*) in which was seen the pure head of his holiness (*janāb*) the Lord of Martyrs, upon him be peace, separated (or cut) from his pure body together with the heads of the family members (*dhūya al-qurbā*). And seven draughts of the blood of his holiness, the Lord of Martyrs, did I drink with perfect love/friendship (*āz kamāl-i ḥubb*). From the blessing of the blood of that Holiness my breast was gladdened/dilated (*munshareḥ gashteh*) with the like of these indisputably genuine and holy verses (*āyāt muttaqineh*) and these obviously authentic and holy prayers (*munājāt muḥakkameh*). Praise be to God, He who caused me to drink the blood of His Proof [the Imam Ḥusayn] and made it [that blood] the reality of my heart (*fuʿād*). For that reason, numerous tests have befallen me by the authority (*imḍā*) of God. **We all come from God and unto Him do we return** [Q 2:156]. **For the like of this let the strivers strive** [Q 37:61].¹³¹

The spirit of prayer which animates My soul is the direct consequence of a dream which I had in the year before the declaration of My Mission. In My vision I saw the head of the Imām Ḥusayn, the Siyyidu'sh-Shuhada', which was hanging upon a tree. Drops of blood dripped profusely from His lacerated throat. With feelings of unsurpassed delight, I approached that tree and, stretching forth My hands, gathered a few drops of that sacred blood, and drank them devoutly. When I awoke, I felt that the Spirit of God had permeated and taken possession of My soul. My heart was thrilled with the joy of His Divine presence, and the mysteries of His Revelation were unfolded before My eyes in all their glory.¹³²

131 The Báb, *Ṣaḥīfa* 160; cf. the slightly different translation in *Resurrection* 131.

132 *Dawn-Breakers* 253. This passage is introduced with: "In one of His writings revealed in the year [12]60 A.H., the Báb declares the following: ...".

One might think of these two accounts as representing something of an apotheosis of the water imagery that suffuses the work, the blood of the Family of God being in reality a water of the most intense holiness.

Tetrads

Architecture of Glory, I

One of the distinctive features of the Báb's commentary on the second sura of the Quran is his frequent recourse to tiering various key concepts over a range of levels or grades resulting in a distinct architecture of interpretation and, considering the nature of the discourse, an ensuing spiritual hierarchy. In this chapter and the next, several examples of these hierarchies will be examined in an attempt to trace any influences their use indicates and, more importantly, to determine the meaning these various structures held for the Báb and perhaps those who were likely to come into contact with his work. As mentioned, some of the immediate influences on the Báb come from the Shaykhi synthesis of several different types of Islamicate theosophical expression. There were possibly other factors which contributed to the representations found in this tafsir, after all Shiraz has been a major centre of Sufi activity for centuries. In addition, the Shaykhi school derived a good deal of its symbology and terminology from the great masters Ibn Sina (1037), the Isma'ili thinkers (10th–11th cent.), the Ghazālīs (11th–12th cent.), Suhrawardi (1191), Ibn Arabi, Simnānī (1336) and Mulla Sadra, to name only a few. Shaykhism also shows the influence of less well-known figures such as Ḥaydar Āmulī, Rajab Bursī and Ibn Abī Jumhūr.

The major hierarchies in the Báb's commentary are either tetrads or heptads with, as shall be seen, some slight variation. In order to come to terms with these structures, it will be helpful to become acquainted with their counterparts in the writings of the first two masters of the Shaykhi school, Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī and Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī. Relevant works by these two authors have fortunately been studied by a small circle of scholars, beginning with the pioneering work of Henry Corbin, and the following remarks pertaining to them are in large measure derived from Corbin's analysis. Inasmuch as the hierarchy that employs four elements may be seen as the basis for the heptad it will be discussed first, although in the Báb's commentary the first hierarchy presented consists of seven elements.¹

The starting place for this discussion is three traditions ascribed to the fourth Imam, 'Alī Zayn al-Ābidīn; the fifth Imam, Muḥammad al-Bāqir; and the sixth

¹ *Baqara* 7–9. See below, Chapter Three.

Imam, Ja'far al-Šādiq. The first one carries a conversation between the Imam and his disciple Jābir ibn Yazīd al-Ju'fī, in which the Imam mentions seven articles of faith the understanding of which is necessary for the believer. These articles are: [1] the realization of divine unity—*al-tawḥīd*; [2] the spiritual meanings and realities of existence *al-ma'ānī*; [3] the doors—*al-abwāb*; [4] the Imamate—*al-imāma*; [5] the pillars—*al-arkān*; [6] leaders—*al-nuqabā'*; [7] lieutenants—*al-nujabā'*.² In this discussion, however, we are concerned only with the first four articles, the remaining three will be dealt with in the following chapter on heptads.

The second hadith is in the form of a conversation between the fifth Imam, al-Bāqir and his disciple, Jābir al-Anṣārī:

Bāqir said: "O Jābir! Upon you be *al-bayān* and *al-ma'ānī*." Jābir said: "And what are *al-bayān* and *al-ma'ānī*?" Bāqir answered: "As for *al-bayān* it is that you recognize that God is He of whom it is said: Like Him there is naught [Q 42:11], and to serve Him and to not share with anything the devotion which is due Him to any extent whatsoever. As for *al-ma'ānī*—We are His *ma'ānī*, His side (*janb*), His hand, His tongue, His command/cause (*amr*), His rule, His knowledge, His truth. Whatever We will, God wills; and God purposes what We purpose ... And We are the Face of God which is turning about in all directions in the earth (*yataqallabu fī 'l-ard*) in your midst (*bayna aẓharikum*). He who has recognized us has certitude (*yaqīn*) itself for an Imam. He who is ignorant of us has hell (*Sijjīn*) for an Imam".³

The third and final hadith is actually composed of two similar statements from the sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Šādiq. Because of its obscurity, the translations of both versions are followed by a transliteration:

[A] Our cause is the truth, and the truth of the truth. It is the exoteric and it is the esoteric of the exoteric, and it is the esoteric of the esoteric. It is

² *Corbin*, i:122.

³ *Ziyāra*, i:43. This hadith, which continues on for a few lines, is a good example of a Shi'i solution to the *tashbihāt al-Qur'ān* problem, another "rational" solution for which was a point of meeting between what might be called the "orthodox" Shi'a and the Mu'tazila. (See McDermott, *Theology*) It has been partially translated in *Corbin*, i:194. The words "turning about in all directions" should probably be read as a gloss of Q 2:115: *Whithersoever ye turn, there is the Face of God*.

the secret, and the secret of the secret—a secret enveloped in a secret and the secret of that which is veiled by the secret.

amrunā huwa al-ḥaqq wa ḥaqq al-ḥaqq wa huwa al-ẓāhir wa bāṭin al-ẓāhir wa bāṭin al-bāṭin wa huwa al-sirr wa sirr al-sirr wa sirr al-mustasirr wa sirr muqannaʿ biʿl-sirr

[B] Our cause is a veiled secret, a secret which can only speak of a secret, a secret above a secret, a secret which remains enveloped in the secret.

*amrunā sirr mustasirr wa sirr lā yufīduhu illā sirr wa sirr ʿalā sirr wa sirr muqannaʿ biʿl-sirr*⁴

These three hadiths play an important part in Shaykh Aḥmad's commentary on one of the verses of the *Ziyārat al-jāmiʿa*: "Peace be upon you, O members of the family of the Prophet, you who are [collectively] the repository of the prophetic message (*mawḍiʿ al-risāla*)."⁵ Shaykh Aḥmad refers to these three traditions in detailing four ontological levels (*maqāmāt*) of *imāma*, which the verse, according to him, presupposes. This commentary is directly conditioned by the language of the second and third hadiths, above:

- [1] The station of "a secret veiled by the secret" (*sirr muqannaʿ biʿl-sirr*).⁶
- [2] The station of "the secret of the secret" (*sirr al-sirr*) or "the esoteric of the esoteric" (*bāṭin al-bāṭin*). (These two stations correspond to "the truth of the truth" (*ḥaqq al-ḥaqq*) in version A.)
- [3] The station of "the secret" (*al-sirr*) or "the esoteric of the exoteric" (*bāṭin al-ẓāhir*). (This corresponds to "the secret which can only be taught by a[nother] secret" (*sirr lā yufīduhu illā sirr*) in version B.)
- [4] The station of "the exoteric" (*al-ẓāhir*), or "the veiled secret" (*sirr mustasirr*). (Stations 3 & 4 correspond to "the truth" (*al-ḥaqq*) in version A.)⁷

The highest level is that of the divine "Unrevealed" (*al-sirr al-muqannaʿ biʿl-sirr*). This corresponds to the levels of *tawḥīd* or *bayān* mentioned in the first two hadiths. It is the metaphysical location of the divine command "Be!" (*kun!*).

4 Cf. *Corbin*, i:116, 187–199 on which the following is based. This hadith is included in Muḥsin Fayz, *Nawādir* 33.

5 This verse is divided in two: the first part appears at *Ziyāra*, i:36, the second at i:42. A recent edition of the prayer may be found in al-Qummī (comp.), *Mafātīḥ* 445–450.

6 *Ziyāra*, i:43 adds *wa sirr mustasirr*.

7 *Corbin*, i:189–190.

Shaykh Aḥmad puts forth the following classical argument of negative theology.⁸ We call Zayd a “standing man” (*qā'im*), by virtue of the appearance (*zuhūr*) of the act of standing (*qiyām*), in the person of Zayd. But it is neither Zayd himself, nor the act of standing itself, which can be designated as *qā'im*. It is only through the appearance of the act of standing that we may refer to Zayd by this word. Thus, it is a heretofore “invisible” quality, now manifest only through the agency of Zayd, which allows us to use the word. So it is with all the various activities which appear in Zayd; they are all other than Zayd, but are ultimately only knowable through Zayd. At the same time, these various activities may not be identified with the essence (*dhāt*) of Zayd.

The relation of the Imams to God corresponds to the relation of Zayd to the act of standing. The divine reality (*ḥaqīqa*) is manifest in them and cannot be known without them. At the same time, they are known only because this reality is manifest in them, just as we can only know Zayd through his actions and situations. The result is that God is only known through the Imams, just as one can only know the idea or act of “standing”, not only through one who stands but also because the otherwise unknowable act is manifest in him.

This first *maqām* then serves to affirm the utter transcendence (*tanzīh*) of God and the relentlessly, almost stark, apophatic nature of Shaykhi theology, reminiscent of classical Isma'ili thought. It also points to the fundamental mystery of being, which according to Corbin, goes quite beyond the ontological theories of the *Ishrāqī* tradition.⁹ Shaykhi ontology provides for the metaphysical pre-existence of the Imams. Here, as in Isma'ili metaphysics, God is outside whatever may be considered under the category of Being (*wujūd*). Zayd stands by virtue of the appearance in him of the “quality” of standing. But this quality appears in Zayd only as a result of the divine command, which brings together the two aspects of the being known together as *qā'im*. Without this command (*amr*) the two would remain separate, and both elements would remain unknown. This *amr* comprises two aspects. One is completely transcendent called “the active command” (i.e., *amr fi'lī*), which proceeds from the unknowable God. The other aspect is the “passive” or “receptive command” (i.e., *amr maf'ūlī*), which is this same imperative as activated in the first creatures (i.e., the Imams), and appears in the world as through the bearer of the divine quality, analogous to Zayd as *qā'im*. The *amr maf'ūlī* is also designated by the Shaykhis as the Light of lights—*nūr al-anwār*, the Muhammadan reality—*ḥaqīqat Muḥammadiyya*, or the “pleroma” of the twelve Imams. The

8 *Ziyāra*, i:44–45.

9 *Corbin*, i:192.

amr maḥfūḍī, as issuing from the *amr fiḥī*, or the unknowable divine Essence, is therefore a “secret veiled in a secret”. The difference between the Shaykhis and, for example the Ishrāqīs, is that the latter identify the *nūr al-anwār* directly with God.¹⁰ The Shaykhi theory would appear to accomplish two distinct but related tasks: the first is an obvious exaltation of the station of the Imams to the degree of bringing down upon their teaching the condemnatory accusation of “extremism” (*ghuluww*);¹¹ the second is a virtual removal from the human mind of any positive content for the word “God”. It is difficult to determine which of the two results, if either, is more important to Aḥsāʾī. A third implication is the concomitant elevation of the station of human being to a status much nearer the divine than might have been thought possible or permissible. It is possible that this is a very ancient theme in Shiʿī thought¹² which the leaders of the Shaykhi school wished to revive.

This first *maqām* has as its aim the establishment of God’s utter transcendence, which as has been seen, can only be spoken of by reference to Being, but for that this transcendence is not diminished. The Imams, as representatives of this transcendence are the focus for the believer, but the believer must never lose sight of the “unseeable” point beyond the Imams.

The human being turns to the inaccessible Essence even though he will never be able to find it; likewise, he never ceases looking for it even though it remains inaccessible to him.¹³

The next *maqām* corresponds to the term *al-maʿānī* in the first two hadiths. It is the level at which apprehension of the “Revealed” occurs. In this case, the emphasis is on that which is knowable. At the first level, the concern was with an absolute mystery or secret, here it is with the “secret of a secret”. This refers to the act of divine manifestation that, however, proceeds concomitantly with the “act” of occultation. Here divine revelation is dependent upon a certain degree of anthropomorphosis which occurs in the Imams, however, not to the extent of a total incarnation (any possibility of which having been obviated through the function of first *maqām*). The Imams provide a safeguard against what Corbin calls “metaphysical idolatry”, which would otherwise naturally ensue as a result of any attempt to affirm the divine unity (*tawḥīd*) without the conceptual assistance of *imāma*.¹⁴ It is clear that the four levels are in fact inseparable

10 See also Landolt, review Visionary.

11 *Rafati* 194–196.

12 Amir-Moezzi, Only.

13 *Corbin*, i:194, quoting Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī.

14 *Corbin*, *Le paradoxe* 7–17.

from one another, one cannot be understood in isolation. This is important to bear in mind, otherwise the temptation to separate one from another, with the result of an overly schematic and mechanistic hierarchy, would tend to nullify what might otherwise appear as an excessively “subtle” or unclear process. This second level also serves to protect theology from the equally abhorrent extremes of *ta‘tīl* (absolute agnosticism) and *tashbīh* (absolute anthropomorphism). These *ma‘ānī* (Imams) can never be considered identical with the divine Essence, but rather *as ma‘ānī* they point beyond themselves to it while providing “phenomenal” content and context (i.e. “meanings”) for divinity.

The term *ma‘ānī*, in the hadith quoted above from al-Bāqir, permits all of those anthropomorphic statements (*tashbīhāt*) in the Quran, such as the “Face of God” or “Hand of God”, to be understood as synonyms for the Imam. While in the first *maqām* the lesson to be learned was that “Zayd” as a standing man represented a mysterious process, here we are concerned with Zayd’s actions or situations as they happen in the world. Again, one lesson cannot be learned in isolation from the other. At this level the Imams are seen as *the oil which would almost shine of itself though no fire touched it* [Q 24:35], the divine Essence being of course light itself, metaphorically, or rather, apophatically speaking.

The third level is represented by the word *abwāb* in the first hadith. The Imams as “gates” represent *the secret which can only be spoken of by another secret*. Their function at this level is described by such terms as “office” (*al-safāra*), “mediation” (*al-wisāṭa*), and “communication” or “interpretation” (*al-tarjama*). This level corresponds with what the Ishrāqīs call the Universal Intellect (*al-‘aql al-kullī*), and what others, specifically the *ahl al-shar‘* (“people of the law”, presumably the ulama, the mujtahids and their followers) refer to as the Pen (*al-qalam*) or the Muḥammadan Light, Spirit or Intellect.¹⁵

In this initial Muhammadan Intelligence, the Merciful is established. It charges it with all things and causes to proceed from it the suprasensible realities of all things: the forms of creatures in a subtle state. Indeed, this is why the Intelligence is *the* Threshold (*bāb*) of God towards His creatures, and why, likewise it is by its mediation that each creature receives that which it receives and turns towards God, the Intelligence is thus the Threshold of the creatures towards God.¹⁶

¹⁵ *Ziyāra*, i:42.

¹⁶ *Corbin*, i:197.

The difference between this *maqām* and the first or second, is again one of emphasis. By the degrees and modalities thus outlined, the divine becomes ever more accessible to man through the Imams.

The fourth *maqām* corresponds to the term *imāma* in the first hadith, and represents the exoteric (*al-ẓāhir*), according to Shaykh Aḥmad: "It is the station of the proof of God (*ḥujjat allāh*) over His creation, and His *khalīfa* in His earth to whom obedience is binding upon all creation."¹⁷ The emphasis on obedience implies the Sharia, an aspect that Corbin does not discuss. This station also refers to the fact that the exoteric dimension of the Quran points to the Imamate, which is therefore the *bāṭin* of the Book. Here is where the Imams, in the "unity of their essence", come to be directly identified as the "repository of the prophetic message" (*mawḍiʿ al-risāla*). The fourth *maqām* includes the remaining categories of *arkān*, *nuqabāʾ*, and *nujabāʾ* mentioned in the first two hadiths.¹⁸ Shaykh Aḥmad closes his discussion with a caveat, indicating that his remarks on this subject should not be taken to imply that the Imams are separate loci (*maḥāll*, pl. as distinct from *mawḍiʿ*, sing.) of inspiration (*waḥy*) "as some of the *ghulāt* fancy."¹⁹ Corbin's final assessment of Shaykh Aḥmad's analysis here is important for understanding the function of the hierarchies as deployed by the Báb in his Quran commentary.

This clarifies what is understood in the allusions of the Imam: the epiphanic descents (*tanazzulāt*) of the Logos-prophet, the successive levels of the prophetic Revelation, and in which way, at each level of descent, is the "place" (cf. *mawḍiʿ*) privileged as being the secret invested in the heart of this Revelation. That is to say, the Imamate of the twelve Imams is understood as being the esoteric dimension of this Revelation in its successive levels. From this flowers the general prophetology and imamologie of Shi'ism at the same time as the spaces and depths of the spiritual hermeneutic ..., that is to say the successive levels in which are perceived the exoteric and esoteric dimensions of the Quranic Revelation. These different levels of revelation of the prophetic Logos are as such the "epiphanic descents" of the eternal Quran, from the archetype of the Book (*umm al-kitāb*) to the level of the secret, which remains concealed in a secret.²⁰

¹⁷ *Ziyāra*, i:47.

¹⁸ *Corbin*, i:198.

¹⁹ *Ziyāra*, i:50.

²⁰ *Corbin*, i:199.

This tetradic structure is also found elaborated by Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, the second master of the Shaykhi school whom the Báb refers to in the opening pages of this commentary as “the revered scholar and friend, my teacher” and who is, in fact, the one in whose honor the Báb says he is writing this tafsir.²¹ In Rashtī’s commentary on the Throne Verse (Q 2:255), he quotes the same double hadith to which Shaykh Aḥmad referred.²² As we shall see below, this commentary also appears to solve some of the mysteries surrounding the Báb’s color hierarchy. The commentary proceeds from a discussion of the problem of the “true meaning” of scripture. Connected with the problem of the “true meaning” of scripture is the problem of the manner in which this meaning is ontologically constituted. Ultimately the “true meaning” of scripture, is the domain of the “eternal Imam” as the guardian of the secret of Scripture in all of the various worlds of being. Corbin hastens to add that such a figure is “not this or that Imam in his historic guise.”²³ However, in the case of the Báb, the Imam was to become just such a figure.²⁴

Each successive level representing one of the four dimensions of the Muḥammadan Reality is, as we have seen, the “repository of the prophetic message” (*mawḍi‘ al-risāla*). The “journey” from the highest to the lowest, represents stages in the process of the Word becoming Book, in which the secret (*sirr*) of this Logos is hidden in the literal text, just as the concern was with the way the Word (Logos) became Imam in the previous discussion.²⁵ The point that Rashtī wishes to make, according to Corbin, is that the “Logos-prophet” appears variously through a series of universes, and that each passage or manifestation, from one level to another, implies the concomitant idea of concealment. Therefore, each higher degree represents more fully the actual being of this Logos. This neo-platonic idea is frequently expressed by the Báb in the maxim “the higher chain is the *ghayb* of the lower chain.”²⁶ Because of the participation of the Imams in this graduated process of manifestation, they may be considered identical with the prophetic principle. Several hadiths support this idea of what Corbin calls “kathenotheism”, for example the one quoted

21 *Baqara* 6.

22 Rashtī, *Sharḥ āyat al-kursī*, lith. Tabriz (ca. 1860), mentioned in *Corbin*, i:201; see also Rashtī, *Qaṣida*, 99 discussed in *Gnostic* 71, 169 n. 137; see also *Gnostic* 160 n. 5 and *passim* in chapter 2 “The Voices of the Text”.

23 *Corbin*, i:201.

24 See below, Chapter Five and *Gnostic*.

25 For the Shi‘i idea of “Book as Imam, Imam as Book” (*kitāb ṣāmit/kitāb nāṭiq*) see Ayoub, *The Speaking*; Lawson, Akhbārī and, more recently, Amir-Moezzi, *The Silent*.

26 *Baqara* 24, an islamicate version of the Hermetic maxim “as above so below”.

by Shaykh Aḥmad from ‘Alī: **I am to Muḥammad as light is to light.** Shaykh Aḥmad’s explanation is as follows:

This light is totally in Muḥammad; it is totally in the Imam ‘Alī; totally in Fāṭima; totally in the Imam Ḥasan; totally in the Imam Ḥusayn; likewise, it is in each of the remaining Fourteen Immaculate Ones. Despite its multiplication, the light is one. This is what the Imams mean when they say: **We are all Muḥammad. The first among us is Muḥammad. He who is in the middle is Muḥammad. The last among us is Muḥammad.**²⁷

To discuss these four “worlds” themselves and the way in which this Muḥammadan Reality “appears” in them, Rashtī relies on the symbol of the Throne and the categories of Intellect (*‘aql*), Spirit (*rūḥ*), Soul (*naḥs*) and Nature (*ṭabī‘a*). Just as the primordial Muḥammadan Reality is represented by the term “Light of Lights,” these four derivative realities are symbolized by the various forms of light in four separate colors, which proceed from the Light of Lights and are the principles of the totality of worlds.

The Intellect of the Muḥammadan Reality is the principle of all Intellects and is symbolized by white light, which is the upper right column of the Throne as **the Spirit that proceeds from the divine command** [Q 16:2]. This Intellect corresponds to the world of *jabarūt*, or *anwār*, the world of pure Intellects. The Spirit of the Muḥammadan Reality is the principle of all Spirits and is symbolized by yellow light, or the lower right column of the Throne. This corresponds to the world of the “higher” *malakūt*. The Muḥammadan Soul is the principle of all Souls and is symbolized by green light, or the upper left column of the Throne, and corresponds to the world of the “lower” *malakūt*, also called the world of images (*‘ālam al-mithāl*). The Muḥammadan Nature is the principle of all Natures. It is symbolized by red light, or the lower left column of the Throne, and corresponds to the world of bodies (*ajsād*).²⁸ The following table puts this hierarchy in a convenient form:

27 Cited in *Corbin*, i:205. This doctrine is confirmed to the believer by the fact that it is also literally true: the first is Muḥammad (the prophet), Muḥammad al-Bāqir (ca. 735), the fifth Imam, is in the middle of the line of 12 Imams and the awaited 12th Imam, who disappeared in 874, is named Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan al-‘Askari. The death date for al-Bāqir is disputed, and ranges from 732 to 743. See *Momen* 37–38. The reference is to Aḥmad al-Aḥsā’ī’s *Sharḥ al-mashā’ir*, a commentary on Mulla Sadra’s *Kitāb al-mashā’ir* edited and translated by Corbin as *Le Livre des Pénétrations métaphysiques*.

28 *Corbin*, i:203. As Corbin points out, the motif of the four lights of the Throne is found in the standard *Imāmī* compendia of traditions. He refers to, among others, *Kāfī* 1, “*Kitāb al-*

World	Colour	Function
Lāhūt	no color	Secrets (<i>asrār</i>)
Jabarūt	white light	Lights (<i>anwār</i>)
Malakūt A	yellow light	Spirits (<i>arwāḥ</i>)
Malakūt B	green light	Souls (<i>anfus</i>)
Nature	red light	Bodies (<i>ajsād</i>) ²⁹

At the level of *lāhūt* there is not yet word, name, or description. It corresponds to the first *maqām* mentioned above represented by the phrase *sirr muqannaʿ biʿl-sirr*/a secret veiled by another secret. It is the “unplumbable abyss” from which eternally issues the divine command through which the Muḥammadan Reality, or Logos, is brought into being. It is this Logos which is both the knowledge God has of His creation and His own self and is also designated as the Mother of the Book (*umm al-kitāb*), which is the Quran “in the wholeness of its manifestations, degrees, descents and significations.” Corbin compares this idea of the Shaykhis with the corresponding classical Ismaʿili apophatic theology which states that the highest level of knowledge accessible to man is the one represented by what is termed the First Intellect, which is also existentially by an ontologically prior principle forever beyond Being.³⁰

It is therefore only below the level of *lāhūt* that the Revelation and the Muḥammadan Reality acquire existence. In one sense the Quran itself is the white light that the Prophet announces to the successive worlds of Spirits, Souls, and Bodies. The fundamental law that determines the way in which this descent occurs employs the hermeneutical principles of exoteric (*ẓāhir*) and esoteric (*bāṭin*). That is, whatever is “apparent” in one world is “hidden” to the world immediately below it. Thus, both the Prophetic Reality and the Revelation are subject to the same hierarchical structure. Sayyid Kāzīm summarizes the implications of the hierarchy of the Logos as Book in the following statement:

tawḥīd”, 129–133. For another *sémiotique* of color, see Corbin, *L’homme de lumière*, 1971. See now also Rafati, *Colors*. A more recent discussion of another example of color symbolism in Islamic religious writing is Günther, “God disdains not”.

29 Rashtī, *Sharḥ āyat al-kursī* 2 cited in Corbin, i:203. See the ensuing discussion, Corbin, i:203–211, for further details about this and other tetrads in both Shaykhi and non-Shaykhi thought.

30 Corbin, i:206.

O my brother! Read the Quran and never abandon it. It is more valuable for you than anything else. If you persevere you *will see* the secret of what I have said. After you have understood all this, you will have understood some of the knowledge of the Quran. But you will also have understood that it is not possible to read it as it is in itself, because this is impossible for us, the *muslimūn* and *mu'minūn*. This kind of reading is only possible for prophets and Imams ... The relatively small understanding that you have should never be confused with *the* knowledge of the Quran. This is why you must never oppose someone who affirms something and who seeks to prove his statement by reading the Quran differently to the way you read it ... Whenever you have understood that the true meaning, the spiritual Idea (*ḥaqīqa*) of the Quran is a secret code (*ramz*) which only God Most High, the Prophet and the members of his House [fully] understand, and that it is the members of this House who teach this code to whoever resides in their House, then know that when we understand the Quran from the Prophet in the multiple worlds, and that we understand finally according to the measure of our comprehension that which has filtered down to this world, and how the multiple universes are differentiated amongst themselves according to their degree of subtlety and opacity, elevation and density, immateriality and materiality then it will be admitted that the understanding of this code varies according to the diversity of our faculties of understanding.³¹

Just as this hierarchy pertains to the graduated manifestation of the Word, so according to Shaykh Aḥmad, does it pertain to the personal spiritual development of the individual believer whose soul is constituted of these four lights. It is for this reason that the revelation may be comprehended by the believer according to the principle that one knows something only because of an *a priori* correspondence with the thing to be known. Individual existence is symbolized by white light; individual identity in this existence is symbolised by yellow light; individual form (“sa détermination et sa mesure”) is symbolised by green light; the matter of which this form is composed is symbolized by red light.³²

The primordial existence, which is brought into being by the divine command (i.e., the *amr maf'ūlī*, see above) is the primordial Light of Lights, also referred to as the Light of Fourteen Flames. It forms one sole primordial essence in the same Light from which proceeds the light of the cherubic Intellects or

31 From Corbin's French translation of this passage of the *Sharḥ āyat al-kursī* in *Corbin*, i:209–210.

32 *Corbin*, i:204, citing Shaykh Aḥmad, *Sharḥ al-mashā'ir*.

the “Angels of the Veil”, and the light from which the prophets were created. The light which constitutes the being of the prophets, is that from which the faithful believers have been created.³³ Corbin’s translation of an important passage by Shaykh Aḥmad summarizes this idea:

No reality is ever created from an essence that is inferior to it. Every inferior reality is created from a reality that is superior to it. A superior reality is, for example, the sun itself; the inferior reality is the light that falls upon the surface of the earth and illumines it. Each reality exists in its true sense (*ḥaqīqa*) at the level proper to it and by relation to that which is below it; in effect, it is the symbol and figure (*majāz*) of that which is above it.³⁴

In the following examples of hierarchies from the *Tafsīr sūrat al-baqara*, these ideas will be more or less faithfully reflected. Because these hierarchies depend upon the Quran for some of their terms, there is a certain degree of deviation among them. The hierarchies have as their purpose the affirmation of a rigorous *via negativa*, and a complementary imamology, which ultimately affirms the famous Shaykhi doctrine of the four supports. It seems beyond dispute that at the time he wrote this commentary the Báb fully subscribed to this doctrine. But it also should be pointed out that before the Báb wrote the *Tafsīr sūrat al-baqara*, he composed a short treatise, which is thought to be his oldest surviving work, entitled *Risālat al-sulūk* in which this doctrine is accepted and explicated.³⁵ Evidence for dating the work is in the reference at the end to Kāzīm Rashtī, which indicates that Rashtī was alive at the time of its writing.³⁶ As the following will demonstrate, apart from the title of the treatise, the contents also show strong Sufi influence.

In this brief epistle, the Báb affirms a doctrine of four supports or pillars (*arkān*), which may be schematized in descending order, as follows:

33 Cf. the statement here by the Báb (*Baqara* 14): “The believers are the rays of the prophets.” This derives from the etymology (found e.g. in *Ziyāra*, i:67) of *shī‘a* from “*shu‘ā*”: beams of light, rays of light.

34 Corbin, i:205. This passage is from Shaykh Aḥmad’s *Sharḥ al-mashā‘ir*.

35 Lawson, *Sulūk*.

36 *Sulūk* 74: “This essay on *sulūk* has been kept brief for the benefit of those who have [spiritual] minds. Nevertheless, it contains sufficient information for those pure affirmers of the divine unity. In any case, the question has been written upon in detail by my lord, support, and teacher Ḥāj Sayyid Kāzīm al-Rashtī, may God prolong his life (*aṭāla allāh baqā’ahu*).” Recall that Rashtī died, according to the various dates in the sources, between 31 December 1843/ 9 Dhu al-Hijjah 1259 and 2 January 1844/ 11 Dhu’l-Hijja 1259. Eschraghi, Kāzem, opts for 1 January 1844.

Rukn	Mode	Organ
<i>tawhīd</i>	<i>ḥubb</i>	<i>qalb</i>
<i>nubuwwa</i>	<i>ḥabīb</i>	<i>fu'ād</i>
<i>walāya</i>	<i>muḥibb</i>	<i>rūḥ</i>
<i>shī'a</i>	<i>maḥbūb</i>	<i>jism</i>

The first column is described as constituting the four supports of religion (*dīn*), and as such those elements are four gates which function only as a whole: “The first is useful only with the last.”³⁷ Altogether they constitute that **Face of God which will never perish**. (cf. Q 28:88) This in turn, is none other than the love of the Family of God, which is the same as the love of God Himself. It is the **hidden treasure** referred to in the famous *ḥadīth qudsī*, **I was a hidden treasure and desired to be known, therefore I created mankind in order to be known**. The Báb says that this is also alluded to by the Prophet in his statement: **Above every good deed is another good deed until one desires Us. When we are desired, there is no good deed higher**.³⁸ From this statement the Báb derives the elements in the second column. These are four (divine) signs (*āyāt*) which issue from the glorious manifestation (*tajallī*) of the Family of God “who are within you, and they are your soul.” The elements of the third column come from the following statement:

Whenever these four signs are remembered, and you polish your heart and your hearts (*afīda*) become impassioned, and your spirit is vivified and your body trembles from ardent desire (*shawq*), then you will be one of the people of Paradise and one of the companions of the Commander of the Faithful.³⁹

This basic structure is adhered to throughout the commentary on *al-Baqara*, although not all of the specific elements are present, just as there is no reference to a color hierarchy in the earlier work. The language of this epistle strongly suggests that its author is speaking from experience and may therefore consider himself “one of the companions” of ‘Alī, the Commander of the Faithful. This self-perception became greatly intensified over time, to the point of

³⁷ *Sulūk* 73.

³⁸ This *ḥadīth* is also quoted at *Baqara* 25.

³⁹ *Sulūk* 73.

claiming sufficient authority to promulgate a new Quran.⁴⁰ Some of this development, whose consummation may be considered symbolized in the Báb's visions, may be seen in the intervening *Tafsīr sūrat al-baqara*.



The first tetrad encountered in the *Tafsīr sūrat al-baqara* proceeds from the Báb's discussion of the first verse: *Alif Lām Mīm*. The Báb says that the People of *al-Zāhir* "recognize in these letters the stations (*maqāmāt*) of Muḥammad and the Family of Muḥammad (*āl Muḥammad*). The *alif* is the letter of Muḥammad himself and is the *walāya* of God (*wa huwa walāyatu 'llāh*)."⁴¹ This statement possibly refers to the tradition that all of the letters of the alphabet have been generated from the *alif*.⁴² Thus Muḥammad, as progenitor of the Imams, occupies the position of *alif*. The *lām* then, is the letter of 'Alī, and the *mīm* is the letter of Fāṭima.⁴³ This order of personalities reflects the one found in the commentary on the *Fāṭiḥa* discussed in the next chapter as a heptadic hierarchy.

The Báb says that God originated (*abda'a*) the *lām* and the *mīm* through His command. It would appear that this is meant to affirm the close relationship between the command of God and *walāya*, inasmuch as the first letter of the word command (*amr*) is *alif*. He then says that when these two letters were joined together, the divine imperative "Be thou!" (*kun*) resulted (*fa-'inda 'l-ijtimā' hiya kalima kun*). Therefore, it is through *walāya* that 'Alī and Fāṭima, as cosmogonic principles, acquired being, and through the joining of 'Alī and Fāṭima (pre-eternally existent), the universe itself acquired being. As the Báb says, it was "through the divine command that the heavens and the earth were raised up" suggesting the equivalence 'Alī/heaven, Fāṭima/earth. As we shall see, this is born out in explicit terms later in the commentary.⁴⁴

There follows a statement to the effect that the reason *maddas* appear over the *lām* and the *mīm* and not over the *alif* in the Quran, is because the *alif* is "the one which causes *walāya* to appear directly from God".⁴⁵ This probably

40 Lawson, *Gnostic*.

41 *Baqara* 11.

42 Cf. *Mashāriq* 35. Here however, the *alif* mentioned is the one "hidden" in the *basmala*. That is, when the preposition "*bi*" is added to the word *ism* in the phrase *bismillāhir-rahīmānir-rahīm* its "natural" *alif* disappears: *bi* (Arabic letter *bā*) + *ism* (Arabic word) < (Arabic ligature: *bism*).

43 *Baqara* 11.

44 *Baqara* 11: *wa bi-amri-hi qāmat al-samawāt wa'l-arḍ*. The above statement also exploits the *abjad* value of the Arabic alphabet: *lām* = 30 + *mīm* = 40 = 70; *kāf* = 20 + *nūn* = 50 = 70.

45 *Baqara* 11: *li-annahū muḡhir al-walāya 'an allāh*.

refers to the absolute and unconditioned aspect of *walāya*, and the verticality of the *alif*. Whereas the *madda* — both etymologically and graphically represents, horizontality, extension or dimension, none of which are aspects of the pure world of divinity which is in absolute “dimensionless” isolation from the rest of the universe.

The Báb then discusses the figure of these three “disconnected” letters in connection with the *shahāda*:

And this [the “*alif lām mīm*”] is the word of *tawhīd*, because the letters *lā ilāh illā allāh* are twelve, but their source⁴⁶ is only three letters. Namely: the *alif*, *lām*, and *hā*. The *hā*, when it descends through eight worlds, seven active and one passive, appears as the letter *mīm*.⁴⁷

The idea is that the Imams themselves are the “living letters” of the *shahāda*. In support of this statement, the Báb quotes the famous hadith, “We are the heights” (*naḥnu al-ʿarāf*), which may be seen partly as a commentary on Q 7:44–46 attributed to the sixth Imam, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq.

Al-Ṣādiq said: We are the high places. Except by the path of Our knowledge God is not known. By us God is known and by Us God is worshipped. Were it not for us God would be neither known nor worshipped.⁴⁸

For a full discussion of this hadith and a history of its interpretation by exponents of theosophical Shiʿism see *Corbin*, i:310–320. It is important to note that in the course of this statement attributed to the sixth Imam (only a portion of which is quoted by the Báb), not only are the Imams characterized as: [1] “the men upon the heights”, and [2] “the heights” themselves, but also as [3] “the gates” appointed by God for whoever wants to have knowledge of His self (*naḥsahu*). This of course has important implications for the proper understanding of the Báb’s earliest claim to be, in addition to the “Remembrance” (*dhikr*), also the “Gate” (*bāb*) of God.⁴⁹

Another hadith quoted here from al-Ṣādiq pertains directly to the *alif lām mīm*:

46 *Baqara* 11 & *I* 159: *aṣlu-hā*; C f. 4a: *uṣūlu-hā*.

47 *Baqara* 11–12: *ʿawāmil al-fīʿl*; C f. 4a & *I* 59: *ʿawālim*. In *abjad* computation the *hā* = 5, *mīm* = 40. Eight worlds = $8 \times 5 = 40$. *Mīm*, as the letter of Fāṭima, represents the creative principle as it functions in the world accessible through sense perception. On Fāṭima as personification of this principle, see *Corbin*, *Spiritual Body* 51–73. See now also Lawson, *Feminine*.

48 *Baqara* 12.

49 See *Gnostic* 46–74. For the full Arabic text of the hadith: *Kāfi*, i:184#9.

It is one letter of the letters of the greatest name of God (*ismu 'llāh al-a'zam*), which the Prophet and the Imam wrote, and which is composed of all the disconnected letters in the Quran. Whenever it is used in prayer it is responded to.⁵⁰

The Báb then quotes a hadith from the Imam Mūsā on the Greatest Name:

The letters of the Greatest Name are four. The first is the phrase “There is no god but God”; the second is: “Muḥammad is the Messenger of God”; the third is: “Us” (*naḥnu*, i.e. we Imams); the fourth is: “Our Shi‘a.”⁵¹

The Báb explains that this Shi‘a has two aspects. The first pertains to all the prophets and trustees (*awṣiyā'*) and that even Abraham, when his heart became purified from the smirch and disarray of multiplicity, became a member of the Shi‘a of ‘Alī.⁵² The second pertains to the believers, who are the “rays of the prophets” (*ashi‘at al-anbiyā'*) if they have become purified from the dust of multiplicity and have entered the House of Glory (*bayt al-jalāl*).⁵³

This exaltation of the Shi‘a is elaborated in the Báb’s commentary on Q 2:2: **That is the Book wherein there is no doubt.** The Báb says that **the Book** is the Shi‘a of ‘Alī and it is the “greatest Book of the sea of Destiny” (*baḥr al-qadar*), “because in it is the principle (*ḥukm*) of all things.” He then says that everything in existence (*wujūd*) is the Book of God. “The prophet dictated it and ‘Alī wrote it with his own hand. Prior to this act of writing, nothing had existence, the act of writing being the trace (*athar*) of the activity of the writer.”⁵⁴ Furthermore, this Book is the first Shi‘a which affirmed ‘Alī’s *walāya* before any books existed. In this way “the Shi‘a is the fourth support” (*al-rukn al-rābi'*).⁵⁵ As such, the Shi‘a may be seen to correspond to the fourth column of the Throne discussed above, although the Báb does not refer to Sayyid Kāẓim’s commentary, or for that matter any other work, here or elsewhere in *Tafsīr sūrat al-baqara*.⁵⁶

50 *Baqara* 12. This hadith may be found in *Burhān* i:53#3. On the greatest name in Shi‘ism generally and Babi and Bahai thought specificall, see Lambden, *The word*.

51 *Baqara* 14.

52 Cf. Q 37:83–84: **Of his party (*shī‘a*) was also Abraham; when he came unto his Lord with a pure heart.**

53 *Baqara* 14. Cf. the quotation from Rashtī above (p. 58), which speaks of the Imam’s teaching “whomever resides in their House”.

54 *Baqara* 13.

55 *Baqara* 13.

56 The sole exception is the passing reference to *Kāfī* (*Baqara* 90).

The Báb emphasizes the importance of the Shi'a by saying that the completion of the appearance (*ẓuhūr*) of the *alif lām mīm* is dependent upon this book (i.e., the Shi'a). There is no indication here that *ẓuhūr* implies an actual appearance in the world; it is therefore probably meant to refer to the kind of esoteric and noetic "descent" through the four ontological levels mentioned above.

In his commentary on Q 2:5: *Those are upon guidance from their Lord, those are the prosperous*, the Báb employs the now familiar terms *al-bayān* and *al-ma'ānī*, in a tetradic discussion of the prosperity (*falāḥ*) derived from the Quranic word *al-muflīḥūn*. While the remaining terms *al-abwāb* and *al-imāma* are not used explicitly, the discussion appears to presuppose them.

Prosperity is from their Lord and it is according to degrees (*darajāt*):

- [1] For the *ahl al-bayān* [this *prosperity*] is the same as absolute purity (*al-tajrīd*) and consists of their attainment to the house of divine aloneness (*bayt al-tafrīd*), and their utter devotion to the affirmation of divine unity (*al-tawḥīd*) to the degree that there is no possibility of their mentioning anything but the most mighty and noble remembrance of God.
- [2] For the *ahl al-ma'ānī* [this *prosperity*] consists in the knowledge of the beginnings (*al-mabādī*, rhymes with *al-ma'ānī*), and their immersion in the ocean of the remembrance of the inclusive unity (*wurūduhum fī ṭamṭām dhikr al-wāḥidiyya*), which is the greatest paradise of the good pleasure [of God] (*riḍwān al-akbar*, cf. e.g. Q 9:72 where *riḍwān min Allāh akbar* is associated with the *Gardens of Eden jannāt 'adn*).
- [3] For those who are accounted in the *walāya* of the family of God [this *prosperity* consists in] their attainment to the Land of Saffron (*arḍ al-za'farān*) which is the depth of the sea of the Merciful (*lujāt al-baḥr al-raḥmān*).
- [4] For those who are accounted among the Shi'a of the family of God [this *prosperity* consists in] their attainment to the Red Sandhill (*kathīb al-aḥmar*).⁵⁷

Here the four supports are each associated with the hidden dimensions of a single Quranic word. As such, the comments are a fine example of the thor-

57 *Baqara* 41. For a study of this term as it occurs in Babi and Bahai writings, see Lambden, *Some Notes*.

oughness with which the Báb applied the Shaykhi doctrine. The origins of the terms *arḍ al-zaʿfarān* and *kathīb al-aḥmar* are somewhat obscure. The latter refers to one of the stages of the *Hajj* ceremony,⁵⁸ but along with the former it appears in Rashtī's *Sharḥ al-qaṣīda*, (one of the books the Báb may have owned)⁵⁹ in a metaphorical and technical usage.⁶⁰ Here both terms are used in the course of other hierarchies. One of these is a discussion of *al-muzammil* (the enwrapped one, i.e. Muḥammad, cf. Q 73), in which Rashtī outlines four separate hermeneutical levels (*maqāmāt*) of the term, followed by seven separate appropriate "garments" (*thawb*). The basic idea is that Muḥammad, or the Muḥammadan reality, is concealed by a number of veils. Of these seven garments, the second may correspond in some way with the third level of the word *prosperity* as given by the Báb. It is probably no accident that the symbolism of garment or clothing will play such a prominent role in the proclamatory *Tafsīr sūrat Yūsuf*—namely in the all-important shirt (*qamīṣ*) of Joseph—which will be the next major composition by the Báb begun only a few months after beginning this commentary. As such, it is not only possible but advisable to deem such images, even at this relatively early stage as one of a cluster of what elsewhere have been termed Josephian tropes or metaphors.⁶¹

58 Qadīmī and Himmat, *Lughāt* 314.

59 Rashtī, *Qaṣīda*. The edition used here is unpaginated. Page numbers supplied are counted from the recto of the title page. The *qaṣīda*, ode, of the title was written by one 'Abd al-Bāqī Afandī al-Mawṣilī (1789–1861). Al-Mawṣilī spent most of his life in Baghdad and was a distinguished poet and the author of several works on poetry and biography. This particular ode is devoted to the seventh Imam Mūsā al-Kāzīm (799–800) and was written on the occasion of the donation of a piece of the covering of the Prophet's tomb in Medina by Sultan Maḥmūd II (r. 1808–1839) to be used for the Shrine of the Imam Mūsā located in Kazemayn. Rashtī wrote his commentary in 1842 at the request of 'Alī Ridā Pasha, then governor of Baghdad. It is possible that the original *qaṣīda* was motivated by an anti-Wahhābī sentiment. For brief information on Sayyid Kāzīm's commentary see *Rafatī* 133 and references and MacEoin, *Messiah* 118 and references. The entire work really needs to be studied thoroughly. Corbin seems not to have taken an interest in it; Nicolas, on the other hand, has translated a passage from it (see below Chapter 5), part of which corresponds to a passage cited by the renowned Bahai apologist, Mīrzā Abū'l-Faḍā'il Gulpāygānī (1914) in his *Kitāb al-farā'id* 575–577 where the object is to show that Shaykhi writings predicted the advent of the Báb. On the Báb's personal library, see *Resurrection* 141.

60 For *arḍ al-zaʿfarān*, see *Qaṣīda* 54, 59, and 74; for *kathīb al-aḥmar*, 41, 66, 74. *Arḍ al-zaʿfarān* is found in the writings of Ibn Arabī (*Futuḥāt*, i: *bāb* 8). See Raḥmān, *Dream* 415, where it is equated with the "world of images" or *ʿālam al-mithāl*. Such an understanding would appear to apply here.

61 Lawson, *The Return*.

- [2] The second is the yellow garment (*al-ridā'*) in the yellow veil and the Land of Saffron (*arḍ al-za'farān*).⁶²

Here Rashtī is presuming the above-mentioned color hierarchy of white, yellow, green, and red. The discrepancy between this and the Báb's hierarchy is accounted for by the fact that the latter begins his tetrad at the level of colorless light or *tawhīd* (see below). Such a discrepancy offers an example of the way in which these hierarchies may be manipulated to stress a given point.

Rashtī refers to the Red Sandhill (*kathīb al-aḥmar*) in a complex hierarchy constructed around the words '*arsh*' and '*kursī*', which are associated respectively with the concepts of "seal of prophecy" (*khatm al-nubuwwa*) and "seal of *walāya*" (*khatm al-walāya*). The hierarchy consists of eight stations (*manāzil*). The fourth is described as "the stages of the beginnings (*manāzil mabādī*) and the grades of paradise". Here the seal of prophecy is in the *kathīb al-aḥmar*, while the seal of *walāya* is in the station of *al-raḥraf al-akhḍar*.⁶³ Rashtī's use of these terms possibly represents the Báb's immediate source, or at least a reliable precedent for his employment of them as hierarchical terms. A variation on this tetrad is found at the Báb's commentary on Q 2:98:

Whosoever is an enemy to God and His angels and His Messengers, and Gabriel, and Michael—surely God is an enemy to the unbelievers.'

[Q 2:98]

[1] The first [i.e. **God**] is the sign of the exclusive unity (*aḥadiyya*).

[2] The second [i.e. **His angels**] is the sign of *walāya*.

[3] The third [i.e. **His Messengers**] is the sign of the *risāla*.

[4] The fourth [i.e. **Gabriel**] is the sign of *imāma*, and

[5] The fifth [i.e. **Michael**] is from the sign of the second.⁶⁴

And for each [of these] there are several stations (*maqāmāt*), while God is isolated from His creation and His creation is isolated from Him. And whatever is other than Him are [but] His names. And each one speaks about what God has manifested to him by means of him (*la-hu bi-hi*).⁶⁵

62 *Qaṣīda* 54.

63 *Qaṣīda* 41. For the origin of *al-raḥraf al-akhḍar* see the **green cushions** (*raḥraf khuḍr*) of Q 55:76.

64 *Baqara* 240.

65 See below, Chapter 4. An example of "several *maqāmāt*" is that found in *Ziyāra*, i:213 where the four *marātib* of *tawhīd* are discussed as: unification of the divine essence (*tawhīd al-dhāt*), unification of the divine attributes (*tawhīd al-ṣifāt*), unification of the divine acts (*tawhīd al-aḥwāl*), and unification of devotional acts (*tawhīd al-'ibāda*).

- [1] The first is the sign of *tawhīd* [= affirming the divine unity by saying] *lā ilāh illā huwa*: “there is no god but Him.” None knows the “how” of Him except Him. *How are you then turned away?* [Q 10:32]
- [2] The second is the sign of ‘Alī.
- [3] The third is the sign of Muḥammad.
- [4] The Fourth is the sign of Ḥusayn.
- [5] The Fifth is the sign of Ḥasan.

Whosoever is an enemy to God and His names, whether this be [to the extent of] a drop of sweet water, or a speck of dust of its earth, then at the time of the impulse to reject (*fa-ḥīn al-khuṭūr bi’l-īrād*), he has become one of the *unbelievers*.⁶⁶

The fifth item may be seen as accidental, that is, it is conditioned not so much by the standard tetrad already discussed, but by the existence in the Quranic verse of five separate elements that require exegesis. This explains why the Báb relegates the fifth item back to the second level. Insofar as this fifth element is accidental, the remaining four elements symbolize, once again, the four supports.

This hierarchy is interesting because it ranks *walāya* above *nubuwwa*. As such, it may be seen as deriving ultimately (although probably not directly) from the mystical philosophy of Ibn Arabi. Izutsu’s study of Ibn Arabi’s theory of *walāya* has shown that this notion represents a kind of universal and supreme relationship to the divine as a function of which it is possible to say that every prophet is also a bearer of *walāya* and may therefore be designated, in some sense, a *walī*. However, not every *walī* is the bearer of *nubuwwa*. Thus, while Muḥammad is a *nabī*, he is also a *walī*. In this connection, it is important to observe that according to the Quran, *nubuwwa* and *risāla* (not to mention *imāma*) must be considered derivative from *walāya*: God is never called a *nabī* or a *rasūl*, but he is called, or more accurately, refers to Himself as *walī* par excellence (Q *passim*) and therefore the direct source of *walāya* in a way that he is not the direct source of prophethood or messengership. Numerous Quranic verses could be cited here, but reference to a recent thorough study will suffice.⁶⁷ The upshot is that *walāya* is superior to all other “offices” in any Islamic sacerdotal hierarchy. It is this fact, together

66 The statement at *Baqara* 240 is: *matā wujida; I 334: wujidat*. The idea that the inanimate earth and the like can be *mu’min* or *kāfir* is attested in several hadiths. See, e.g. *Burhān*, iii:360–362 *ad* Q 33:72.

67 Lawson, *Friendship*.

with the Quranic insistence that God is the best of *walīs*, which renders *walāya* superior to prophecy.⁶⁸ It is also precisely this kind of theory, emphasized by Ibn Arabi, which commended his work so well to the concerns of mystically inclined Imami thinkers such as Rajab Bursī, Ḥaydar Amūlī, and Ibn Abī Jumhūr who were, in turn, responsible for its Shi'ī assimilation.⁶⁹ But, whereas in Ibn Arabi's thought Jesus is the bearer of absolute *walāya* (*khātim al-awliyā'*), according to Shi'ī thought it is 'Alī who is the *non plus ultra* symbol of *walāya*.⁷⁰

Elsewhere, we find explicit statements which assert this ranking of *walāya* over *nubuwwa*, for example in the commentary on the following verse:

Knowest thou not that to God belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and that you have, apart from God, neither protector nor helper? [Q 2:107]

That is, [this verse is addressed to] all people everywhere:⁷¹

Knowest thou not that the sign of the exclusive unity appearing with divinity (*ulūhiyya*) is the sign of 'Alī?

And that the (divine) Essence is more glorious than to be connected to the kingdom (*mulk*) by means of description?

And that the kingdom belongs to His *walī* [alone] and that [kingdom] is the *walāya* [implied in the entire process of] Origination and Invention. And for him is set up the kingdom of the sign of the exclusive unity over all in the active heavens and the passive earth.⁷²

And that you have none apart from the sign of God [which is] 'Alī as a protector (*walī*), because here the *walāya* belongs to God, the Truth [Q 18:44].

Nor apart from the sign of the exclusive unity any helper in the affirmation of divine unity (*tawḥīd*).

Nor apart from the sign of the inclusive unity any helper in *nubuwwa*.

Nor apart from the sign of Raḥmāniyya any helper in *walāya*.⁷³

68 Izutsu, *Sufism* 263–274.

69 Corbin, ii:352.

70 On *walāya* in Ibn Arabi, the most penetrating analysis is still Chodkiewicz, *Seal*.

71 Baqara 250, C f. 93a, I 342, L 19: *ahl al-inkān wa al-akwān fī al-akwār wa al-adwār*.

72 Baqara 250–251: *wa la-hu yuthbitu mulk āyati 'l-aḥadiyya li-man fī 'l-samawāti 'l-maqbūlāt wa'l-arḍi 'l-qābilāt*. For similar statements, see the commentary at Q 2:22 & Q 2:116, Baqara 81–84 & 264.

73 These last two phrases are missing from L 19, probably the result of the copyist inadvertently skipping a line.

[Do you not know that] there are no signs [anywhere] except the signs of his kingdom (i.e. *walāya*). How is it then that you turn away?⁷⁴

Here, it is *walāya* (not *nubuwwa*), as the fundamental spiritual value, which is being emphasized. It may be helpful here to bear in mind the somewhat mnemonic formula: all prophets and messengers are *walīs*, but not all *walīs* are prophets or messengers. It is *walāya* as a spiritual quality, abstracted from any historical personality that is at issue. The key to the statement is the existence in the verse itself of the all-important word *friend* (*walī*). The commentary proceeds from the immediate association in Shi'i devotion of 'Alī and God with this term. It is of some interest to note that in this passage the inclusive unity is positive, as opposed to those cases mentioned in the previous chapter, where the inclusive unity is associated with false *walāya*. Here, it is explicitly connected with prophecy and therefore Muḥammad. Elsewhere in the tafsir, there are clear statements ranking Muḥammad above 'Alī:

[God is] the Creator of the heavens and the earth; and when He decrees a thing, He but says to it 'Be,' and it is [Q 2:117].

God designated (*ja'ala*) the role (*maqām*) of His own self for Muḥammad in Origination and Invention, insamuch as He is above all connection. And the thing (*amr*), according to the Lord (*laday 'l-rabb*) is 'Alī.⁷⁵

It seems that two types of *walāya* are being suggested: one connected with *aḥadiyya* and the other connected with *raḥmāniyya*. It is likely that the latter refers to *walāya* as it is represented in the world (*imkān*), while the former refers only to the *walāya* of the unknowable dimension of Essence. The influence of Ibn Arabi may be at work here in the form of his doctrine of "existence as mercy".⁷⁶ Another assertion of the high rank of Muḥammad is found in the commentary on the following verse:

74 The Quranic phrase: Q 10:32 or Q 39:6 (both verses mention *kingdom*); cf. also *yusṣafūna* in Q 40:69 where *signs* are mentioned. This statement is characteristic of the professed *waḥdat al-shuhūdī* "unity of witnessing" stance adopted by the Shaykhiyya by which they both differentiated themselves from and roundly condemned the *waḥdat al-wujūdī* "unity of being" orientation of the so-called school of Ibn Arabi. Recall that the formulation "*waḥdat al-wujūd*" has so far not been found in any of the great Sufi master's written works. See Landolt, Simnāni & Chittick, Ibn Arabi.

75 *Baqara* 264: *idh kāna huwa al-ghanī 'an al-iqtirān wa'l-irtibāt*. The point here is that Muḥammad is like God: *when He decrees a thing, He but says to it 'Be!' and it is*. [Q 2:117]

76 *Fuṣūṣ*, i:28; 112, 119, 143 f., 145, 187, 216; Corbin, *Creative*, index q.v. "*Nafas Raḥmānī*"; Izutsu, *Sufism* 116–140.

We have sent thee with the truth, good tidings to bear, and warning. Thou shalt not be questioned touching the inhabitants of Hell. [Q 2:119]

Verily, God chose (*iṣṭafā*), that is He created, Muḥammad in pre-eternity (*qidam*), which is His self, to stand for the Merciful in all the worlds of Origination and Invention,⁷⁷ over all the communities, isolated (*munfarid*) from all likenesses, and pre-existent forms (*ashbāḥ*), and similarities, since He is independent from any glad tidings and warnings. And He is as it says in the verse:

No vision taketh in Him, but He taketh in all vision: and He is the Subtile, the All-informed. [Q 6:103]. (Rodwell)

This re-affirms the supreme rank of Muḥammad, but the apparent contradiction remains. This contradiction can perhaps only be resolved by reference to Corbin's kathenotheism and those hadith, such as the one quoted and commented upon by Shaykh Aḥmad, in which the Imams are equated with Muḥammad (see above, p. 56).

In the commentary on Q 2:125 we find a tetrad which employs color symbolism along the lines mentioned earlier. First the Quranic verse

And when We appointed the House to be a place of visitation for the people, and a sanctuary, and: 'Take to yourselves Abraham's station for a place of prayer.' And We made covenant with Abraham and Ishmael: 'Purify My House for those that shall go about it and those that cleave to it, to those who bow and prostrate themselves.' [Q 2:125]

Covenant means the duty of witnessing God through whatever is other than Him.⁷⁸ And by Abraham 'Alī is intended just as by Ishmael Ḥusayn is meant because both were killed by the sword alone, may God punish their killer throughout all Origination.⁷⁹

And by [the order to] Purify [He means to behold] the sign of the exclusive unity which is manifest in all things from 'Alī and Ḥusayn for the sake of Muḥammad until those that shall go about it are firmly established therein [i.e. the exclusive unity].

[1] [Those that shall go about it] are the people of the White Depth (*lujjat al-bayḍā'*)—those who go about Muḥammad above the Throne of divine glory (*bahā'*).⁸⁰

77 L 22 & I 354 *qā'imān*; Baqara 266 & Cf. 99a: *mutaqā'imān fī kullī 'l-'awālim 'an al-rahmān*.

78 Baqara 278: *wa bi'l-'ahdi al-shahādata li-llāh 'an aydi mā siwā-hu*.

79 Cf. the previous similar equivalence 'Alī/Abraham where the reason given for the equivalence is the correspondence between the words *khalīl* and *walī*.

80 It is not clear whether *bahā'* has the same kind of technical meaning in the Shaykhi

- [2] And the ones who **cleave to it** are the people of the Yellow Sea (*qulzum*), **they cleave** (*yu'ākifūna*) to the sign of Muḥammad in the land of the Merciful.
- [3] And **those who bow** are the people of the Green Depth, they bow to their Creator in the center of the zone of splendor (*quṭb manṭiqat al-sanā'*) by means of the name of Muḥammad, the bearer of Origination.
- [4] And those who **prostrate** are those people of the vast sea (*yamm*) of the Red Deep (*ṭamṭām*), **prostrating before** God because of [their beholding] the sign of Muḥammad [which is] **in the souls and the horizons** [Q 41:53] in the sanctuary (*ḥaram*) of Ḥusayn.

The Báb says that God made the House of the exclusive unity a refuge (*marja'*) for the Family of God (*āl Allāh*, the Fourteen Pure Ones), **secure** from the allusions of everything else, “because they merit the rank of Trusteeship (*wiṣāyat al-rasūl*) apart from all others.”⁸¹ These comments seem to bear only a superficial relationship with Rashtī's color hierarchy. The Báb is more interested in the “embodiments” or personifications of any principles, such as *ʿaql*, *rūh*, *naḥs*, and *ṭabīʿa*, than with the principles themselves. Nonetheless, the hierarchy does reflect Rashtī's, as far as the respective “intervals” are concerned.

Another color tetrad is constructed on the basis of the following verse:

And when Abraham, and Ishmael with him, raised up the foundations of the House: ‘Our Lord, receive this from us; Thou art alone the All-hearing, the All-knowing’. [Q 2:127]

God here speaks about the **foundations** (*qawā'id*) **of the house** of the inclusive unity which came to be realized (*qad taḥaqqaqat*) through 'Alī and Ḥusayn. And when 'Alī and his son, the Martyr par excellence (*al-shahīd*), said:

Our Lord we accepted (*raḍaynā = taqabbal* < receive) martyrdom, do Thou receive from us our manifestation to all other than us. And receive from them the sign of Thine exclusive unity which is in them from us.⁸² And if it is this sign then it behooves you [to accept it] only because of itself. And nothing in their possible beings (*imkānihim*)⁸³ is more lofty

context as does, for example, *al-bayān*. The Báb also refers on this page to “the people of *al-bahā'* and *al-jamāl*”, eliciting once again and with new terminology the all-important glory motif.

81 *Baqara* 279.

82 C f. 105b: *fa-hum minnā* instead of *fī-him* (all other mss.).

83 C f. 105b: *wa mā imkānuhum* instead of *mā fī imkānihim* (all other mss.).

than it. Thou art the All-hearing while there is no existence to the heard (*al-masmūʿ*) in Thy presence, the All-knowing, while there is no existence to the known (*al-maʿlūm*)⁸⁴ in Thy presence. Exalted art thou. None knows how Thou art except Thee. Thou art alone the All-hearing, the All-knowing.

Had it not been for this supplication (*duʿā*) of theirs, God would not have **accepted** the affirmation of oneness from anyone who affirmed it (*min muwahhidīn*). But, God **received** from both their supplications by means of the martyrdom of both their **selves** (*anfusiḥumā*), for the **reception** of the very **souls** of these believers in the divine unity in **Paradise**.⁸⁵

When the two built⁸⁶ the **House** upon four supports [is a statement] for those who subscribe to a fourfold hierarchy (*li-ahl al-tarbīʿ*). As for the people of unity (*ahl al-waḥda*, i.e., the Imams) [this statement refers to] the exclusive divine unity.

- [1] And for the people of pre-creation,⁸⁷ one pillar [is raised] in the form (*ḥaiʿa*) of glorification (*tasbiḥ*), dyed with the color of affirming the unity (*tawḥīd*) of God, the Eternal, the Glorious—white.
- [2] And a pillar in the temple (*ḥaykal*) of praise (*taḥmīd*), dyed in the color of prophecy (*nubuwwa*)—yellow.
- [3] And a pillar in the form (*shabaḥ*) of *al-tahlīl* (i.e., affirming *lā ilāh illā ʾllāh*) dyed with *walāya*, which is over the letters of *al-tahlīl*—green.
- [4] And a pillar in the form (*ṣūra*) of *al-takbīr* (i.e., the uttering of *allāhu akbar*), dyed according to what is best about practicing true devotion to the Family of God (*ʿalā aḥsan al-tashayyuʿ*), the bearer of *al-tahlīl*, reddened with the red of redness.

In this way did they raise the **House** on these foundations in all the worlds that perhaps they might believe firmly in the signs/verses of God.⁸⁸

This hierarchy conforms perfectly to the famous doctrine of the four supports, although there is a certain amount of variation among the manuscripts at this

84 L 26: *wa law lā wujūd liʾl-maʿlūm*, an obvious scribal error; see following sentence transliterated in the next note.

85 Baqara 284: *wa law lā duʿā-humā lam yaqbalī ʾllāhu tawḥīdan min mutawahhidīn wa qad qabila ʾllāhu duʿā-humā bi-shahādātī anfuṣi-himā li-qabūl nufuṣi ʾl-muwahhidīna anfuṣihim bi-anna la-hum al-jannata*.

86 Baqara 284: *banayā*; this verb is a paronomastic reference to Ḥusayn as the “son” *ibn* of ʿAlī, and therefore the **Ishmael** (son of **Jacob**) of the verse.

87 *ahl al-ūlā*, see below, Chapter Five.

88 Baqara 284–285. In view of the vigor with which the Báb stresses the redness of the rank of the Shiʿa, it is likely that connotations of martyrdom are to be read into it.

point. The hierarchy which this manuscript and the one designated “I”⁸⁹ present, may be tabulated as follows:

Form	Colour	Function
<i>tasbīḥ</i>	white	<i>tawḥīd</i>
<i>taḥmīd</i>	yellow	<i>nubuwwa</i>
<i>tahlīl</i>	green	<i>walāya</i>
<i>takbīr</i>	red	<i>tashayyuʿ</i>

The Leiden manuscript⁹⁰ deviates from this schema the most:

Form	Colour	Function
<i>tasbīḥ</i>	white	<i>nubuwwa</i>
–	yellow	<i>taḥmīd li-llāh</i>
<i>tahlīl</i>	green	<i>walāya</i>
<i>takbīr</i>	red	<i>tashayyuʿ</i>

It seems that Leiden is the oldest manuscript extant. It is possible that the somewhat exaggerated doctrine presented in this schema is the most authentic and one that was later modified by other scribes. The likely alternative is that it is simply an error, and that *I* and *Baqara* represent a truer tradition. The Cambridge manuscript⁹¹ carries the following variant:

Form	Color	Function
<i>tasbīḥ</i>	white	<i>tawḥīd</i>
<i>taḥmīd</i>	yellow	<i>nubuwwa</i>
<i>tahlīl</i>	green	nothing
<i>takbīr</i>	red	<i>tashayyuʿ</i>

89 I 368.
90 L 26.
91 C f. 105a.

Color symbolism is also found in the Báb's commentary on Q 2:25, in which he comments on the word **rivers**.

Give thou good tidings to those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, that for them await gardens underneath which rivers flow; whensoever they are provided with fruits therefrom they shall say, 'This is that wherewithal we were provided before'; that they shall be given in perfect semblance; and there for them shall be spouses purified; therein they shall dwell forever. [Q 2:25]

The Báb begins by exploring this verse's meaning on various other levels. He says that there is a specific meaning of the verse for the People of Reality, which may be paraphrased as: "God himself **gave** (imperative of the Quran changed to perfect) **the glad tidings to those who believe in 'Alī**."⁹² The way this statement is introduced reveals something of the way the Báb saw himself at this time: "According to the People of Reality, this verse has a meaning that is known by none but them. And behold! I am able to relate it." (*hādhihi 'l-āya li-ahl al-ḥaqīqa la-hā wijhatun lā ya'rifuhā ghayruhum wa hā anā dhākiruhā*). Such a statement indicates that not only did the Báb arrogate to himself far-reaching powers of interpretation at this time, but also suggests that he considered himself one of the People of Reality (possibly the Imams). The authority with which he interprets the Quran in such instances may be thought to contravene the spirit expressed by Rashtī in the statement quoted above which cautions against the imposition of one's reading of the Holy Book on another. Similar indications may be found elsewhere in the commentary, a few of which will be noted in the following chapters.

There is another meaning for the locution *ahl al-bāṭin* "people of inner meaning" as distinct from the *ahl al-ḥaqīqa*, in which case the verse may be similarly paraphrased: "God himself **gave glad tidings to those who believed in Muḥammad**." A third meaning is for the *ahl al-bāṭin 'alā nahj al-zāhir*: those who "hide in plain view". Here the paraphrase is: "... **to those who believe** in the divine origin of the one named 'Alī (also the Báb's name, viz: 'Alī Muḥammad) and **who do deeds of righteousness** through those names and attributes by which he describes himself." Then the Báb says "the **rivers** are four so that the lights (of the Throne) can appear in the world (*fī'l-akwār wa'l-adwār*)."⁹³

⁹² *Baqara* 85.

⁹³ *Baqara* 87–88.

- [1] The pre-creational **river** (*al-nahr al-ūlā*) is a **river** of white water which flows for the creation of all things (*li-khalq al-ashyā'*). By it, the hearts are whitened for the affirmation of the unity of the Merciful and purified of the dust of multiplicity. At the headwaters of this river is written "There is no god but He, and to Him is the return."
- [2] The second **river** is of yellow milk which flows for the **sustenance** (*rizq*) of all things. By it, the intellects are yellowed to [perceive] the *nubuwwa* of the Messenger of God. God wrote at its headwaters, "The excellence of Muḥammad over all the other prophets is like My own excellence, and I am the Lord of Might, high above whatever is attributed to Me."
- [3] The third **river** is of pure green honey, flowing for the very life (*ḥayāt*) of all created things. From it, the souls (*al-nufūs*) are greened so that they might perceive the signs of the Trustees (*awṣiyā'*) of the Messenger. God wrote at its headwaters the names of the family of God and their excellence, and their excellence is inexhaustible.
- [4] The fourth **river** is of red wine flowing for the dissolution (*kasr*) of all things, and their reconstitution (*ṣawgh*) by means of the divine verses and tokens. From it, the bodies are reddened for the love of the Shi'a of the pure family of God. God forms the form of the believers in this river. And God wrote at its headwaters: "The love of the Shi'a of 'Alī is My fortress (*ḥiṣnī*); he who enters My fortress is secure from my wrath."⁹⁴

Here the basic tetrad is once again affirmed through exegesis of the Quran. The apparent variation from the tetrad described by Rashtī is a function of the tafsir context, and also the less speculative concerns of the author. In closing this section of his commentary, the Báb says that these **rivers** represent the respective paradises of exclusive unity, inclusive unity, Mercy, and the Fifth Paradise (*jannat al-khamsa*). This last may correspond to a specific level in the heptadic hierarchies, to which we will now turn.

94 *Baqara* 88–89. Rivers of water, milk, wine and honey are described in Q 47:15. The Báb has changed their order to conform to the hierarchy. The fourth inscription is a well-known hadith, see *Anwār* 133.

Heptads

Architecture of Glory, II

For the first example of a heptadic hierarchy, we need look no further than the *Fātiḥa* itself. As mentioned earlier, much of this short commentary may be seen as microcosm of the whole tafsir. It is of some interest to notice the old exegetic controversy over the number of verses (six or seven) in this sura, inasmuch as most of the tiering occurring in this commentary does so across a range of seven elements.¹ The Báb characterizes each of the seven verses as a particular paradise or garden (*janna*), which is associated with one of the seven names by which the fourteen pure ones may be designated, viz., Muḥammad, ‘Alī, Fāṭima, Ḥasan, Ḥusayn, Ja‘far and Mūsā. Verse 1 is called the “book” (*kitāb*) of Muḥammad and is also the “garden of Paradise” (*jannat al-firdaws*). The following table represents the hierarchy presented in the commentary on this sura.² However, it should be remembered that Muḥammad and the Imams are also seen as being of equal rank as bearers of *walāya*.

Verse	Name	Paradise	Function
1	Muḥammad	<i>firdaws</i>	<i>nubuwwa</i>
2	‘Alī	<i>wāḥidiyya</i>	<i>walāya</i>
3	Fāṭima	<i>na‘īm</i>	<i>mā hiya ahlu-hā</i>
4	Ḥasan	<i>‘adn</i>	<i>wiṣāya</i>
5	Ḥusayn	<i>muqām</i>	<i>walāya</i>
6	Ja‘far	<i>khuld</i>	—
7	Mūsā	<i>mawā’</i>	<i>walāya</i>

The fourth garden is further defined as the center or axis of all the gardens (*quṭb al-jinān*), perhaps indicating another dimension to this hierarchy. The seven names, represent the different names by which each of the fourteen Pure Ones

¹ Ayoub, Prayer 642–643.

² *Baqara* 7–9.

are known. That is, each of the names Muḥammad, ‘Alī, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn may be applied to more than one figure. The names Fāṭima, Ja‘far and Mūsā, however, may only be used once. The name Muḥammad is applicable not only to the Prophet himself, but also to Muḥammad al-Bāqir, the fifth Imam, Muḥammad al-Jawād, the ninth Imam, and Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī, the twelfth Imam (also known as al-Mahdī, al-Qā‘im, or al-Ḥujja). The name ‘Alī may properly designate not only the first Imam but also his grandson ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn, the fourth Imam, the eighth Imam ‘Alī al-Riḍā, and ‘Alī al-Hādī, the tenth Imam. The name al-Ḥasan may be applied to both the second Imam and the eleventh. The result is that although there are fourteen different personalities involved, it may be said that there are in reality only seven different names.³ That the Báb has chosen to associate each verse with one of these seven names is undoubtedly connected to the way in which he understood one of the more common names for this sura, namely *al-sab‘ al-mathānī*, a designation that reflects a somewhat obscure statement at Q 15:87:

We have given thee seven of the oft-repeated (*sab‘ān min al-mathānī*), and the mighty Koran.

As is the case with many *hapax legomena* in the Quran, interpretation varies widely.⁴ The Akhbari interpretation supports these understandings of the *sab‘ān min al-mathānī*. In *Burhān*, for example twelve hadith are marshalled to support both the idea that the Fātiḥa is the *sab‘ān min al-mathānī* (#s 1,2,5,6,11), as well as the Imams (#s 3,4,7). The remaining hadith says that the “seventh” is the Qā‘im (#8). Report #9 says that the verse was not revealed this way, but in any case it refers to “Us” (i.e. the Imams or the *ahl al-bayt*), whereas the *al-Qur‘ān al-‘azīm* mentioned in the verse refers to the Qā‘im. Report #10 says simply that the verse points to the seven (!) Imams and the Qā‘im. Report #12 makes the interesting statement that “none of the prophets were given these except Muḥammad; they are the seven Imams around which the spheres revolve and *al-Qur‘ān al-‘azīm* is Muḥammad.”⁵

Later in the commentary, the Báb states that one of the results of the process of creation (*ibdā‘* and *ikhtirā‘*) is that seven becomes fourteen.

There are seven locations (sing. *mazhar*) where *ibdā‘* appears/occurs, and they are the **seven heavens**. The first is the divine will (*al-mashīyya*), the

3 I am grateful to the late Dr. Muḥammad Afnan for pointing this out to me in private communication (June 1980).

4 On Quranic *hapax* in general see Karimi-Nia, *Hapax* and its comprehensive bibliography.

5 *Burhān*, ii:353–354. See also Ayoub, Prayer 638, and Wensinck, *al-Mathānī*.

second is divine specific purpose (*al-irāda*), the third is divinely ordained destiny (*al-qadar*), the fourth is divine decree (*al-qaḍā'*), the fifth is divine permission (*al-idhn*), the sixth is divine fate (*al-ajal*), the seventh is holy scripture (*al-kitāb*). Likewise, there are seven places where “invention” appears/occurs, “and they are the **seven earths**”.⁶

In support of this statement the Báb cites the following hadith from al-Ṣādiq:

Nothing exists in the earth or in heaven except with these seven qualities (*khiṣāl*): Will, Purpose, Destiny, Decree, Permission, Book, and Fate. Whoever imagines that he can do without any one of these has committed *kufr*.⁷

All **gardens**, except the second (*wāḥidiyya*), take their names from various Quranic contexts: *firdaws* [Q 18:107; Q 23:11]; *naʿīm* [several, e.g. Q 5:65]; *ʿadn* [several, e.g. Q 13:23]; *muqām* [Q 25:76]; *khuld* [Q 25:15]; *mawā'* [e.g., Q 32:19].⁸ Inasmuch as few details are given by the Báb about the nature of these **gardens**, we can assume that the purpose of the hierarchy is to affirm the sanctity of all the members of the *ahl al-bayt*, without any appreciable preference for any single one. The statement that the fourth paradise is the axis (*quṭb*) of all the others, is in line with Ptolemaic cosmography which puts the sun in the fourth sphere.⁹

Another seven-level hierarchy is suggested at verse 26, where the Báb cites a hadith from the seventh Imam, Mūsā al-Kāẓim, in which he explains the well-known Quranic verse:

Though all the trees in the earth were pens, and the sea—seven seas [of ink] yet would the Words of God not be spent. God is All-mighty, All-wise. [Q 31:27, cf. Q 18:109] (Arberry slightly adapted)

6 *Baqara* 112–113 *ad* Q 2:29: It is He who created for you all that is in the earth, then He lifted Himself to heaven and levelled them seven heavens; and He has knowledge of everything. Cf. the above mention of *hā* becoming *mīm*, during the process of “descent” or creation. For the Quranic warrant for seven earths, see Q 65:12. For pertinent Ismāʿīlī philosophical background see Andani, Merits.

7 *Baqara* 113–114. This tradition appears in *Kāfī*, i:149 in a separate chapter devoted to the subject. A variant ascribed to the Imam Mūsā lists these seven in the following order: *qaḍā'*, *qadar*, *irāda*, *mashīyya*, *kitāb*, *ajal*, and *idhn* (*Kāfī*, i:149).

8 Cf. the hierarchy of paradises mentioned by Karīm Khān Kirmānī in Corbin, *Spiritual Body* 235.

9 For a summary of the presence of the Quranic material in early Muslim astronomy see Hehmeyer, Configuration.

Kāzim said: These seas are:

- [1] The spring (‘ayn) of al-Kibriyat¹⁰
- [2] The spring of *al-Yamin*,
- [3] The spring of Abrahūt,¹¹ and
- [4] The spring of al-Ṭabriyya and
- [5] The reservoir of the water of the two Sayyids,¹² and
- [6] The reservoir of Ifriqiyya, and
- [7] The reservoir of Najrawān.¹³

And we are the **words** [of God]; none perceives our virtues, nor can any recount [them].¹⁴

The Báb adds:

The Imam meant that from each spring there proceeds one of the grades of the Divine Will, and one of the seven gardens of the gardens of the divine Ipseity (*al-hūwiyya*). Verily the seas, and whatever has been originated in Origination like them, **would be exhausted**, but the fruits of this land **would not be exhausted**, because they have been individuated (*tudhuwwita*) by the hand of God, **if they but knew**.

Further information about these gardens or paradises is given in the previously quoted commentary at Q 2:1: **Alif Lām Mīm**. The Báb says that this verse, as seen by the People of Reality (*ahl al-ḥaqīqa*, viz, the Imams, but possibly including others, see the following), is the knowledge (*maʿrifa*) of God.

Notwithstanding the many letters that compose it, and the several meanings that may be derived from it, the Imams see it as a single letter with a single meaning (*maʿnā*). He then says that these People of Reality are the inhabitants of the **garden** of Pre-Creation (*jannat al-ūlā*). Their immortality (*baqāʾ*) is the immortality of God and none but they themselves may properly describe them.

10 L 26: ‘ayn al-kibriyyat. All the following names are vowelled in this manuscript.

11 So vowelled in L 26, which is followed in *Baqara* 282 and C f. 104b; I 366: ‘ayn barhūt as *Ziyāra* (see below).

12 L 26: jummatu mā sayyidān.

13 The seventh body of water is called an ‘ayn in C and *Baqara*; I agrees with L.

14 *Baqara* 282. Cf. *Nūr*, iv:216 #92; the last ‘ayn here is different: “baʿlʿwrān”. The hadith is also found in *Burhān*, iii:279 #4, where yet another name “bāhūrān” is given in the seventh place. All these names are obscure. Shaykh Aḥmad cites this hadith in *Ziyāra*, i:378–379, in the course of another discussion of the terms *bayān*, *maʿānī*, *abwāb*, and *imāma*. Here the third fountain is *al-barhūt*. Elsewhere, Shaykh Aḥmad says that the valley of *barhūt* is where the astral body is joined by the spirit (see Corbin, *Spiritual Body* 186–187).

Compared with their station, whatever is other than them is nonexistent.¹⁵ For this reason,¹⁶ there are (*li-dhā sāra*) eight **gardens** and seven hells. The latter are actually seven shadows (*ẓill*), and there are only seven because the first **garden** is completely cut off from the rest of the **gardens** and **hells**.¹⁷ This garden is the Garden of *Tawhīd* and the Form (*shabah*) of *Tafrīd*, completely unconnected and incomparable.¹⁸

The terms *ẓill* and *shabah*, encountered many times in this tafsir, have a long history in Islamic gnostic literature. They may be translated respectively, as shadow and phantom.¹⁹ In the early text *Kitāb al-aẓilla*, for example, one finds many contexts in which this terminology is used.²⁰ The tradition which it represents, often associated with the name of Mufaḍḍal ibn ‘Umar al-Ju‘fi reaches back into a very early and unsettled period of Islamic history. The following examples are representative.

In the course of a session with some of his disciples (including al-Mufaḍḍal, on whose authority the hadith is transmitted) on the subject of the beginning of creation, al-Ṣādiq asked Yūnus ibn Zabyān (832) what the people of Kufa had to say about the first being created by God. Yūnus replied that the people of Kufa say that God created Iblis before He created Adam. al-Ṣādiq, outraged, replied:

I seek refuge with God from their idle talk! Such is the talk of the unrighteous! God, the Exalted, created light before darkness, good before evil, Paradise before Hell-fire, mercy before punishment, Adam before Iblis, the shadows (*aẓilla*) before the phantoms (*ashbāḥ*), and the phantoms before the spirits, and the spirits before the bodies, and the bodies before

15 *mā siwā-hum ma’dūmūna ‘inda maqāmi-him*.

16 That is, to facilitate a gradual and graduated access to ever higher levels of spiritual being.

17 *lā dīdd la-hā wa lā ẓill ba‘ fī ‘l-ḥaqīqati khalwa min al-jinān wa’l-jinān khalwa min-hā*. That the **hells** are characterized by the nonsubstantial idea of shadow is perhaps traceable to the teachings of Suhrawardi, which present evil as having no ontic value whatever. However, the ancient teaching of the Imams had already taught the primacy of good over evil, light over darkness, being over nonexistence as is shown in the hadith from Mufaḍḍal b. Ju‘fi quoted below. On Suhrawardi, see *Corbin*, ii; also Sohravardi, *L’Archange* 85–86; Ziai & Walbridge, *Hikmat*; Marcotte, *Suhrawardi*. This metaphysics of light can be seen as having partly developed, although much altered, from Zervanism. Cf. Widengren, *Religions* 244–252 & Bausani, *Religiosa* 228–251.

18 *Baqara* 9–10.

19 So Halm, *Die islamische* q.v. index, *ẓill*, *ashbāḥ*. See now Bar Asher and Kofsky, *Nuṣayrī*.

20 On this work, preserved by the Syrian Nuṣayrī, ‘Alawī and Isma‘īli communities, see Halm, *Die islamische* 240–246 and references. Much of the work is translated in Halm, *Die islamische* 246–274.

death, and death before the Passing Away, and the Passing Away before the Arrangement, and the Arrangement before the Rising, and the Rising before the Resurrection, and the Resurrection before the Retribution, and this before the Repentance, and this before the Gathering, and the Gathering He created before the Earth and Heaven, which was in a completely different garb, in which God the One, the Almighty, will appear.²¹

In the same vein:

I asked: “My Master, what was the first thing which God created?” al-Šādiq answered: “The first thing God created was the *al-nūr al-ẓillī*.” “From what did He create it?” “He created it out of His Will, after which he divided it. Knowest thou not the word of God in your Book: *Hast thou not regarded thy Lord, how He has stretched out the shadow? Had He willed, he would have made it still. Then We appointed the sun, to be a guide to it; thereafter We seize it to Ourselves, drawing it gently.*” [Q 25:45–46]²²

In another passage, al-Šādiq speaks of the *aẓilla* being rewarded by God for their act of praise by being clothed with *ashbāḥ*.²³ Halm describes these two entities simply as “bodiless first beings.” The *ashbāḥ* and *aẓilla* according to various reports, were created before Muḥammad;²⁴ elsewhere, the *aẓilla* are the as yet unvivified figures of Hell and the *ashbāḥ* are the figures of Paradise.²⁵ They also represent the material out of which not only Adam and his progeny, but also Iblīs were created.²⁶ Halm explains that they represent the two earlier stages in a successive process by which the primordial *Lichtseelen* (*dharra*), due to their fall to earth, acquire density and darkness to become spirits (*arwāḥ*) and finally bodies (*abdān*),²⁷ yet another tetrad.

The use of these two terms by the Báb seems, in some cases, to reflect the meanings in this early gnostic literature, especially the term *ashbāḥ* (sing. *shabāḥ*).²⁸ But a more immediate influence is probably Shaykhi thought in

21 Cf. Halm, *Die islamische* 247.

22 Cf. Halm, *Die islamische* 247–248.

23 Halm, *Die islamische* 247–248.

24 Halm, *Die islamische* 109–110, 254.

25 Halm, *Die islamische* 183. On *ashbāḥ*, see also Rubin, Pre-existence 99–101.

26 Halm, *Die islamische* 256 & 258.

27 Halm, *Die islamische* 197 & 301.

28 As a matter of fact, much of the otherwise unusual or puzzling vocabulary in this work by the Báb, and the work of Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kāẓim may be seen as deriving

which such terminology is used to speak of the *‘ālam al-mithāl*, the so-called “world of images” or “imaginal realm”.²⁹ Depending on the context, *shabāḥ* in this tafsir has been translated as “pre-existent form”, “lifeless form”, “facsimile”, or simply “form”. This last translation appears to suit the intention of its use in the fourfold color hierarchy above, where it functions as a synonym for *hai’a*, *haykal*, and *ṣūra*. Nevertheless, even in this context it is possible to read connotations for the overall ontological theory implied in the tafsir. So, *shabāḥ* would represent a stage of Being which is still some distance from perfect realization, but which nonetheless holds within it all of the “genetic material” for the realization (*ta’ayyun*) of a given individual, much like Ibn Arabi’s *al-a’yān al-thābita* or immutable entities.³⁰ As such, the Day of Alast of Q 7:172 is suggested.

To return to the passage from the tafsir translated above, it is possible to see in this schema traces of a traditional spiritual discourse involving the basic structure 7 + 1. Thus, we find in the writings of the mystic Nur al-Dīn Isfarāyīnī (1317) reference to eight degrees of spiritual ascent, the highest or eighth degree of which is characterized as being beyond opposition and the cosmos, viz, *lā makānī*, “placeless”. Both Najm al-Dīn Kubrā (1221) and Aḥmad al-Ghazālī (1126) had previously used the metaphor of this “eighth degree” as the ultimate spiritual goal of the mystic.³¹ This basic structure was adopted later by the Shaykhis in order to discuss their views on the thorny question of bodily resurrection. The eventual opponent of the Báb, Karīm Khān Kirmānī (1871), speaks of eight degrees of paradise, the eighth of which is the domain of the Prophet and the twelve Imams.

Now, that degree has no opposite because, ontologically, the Prophet and the Imams have no opposites. Ontologically, opposites appear only on the level of our existence, that is, of the Shi‘ites and the True Faithful. That is

ultimately from this literature, which was encountered in the work of scholars like Rajab Bursī, if not directly from those books like *Kitāb al-ḥaṭṭ wa ’l-aẓilla*, “The Book of Sevens and Shadows” (half in Arabic and half in Persian, on which see Halm, *Die islamische* 240–242). See Eschraghi, *Die Frühe* 338–340.

29 Corbin, *Spiritual Body* 182; Lawson, Shaykh Aḥmad.

30 According to Lane, *shabāḥ* denotes a figure which is visible at a great distance, but which is as yet unidentifiable. Steingass offers a simple, yet suggestive definition: “Any object seen at a distance and yet appearing as a black speck.” There is a growing body of scholarship on the immutable entities or immutable archetypes, as the technical term is sometimes translated: Izutsu, *Sufism*; Corbin, *Creative*; Chittick, *Sufi*; Hameen-Anttila, *Immutable*; Lawson, *Mythic*. In this connection, see now the excellent article by Kazemi, *Mysteries*.

31 Isfarāyīnī, *Révélateur* 72.

why the Antagoniste [possibly a direct reference to the Báb], in the true and ontological sense, is the adversary of the Shi‘ites, or the adepts of the holy Imams. But they, that is, the Prophets and the Imams, have neither opposite nor adversary in the true and essential meaning of the word, because the adversaries themselves rank below them.³²

Following these indications, the above chart might be revised as:

Verse	Name	Garden	Office
0	God	<i>al-ūlā</i>	Habitation of Imams
1	Muḥammad	<i>firdaws</i>	<i>nubuwwa</i>
2	‘Alī	<i>wāḥidiyya</i>	<i>walāya</i>
3	Fāṭima	<i>na‘īm</i>	<i>mā hiya ahlu-hā</i>
4	Ḥasan	<i>‘adn</i>	<i>wiṣāya</i>
5	Ḥusayn	<i>muqām</i>	<i>walāya</i>
6	Ja‘far	<i>khuld</i>	–
7	Mūsā	<i>Mawā’</i>	<i>walāya</i>

The next pertinent tiering occurs in the commentary on Q 2:2, where the Báb singles out the nouns *hidāya* (“guidance” derived from the Quranic *hudā*) and *taqwā* (“piety” derived from *al-muttaqīn*) for special consideration. Each of the two terms is considered on several levels, each level is associated with a specific group or identity. It is here that we encounter those terms which played such an important role in Shaykh Aḥmad’s discussion of *imāma*. To introduce these hierarchies, the Báb says:

Guidance from God is the creation of the thing (*ijād al-shay’*); **guidance** from Muḥammad is the “Most Great Office” (*al-sifārat al-kubrā*, i.e., *nubuwwa*); **guidance** from ‘Alī is the bestowal (*‘aṭā*) to each according to his due. **Guidance** at the level of the Imams is therefore one but involves these three relationships.³³

32 Corbin, *Spiritual Body* 234–235, from Kirmānī, *Irshād al-‘awwām*. Another work by Kirmānī, *Izhāq al-bāṭil*, devotes long sections specifically to refutations of the Báb’s claims. On this latter title, see now McCants, A grammar 62–63 and the earlier discussion in MacEoin, Shaykhi reactions.

33 *Baqara* 16.

The Messenger of God said: I am the *warn*er (*nadhīr*: Q *passim*), and ‘Alī is a *guide* (*hādī*: Q *passim*).

- [1] And his *guidance*³⁴ for the People of al-Bayān is his revelation to them by means of them (*la-hum bi-him*) that: There is no god but Him, the Real (*al-ḥaqq*), *Like Him there is naught, He is the All-hearing, the All-seeing*. [Q 42:11]
- [2] And for the People of Meanings (*ahl al-ma‘ānī*), *guidance* is that Muḥammad is unique (*munfarid*) in the world (*fī ‘l-‘imkān*) with regard to likeness and similarity (*naẓīr, shabīh*), and God raised him up in the station of His self in actuality (*fī‘l-adā’*) in all the worlds after the gist of the statement: *No vision taketh in Him, but He taketh in all vision: and He is the Subtile, the All-informed*. [Q 6:103 Rodwell].³⁵
- [3] And for the People of the Gates (*ahl al-abwāb*) [the *guidance* is that] the Family of God (*āl allāh*) is the place of the appearance (*maẓhar*) of Muḥammad on the level of gnosis and realization (*fī‘l-ma‘rifa wa ‘l-adā’*) in all the worlds, potential or actual (*al-‘imkān wa‘l-akwān*). By means of them all movements move, and all rests rest.
- [4] And for the People of the Imamate (*ahl al-imāma*), *guidance* is that the trustees (*awṣiyā*) of Muḥammad are twelve souls. And they are the letters of *lā ilāha illā allāh* in the sacred scriptures (*fī ‘l-ruqūm al-musattarāt*). And that Fāṭima, the Truthful and Pure (*al-ṣiddīqa al-ṭāhira*) is unique, except for the Imams, apart from all things. All must approach her in servitude.³⁶
- [5] And for the People of the Supports (*ahl al-arkān*), *guidance* is support (*rukniyya*).

34 “His *guidance*”: *hidāyatuhu* = ‘Alī’s *guidance*.

35 *Baqara* 167. *Baqara* 167. *Ma‘ānī*, sing. *ma‘nā*, is a notoriously difficult word to pin down. One of the more logical definitions in the present context is: “The positive concepts of God, the qualifications of God which have meaning for us, human beings, and this is the primordial Muḥammadan reality, pleroma of the Fourteen Immaculates which are these *ma‘ānī*.” (*Corbin*, i:194). This may be summed up by the German *die Idee* (Landolt, Briefwechsel 271); but see also Arberry, *Doctrines*, where the word is variously translated as “relation” (20), and “being” (136). The adjectival *ma‘nawī* corresponds to the English “significant” or “real” in the same way that the spiritual aspect of a thing, as opposed to its material aspect, is thought to be “true” or “real” as opposed to illusory or transient. Thus, *ma‘nawī* also carries the extra value of “holy” or “sacred”. However, there is an important semantic opposition between *ma‘nā* “spiritual meaning” and *ṣūra* “form” that should not be lost sight of. On this see Chittick, *Sufi Path of Love* 15 & 352 n. 12.

36 C f. 6a: “All her community is her servant.”

- [6] And for the Deputies (*ahl al-nuqabā'*), it is deputyship (*al-naqāba'*).
- [7] And for the Lieutenants (*ahl al-nujabā'*), it is lieutenantship, (*al-najāba*).
- [8] And to all [others], it is according [to their precreational state on the Day of Alast] (*bi-mā huwa 'alayhi*). And all of the above is His manifestation to everything other than Him, by means of everything other than Him.

The terminology of this particular hierarchy comes directly from the hadith quoted in the previous chapter ascribed to the fourth Imam, Zayn al-Ābidīn. It is assumed that the Báb was acquainted with it (although he never quotes it as such) either through those writings of Shaykh Aḥmad that he is thought to have possessed, or other sources.³⁷ The first element of the Báb's hierarchy does not explicitly mention *tawḥīd*, as in the case of Shaykh Aḥmad's commentary; but the gist of his statement amounts to the same, which in Corbin's words is "l'Unification de l'Unique au *situs* de la théologie négative ou apophasique".³⁸ Therefore, the designation *ahl al-bayān* is rightly applied only to those who have perfectly accomplished the act of affirming divine unity, namely the Imams (and perhaps the Báb, see below). As for the Quranic term *al-bayān* as used by the Báb, it is taken from the second tradition quoted earlier from the fifth Imam, Muḥammad al-Bāqir, and quoted here again for convenience:

Bāqir said: 'O Jābir! Upon you be *al-bayān* and *al-ma'ānī*'. Jābir said: 'And what is *al-bayān* and *al-ma'ānī*?' Bāqir answered: 'As for *al-bayān* it is that you recognize that God is He of whom it is said: *Like Him there is naught* [Q 42:11], and to serve Him and to not share with anything the devotion which is due Him to any extent whatsoever. As for *al-ma'ānī*, We are His *ma'ānī*, His *side*, His *hand*, His *tongue*, His *cause*, His *rule*, His *knowledge*, His *truth*. Whatever We will, God wills; and God purposes what We purpose ... And We are the *Face of God* which turns about in all directions in the earth in your midst. He who has recognized us has certitude itself for an Imam. He who is ignorant of us has *Sijjīn* for an Imam.'³⁹

37 See also Browne, *Traveller's* 303–304. Cf. also the statement of al-Qummi quoted in *Burhān* i:56 #10, that *hidāya* in the Book of God has several meanings (*wujūh*).

38 Corbin, i:198. This may be translated as "The unification of the Unique [God] in the 'place' indicated through negative or apophatic theology", that is to say in a "placeless" place.

39 Quoted above at the beginning of Chapter Two (p. 49) from *Ziyāra*, i:43. Cf. also the Báb's citation of a part of the *Khutbat al-yatimīyya*, below (pp. 125–6).

Here the term *al-bayān* (“highest truth”) in a not uncommon instance of the Quran performing exegesis on the hadith, is explained by the same Quranic citation [Q 42:11] found in the Báb’s statement. The term *al-ma‘ānī* is also further clarified as referring directly to the Imams themselves. At this level, the Imams would represent “the positive concepts of God, those divine qualifications that have signification for us.”⁴⁰ Whereas at the level of *bayān*, they represent the unknowableness of God.

The remaining categories of the hierarchy presented by the Báb describe a descending order of spiritual rank. The point being made here is the same one quoted from Rashtī in the previous chapter: scripture carries a number of meanings, each one as “correct” as the other, depending upon the spiritual rank, or ability to understand, of a given reader. The hierarchy indicates that these various meanings function in harmony, something of an islamicate *Diapason*.⁴¹ The distinctive terminology of this hierarchy appears to place the author firmly in the Shaykhi tradition.

The designations *arkān*, *nuqabā’*, and *nujabā’* found in the above-mentioned hadith require some explanation. It is clear that these three levels are inferior to *imāma*, but it is not clear precisely to whom they refer. It is likely that the Báb’s hierarchy, apart from being conditioned by the hadith from Zayn al-‘Ābidīn, refers to the tradition of the spiritual elite who, from generation to generation, maintain true religion. This elite however, is recognized only by a select group of followers, while the majority of people remain ignorant both of the elite itself and their teaching.⁴² In Shaykhi theology, the community of those who are so privileged represent the so-called “fourth support” of religion, namely the Perfect Shi‘a (*al-shī‘at al-kummāl*). The first three supports are *tawhīd*, *nubuwwa*, and *imāma/walāya*. The Báb clearly subscribes to this idea in this tafsir when he states explicitly “the Shi‘a are the fourth support.”⁴³

The *arkān* can refer to four persons, who subsist unchanged from age to age, and can also possibly refer to those prophets who were “raised by God” without suffering death, namely Enoch (*Idrīs*), Elijah (*Ilyās*), *Khidr*, and Jesus (*‘Īsā*).⁴⁴ Corbin insists that this hierarchy, as elaborated by the Shaykhis, functions only

40 Corbin, i:194.

41 See the related remarks in Rustom, Chain.

42 Corbin, i:122.

43 *Baqara* 13. As mentioned earlier, the Báb also affirms the doctrine in his *Risālat al-sulūk* translated and annotated in Lawson, *Sulūk*.

44 For Ibn Arabi, these four are designated as *awtād* (sing. *watād*); see Chodkiewicz, *Sceau* 119–120 & 125 where *Khidr* himself is referred to as the fourth support (*watād*). On the distinctive role of *Khidr* in Shi‘ism see Franke, *Begegnung* 293–298.

in the invisible realm (i.e., the *‘ālam al-mithāl*).⁴⁵ It remains to be seen whether this is so in the present context, inasmuch as there is not a single explicit reference to this imaginal world in the Báb’s tafsir; but neither does the Báb offer any other clues about the identity of these mysterious individuals. It is almost as if the imaginal world has become materialized in this earthly realm as a precursor to the return of the hidden Imam. It may be helpful here to summarize Corbin’s study of this problem.

What seems to be clear is that the *arkān*, *nuqabā’*, and *nujabā’* represent hierarchical levels between a perhaps anonymous *ecclesia spiritualis* and the Imams themselves. The *arkān*, generally speaking, refer to those four prophets mentioned above who were “raised up by God” without suffering death. *Nuqabā’* derives from the Quranic reference to the twelve chiefs of Israel [Q 5:12] but may be thought to refer to those thirty “spiritual princes” mentioned in a hadith attributed to al-Ṣādiq, who enjoy communication with the hidden Imam throughout the period of major occultation (*al-ghaybat al-kubrā*) which began in 941 and, for Twelver Shi’ism, continues to the present day.⁴⁶ The *nujabā’* have traditionally been seen as a group of forty, whose spiritual status is immediately inferior to the *nuqabā’*. The total number of *nuqabā’* and *nujabā’* is seventy, a number which remains constant, although the various members are replaced by others over time. Their number and function are determined in correspondence with the idea of the descent of the divine names to the sub-lunar realm. Shi’i theologians record that some have added another category below the *nujabā’*, an equally permanent group of 360 (the number of degrees of the celestial sphere) subject to the same kind of substitution as the other categories. These are referred to as the Just and the Wise. This last category is not attested in the teachings of the Imams. In addition, there are several variants for the whole scheme, as in the case of one report in which al-Ṣādiq fixes the number of *nuqabā’* at twenty-eight—similar, it may be further noticed, to the number of days in a lunar month and the number of letters in the Arabic alphabet. He fixes the number of the *nujabā’* at twelve, a number equally rich in symbolism, especially for Twelver Shi’ism.⁴⁷ Among these forty (the number of the *nujabā’* mentioned above), are found an unspecified number of *abdāl* and *awtād*.⁴⁸

45 Corbin, iv:213 *et passim*.

46 On the theme of contact with the hidden Imam during the major occultation, see now Ghaemmaghami, *Invented*.

47 Rubin, *Apocalypse*.

48 Corbin, i:122.

Corbin also draws attention to the following passage from a work ascribed to the Ismaʿili master of Alamūt, Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ (1124):

Our Masters have declared: from among the humans we have chosen four thousand men, from these four thousand, we have chosen four hundred, from these, forty, from these, four, and of these four we have one who is the pole (*quṭb*) The stability of the world depends upon him; not an instant will the world exist without him because without him the world cannot continue in being.⁴⁹

Another variant of the tradition is found in a work of the Sunni mystic, Rūzbihān Baqlī (1209), in which six categories are associated with the prophets Adam, Moses, Abraham, and the angels Gabriel, Michael and Seraphiel. One of these, the *quṭb al-aqtāb*, is identified by the Shiʿi tradition as the Imam himself, specifically the hidden Imam. Corbin points out that all of the various numbers are symbols, which refer to “certain cosmic correspondences and to the very rhythm of the order of being” or *tartīb al-wujūd*.⁵⁰ According to Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, the *arkān*, *nuqabāʾ*, and *nujabāʾ* represent three “curtains” (*riwāq*) of the Imam, who is in this metaphor, a “gate” (*bāb*).⁵¹ In a long passage in his *Sharḥ al-qāṣida*, in which he discusses the whole structure, Rashtī compares this hierarchy with the Sufi doctrine of the *abdāl* (“substitutes”). However, he then insists that contrary to what he believed earlier, he has been inspired to know now that a higher rank can never be replaced by a lower rank, contrary to the Sufi doctrine.⁵² According to the Shaykhis, all of these mysterious persons are intended to remain anonymous. As intermediaries between the Imam and other men, they are thus invisible (*rijāl al-ghayb*) and will remain hidden until the Last Day (*yawm al-dīn*). The eventual opponent of the Báb, Ḥāj Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī (1871), speaks of the hierarchy as follows:

49 Corbin, i:122–123 translated from Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ (attr), *Haft* 12.

50 Corbin, i:123. In Rūzbihān’s hierarchy, incidentally, the order *nuqabāʾ*, *nujabāʾ* is reversed. See also Corbin, iii:36 for the comparison of Rūzbihān’s scheme with that of the Shaykhis. On these categories in Shaykhi thought see *Resurrection* 98, 189–190 & 195 and Eschraghi, *Frühe* 14, 140, 33, & 352–353.

51 Cited in Corbin, i:123 from a short *risāla* by Rashtī. Rashtī’s discussion of *riwāq*, particularly as it pertains to the word *bāb*, is discussed in *Gnostic* 70–71. Cf. also the “hadith of ‘Abdallāh ibn Masʿūd” summarized in Landolt, *Walāyah* 321, which mentions 356 (or 355) figures, comprising several categories, on whom the life of the world depends.

52 *Qāṣida*, 96–103.

The knowledge of the *nuqabā'* and the *nujabā'* is not possible at this time. It is not permitted to even ask to discover their individual identities or names. Furthermore, it is not possible for them to respond to such a request because at this time they are the Holy Name [perhaps "greatest name" *ism a'zam*] of the Imam and during the time of occultation it is not permitted to pronounce this Name.⁵³

According to Corbin's sources, this secrecy is due to the incapacity of men to perceive, as a result of their having veiled themselves, presumably through their own deeds and thoughts. In the Báb's commentary, which was written before Kirmānī's statement, it seems possible that the Báb subscribed to a similar view although except in discussions of the hidden Imam there are no explicit statements to this effect. However, it is also true that in the short space of a few months, he was to identify an actual earthly hierarchy of spiritual elite, as in the case of the nineteen "letters of the living" (*hurūfāt al-ḥayy*), the first eighteen persons to have believed in his mission (after he proclaimed it in May of 1844/Jumādā 1, 1260) plus himself.⁵⁴ This is explained by the fact that by this time, the Last Day, according to the Báb, had occurred. There are also various indications throughout the text of this commentary that the Báb regarded himself as an elite of some kind, although he never makes an explicit claim for this either. But, it must be remembered, explicitness is not the only method of proclamation. In this culture much depends upon hint, ambiguity, allusion, and even oral—unwritten—transmission. If the "true" Shaykhi position is as Kirmānī describes, and if the Báb was a "faithful" Shaykhi, the events which were to follow, in the space of two or three months, represent a dramatic break with the teachings of Sayyid Kāẓim, his "revered teacher".⁵⁵ In light of this, it is perhaps advisable to see in his hierarchies a simultaneous allusion to both their *zāhirī* and *bāṭinī* implications.

In regard to the comparison of the Shaykhi hierarchy with Ibn Arabi's, mentioned earlier, it is obvious that both schemes share many functional similarities, although they undoubtedly have long and separate histories. The important difference resides in the fact that for Ibn Arabi, even though he recognized such categories as *awtād*, *nuqabā'*, *nujabā'*, and even *rijāl al-ghayb*, Sufism in general also supports the all-important institution of *shaykh* (sometimes referred to as *quṭb*) which must be an actual person. The Báb was eventually

53 Corbin, i:125.

54 Gnostic 28, 58, 67, 102, 104.

55 See *Resurrection* 135–141 for a discussion of the Báb's esteem of Kāẓim Rashtī.

to join features of the two traditions in a combination that could scandalize both equally, but for different reasons.⁵⁶

In the next hierarchy, the terminology changes. Still commenting on the same verse [Q 2:2], the Báb discusses the various levels of the word *taqwā*, (piety, fear of god, conscience) derived here from the Quranic *al-muttaqīn* the godfearing:

God's guidance is the same as that which is implied in the word *al-muttaqīn*. *Taqwā* "piety" has several degrees (*darajāt*).

- [1] The first degree of piety is for the People of Reality (*ḥaqīqa*) and *al-bayān* and consists in shunning all "veils of glory" (*al-i'rāḍ 'an al-subuḥāt*), the effacement of all idle fancies (*maḥw al-mawhūmāt*) and rending all veils (*hatk al-astār*), attainment to the House of Glory (*bayt al-jalāl*) and abiding in the station (*maqām*) of: We are He and He is Us.⁵⁷

The Báb describes an experience of ecstasy when he adds that the first degree is above even this, because these people are purified (*munazzahūn*) above all names and attributes.

[These] words pertain to others (*aghyār*) ... whereas these are the People of Pure, Definitive Concentration (*al-tawajjuh al-baḥt al-bātt*) [in which] the One concentrated upon is the same as the concentration, and the act of knowing is the same as the object known.⁵⁸ In their grade (*rutba*), there is no trace of ordinary practical ego (*inniyya al-ṣulūḥiyya*). For how could it be that what pertains to others pertain also to them? Nay, rather they are the People of the Depth of the Divine Ipseity (*lujjat al-huwiyya*).

56 But cf. the designation *Shaykhiyya*. As mentioned earlier, the Shaykhis themselves preferred the designation *Kashfiyya: The People of Divine Revelation*. This indicates that the former name was meant to imply the kind of Sufi veneration of a shaykh which the Shi'a abominated. Furthermore, it seems that the charge of "shaykh veneration" was not altogether without foundation. See the several passages in *Qaṣīda (passim)* in which Rashtī refers to al-Aḥsā'ī as "al-Shaykh al-Akbar", the usual term of respect reserved for Ibn Arabi. A general Shi'i allergy to "shaykh worship" is doubtless behind some of the vituperation al-Aḥsā'ī frequently levels against Ibn Arabi in his writings.

57 This is part of a longer tradition which is divided into stages by the Báb:
al-Ṣādiq said: "With God we have several states (*ḥālāt*). In them We are He and He is Us; and He is He and We are Us." (quoted in *Ziyāra*, iv:73)

58 *Baqara* 18: *al-mutawajjah nafsu 'l-tawajjuh wa'l-'ilmu huwa 'l-ma'lūm*. See below Chapter Four.

As the Imam has said: O Lord! Cause me to enter the depth of the sea of Thine exclusive unity, that to which no name or representation pertains.⁵⁹ Whoever questions their dignity (*haqq*) has indeed committed *kufṛ*.

- [2] *Taqwā* for the superior elite (*al-khiṣṣīṣīn*) is the abandoning of what-ever distracts them from God, and their attainment to the City of the inclusive unity (*wāḥidiyya*) at a time when its people were unheeding. [Q 28:15]. This is the degree [which is represented by the next phrase of the above-quoted prayer]: and the boundless ocean of Thine inclusive unity. It is also alluded to in the prayer for the day of al-Sha'bān, in which the Imam (anon.) says: "O my God! Grant me perfect detachment and illumine the sight of our hearts through the light of beholding you ... so that our spirits may become dependent upon the might of Thy holiness. O my God! Make of me one who when you call him he responds and when you behold him he swoons before Thy glory, and when You confide in him secretly he carries out the command publicly."⁶⁰
- [3] [*Taqwā*] for the ordinary elite (*ahl al-khawāṣṣ*) is the Most Great Infallibility (*al-ʿiṣmat al-kubrā*); it is that *taqwā* which prevents them from neglecting the remembrance of God.⁶¹ They see nothing but that they see God with it, and see no light but His light and hear no

59 Prayer from Shi'i hadith known as the *Du'a al-baḥr*. Cf. C 6b ll. 9–13; INBA 69, 165; *qad qāla 'alayhi al-salām: rabb idkhubnī fi lujjat baḥr al-aḥadiyyatika*.

60 *Baqara* 18–19. The Quran reads: *wa dakhala 'l-madīnata 'alā ḥini ghaflatīn min ahli-hā*. It may be possible to translate it: He entered the city while ignoring its people. Swoon here can only be a reference to the episode of Moses described in Q 7:143: And when His Lord revealed Himself in His Glory (*falammā tajallā rabbuhu*) to the mountain He made it crumble to dust; and Moses fell down swooning/*wa kharra mūsā ṣa'iqān*. The "day of Sha'bān", the eighth day of the month of Sha'bān, is the anniversary of the occultation of the 12th Imam. (See *Momen* 239.) The entire prayer, ascribed to 'Alī and transmitted by Ibn Khalawayh, from which the above quotation is taken may be found in al-Qummī, *Maḥāṭiṭ al-jinān* 211–214 (the portion quoted by the Báb appears on 213–214).

61 *Baqara* 19. This is relevant for the future claim of the Báb, The Remembrance of God, *dhikru'llāh*, being one his more usual titles. See *Gnostic* 52–61. The Báb was known as *Sayyid-i Dhikr* after his return to Shiraz from the 'Atabāt (Thresholds), the Shi'i shrine cities of Iraq, (after 1842; see *Resurrection* 141), because of what was apparently his constant preoccupation with prayer and other austerities. It is not impossible, then, that he was describing himself in this passage and was appropriating to himself the qualification of "the Most Great Infallibility" (*al-ʿiṣmat al-kubrā*), one of the features of the Imamate in general. On the subject of infallibility and/or immunity from error/sin in Shi'ism see now Madelung and Tyan, 'Iṣma.

voice but His voice,⁶² and are permanent dwellers (*yaqifūna*) in the station of “He is He and We are We” [and] “I serve Thee not from fear of Thy wrath neither from hope for Thy good-pleasure; nay, rather [it is that I find Thee simply] deserving of servitude (*‘ibāda*), therefore I [have no choice but to] worship Thee.”⁶³

- [4] The sign (*‘alāma*) of *taqwā* for the Wayfarers (*sālikīn*) is that he [the individual *sālik*] does not see himself dwelling in remembrance (*dhikr*) of the Merciful One (*al-rahmān*).⁶⁴ They are men whom neither commerce nor trafficking diverts from the remembrance of God [Q 24:37] and they remember God in private and public⁶⁵ as in the statement⁶⁶ of their Imam al-Ḥusayn:

Is there any other beside Thee, O Lord, who can manifest that which is not yours [already] to such an extent that he is your manifestor (*muzḥir la-ka*) when Thou art absent so that Thou art in need of some kind of evidence which proves Thine existence, and when Thou art far so that there are traces which might connect to Thee? Blind is the eye that does not see Thee, while Thou continuest to be over it (the eye: *‘alayhā*) a watcher (*raqīban*). And for that servant who has put no share in Thy love is a poor bargain (*khasarat ṣafaqa*).⁶⁷

- [5] [*Taqwā*] for the People of Externals (*ahl al-ẓāhir*) is that none sees God as his Lord, under any circumstances (*fī ḥāl*), unless he is obedient to Him.⁶⁸

62 This is a famous statement attributed to several classical Muslim ascetics, as quoted in Sufi manuals, similar to the so-called *ḥadīth al-nawāfil*, the hadith of supererogation; see Schimmel, *Dimensions* 43.

63 Similar to a statement usually ascribed to the famous woman mystic, Rābi‘a al-‘Adawiyya (801), on whom see Schimmel, *Dimensions* 38–39.

64 *Baqara* 19: *lā yarā nafsa-hu wāqifan fī dhikri ‘l-rahmān*. It is possible to translate this as: “He does not see himself as desisting from the remembrance of God.” However, the translation suggested above is more faithful to the overall Islamic mystical and ascetic tradition; cf., e.g., Arberry, *Doctrines* 95–96 and *passim* for cautions against the mystic esteeming himself as performing various pious acts. An interesting cognate to this may be found in the statement of Plotinus, in which he likens the mystical experience to the condition of the person so absorbed in reading that he has forgotten that he is reading (O’Brien, *Essential* 30). The repeated use of words derived from the root *w q f*, may be thought to reflect the Báb’s preoccupation at this time with the *Khuṭbat al-tuṭunjiyya*, whose hero is *al-wāqif ‘alā ‘l-tuṭunjayn*, “the who abides (or presides) over the two gulfs” on which see *Gnostic* 84–92.

65 Cf. Q 2:284; Q 13:22; Q 14:31; Q 35:29.

66 Cf. 7a: *yaqūla*, not *bi-qawl* as in *Baqara* & I 165.

67 *Baqara* 19–20.

68 *Baqara* 20.

This passage is a good example of the melding of Sufi and Shi'i motifs and vocabulary, e.g., esp. *sālikīn*. The reference to "their Imam" is striking in that it suggests a separate group and is probably an example of the frequent merging of the spiritual authority of the two historical personages, Imam Ḥusayn (686) and Ḥusayn b. Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (922) in tradition. This particular statement is translated from Corbin's French as follows:

How can something which in its being has need of Thee refer to Thee?
Can something else actually have something which You do not already have so that this other can manifest You when you are absent, so that You have need of an outside indicator which points to You when You are far to the point that such indications will lead to you? Blind indeed is the eye that does not see you inasmuch as You never cease observing it.⁶⁹

This passage, obviously a favorite of theosophical Shi'ism at the time the Báb wrote, is from a very long prayer by the 3rd Imam, al-Ḥusayn, for the Day of 'Arafat as quoted by Badī' al-Mulk Mīrzā (after 1890) who was the youngest grandson of Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh. He was the author of a Persian translation of and commentary on Mulla Sadra's *Mashā'ir*.⁷⁰

The following hadiths follow as a corroboration of this statement and at the same time provide a typology of intimate encounter with the divine:

- [1] The Messenger of God said: "Perform the laws of God and be the most pious of men!" And Abū Ja'far [al-Bāqir] said: "O company of the Shi'a!" that is, the Shi'a of the family of Muḥammad (āl Muḥammad), "Be ye *a middle position* so that the one who has gone too far (*ghālī*) might return to you and that the one who has not gone far enough (*tālī*) might catch up with you."⁷¹

69 "Comment référer à Toi par quelque chose qui dans son être a besoin de Toi? Quelque chose d'autre aurait-il donc une manifestation que tu n'aurais pas, pour cet autre Te manifeste lorsque tu serais absent, pour que Tu aies besoins d'un indice qui te montre quand Tu serais au loin, de sorte que ce seraient les vestiges qui feraient parvenir jusqu'à Toi? Aveugle est l'œil qui ne te voit pas, tandis que tu ne cesses de l'observer." (Corbin, *Pénétrations*, 104–105, n. 14)

70 See Corbin's edition of this in *Pénétrations* 91–92, Persian text. The entire prayer is in al-Qummī, *Mafātīḥ al-jinān*, 329–344, this passage is on page 342.

71 *Baqara* 20: *al-numruqat al-wustā*, cf. Quran on *middle nation*, e.g. Q 2:143. This hadith is

- [2] Then he said: "By God! We are without separation from God through independence; nor is there between us and God any kinship. We have no argument against God. And none may approach God except by means of obedience (*al-ṭāʿa*). Whoever of you is obedient to God, then him will our walāya benefit. Whosoever from among you is disobedient (*ʿāṣī*) to God, our walāya will never benefit. Woe unto you (*wayḥakum*)! Be not deluded!"
- [3] Bāqir said: "The Messenger of God delivered a sermon during the Farewell Pilgrimage, he said: O people! By God! There is nothing that will draw you near to Paradise (*janna*) and far from Hell but that I have given it to you as a positive command (*amartu*). And there is nothing that will draw you near to Hell and far from Paradise but that I have forbidden it to you (*nahaytukum*). Indeed, the Faithful Spirit⁷² breathed into my soul:⁷³ "A soul will never die until it has used up its [preordained] sustenance (*tastakmila rizq-hā*)."⁷⁴ So *fear* God and perform well in asking for your needs (*al-ṭalab*), and He will not burden any of you with causing you to wait unduly for what you require, if He is asked without [ulterior or unethical] intent,⁷⁴ for none is aware of what is with God except by means of obedience."
- [4] Ḥasan b. ʿAlī Abū al-Ḥujjat⁷⁵ said in his clear and salubrious explanation (*fī tafsīri-hi*) of this statement, *the godfearing* of the Shiʿa of Muḥammad and ʿAlī [means]: "*Fear* all kinds of *kufṛ*; that is: abandon them! And fear the large sins; that is abandon them! And *fear* the disclosure of the secrets of God and the secrets of the pure ones among His servants who are his trustees (*awṣiyā*) after Muḥammad; that is, keep them hidden! And *respect* [*> fear*] the spiritual value (*sirr*) of the knowledge (*ʿulūm*, lit: sciences or knowledges) of the people who merit them; that is, spread [such knowledge] only among them!"

repeated in slightly differing form in the so-called *juzʿ al-thānī* of this work in I 402. Likewise, reference is made there to *al-numruqat al-kubrā* in connection with Muḥammad's office, I 393.

72 I.e., Gabriel: *al-rūḥ al-amīn*; C f. 7b: *rūḥ al-amīn*.

73 *Baqara* 21 & I 166: *rūḥ*; C f. 7b: *rūḥī*.

74 *Baqara* 21: *ḥlla*; C f. 7b & I 166: *ḥla*.

75 This is a reference to al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī, father of the hidden Imam, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan. His tafsir is often quoted in Shiʿi commentaries, an edition of which is printed on the margin of the old edition of the *Tafsīr al-Qummī* (see bibliography); this statement appears on the margin of page 22.

The Báb closes this section with:

Indeed, all that I have mentioned to you *in the path of* (*fī sabīl*) *taqwā*, both as regards its secrets and those things which may be publicly known, is the fruit of [my] affirming and living divine oneness (*thamaratu'l-tawhīd*), but none recognizes it save the People of *Tawhīd* and *Tafrīd*.⁷⁶

There are in this hierarchy certain similarities with the previous one. For example, the reference at the first level to absolute transcendence (*munazzahūn*) coincides with the level of *bayān* or *tawhīd* discussed above. It would therefore correspond to the eighth, or highest level. The second stage, specified for the *khiṣṣīṣīn*, speaks of a relationship between the subjects and God, whereas the first level of *taqwā* was “beyond” relationship. The term *khiṣṣīṣīn* may be thought to reflect the usage of Shaykh Aḥmad in his discussion of the various grades of believer.⁷⁷

At the third level, this relationship becomes even more sharply articulated so that the clear distinction “He is He and we are we” is made. At this level, which corresponds to the level of *abwāb* above, the idea of mediation is implied. The term *al-khawāṣṣ*, as used by the Báb, appears to pertain to a higher level.⁷⁸ At the fourth stage of *taqwā*, the grade of “seeker” is introduced with the traditional Sufi term *sālik*. The implication here then would be that some kind of “leader” (Imam) is required, as in the Báb’s reference to “their Imam al-Ḥusayn.” Here the fourth level of the previous hierarchy, *imāma*, is also implied.

The fifth and final stage would appear to encompass the lower levels of *arkān*, *nuqabā*, and *nujabā*’ from the emphasis here which the Báb places on obedience to the Shariah, as seen in those hadiths quoted above. It would appear from this that those levels, which are ranged above this lowest one, also assume obedience to the law, but because of the greater spiritual capacity that they imply, perception of (or “contact” with) the divine in this world is accomplished through other means as well. The fifth level is distinct from the others in that the *ahl al-zāhirīn* see nothing beyond “mere” obedience. The above hierarchy may be schematized as follows:

⁷⁶ *Baqara* 21. It seems clear that the Báb here is referring to his own spiritual discipline, namely *tawhīd*, understood roughly as existentiating in and for one’s self the reality of divine oneness. Thus his insights are the fruit of this individual effort and demonstrate an example of ecstasy as instasy (see Introduction).

⁷⁷ *Ziyāra*, iii:203; *wa hākadhā hādihā ’l-maqṣad al-thānī huwa ṭarīq al-khiṣṣīṣīn min shī’atihim*.

⁷⁸ *Baqara* 19.

1	<i>ahl al-ḥaqīqa wa'l-bayān</i>	<i>huwīyya</i> ⁷⁹	We are He and He is Us
2	<i>al-khiṣṣiṣīn</i>	<i>wāḥidiyya</i>	–
3	<i>ahl al-khawāṣṣ</i>	–	We are we and He is He
4	<i>al-sālikīn</i>	<i>dhikr</i>	–
5	<i>ahl al-ẓāhir</i>	<i>sharīʿa</i>	obedience

Inasmuch as the first level represents absolute transcendence and is therefore beyond functional utility, it may be that the fifth level is meant to suggest again the Shaykhi doctrine of the “fourth support”.

The next hierarchy is that found in the commentary at verse Q 2:3, concerning the obligation of faith (*īmān*) derived from the verb *yuʿminūna*.

īmān has several grades and degrees (*marātib wa darajāt*):

For the People of Tajrīd (*ahl al-tajrīd*), [*īmān*] is the same as *al-tafrīd*.⁸⁰

The terminology here, as in the case with *sālik*, is that of Sufism. *Tajrīd* refers to a state of absolute purification or abstraction (as in the philosophical usage), while *tafrīd* refers to the assimilation by the mystic of the quality of divine “aloneness”. The terms are seen to be connected to the formula *lā ilāha illaʾllāh*. Here, the first half of the statement corresponds as a negation to the detachment indicated in the word *tajarrud*, while the second half, as an affirmation, corresponds to *tafarrud*: “doing divine aloneness”.⁸¹ These terms appear elsewhere in the Báb’s tafsir and it is almost certain that they refer to the Imams themselves, either as non-material entities or otherwise spiritually pure beings. Their accomplishment of the quality of “divine aloneness” is equated with a pure act of faith, whereas faith at lower levels is represented by commensurately less demanding accomplishments. The Báb says that in all other cases *īmān* consists in the belief that there is a certain amount of divine truth (*ḥaqq*) in every sign (*āya*), “from the meanest to the noblest”⁸² which God reveals

79 This appears to be synonymous with *aḥadiyya*.

80 *Baqara* 22.

81 Isfarāyīnī, *Révélateur* 131–132 and notes.

82 *Baqara* 21–22: *min al-durra ilā ʾl-dharra*: “from the pearl to the speck of dust” appears to be an idiomatic phrase meaning “whether high or low”—a merismus which does not necessarily refer directly to the Quranic primordial covenant despite the coincidence of terminology; cf., e.g., al-Aḥsāʾī, *Sharḥ al-fawāʾid* 124 where the terms are used to describe everything within limited existence (i.e., in the world as normally construed): *al-wujūd al-muqayyad: awwaluhu al-durratu wa ākhiruhu al-dharra*.

(*tajalla*) to the “people of God” (*ahl al-ḥaqq*). “And if people really knew how God created mankind, none would ever blame another.”⁸³

The following groups represent the remaining seven grades of faith:

- [1] The People of the Garden of the Divine Will (*al-maṣḥiyya*).
- [2] The People of the Garden of the Divine Purpose (*al-irāda*).
- [3] The People of the Garden of the Sea of Divine Decree (*baḥr al-qadar*).
- [4] The People of Garden of Eden (*al-ʿadn*).
- [5] The People of the Garden of the Divine Permission (*al-idhn*).
- [6] The People of the Garden of Eternity (*al-khuld*).
- [7] The People of the Garden of the Divine Refuge (or Repose, *al-mawāʿ*).

And for each level of these seven, there are an unlimited number of enclosures (*ḥaṣāʾir*), and the dwellers therein are servants whose number none but him whom God willeth can know.⁸⁴

This is another expression of the “eight paradises” motif, which is also found in later Shaykhi works that treat the question of Heaven and Hell. For example, Karīm Khān Kirmānī wrote:

When it is said that Paradise is in Heaven and Gehenna is in the Earth, that is because the human being has two dimensions: a dimension of light and a dimension of darkness. His dimension of light is the Heaven of his being; his dimension of darkness is the Earth of his being. Every faithful act a man does is done through the dimension of Light. Then he is wholly luminous, celestial, subtle. Conversely, his betrayals and denials come from the dimension of darkness; he is then wholly dark, earthly, dense, opaque ...

83 *Baqara* 22. The Báb says God created men each according to their predetermined capacity for accepting or rejecting [*walāya*]. This is very much in line with the theology (or anthropology) of the day of the covenant and has implications for an understanding of the *aʿyān thābita* in a scripturalist Shiʿi milieu.

84 *Baqara* 22–23. The term *ḥaṣāʾir* “enclosures” is the plural of *ḥaṣīra* that in Shiʿism is frequently encountered in the compound noun *ḥaṣīrat al-quḍṣ* designating a special area in Paradise for the “holy fold” of the Fourteen Pure Ones, the Báb’s “Family of God”. See, e.g. Mutaqqī, *Kanz al-ʿummāl*, iii:2089; *inna Fāṭima wa ʿAlīya waʿl-Ḥasan waʿl-Ḥusayn fi ḥaṣīrat al-quḍṣ fi qubbat bayḍāʾ saqfiḥā ʿarsh al-Raḥmān*.

Now, Paradise includes eight degrees; Hell contains seven. Each of these stages contains several enclosures; however, there is one degree of Paradise that does not include a plurality of enclosures.⁸⁵

This represents a most interesting point of agreement between two authors who were eventually to become representatives of opposing camps. This example shows how the basic elements of Shaykhism were susceptible of assuming (or producing) such different forms, depending upon the uses to which they were put. For Karīm Khān, eschatology was to be worked out exclusively within the soul of each believer; whereas for the Báb this eschatology eventually involved also events in the world “outside” or *in the horizons*, as one of his favorite Quranic verses (Q 24:35) phrases it.⁸⁶

In the following hierarchy of virtues, or aspects of faith, the Báb refers directly to the “return” of the hidden Imam, long awaited by the Shi‘a. Following a hadith from al-Ṣādiq,⁸⁷ the Báb associates each virtue with one of the seven names mentioned in his earlier commentary on the Fātiḥa. These virtues are:

- [1] Righteousness (*al-birr*): Muḥammad
- [2] Truthfulness (*al-ṣidq*): ‘Alī
- [3] Certainty (*al-yaqīn*): Ḥasan
- [4] Contentment (*al-riḍā*): Ḥusayn
- [5] Faithfulness (*al-wafā*): Fāṭima
- [6] Knowledge (*al-‘ilm*): Ja‘far
- [7] Forbearance (*al-ḥilm*): Mūsā.

Then He divided that [among mankind] and he in whom He has placed all seven portions, he is a perfect bearer.⁸⁸ And He apportioned to some people one share, and to some two, and to some three, and so forth up to the seven.⁸⁹

85 Corbin, *Spiritual Body* 230. The passage is from Karīm Khān Kirmānī, *Kitāb irshād al-‘awwām*.

86 In the Báb’s earlier *Risālat al-sulūk* (74), he says that *dunyā* and the Hereafter are two “states” (*ḥālatān*): “If your concentration is upon God, then you are in Paradise, but if your attention is upon your self, then you are in Hell which is the same as *the world* (*al-dunyā*).” This statement is quite faithful to the Shaykhi doctrine that Paradise and Hell were not real “places”, but spiritual conditions. This belief is said to have set them apart from what would therefore represent an orthodox Shi‘a (*Rafati* 195 quoting a polemical work by al-Māzandarānī, *Tūryāq*).

87 *Baqara* 23.

88 *kāmīl muḥtamaḥ*; I 168: *al-kāmīl muḥtamaḥ*.

89 *Baqara* 23.

It will be noticed that the order of the names here differs slightly from that found in the commentary on the Fātiḥa. Fāṭima has been moved from third to fifth place, thereby elevating both Ḥasan and Ḥusayn one level. It is not clear what significance, if any, this change indicates. The Báb ends this discussion with the following statement:

May God bless them all! He who believes in them and in their *unseen* (*ghayb*) [= spiritual reality], that is, of these seven when they are doubled, then he is a pure believer.⁹⁰

Still at Q 2:3, the Báb now discusses the significance of the word *ghayb*:

And the *unseen* is Muḥammad because he is absent to whatever is other than him. None knows his true essence (*kunh*) but God. But the specific place (*maḥall taḥṣīl*) of this *ghayb*, is the Qā'im, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan.⁹¹ He is the one about whom al-Ṣādiq spoke when asked about *al-ghayb* in this verse. He said: "It is the hidden proof (*al-ḥujjat al-ghā'ib*): 'Alī is the same as the Messenger of God as he clearly indicated in his lofty statement: 'My *zāhir* is *imāma* and my *bāṭin* is a forbidden hiddenness (*ghayb manī*) of which none is aware.'"

There are an unlimited number of grades to *al-ghayb*. For example: potentiality is hidden from actuality in every world, commensurately. Or: the true state of the higher chain [of events] is hidden from the lower chain. This is eternally the case, in matters both universal and particular, whether of realities or mere attributes. And all this is from the point of view of limitation and multiplicity.⁹²

In the following, the emphasis is once again on obedience to the law for those who are described as the *ahl al-zāhir*.

90 *Baqara* 23: *fa-man amana bi-him wa bi-ghaybi-him li-hādhihi 'l-sab'atu idhā karrarat fa-huwa 'l-mu'minu 'l-khālīṣ*. N.b. the fourfold interpretation of *imān* in *Burhan*, i:56#10 where al-Qummī is quoted as follows:

Imān in the Book of God is according to four aspects (*wujūh*): [1] *iqrār bi'l-lisān*; [2] *taṣdīq bi'l-qalb*; [3] *al-adā*; [4] *al-ta'yīd*.

91 *Baqara* 23: *wa maḥall taḥṣīl hādhih 'l-ghayb huwa al-qā'im* (*Baqara* = *taḥṣīl*; C, f8b & I 168 = *taḥṣīl*).

92 *Baqara* 24.

- [1] But for the *ahl al-bayān* (i.e., the Imams), *al-ghayb* is the same as *al-shahāda* (the hidden is the same as the visible), and the visible is the same as the hidden. And none knows the hidden except God.
- [2] And according to the *ahl al-zāhir*, and it (*al-zāhir*) is the same as *al-bāṭin* according to the *ahl al-bāṭin*, it is as Abū 'l-Ḥujjat al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī said in the tafsir of this verse:

[T]hose who believe in the *unseen*, that is (*ya'nī*) in that which is hidden from their senses about those things which faith obligates them, like the resurrection (*al-ba'ṭh*), the judgment (*al-ḥisāb*), Paradise (*al-janna*), Hell (*al-nār*), and the *tawḥīd* of God, and the rest of whatever is not known by seeing, although it may be known by rational proof (*dalā'il*). [They are what] God established (*naṣaba*), like Adam and Eve and Idrīs and Nūḥ and Ibrāhīm and the prophets in whom faith is obligatory, and in the Proofs (*hujaj*) of God, even though they be invisible.⁹³

The next hierarchy occurs at the second half of Q 2:3: *and expend of that We have provided them*. The Báb arranges the ideas of divine *sustenance* (*rizq*) and its *expenditure* (*infāq* > *yunfiqūnā*) in hierarchical form, introduced by the following statement:

That is to say (*ay*): Their [the Imams'] souls have become a place for the appearance of the divine mercy (*mazhar al-raḥmāniyya*) and they *bestow* [from *'aṭā'* a frequent (×14) Quranic word, e.g. Q 108:1] that which God *bestowed* upon each [one] according to what that one deserves.⁹⁴

- [1] For the People of Wisdom (*ahl al-ḥikma*) [this *bestowal* is] the secrets of the sciences and the realities and [the secrets of] *the clear verses* (*al-āyāt al-muḥkama* sic).

93 *Baqara* 24–25; C f. 9a: *li-Adam* instead of *ka-Adam*, altering the sense greatly. Cf. slight variations on this hadith in the tafsir attributed to al-'Askarī, al-Qummī, *Tafsīr* 22–23 (margin). It is not in *Nūr. Burhān*, i:56–57#11 is exactly as the Báb cites. *Ṣāfi*, i:92 has an unattributed variant: “*al-ghayb* is that which is hidden from the senses about the *tawḥīd* of God and the *nubuwwa* of the prophets and the rising of the Qā'im, and the return and the resurrection”; the remainder is as quoted by the Báb until *qad naṣaba-hā Allāh*. Al-'Askarī: *qad naṣaba-hā Allāh 'azza wa jalla 'alay-hā ka-Adam wa Hawwā wa Idrīs wa Nūḥ wa Ibrāhīm wa 'l-anbiyā' al-ladhina yalzamu-hum al-īmān bi-ḥujaji 'llāhi wa in lam yushāhidū-hum wa yu'minūna bi'l-ghaybi wa hum min al-sā'ati mushfiqūna*. [Q 21:49]. N.b., the Quran (unquoted here) continues with Q 21:50: *And this is a blessed Remembrance that We have sent down, so are you now denying it?*

94 *Baqara* 30.

- [2] For the People of Admonition (*ahl al-maw'iza*) [this **bestowal** is] the inner knowledge (*al-bawātin*) and the spiritual truths (*al-ma'ārif*) and the imperatives of justice (*furūd al-'ādila*).
- [3] For the People of Disputation (*ahl al-mujādala*) [this **bestowal** consists of] the ostensive knowledge (*al-ẓawāhir*) and the superficialities (*al-qishriyyāt*)⁹⁵ about those things which they agree upon concerning the paths of righteousness (*turuq al-ḥisān*) for the tranquility of their souls (*li-sukūn anfusi-him*). God has forbidden them what He has permitted others because they are an **uncouth rabble** (*hamaj ra'ā'*).⁹⁶

These three categories are, of course, derived from Q 16:125: **Call thou to the way of thy Lord with wisdom (*al-ḥikma*) and good admonition (*al-maw'iza*), and dispute with them (*jādilhum*) in the better way.** The first two categories are quoted in another verse of the *Ziyārat al-jāmi'a*, where Shaykh Aḥmad takes the opportunity to specify that all three categories are different types of divine proofs, which are suited to three classes of men. From this explanation, which bears some resemblance to the words of the Báb, we learn that the first category pertains to the heart (*fu'ād*) and the pure innate human character (*fiṭra*), which conduces to reading what has been written by God **in the horizons and in the souls** [Q 41:53] which, in turn, point to the true meaning of all things as they are (*ma'rifat al-ashyā' kamā hiya*). Furthermore, these are things that are in a condition ontologically prior to their appearance in this world (*hiya ash-bāḥ al-ashyā' wa aẓillatu-hā bi'l-ḥaqq*).⁹⁷ This kind of proof (*dalīl*) is reserved for the **"believer whose heart has been tested for faith"** and is therefore accounted as genuine (*ṣādiq*) by God, the Messenger and his Trustees.⁹⁸ Shaykh Aḥmad here alludes to what is perhaps one of the ten most seminal hadith (mentioned above, p. 42) that appear in part or in whole throughout *Baqara*:

Our cause (*amr*)/teaching (*ḥadīth*)/knowledge (*'ilm*) is exceedingly difficult (*ṣa'b mustaṣab*). Only these understand it: a sent prophet, the

95 Baqara 30 *al-qishratāt*; C f. 11a & I 173: *al-qishriyyāt*.

96 Baqara 30.

97 On *ashbāḥ* and *aẓilla* see above pp. 80–81. Concerning *al-ashbāḥ*, "the pre-creational spiritual realities of the Imams" see *Ziyāra*, i:36 which records the following exchange:

From Ḥabīb b. Muẓāhir ("a leading Kūfan Shī'ite": *K. al-Irshad* Eng. trans. 586):

I said to Ḥusayn b. 'Alī Abī Ṭālib (the 3rd Imam): "What sort of thing were you before God created Adam?" He said: "We were *ashbāḥi nūr* revolving about the throne of the Merciful, teaching the angels the praise and glorification [of God]."

98 *Ziyāra*, ii:50.

angels brought nigh or a believing servant whose heart has been thoroughly tested by God for faith (*al-mu'min al-ladhī imtāhana Allāh qalbahu li'l-īmān*).⁹⁹

It is important to note that the epithet **uncouth rabble** is also an allusion to the previously-mentioned *Khuṭbat al-shiqshiqiyya* where it designates the enemies of the Shi'a. Therefore, this should be considered a direct criticism of Sunni piety in which the laws of the Sharia are followed but the true meaning of scripture as upholding the *walāya* of 'Alī and the "Family of God" is not understood. This segment continues the theme found in the earlier quotation from Rashtī condemning any kind of disputation over the meaning of the Quran.

The second category represents a proof that is suitable for those who approach God according to the law (*'alā ḥudūd al-'aql al-shar'ī*) by means of which they hope to gain Paradise. The third category represents those who regard only the outer meaning (*qishr*) of a statement and are unable to appreciate the first two kinds of proof. A characteristic anti-clericalism is revealed here when the Báb says that these include "some ordinary people and some of the theologians and legalists" (*min al-nās wa min al-mutakallimīn wa'l-fuqahā*).¹⁰⁰

The Báb outlines the levels of *infāq*, "expenditure" derived from the Quranic word *yunfiqūna* "they expend" in Q 2:3, according to the eight different paradises:

- [1] **Expenditure** is the **bestowal** upon the people of the Garden of Paradise (*jannat al-firdaws*) of the secrets of the divine will (*asrār al-mashiyya*) and the tablets of divine knowledge (*ahwāḥ al-ma'rifa*), as befits the glory of their holiness (*'izz qudsihim*).
- [2] And upon the people of the **sublime garden** [cf. Q 69:22 & 88:10] [the **bestowal** is] the limitless, secondary, eternal, divine secrets and the knowledge of the highest purpose (*irāda*) of God.¹⁰¹
- [3] And for the people of the **garden of grace** [cf. Q *passim* *jannāt al-na'im*] [the **bestowal** is] the secrets preserved in the unplumbed

99 Kulaynī has devoted a separate chapter to this hadith and its variants: *Kāfī*, i:401–402. On the importance of this hadith for Shi'ism in general see *Corbin*, i:14–15; *Guide* 18 & 234–235.

100 *Ziyāra*, ii:49–54. This verse, Q 16:25, functions similarly for Naṣir al-Dīn Ṭūsī (1274). See his *Taṣawwurāt*, (Ivanow translation, see bibliography) 50–51 & 74–75.

101 *Baqara* 30: *min al-asrār al-lāhūtiyyati 'l-azaliyya wa'l-thanawiyyati 'l-ghayri mutanāhiyya sic min ma'rifati irādati 'llāh al-'āliyya*: "and other lesser matters without end concerning the knowledge of the highest purpose of God."

billowing seas,¹⁰² namely the secret of the divine decree (*sirr al-qadar*) and the perfect understanding of the principle of “choice” (*ikhtiyār*) that applies to all created things. [This principle is]: That God does not compel or force His *amr*, nay rather He created all created things according to the divine secret (*sirr*) of choice (*ikhtiyār*). And this door (*bāb*) was flung wide open for this soul, wider than what is between the heaven and the earth.¹⁰³ [This divine secret of choice] is the bright sun about which nothing but the Ancient, the Single is fully informed.

- [4] And for the People of the **garden of Eden** (cf Q *passim jannat ‘adn*) [The **bestowal** is of] the secrets of the divine decree (*al-qadā’*) and divine change of mind (*al-badā’*). That is, [they understand] how the divine signature (*imḍā’*) is suspended at the occurrence of divine change of mind (*al-badā’*).¹⁰⁴ [They] know that this garden is higher than all the other gardens. It is limitless (*lā ḥazīra la-hā*) while it is also the centre (*quṭb*) of all the gardens and the other gardens revolve around it and the knowledge of its inhabitants.
- [5] And for the People of the Garden of **Perpetual Abode** (cf. Q 25:76 *muqām*) [the **bestowal** is] the secrets of the stations of God and His tokens.
- [6] And for the people of the Garden of **Eternity** (cf Q 25:15 *jannat al-khuld*) [the **bestowal** is] the secrets of the veils and the hidden pavilions (cf Q 18:29 *suradiquhā*) and the knowledge of the way in which the divine glory (*al-bahā’*) and beauty (*al-jamāl*) are related (*ta’allaqa*) to the People of Glory and Perfection (*ahl al-majd wa’l-kamāl*, i.e., the Imams).

102 *Baqara* 30: *qulzum al-mawwāj al-mutasākhir/al-mut’akhhir al-‘amīq*. C f. 11a: *al-muta-zākhkhir* (very difficult to read); I 173: *al-mutadhākhkhir*.

103 *Baqara* 30–31: This is a reference to the famous hadith *qudsī*, especially influential in Sufi circles but certainly not restricted to them, “Heaven and earth cannot contain Me. That which can contain me is the heart of My servant.” (see, e.g., Schimmel, *Dimensions* 190) and a rare reference by the author to himself indicating a special status:

lā yajburu wa lā yufawwidu amra-hu bal qad khalaqa ‘l-ashyā’ bi’l-sirri ‘l-ikhtiyār wa inna hādhā ‘l-bāb huwa wa ‘uriḍa hādhā ‘l-jānān sic awṣa’ ‘ammā bayna ‘l-samā’ wa’l-arḍ wa huwa ‘l-shamsu ‘l-muḍī lā yaṭṭali’u ‘alay-hā illā ‘l-fard al-qadīm.

C f. 11a–b: *hādhā ‘l-jān*; I 173–174: as *Baqara* except: *yajburu*.

104 On this subject see Ayoub, al-Badā’; Goldziher, and Tritton *Badā’*, where reference is made to the Shaykhi treatment of the subject found in Nicolas, *Le Chéikhisme*, fasc. III “Le Doctrine” (see bibliography). Note that this garden entails a horizontal or planar relational dynamic which suggests the realm of history as distinct from a vertical vector suggesting an ahistorical and spiritual (gothic) focus.

- [7] And for the people of the Garden of Refuge (cf. Q 53:15, 79:41 and *passim mawāʾ*) [the bestowal is of the] knowledge of [the station of] the further mosque [Q 17:1] including [the station of] or closer still [Q 53:9: *aw adnā*].
- [8] And for the people of the Garden of Peace (*al-silm*) [cf. Q 2:208] [the bestowal is] security (*al-salāma*) from all but God. And it is the [station of that] poverty that the Messenger of God prided himself in, because he had expended all for the sake of God, and he became annihilated while nothing of his own existence remained. And when he had expended all of what God had supplied him, God made him immortal (*bāqīyyan*) by means of His own immortality so that his annihilation was the same as (*ʿayn*) his immortality, and his poverty was the same (*ʿayn*) as his self-sufficiency. He who obeys [God] (*atāʿa*) as the Messenger of God did in responding to the admonition to expend, that one will enter into [the very essence] of this verse. Otherwise, God will do with him what He wills.

And that is the greatest grade of expenditure for the people of the abode of peace, none knows it except he who enters the house of God (*bayt Allāh*), the Generous and drinks from the cup of His ancient glory (*majdiḥu al-qadīm*). And when he enters and drinks he is proven worthy of the abode of peace.

The eighth level shows much Sufi content, from the reference to the hadith: *al-faqrū fakhrī* “My poverty is my glory.” (see Schimmel, *Mystical* 121 & 428) to the paradoxical treatment of the principles of *fanāʾ* and *baqāʾ*. Notice, however, that these traditional Sufi values and virtues, which represent the “greatest grade” are said, in the following comment, to be properly acquired only by those who have “entered the House”, that is, the Shiʿa. The Báb further says that just as *infāq* exists on these positive levels, it is also applicable to the inhabitants of the seven Hells, according to specific misdeeds. In fact, all created things have been given *infāq* according to their respective capacities.¹⁰⁵ The hierarchy of creation is further pointed out in the following statement:

And each thing has been put in its proper place: the realities (*ḥaqāʾiq*) in the realities, and the gems in the mines¹⁰⁶ and the attributes in the attributes, and the accidents in the pre-existent forms (*ashbāḥ*). The

105 *Baqara* 32: *ʿalā mā hum ʿalayhi*.

106 *al-jawāhir fiʾl-khazāʾin*; C f. 12a: *al-jawāhir fi jawāhir*.

believers have been given pity (*raʿfa*) and humility (*khudūʿ*) and are under divine protection and mercy. While to the unbeliever vengeance and error have been given. Nothing has been named except by that which God, the Messenger or the *awliyāʿ* have named it.

Al-Bāqir has said: “Whoever calls a date-pit a pebble or a pebble a date-pit, that one is condemned, and he is a polytheist.”¹⁰⁷

Such a statement emphasizes the sanctity of names and words and depends upon the theory that all language is generated from divine revelation and that even the most apparently insignificant element of creation, or those elements which are considered unworthy, nonetheless play an integral part in the divine economy. It also suggests that there are no such things as pure synonyms. The Báb’s closing remarks relate the obligation of *expenditure* to the concrete world of the Sharia:

And concerning *infāq*, at the time of Ṣalāt—it is Ṣalāt
and at the time of Zakāt, Zakāt
and at the time of Fasting, Fasting
and at the time of Ḥajj, the Ḥajj
and at the time of Jihād, Jihād.

And all of that is but a mere drop (*rashḥa*) concerning the principle of *expenditure*, but the whole subject is completely understood by the People of Excellence (*tufāq*).¹⁰⁸

Another heptad is found at the commentary on Q 2:5.¹⁰⁹ Here, the various grades are described most fully. After mentioning all twelve Imams, the Báb comments on the following:

Those are upon guidance from their Lord (*rabb*), those are the ones who prosper (*al-mufliḥūn*). [Q 2:5]

[1] This concerns the Lordship of the pure Ancient Essence and it exists even when there is no object of Lordship (*idh lā marbūb*) mentioned or seen, [and this Lordship] is not comprehended (*lā iḥāta*). He has ever been a Lord even when there is no *marbūb*; He is now as He was (*al-ān ka-mā kāna*). His lordship is exalted and sanctified above the

¹⁰⁷ Baqara 32.

¹⁰⁸ Baqara 33 & I 175: *ahl al-tufāq*; C f. 12a: *ahl al-naḥāq*.

¹⁰⁹ Baqara 37. The following excerpts are from Baqara 38–40.

reach of any hand but His. There is no statement (*kalām*), no utterance (*bayān*), no presentation (*rasm*), no name (*ism*), no expression (*‘ibāra*), nor “pointing to” (*ishāra*), which can make it known (*‘an ma’rifa*). “The road is blocked, the search obstructed.” Exalted is thy Lord, the Lord of Might, above what you attribute to Him.

- [2] The second stage is the proof (*dalīl*) of this first Lordship and its sign. That is, the eye which is directed by it to it. This stage is the knowledge of the first stage through an indication, because this Lordship is the face (*wajh*) of the first Lordship. The knowledge of the face is the same as the knowledge of the owner of the face. “O my God! It is through You that I recognize you as you have directed me to You and summoned me to you. Were it not for You I would not know what you are.” This stage points to the Essence by means of the Essence, while there is as yet no mention of the objects of Lordship in the court of divine Might. There is neither mention, nor function (*ṣulūh*), nor comprehension (*iḥāṭa*) nor manifestation (*ẓuhūr*). Nay, rather in reality this stage of Lordship is the same as the first. There is no name or allusion that can approach Him. Exalted is the Ancient above the description of all but Him. He is isolated from His creation and His creation is isolated from Him. The only knowledge, which He allows, is the knowledge of His signs. Exalted is He. He is too glorious to be described.
- [3] The third stage of Lordship is the Lordship of the Will (*mashīyya*). This is the Lordship that exists when an “object” of Lordship (*marbūb*: the one over whom lordship is exercised) is mentioned but not seen or comprehended. This is the station (*maqām*) of the divine Ipseity (*huwīyya*), and the highest grade of the inclusive unity.
- [4] The fourth is the Lordship of the divine Purpose (*irāda*). This is the Lordship which exists when the *marbūb* is mentioned and seen generally (*ijmālī*), even if there is no *marbūb* through actual connection (*bi’l-ta’alluq*), either by manifestation (*bi-ẓuhūr*) or comprehension.
- [5] The fifth level of Lordship is that of the greatest name of God (*ism allāh al-akbar*). This is the lordship that exists when the *marbūb* is mentioned and seen specifically (*tafṣīlī*), even if there is no *marbūb* by connection, manifestation or comprehension.
- [6] The sixth is the Lordship of Mercy (*rubūbiyya ism al-raḥmāniyya*) and it is the lordship that exists when the *marbūb* is mentioned and seen through connection and comprehension, while there is yet *marbūb* through manifestation. This Lordship is the stage of being

worshipped (*ma'būdīyya*) indicated in the verse: *Thee do we worship and Thee do we ask for help*. [Q 1:5].

- [7] The seventh stage of Lordship exists when the *marbūb* is mentioned, seen, comprehended, and manifest. This is the lordship which has been cast (*al-rubūbiyyat al-mulqātatu*) into the ipseity (*huwīyya*) of the *marbūb*. Al-Šādiq alluded to this level in the following statement:

*Servitude ('ubūdīyya) is an essence whose kernel is Lordship. Whatever is lost in servitude is found in lordship, and whatever is hidden in lordship is attained in servitude.*¹¹⁰

This lordship exists in both the hidden dimension and the visible dimension of all things (*tilka al-rubūbiyya mawjūdātun fī ghayb al-ashyā' wa shahādatihā*). This is what is meant by the phrase: *guidance from their Lord*. That is to say, the lordship which has been cast into their ipseities (*huwīyyātihim*). God guides them by this Lordship to themselves through themselves. And God appointed 'Alī in the station of His own self in all of these seven stages of Lordship for the magnification of the glories of His lordship inasmuch as *the eyes attain Him not* [Q 6:103], nor do the natural thoughts of men encompass Him, nor are the birds of the hearts and thoughts (*awhām*) able to ascend to the atmosphere of His lordship. *But He attains the eyes, He is the Subtle, the Apprised*. [Q 6:103]

This is merely a drop (*rashḥa*) concerning the *guidance from their Lord*.

The first three degrees of Lordship are mentioned again in the commentary on Q 2:30, where they are identified with God, Muḥammad and 'Alī respectively.¹¹¹

- [1] The lordship which exists [even] when there is none over which to be a Lord (*lā marbūb*), is the sign of the Lord and the highest aspect of the Will (*mashīyya*). The road to it is cut off, and the path to it is blocked. God was Lord even when there was no object of lordship.
- [2] The lordship which exists when no *marbūb* is seen, even though the *marbūb* is mentioned. And this lordship is the same as the divine will. There is no road to it, except after the manner in which the Messenger of God has described, he said: *"None but God and thee, O 'Alī, knows me."*

110 This tradition is quoted in *Ziyāra*, iii:203.

111 *Baqara* 120–121.

- [3] And the lordship which exists when the *marbūb* is both mentioned and seen. And it is the lordship which exists through its connection with the *marbūb* and [the lordship] implied in the statement: **the Merciful mounted the throne** [Q 20:5].¹¹² It is the Lordship of the divine mercy and there is no path to it except by means of what Muḥammad himself described, he said: **"None but God and I know thee, O 'Alī!"**¹¹³

This hierarchy is relatively straightforward in indicating the three principles of *tawḥīd*, *nubuwwa*, and *imāma*, which may be associated respectively with the levels of exclusive unity (*aḥadiyya*), inclusive unity (*wāḥidiyya*), and mercy (*raḥmāniyya*). In this context such a hierarchy implies the existence of the fourth element, namely the Shi'a itself. The Báb does not mention this last in connection with *rubūbiyya*, possibly because the Shi'a represent the opposite but complementary principle of servitude (*'ubūdiyya*) mentioned in the preceding heptad.

At Q 2:35 Adam, or more specifically the Adam which functions in the pre-creational garden (*jannat al-ūlā*) of the Day of Alast,¹¹⁴ is identified as the divine Will, and is the first male (*dhakar al-awwal*) to appear in the pre-existent contingent world (*al-imkān al-ūlā*) whose **spouse** is the divine Purpose (*irāda*).

And **the garden** here is the **garden** of the inclusive unity, not the garden of the exclusive unity, because in the latter (*aḥadiyya*) there is no mention of **drawing near the tree**, neither potentially nor actually. It is the **garden** of pre-eternity (*azaliyya*). The one who enters therein never departs (*yakhruju*). And the one who departs from it (*khārij*), never enters it again.

Nothing is opposed to its people,¹¹⁵ and its people are not other than that [= **the garden?**]. Its inhabitants are ever in one condition (*ḥāla wāḥida*) which none recognizes through hints (*bī'l-talwīḥ*), except he who has burned the **veils of glory and allusion** and [the veils of] infinity and finitude and entered the **throne** of glory (*dakhala 'arsh al-jalāl*) so that he

112 *rubūbiyyat al-muqtaranat al-marbūb*. The Quran reference is Q 20:5, cf. also Q 7:53; Q 10:3; Q 13:2; Q 25:59; Q 32:4; Q 57:4.

113 *Baqara* 121: *'arrafa-ka*; C f. 45a: *'araḥa-ka*; I 241: *waṣafa-ka*.

114 *Baqara* 150 & I, 263: *al-ādam al-ūlā*; C f. 56a: *al-ādam al-awwal*.

115 *Baqara* 150: *lā ʿidd li-ahli-hā*. Cf. above *ad* Q 2:1 where the first **garden** itself is described in a similar way.

hears whatever he wants of the Merciful One from the melody of the peacocks of this **garden**. “And He wrongs not His servants.”¹¹⁶ And this **garden** is specified (*makhṣūṣ*) for the Family of Muḥammad. And no one merits it until he has recognized them through illumination (*maʿrifatihim biʿl-nūrāniyya*).¹¹⁷

It is the **garden of eternity** (*al-khuld*), God specified it for Himself, and alluded to it in His book: **God warns you that you beware of Him ...**¹¹⁸ [Q 3:28 & 30]. **And remind them of the days of God.** [Q 14:5]

The Báb then says that this **garden** of the First (*al-ūlā*) Adam is at the level—actually in the “depth” (*lujjat*)—of the exclusive unity. When he became intimate with **her mate**,¹¹⁹ which is the station of the individuation of the First **Adam**,¹²⁰ then **their Lord** caused them to **dwell** in the **garden** of the inclusive unity. This statement appears to describe three levels, of which the station of *taʿayyun* “individual existentiation” is the middle one. The Báb then says that the **tree** itself is the sign of the exclusive unity, which cannot be properly perceived within the realm of contingency and this is why Adam and Eve were ordered **not to approach it**. After they disobeyed, the first offspring to come forth into contingency was the Sea of Destiny (*baḥr al-qadar*),

which is only understood by God the One, the Single. And it is a surging sea in whose waves God forms (*ṣawwara allāh*) all that is given existence by the Will. It is a Sea with no beginning and no end. Glorified be God, its Originator, above whatever is said of Him.¹²¹

And verily al-Ṣādiq has said, when asked about the **garden of Adam**:
It was one of the gardens of the earth (*al-dunyā*). **The sun rose over it, as did the moon. If it had been one of the gardens of the Hereafter, he [i.e. Adam] would have never come forth out of it.**¹²²

116 *Baqara* 150. Variation on Q 50:29. Cf. also Q 3:182, Q 8:51, Q 22:10, Q 41:46.

117 *Baqara* 151: *illā baʿda maʿrifati-him biʿl-nūrāniyya*.

118 Q 3:28 & 30. May be read as: God warns you to beware of Him alone.

119 *Baqara* 151: *zawji-hā*, reference Q 4:1, Q 7:189, Q 39:6, Q 57:1. Cf. also *Fuṣūṣ*, 1:56 where **Adam** is identified by Ibn Arabi as the **single soul** (*naḥs wāḥida*) mentioned in Q 4:1: **Mankind, fear your Lord, who created you of a single soul, and from it created its mate ...** The gender of the pronoun is of course determined by the feminine word *naḥs*.

120 *Baqara* 151: *fa-lammā istaʿnasa bi-zawji-hā wa ḥiya maqāmu taʿayyuni Adam al-ūlā*. N.b. *taʿayyun* is a technical term in the writings of Ibn Arabi and his school.

121 *Baqara* 152. This passage echoes Ibn Arabi's preoccupation with the “mystery of destiny”, *sirr al-qadar*.

122 This report is also in *Ṣafi*, i:116; *Burhan*, i:80#2, also part of #4.

He means (*lawwaḥa*) by *dunyā*, the vast sea (*ṭamṭām*) of the inclusive unity. And it is the beginning place of limits in the worlds of *al-jabarūt*, from infinity to infinity. And the meaning of “rising of the sun and the moon” (*ṭulūʿ*) is the process (*madad*: lit. support) of Origination and Invention. And by *hereafter* is meant the depth of the exclusive unity of the sign of pre-creation, which appears to it through it (*la-hā bi-hā*).¹²³

In his commentary at verse Q 2:38, the Báb comments upon the phrase *and whosoever follows My guidance, no fear shall be on them, neither shall they sorrow*. Here my *guidance* is glossed as ‘Alī who, in turn, may be followed in a variety of ways, according to the tradition *The paths [to God] are as numerous as the breaths of the creatures*.¹²⁴

- [1] The first who *followed* ‘Alī in the contingent world is [by virtue of the word] *huwa*. It is his name and his designation, even without fully pronouncing the *wāw*.
- [2] Then the manifest divinity (*al-ulūhiyya al-zāhiriyya*).
- [3] Then the victorial exclusive unity (*al-aḥadiyya al-qāhiriyya*).
- [4] Then the universal mercy (*al-raḥmāniyya al-jāmiʿa*).
- [5] Then the second pre-eternity (*al-azaliyya al-thāniyya*).
- [6] Then the world of attributes (*ṣifāt*).
- [7] Then the world of acts (*afʿāl*).
- [8] Then the veil of divine power (*qudra*).
- [9] Then the veil of divine majesty (*ʿaẓama*).
- [10] Then the veil of divine glory (*ʿizza*).
- [11] Then the veil of awe (*hayba*).
- [12] Then the veil of omnipotence (*jabarūt*).
- [13] Then the veil of mercy (*raḥma*).
- [14] Then the veil of prophecy (*nubuwwa*).
- [15] Then the veil of miracle (*karāma*).
- [16] Then the veil of high rank (*rifʿa*).
- [17] Then the veil of felicity (*saʿāda*).
- [18] Then the veil of intercession (*shafāʿa*).
- [19] Then the world of command (*amr*).
- [20] Then the world of creation (*khalq*).

¹²³ *Baqara* 152–153.

¹²⁴ *Baqara* 163–164. On this tradition, also cited in the Báb's *Risālat al-sulūk* 73, and its variants, see Algar, *Silent* 39.

And all of that **follows** him in a continuous motion (*bi-ḥarakat al-tawālī*). While he [‘Alī] helps them (*mumidduhum*) with **guidance** according to what they are (*bi-mā hum ‘alayhi*). Even the People of non-recognition (*ahl al-inkār*) **follow** him by virtue of that very non-recognition.¹²⁵ Thus God has caused the people of paradise to enter [paradise] by means of **following** him, and the people of hell [to enter] hell by means of **following** him.

The idea expressed in this last statement is one frequently encountered in the traditions. For example, in one of the sermons (*khutab*) collected by Rajab Bursī we find this statement from ‘Alī: “I am the master of the Path and the Place, [and I am the one] who determines who goes to Paradise and who goes to Hell according to the command of my Lord.”¹²⁶ The above exaltation of ‘Alī by the Báb is, in fact, very similar to the theme of this *khutba* and several others, such as the *Khutbat al-tuṭunjiyya*¹²⁷ and much of the terminology found here, and in the Báb’s following remarks¹²⁸ is also found in these traditions. It is known that Bursī’s compilation was studied by Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī¹²⁹ and it is likely, therefore, that it was studied by the Báb as well. Indeed, one of the early compositions of the Báb was a commentary on a section of the commentary by Rashtī on *Khutbat al-tuṭunjiyya* for which Bursī’s *Mashāriq* was one of the very few possible sources.¹³⁰

As for the hierarchy itself, the pattern seems to imply the number of the letters of the *basmala* (19), if the point under the *bā’* is counted separately as the twentieth element. This in turn suggests a theoretical background for the later “doctrine” of the Letters of the Living, mentioned above. Here, it is also helpful to refer to one of those passages in *Mashāriq* which seems to have served as a source for the Báb. Rajab Bursī writes that all existent things (*mawjūdāt*), find their consummation in a single point (*al-nuqṭat al-wāḥida*), and this point is a quality of the divine Essence.¹³¹ This would correspond to the first element above, “He [is]!”—*huwa*.

The remaining elements in the above list may be seen to reflect the continuing discussion by Bursī of the way in which the existent things acquire

¹²⁵ *Baqara* 164: *bi-mā hum ‘alā khilāfi ‘l-tawwālī*.

¹²⁶ *Mashāriq* 170: *anā ... qāsim al-janna wa’l-nār bi-amr rabbī*.

¹²⁷ *Mashāriq* 166–170.

¹²⁸ See *Baqara* 165.

¹²⁹ *Rafatī* 133.

¹³⁰ *Sources* 73; on the transmission of this sermon see Lawson, Dawning-places.

¹³¹ *Mashāriq* 31.

being. Bursī, who was clearly influenced by the writings of Ibn Arabi,¹³² says that this divine attribute is the first thing that was created and is identifiable as the Muḥammadan light, which is also called the first intelligence. It is also called the universal intelligence (*‘aql al-kull*), which represents the origin of all things. When God spoke to this first principle His word became a light; then he spoke another word and it became a spirit (*rūḥ*). Ultimately, through this speaking, the “point” was diffused (*sarayān*) through the “many”, as the *alif* is diffused through speech in general. In the course of this passage reference is made to such terms as *al-wāḥdāniyya al-awwaliyya* (cf. the above *al-azaliyya al-thāniyya*), the “appearance of the deeds from the attributes” (*ṣudūr al-af‘āl ‘an al-ṣifāt*, cf. items 6 & 7 above), and the “clouds of divine might” (*saḥāb al-‘aẓama*, cf. *ḥijāb al-‘aẓama*, item 9) and the correspondence cloud/veil.¹³³

Bursī here indicates that the highest principle, the “single point” is the Muḥammadan Presence, (*al-ḥadra al-muḥammadiyya*, another term from Ibn Arabi’s lexicon). These remarks serve as an introduction for a notoriously obscure *khutba* ascribed to ‘Alī, in which a dialogue between the divine and human dimensions of the Imam is presented. During this dialogue, the statement is made: “**I am the Essence of essences.**” Now, this statement is reproduced (but not ascribed) by the Báb immediately after the list translated above.¹³⁴ A closer comparison between this section of the Báb’s commentary and the material in *Mashāriq* would undoubtedly further confirm the intimate relation between the two works.

We conclude this chapter by giving the commentary at Q 2:125, which is important for the hierarchical exegetic theory of this tafsir. The commentary concentrates on the word **house** (*al-bayt*) for which are given nine inner meanings (*buṭūn*), beginning with the ninth as the most profound.¹³⁵ This nine-level hierarchy is not found elsewhere in the tafsir, but one assumes that since it is applied here to the distinctive, highly generative and characteristic Shi‘i technical term **house**, it may also be applicable at other verses to similarly key religious technical terms.

¹³² Lawson, Dawning-places 273.

¹³³ *Mashāriq* 30–31. It is perhaps of some interest to note the hermeneutical deployment of this equivalence in the writings of Bahá’u’lláh, a self-confessed follower of the Báb prior to his own revelation. See his *Kitāb-i Īqān*, e.g. 55/71: *hameh in ḥijāb bi-ghamām ta’bīr shudeh* / “All such veils are symbolically referred to as ‘clouds’”. See also the thorough discussion of the hermeneutics involved in Buck, *Symbol* 110–112, 126.

¹³⁴ *Baqara* 165.

¹³⁵ *Baqara* 276.

And when We appointed the house to be a place of visitation for the people, and a sanctuary, saying: 'Take yourselves Abraham's station for a place of prayer.' And We made covenant with Abraham and Ishmael: 'Purify My house for those that shall go about it and those that cleave to it, to those who bow and prostrate themselves.' [Q 2:125]

- [9] The meaning (*al-murād*) of the house in the ninth depth (*fi baṭn al-tāsi'*) is the house of the divine Ipseity (*al-huwiyya*). It is the house of *tawḥīd* and the first house which God manifested to itself through itself (*la-hā bi-hā*) in the process of Origination (*al-ibdā'*). He made it as a sign of His own self, the Ancient (*al-qadīm*) as a proof of the statement: "There is no god but God, the Mighty (*al-‘azīm*)."¹³⁶
- [8] In the eighth depth, it is the house of divinity (*al-ulūhiyya*) and it is the first house established in the absolute Cloud (*al-‘amā' al-muṭlaq*) as the possessor of whatever is rare and glorious (*mustawliyyan 'alā mā daqqa wa jalla*).
- [7] In the seventh interior, it is the house of the exclusive unity belonging to God, the One the Single. It is the first house which God, his (Abraham's) Lord established with His hand for Muḥammad in the world of *al-lāhūt*. In it [He is] in it; he is he; no other than him (*wa fihi fihi huwa huwa lā siwā-hu*).¹³⁷
- [6] In the sixth depth, it is the house of Destiny (*al-qadar*). This is the first house which was established in the world of *al-jabarūt* by the hand of Muḥammad for 'Alī. And in it he is, and he is independent and the ordainer, by permission of the Merciful, of the divine economy (*muqaddir al-taqdīr*) in the states of immortality and annihilation alike (*fi'l-baqā' wa'l-fanā'*) for all who are in these worlds. ['Alī] is the throne of God (*'arsh al-ḥaqq*) which is mentioned in the verse the All-compassionate sat Himself upon the Throne [Q 20:5].
- [5] In the fifth depth, it is the house of divine change of plan (*al-badā'*).
- [4] In the fourth depth, it is the battleground where Ḥusayn fell (*maṣra' al-Ḥusayn*).

¹³⁶ Though this sounds perfectly Quranic it does not actually occur in the Quran. As such it represents a fine example of the Báb composing in the voice of the Quran. This whole section is replete with similar instances of the combination of Quranic verbal usage and *saj'* in which the words of the Imams and the Báb himself have been given a Quranic sound. This literary gesture will become standardized in the Báb's *Qayyūm al-asmā'* where it is one of that work's most distinguishing features and which no doubt went a great distance in establishing the Báb's credentials as a recipient of miraculous, divine revelation. The *Qayyūm al-asmā'* is the subject of *Gnostic*.

¹³⁷ From this point on, there is a difference in numbering the levels among the *mss*.

- [3] In the third depth, it is the tomb of the Messenger.
- [2] In the second depth, it is the tombs of the Shi'a of the Imams.
- [1] And in the first interior it is what the Merciful said: *The first house established for the people was that at the blessed and holy Bakka a place holy, and a guidance to all beings.* [Q 3:96]¹³⁸

And the tafsir of this noble verse for the People of Reality (the Imams) is itself all according to one station.¹³⁹

The function of the ninth “depth” is the same as that of the world of *lāhūt* shown above, namely to emphasize the rigorous negative or apophatic theology so central to Shaykhi, Babi and eventually Bahá'í thought—an apophaticism which undoubtedly has its origins in Isma'ili philosophy. It is on account of such a theology that the Imam is permitted (or required) to make all of the various theopathic statements recorded in tradition.¹⁴⁰

Although the point has been alluded to several times, it should be stated clearly that apart from quoting several hadiths which were favorite “icons” of meditation for the first two masters of the Shaykhi school, and apart from the repeatedly affirmed doctrine of the four supports (which includes the anonymity of a spiritual elite) and the affirmation of the existence of a God which is beyond Being, the Báb shows no interest in what might be termed the more technical teachings of the Shaykhiyya. That is, he does not elaborate any of the theosophical and metaphysical themes, such as those pertaining to the *'alam al-mithāl*, or alchemy for which the Shaykhis are known. In addition, there is a strong element of “aphoristic” Sufism in these hierarchies, which, one assumes, came as naturally to a spiritually minded Shirazī as his own heartbeat. There is no mention in the histories of any direct affiliation of the Báb with a Sufi order or teacher, although Shaykh Aḥmad is known to have had an early association with the *Dhahabīyya* sufi order in his native Baḥrayn, an order that was also the pre-eminent Sufi order in Shiraz at this time and with whom the Báb is said to have had contact.¹⁴¹

One of the most decisive precedents for the final form of this composition by the Báb, it must be emphasized, is obviously the writings and teachings of

138 *Baqara* adds an illegible word, perhaps *'ilikh* “etc.”; *I* 363 continues the Quran: *and a guidance to all beings* [followed by] “etc.”; *C* f. 103a ends as *Baqara* adding “etc.”; *L* 25: as *I*, adding *al-āya* instead of “etc.”

139 *Baqara* 277: *wa inna tafsīra hādhihi 'l-āyati 'l-sharīfati li-ahli 'l-ḥaqīqati kānat nafsa-hā kullu 'alā maqāmi-hā.*

140 Cf., e.g., *Mashāriq* 160–172.

141 *Resurrection* 145.

Ibn Arabi but as they had been transmitted and debated through numerous channels in the history of Islamic religious thought. Such channels include statements cast in the form of hadith, especially those traced to the Imams, and the writings of such important Shi'ī scholars as Maytham al-Baḥrānī (1299), Ḥaydar Amūlī, Rajab Bursī, Ibn Abī Jumhūr, Mulla Sadra, Muḥsin *Fayḍ* Kāshānī (1680–1681) and, of course, Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī and Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī.

The basic perspective identified with the teachings of Ibn Arabi is known widely as “the oneness of Being” (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). It has been known now for nearly three generations that Ibn Arabi himself never used this descriptor or this technical term to refer to his ideas, his vision or his teaching. Nonetheless, there has been no thinker more influential in the post-Mongol intellectual landscape of Islam. This includes the rise and development of what might be considered neo-Twelve Shi'ism with the establishment of the Safavids in 1501.

Before proceeding to the next chapter, I would like to revisit the commentary on Q 2:35 to suggest that this passage may offer a clue to the later development of the Báb's role as gate of the Imam, then Imam/Qā'im, establisher of a new Sharia and finally harbinger of yet another divine manifestation. The commentary may be thought an elucidation of the archeology of the Family of God, which is traced to the First Adam, the inhabitant of the Garden of pre-eternity or pre-creation. The Báb says that this **garden** is restricted to the family of Muḥammad, but that those who recognize this through illumination will also merit the same **garden**. This is another way of saying that those who recognize the family of Muḥammad become members of that family. In the case of the Báb, this may be thought redundant since, as a Sayyid, he is automatically related to the family of Muḥammad. However, this would be a hasty assessment. The Báb is saying here that there is a kinship that transcends blood line—a spiritual kinship which is a function of knowledge and illumination.

Tajallī

Divine Glory Manifested

The foregoing discussions of *walāya* and hierarchies have outlined in detail the form and structure of the thought expressed in this commentary on the second sura of the Quran. However, without some understanding of the many references in this commentary to the process of God's self-manifestation, *tajallī*, this form would, to some degree, remain spiritless. The most usual translation of this term is "manifestation". The active participle is *mutajallī*, "the one who manifests or causes to become manifest". The passive participle *mutajallā*, "that which is manifested", can also mean "the place of manifestation". *Mutajallā la-hu* is "the one who receives manifestation". The root *J L W* is found in several forms five times in the Quran. For the purposes of this discussion, the most important occurs in the following context:

And when Moses came to Our appointed time and his Lord spoke with him, he said, 'Oh my Lord, show me, that I may behold Thee!' Said He, 'Thou shalt not see Me; but behold the mountain—if it stays fast in its place, then Thou shalt see Me.' And when his Lord revealed His glory to the mountain (*fa-lammā tajalla rabbuhu li-l-jabal*) He made it crumble to dust; and Moses fell down swooning. So when he awoke, he said, 'Glory be to Thee (*subhānaka*)! I turn to Thee; I am the first of the believers.' [Q 7:143 modified]¹

Tajallī and its various derivatives parallel other words stemming from the root *Ẓ H R*, "appearance", which are used in slightly differing ways. *Mazhar* is the noun of place meaning "the location where something appears or is made to appear". In the context of this commentary, it frequently refers to the Imams, and therefore a blurring of actual agency may become a problem. Strictly speaking the *mazhar* must never be thought of as being the cause of a given appearance (*muzhir*) but merely the vehicle by means of which such appears.² The

1 Other related uses in the Quran are at Q 7:187; Q 91:3; and Q 92:3. This term, and its derivatives, also exists in the hadith literature, which will be discussed below in some detail.

2 An important discussion of this is Corbin, *Divine Epiphany* 123.

one who makes to appear is always God. *Zuhūr* is a very important term, especially in a Shi'i context, which carries all of the above meanings of appearance and manifestation in addition to "advent," "victory" and "overcoming".³ It is the term most frequently used in even the oldest hadith literature to refer to the eventual "parousia" of the 12th or hidden Imam, to borrow a perfectly cognate term from the lexicon of the Church, *a fortiori* since parousia typically indicates the appearance of a return in glory. Such luminescence is also very much part of the word *tajallī* and, by etymology and association, the word *zuhūr*. Indeed, divine glory and its appearance or manifestation is itself a central vibrant theme of the Quran.⁴ The doctrinal focus in Twelver Shi'ism on revelation, appearance and advent is in perfect symmetry with the central ethos of occultation from which it derives its most characteristic and determining features. The apotheosis of hiddenness represents the true soul of Imami Shi'ism and is that element which eventually guarantees that the Babi religion, to a large extent, and the later development known as the Bahai Faith, to a much more unambiguous and complete extent, went quite beyond the bounds of orthodox⁵ Twelver Shi'ism, something both critics and followers assert with equal emphasis. This is the religio-historical foundation of the otherwise sometimes puzzling insistence that the Bahai Faith is not an Islamic sect but an independent world religion.

Tajallī

As a word not only approved but sanctified by scripture, *tajallī* came to be used by thinkers very early in the history of Muslim thought as a technical term to convey the neo-platonic idea of the self-manifestation of the One, who for Muslims was God (*Allāh*). One of the earlier philosophers to employ it was Ibn Sina.⁶ But, it was really Ibn Arabi who discussed the process in what was to

3 Cf. *Anwār*, 227 "*al-zahr*". Other related terms are those derived from the following roots: *B-L-GH*; *B-Y-N*; *K-SH-F*; *SH-R-Q*; *B-R-Z*; *W-H-Y*; *L-H-M*; and *N-Z-L*, all of which may be used to refer to the process commonly denoted by the word "revelation", which may be thought of as a synonym for "appearance".

4 Lawson, *The Quran* 37–41.

5 Corbin was the first scholar to explicate this although in doing so he wanted to cut any genealogical connection between the Bahai Faith and the teachings of the first two masters of the Shaykhi school. See *Corbin*, iii:213 and the critique in Lawson, *Orthodoxy* 153 n. 86.

6 See the citation in Goichon, *La Philosophie* 42. On the early history of *tajallī* in sources restricted to "Sunni Islam" by the author, see the recent Williams, *Tajallī*.

become its classical and highly influential formulation.⁷ This in turn was adopted not only by Sunni mystics but also virtually wholesale by many of his Shi'i readers, such as the influential Ḥaydar Āmulī, Rajab Bursī and Ibn Abī Jumhūr,⁸ and transmitted directly to such representatives of the great Safavid intellectual synthesis as Mulla Sadra and Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī. The main features of Ibn Arabī's theory of the self-manifestation of God would appear to have been subscribed to by Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī and his successor Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī. But, as will become clear, there is an important divergence between the Shaykhi position and the one perceived by them to have been put forth by Ibn Arabī. In any event, the *tajallī* which is at work in the Báb's tafsir shares many features in common with the classical notion.⁹

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- 7 It is generally agreed that the most faithful repository of his mature thought is the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, which was begun in 1229, approximately ten years before his death in Damascus. For a representative passage on this subject see *Fuṣūṣ*, 1:49. Much has been written on this most influential of all Muslim mystical philosophers. For pertinent scholarship that is also acutely attuned to and knowledgeable about Shi'ism, see the works of Chittick, beginning with *Sufī*. Older important works are Izutsu, *Sufism*; Corbin, *Creative*; & Morris, *Ibn Arabī and his Interpreters* 1 & 2.
- 8 For *tajallī* in the writings of Ibn Abī Jumhūr, see his *al-Mujlī* ("the polisher"), 204–205. On this work specifically, see *Dharī'a*, v. 20, 13 where the title is given as *al-Mujlī li-mir'āt al-munjī*. This refers to the successive refinement of the author's thought in the course of commenting on his original *Masālik al-aḥām*. This commentary he entitled *al-Nūr al-munjī*. As a commentary on *al-Nūr al-munjī*, the title *al-Mujlī* refers to the third and final stage of refinement. *Dharī'a* characterizes Ibn Abī Jumhūr as an "*ārif*, *muḥaddith*, and a *faqīh*". See also the articles by Madelung, "Ibn Abī Jumhūr", Lawson, "Ebn Abī Jomhūr". The importance of Ibn Abī Jumhūr for the study of Shaykhism is suggested in *Rafatī* 22 & 40 (and references), where for example, the author refers to him in discussing Shaykh Aḥmad's early education and mentions the speculation that Shaykh Aḥmad somehow fell heir to his fellow Aḥsā'ī's library from which he derived a great deal of his methodology; see also *Corbin*, iv:222. Cole claims to have "ample textual proof that Shaykh Aḥmad is much influenced by theosopher Ibn Abī Jumhūr al-Aḥsā'ī (b. 1434) and the great Bahraini thinkers of the Safarid (*sic*) period (1501–1722)." Cole, *World* 147. See now the detailed and comprehensive study of Ibn Abī Jumhūr by Schmidtke, *Theologie*, and the more recent general assessment by Pourjavady & Schmidtke, Twelver.
- 9 For Ibn Arabī's influence on Ḥaydar Āmulī, see *Corbin*, iii:149–213. For his influence on Ibn Abī Jumhūr see *Corbin*, iii:156, e.g.: "The writings of Ḥaydar Āmulī are, along with those of Ibn Abī Jumhūr, among those that have most contributed to the integration of the thought of Ibn Arabī with Shi'i thought. It is as if Shi'ism discovered its true soul in the immensity of Ibn Arabī's writings." Incidentally, Corbin continues here in pondering a Shi'i "essence" for Ibn Arabī's thought, stating that the above "poses the question of the origins and sources of the thought of Ibn Arabī, a question to which future research, deepened as much in the writings of Ibn Arabī as in the monuments of Shi'i philosophy, will have to respond." See now Pourjavady & Schmidtke, Twelver, q.v. Ibn Abī Jumhūr for the most recent assessment of this scholar's influences and importance. As for a Shi'i influence on Ibn Arabī, see the work of Ebstein. (to be added to Bib).

It is neither advisable nor possible to list all the contexts in this tafsir where reference is made to the process of *tajallī*; indeed, there is hardly a page that does not at least allude to it in some way or another. *Tajallī* and *walāya* are the ideational anchors for the tafsir. The first mention outside the highly lyrical and doxological “Introduction”¹⁰ is in the commentary on the *Fātiḥa*.

- [1] The third [verse] is the book of Fāṭima.
- [2] God has placed in it *all that pertains to her* (= *kullu mā la-hā wa ‘alayhā*).
- [3] It is the **garden of bliss** (*al-na‘īm*).
- [4] God prepared its shade for whoever believes in her and loves her after *he has recognised her as she deserves to be recognized* (= *bi-mā hiya ahlu-hā*).
- [5] [*That is, in the way*] *she appeared to the one who recognizes her through her* (= *ka-mā tajallat li’l-‘ārif la-hā bi-hā*).¹¹
- [6] At such time [when he recognizes her properly] this Garden will open to him.

The problem, then, is how does one understand the statement *ka-mā tajallat li’l-‘ārif la-hā bi-hā*. The most venerable usage of this kind of expression, at least for the Shi‘a, occurs in a statement attributed to ‘Alī and quoted by many writers, a transliteration of which runs as follows:

*Qāla ‘Alī: lā tuḥīṭu bi-hi al-awḥāmu bal tajalla la-hā bi-hā wa bi-hā umtu-ni‘a min-hā.*¹²

This report, along with others in early Shi‘i hadith, undoubtedly serves as the *locus classicus* for the ideas represented by the above quotation from the Báb’s tafsir.¹³ In fact, he comments on it himself a little later in the same work.¹⁴ Shaykh Aḥmad quotes it in the course of his fourfold commentary on the hadith: “**Our cause is a secret, a secret within a secret**”. This statement is connected with the first station (*maqām*), the affirmation of divine unity, and the

¹⁰ *Baqara* 1–6.

¹¹ So C f. 2b. The manuscripts vary at this point: *Baqara* 8 has *la-hu bi-hi* and a (perhaps crossed out) final *bi-hi*; I 156 has simply *la-hu bi-hi*.

¹² Cited in *Ziyāra*, i:25. See also *al-Mujlī* 168.

¹³ See, e.g., the hadith from al-Šādiq quoted from the *Miṣbāḥ al-sharī‘a* in *Ziyāra*, i:90 = *injala: idh tajallā dīyā’ al-ma‘rifa fi al-fu‘ūd hāja riḥ al-maḥabba*. See also *Ziyāra*, i:165 & i:243 (quoting Q 7:143); also *Ziyāra*, i:326 for other occurrences of *tajallā*.

¹⁴ *Baqara* 10.

knowledge of the Ancient God who is described in the Quran by the verse: *The eyes attain Him not, but He attains the eyes; He is the All-subtle, the All-aware.* [Q 6:103] Shaykh Aḥmad says that there are several hadith which explain this station, the first of which is the one quoted above. With this background, it is possible to translate this statement of ‘Alī’s in the following way:

‘Alī said: “Mere minds do not comprehend Him. Rather, He appears to them by means of them, and it is by means of them also that He remains inaccessible to them.”

With this translation, however, the problem of the proper understanding of the plural *awhām* “mere minds” is introduced. In the vast majority of its usages, it carries a negative connotation along the lines of delusion, fancy, and erroneous, perhaps wrong-headed, conjecture. Much of this negativity must be seen in this context, to have been neutralized by the stated relationship to the divine: It is God who appears to the thoughts after all, therefore how can these thoughts be said to be unworthy?¹⁵ A similar idea is found in the *Fuṣūṣ*, although not ascribed to an Imam. Ibn Arabi is explaining the way we gain knowledge of God. This knowledge, according to Ibn Arabi is closely associated with individual self-knowledge:

Since we know Him through ourselves and from ourselves, we attribute to Him all we attribute to ourselves. It is for this reason that the divine revelations come to us through the mouths of the Interpreters [sing. *mutarjīm*, the prophets], for He describes Himself to us through us (*fa-waṣafa nafsa-hu la-nā bi-nā*). If we witness Him we witness ourselves, and when He sees us He looks on Himself.¹⁶

15 The root *W-H-M* does not occur in the Quran. Cf. Mulla Sadra, *Mashā’ir* 2 who speaks of God’s power in repelling the *shayāṭīn al-awhām*; & Bo Utas, 182 and the references there. This problem of the fluidity of positive and negative connotations for the same word may be seen in another statement attributed to ‘Alī, one which appears in the *Nahj al-balāgha*, iv:73: *ittaqu ḡunūn al-mu’minīn fa-inna ‘llāha ta’āla ja’ala al-ḥaqq ‘alā alsinati-him*. Here the word *ḡunūn*, “thoughts”, which in many contexts has an unmistakable negative value, viz, “fancies” or “conjecture” as distinct from the much worthier “certitude/*yaqīn*”, can be read only as positive (that is, mental activity which is true, accurate & veridical). Cf., for example, Izutsu, *Ethico* 131–132. The same may be said for *khayāl*, “imagination”.

16 *Bezels* 54–55/*Fuṣūṣ* i: 53. For *al-mutajallā la-hu*, see *Fuṣūṣ*, i: 61 (ll. 14–15), 62 (l. 1), & cf. 121 (l. 1).

A solution to this problem of *awhām* mentioned above may be to read the pertinent sentence as follows:

Rather, He appears to their minds insofar as such insufficient instruments are capable of properly perceiving.¹⁷

While this statement could be interpreted pessimistically, it should be pointed out that the intellectual tradition in which it serves as a focus of meditation has often responded to the basic idea rather differently. Ibn Arabi, for example, would say that God appears to the human mind only in the form of that mind, precisely because He has no form Himself.¹⁸ The many appearances in these limited forms are His only appearance. The manifestation (*tajallī*) of attributes, is the manifestation of essence, or at least as much of the essence as our minds can hope to recognize. Thus, the thought (*wahm*) may be seen as the highest form of God's manifestation. However, because of the inherent ambivalence of the equation, a certain amount of caution or vigilance is in order to avoid what Corbin has termed "metaphysical idolatry."¹⁹

To return to the words of the Báb, the most important sentence is number five where the actual verb *tajallat* is used together with a prepositional phrase frequently encountered throughout the work, either in the form it appears here or in combination with other pronouns. The variations in the manuscripts deserve some further notice. The reading in *Baqara* and *I: ka-mā tajallat li'l-ʿarīf la-hu bi-hi* (not taking into account the extra *bi-hi* in *Baqara*) could be translated: "As she appeared to the one who recognized 'all that pertains to her' [or possibly even 'pertains to God'] by means of his (i.e. the *al-ʿarīf*'s) own self, [or his own capacity for recognition]." It may be that the masculine pronoun refers to **book** thus giving: "As she appeared to the one who recognized that this verse is the book of Fāṭima by means of the book/verse [or by means of his capacity to understand the book]." Although in this last attempt, one would rather have seen *al-ʿarīf la-hu bi-hā*: "the one who recognized that this verse is the book by means of the verse (f. *āya*) [or, through the meditation on the verse which produced a vision of Fāṭima through which 'she appeared to the knower']". It is

17 This translation is in line with a motif frequently referred to by Corbin which is found expressed in the apocryphal *Acts of Peter*: "I saw him in such a form as I was able to take in./*Talem eum vidi qualem capere potui*." See, e.g., Corbin, *Divine Epiphany* 69.

18 A similar idea is also ascribed to al-Ḥallāj:

Au nom de Dieu Clément et Miséricordieux, Lequel Se manifeste à (*al-mutajallī ʿan*) travers toute chose à qui Lui plait. (al-Ḥallāj, *Akḥbār*, #41, 85). "In the name of God the Merciful the Compassionate, He Who is manifest through any thing that pleases Him."

19 Corbin, *Le paradoxe* 14.

possible that the variation in the readings derives from an autograph, which carried the statement in this form. Another possible reading, in the light of the above hadith from ‘Alī (and the confusion among the manuscripts), is *al-‘ārif la-hā bi-hi*: “As she appeared to the one who recognized her through his own self [viz, his own capacity].” But this reading is not contained in any of the manuscripts consulted. However, from the way similar formulations are used throughout the work, and from our translation of the above-quoted hadith from ‘Alī, it seems advisable to adopt—at least provisionally—this last possibility.

As mentioned, that hadith appears at the very beginning of the Báb’s commentary, in his description of the eight gardens.²⁰ The Báb, in his description of the eighth or highest garden (that one which is isolated from all other gardens, and from which all other gardens are isolated)—quotes a portion of the *tajallī* hadith of ‘Alī, leaving no doubt that it is the inspiration behind the above usage. The Báb says:

It is the garden of *tawhīd* and the very form (*shabah*) of divine uniqueness (*tafrīd*) to which nothing at all is either connected or is like. It is as in the statement of ‘Alī: “He has appeared to them by means of them (*tajalla la-hā bi-hā*).”²¹ And the one who causes to appear (i.e. God, “*al-mutajallī bi-‘l-kasrī*”) is the same as the appearance (*nafs al-tajallī*). And it is [also] the thing that is caused to appear [or, the place where it appears] (*al-mutajallā bi-‘l-fathī*). And the pre-eternity of His self is the same as His self.²² It is not comparable with anything, and there is no knowledge from it directly (*lā ma‘rifat ‘an janābi-hi*), neither by inspired intuition (*kashf*) nor by discursive proof (*istidlāl*),²³ because whatever is other than Him is non-existent (*ma’dūm*) by comparison to Him (*‘inda-hu*). “And He is God.”²⁴ He was and nothing was with Him. He (or “it” i.e. “the primordial situation” just described) is now as He (or “it”) was.”²⁵ So how can He be known by one who does not exist? Although He is known, insofar as such is possible, in the contingent world. There is no distinction in this knowl-

20 See above pp. 76–83.

21 *hā* = *al-awhām*.

22 *Baqara* 10 & 1158: *wa‘l-azal nafsu-hu nafsu-hu*; C f. 3b: *wa ‘l-azal nafsu-hu*.

23 These two technical terms represent two opposite yet somehow “cooperative” modes of knowledge.

24 At this point *Baqara* 10 mistakenly adds *wa in qulta huwa huwa* which is actually a portion of the *Khuṭba al-yatimiyya*, quoted below p. 125.

25 [a] *lam yakun ma‘a-hu shay‘-un* [b] *al-‘ān ka-mā kāna*.

edge except that they²⁶ are His servants and His creation. He is known by means of signs and is witnessed by means of tokens. This knowledge is the proper understanding of the transcendence (*tanzīh*) of the Living, the Ancient. At the level of contingency nothing else is possible.²⁷

God Was and Nothing Was with Him. Even Now He Remains as He Was. (Nothing Has Changed)

The iconic phrase: “[a] He was and nothing was with Him. [b] He/it is now as He/it was,” is often repeated in this tafsir and therefore deserves some comment because it is a most powerful evidence of Sufi content. It is composed of two elements: [a] a statement ascribed to the prophet Muḥammad: “God was alone and nothing was with Him” *kāna allāh wa lam yakunu ma’ahu min shay’in*, and [b] a response to this statement frequently ascribed to the important Sufi teacher, al-Junayd of Baghdad (910): “And He is still the way He was.” *al-ān kamā kāna*. As indicated, this second element might also be translated as “it is now as it was” referring to the state of affairs, as opposed to the “person” described in [a]. This first element is attributed to the Prophet who is reported to have addressed it to ‘Alī when he descended back to earth after the *mi’rāj*.²⁸ The verb *kāna*, we are told, should not be understood as imputing a past tense to God (“l’être”).²⁹

The prolific Bahai scholar, ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Ishrāq-Khāvarī (1972) has studied this maxim together with several variants, in his commentary on Bahā’u’llāh’s *Kitāb-i iqān*.³⁰ The *Kitāb-i iqān* was written in 1861 specifically to argue the truth of the Bāb’s messianic and prophetic claims to the Bāb’s own uncle. Ishrāq-Khāvarī says that the hadith [a] originally comes from the Imams but is related through various schools (*ṭuruq*). Ishrāq-Khāvarī cites those variants which appear in *Kāfī* and adds that they are used by the ‘urafā’ and Sufis to speak about the first stage (*maqām-i aḥadiyyat*) of the process of God’s self-

26 So C f. 3b & I, 158. *Baqara* 10: *illā inna-hu = al-inkān* as a collective for men. The third person plural pronoun could also refer to the Imams.

27 *idh mā siwā-hu lā yumkin fī ḥaqq al-inkān*. A similar problem—we know and yet we do not—is presented and resolved in the beginning of the *Fuṣūṣ* (1:3) where ultimate guidance is to be obtained from “the tongues of the interpreters (*alsinat al-tarājim*)” namely, the prophets and messengers in a translation of this passage quoted above, n. 16.

28 *Mashā’ir*, 59 (205 of French translation). Mulla Sadra’s source, according to Corbin, is Shaykh al-Mufid (1022), *Kitāb nawādir al-ḥikmat*.

29 Corbin, French text of *al-Mashā’ir*, 221. See also Persian text, 89.

30 Ishrāq-Khāvarī, *Qāmūs-i iqān*, iii: 1287–1289.

manifestation (*tajallī*), as distinct from the second stage (*wāḥidiyyat*), in which the “permanent archetypes” (*a‘yān-i thābita*) occur.³¹ It is in these discussions of the stages of divine manifestation, whether as being or glory, that the phrase often appears. The second part of the phrase is meant to suggest the realm of *wāḥidiyya* in which the names, attributes, quiddities and the realities of things appear (*ẓuhūr*) or acquire external existence.

Furthermore, such discussions which classically involved three stages of divine manifestation, *tajallī*, are stimulated to life by the famous doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd* associated with the name of Ibn Arabi. The Persian interpreter of Ibn Arabi, ‘Abd al-Razzāq Kāshānī (poss. 1336) cites element [a] in his analysis³² of *tajallī*, a discussion that might be thought to tacitly evoke in the mind of his reader the response attributed to Junayd. This aspect of Ibn Arabi’s influence on Persian Sufism has been discussed in detail,³³ it may be thought, therefore, that most references to a multi-stage process of *tajallī*, including this one by Ishrāq-Khāvarī, derive ultimately from Ibn Arabi. References by Ishrāq-Khāvarī in this passage to the prophet Muḥammad, the Imam ‘Alī, the Imam al-Bāqir, al-Junayd, al-Kulaynī (941), Abū al-Ḥasan al-Bakr (after 1295) and his *Kitāb al-anwār* through *al-Shahīd al-Thānī*, Zayn al-Dīn al-Jubā‘ī al-‘Āmilī (1558), Muḥsin *Fayḍ* Kāshānī (1679), indicate that this contemporary scholar acknowledged the importance of the greater Islamic mystical tradition for understanding the writings of the Bahai Faith. His reference to the long commentary by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’ (son of and successor to Bahá’u’lláh, d. 1921) on the hadith of the Hidden Treasure—*Kuntu kanzan makhfiyyan*, where ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’ cites the *Lam yakun ma’a-hu shay’un* tradition to also speak about the first stage of *tajallī*, indicates that Ishrāq-Khāvarī acknowledged the genetic relationship of this tradition with the Bahai revelation.³⁴ As a matter of interest, Ishrāq-Khāvarī’s comments are tied to the following passage in Bahá’u’lláh’s *Kitāb-i IQān*:

31 This is, of course, a clear reference to the unnamed Ibn Arabi and his distinctive theory of “immutable entities”—another translation of *al-a‘yān al-thābita*.

32 Kāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt* 155–156.

33 Landolt, *Der Briefwchsel* 257–270, see 263–264 for a translation of Kāshānī’s treatment of *tajallī* as it appears in the *Iṣṭilāḥāt*.

34 See the related discussions on *tajallī-ye khāṣṣ* in Ishrāq-Khāvarī, *Qāmūs-i īqān*, i:383 and *fayḍ al-aqdas* & *fayḍ al-muqaddas*, in iii:1193–1204. The author closes his commentary on this phrase, with a long excerpt in which it figures from the *Sharḥ khuṭbat al-tuṭunjiyya* by the successor to Aḥmad al-Aḥsā‘ī, Kāzīm Rashtī. As mentioned earlier, the Báb wrote a commentary on part of this commentary; it has unfortunately not been possible to consult it.

To every discerning and illumined heart it is evident that God, the unknowable Essence, the divine Being, is immensely exalted beyond every human attribute, such as corporeal existence, ascent, descent, egress and regress. Far be it from His glory that human tongue should adequately recount His praise, or that human heart comprehend His fathomless mystery. He is and hath ever been veiled in the ancient eternity of His Essence, and will remain in His Reality everlastingly hidden from the sight of men. **No vision taketh in Him, but He taketh in all vision; he is the Subtile, the All-Perceiving.** [Q 6:103] No tie of direct intercourse can possibly bind Him to His creatures. He standeth exalted beyond and above all separation and union, all proximity and remoteness. No sign can indicate His presence or His absence; inasmuch as by a word of His command all that are in heaven and on earth have come to exist, and by His wish, which is the Primal Will itself, all have stepped out of utter nothingness into the realm of being, the world of the visible.

Gracious God! How could there be conceived any relationship or possible connection between His Word and they that are created of it? The verse: **God would have you beware of Himself** [Q 3:28] unmistakably beareth witness to the reality of Our argument, and the words: **“God was alone; there was none else beside Him”** are a sure testimony to its truth. All the Prophets of God and their chosen Ones, all the divines, the sages, and the wise of every generation, unanimously recognize their inability to attain unto the comprehension of that Quintessence of all truth, and confess their incapacity to grasp Him, Who is the inmost Reality of all things (*jawhar al-jawāhir*).³⁵

To return to our author, the Báb never tires of asserting the reality of this God who is utterly unknowable. And it should be remembered that such an uncompromising apophatic theology is considered by him, as well as by the Shaykhiyya in general, as being a true reflection of the pristine teachings of the Imams, as opposed to being the result of “secular” theological speculation. A prime example of this is the following hadith:

‘Alī, in the Khuṭba al-Yatīma,³⁶ said: {“If you say: ‘Of what is He?’ He has already transcended all created things (fā-qad tabāyana al-ashyā’ kulla-

35 Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitāb-i-Iqān* 98–99/73–4.

36 *Baqara* 10, and all *mss*. A fragment from the same *khuṭba* is quoted and thus identified in *Ziyāra*, ii:264. {---} indicates material which is quoted (with some variation) in the course

hā). And if you say: ‘He is He,’³⁷ the *hā*’ and the *wāw* are from His speech,} [which is only] an attribute that indicates Him (*ṣifat istidlāl ‘alayhi*), not an attribute which reveals Him (*lā ṣifat takshifu lahu*). And if you say: ‘He has a limit’, the limit is automatically other than He. And if you say: ‘He is like the air’, the air itself is his creation (*san‘*). And the whole discussion goes from attribute to attribute. Blindness of heart is from [faulty] understanding (*fahm*). And [faulty] understanding is the result of [insufficient] awareness (*idrāk*). [Insufficient] awareness is from [a lack of the experience of] discovery (*istinbāt*). While the kingdom perdures in the kingdom and a created thing terminates in its like. And [from the beginning] the quest is destined to end in that which resembles [the seeker, or his faculties]. To barge ahead in such a search ends only in futility. So the explanation is lost. And the struggle is in vain. And the communication is cut off. And the path is blocked. And the quest is barred. His proofs are His signs, and His existence (*wujūd*) is His own corroboration (*ithbātu-hu*”).

The Bāb concludes:

Thus, it is [only] apparent *wujūd* [which is known] to the contingent world, while that existence of His which is His self “**none but Him knows It, Exalted be He,**”—none knows how It is except Him.³⁸

The title of the *khutba* refers to the uniqueness of God, or divine *yatīma*, “orphanhood”. The word is found in such expression as “priceless pearl”—*al-durra al-yatīma*. Although it has not been possible to trace a printed version of the full hadith with this title, standard Shi‘i literature abounds with similar statements.³⁹ Of particular interest is the existence of a virtual duplicate of this statement as a doctrine (*‘aqīda*) of classical Sufism ascribed to Ḥallāj (922).⁴⁰

of the very long doxology at *Mashāriq* 9. It is not referred to here as the *Khutbat al-yatīma*. Cf. *F10*, f. 92b, poss. *Khutbat al-taymiyya*.

37 Here *Baqara* has *fā-huwa huwa illā ‘l-waṣf*, which is probably an error.

38 *Baqara* 10–11: *lā ya‘lamu kayfa huwa illā huwa* is a frequent refrain in this work. These sorts of formulations are used in “orthodox” (including 12er Shi‘i & Shaykhi) rejections of *waḥdat al-wujūd*. We will return to this topic, and the semantics of theophany, below.

39 Some of these may be found under the heading “Via Negativa” in Chittick (trans.), *A Shi‘ite* 29–30. Many similar selections, some of which are taken from such canonical works as *Nahj al-balāgha*, may also be found here, *passim*.

40 al-Ḥallāj, *Akhbār al-Ḥallāj* 31–32 (French trans. 68–69). Elsewhere the editors have suggested comparing such compositions with the earliest Shi‘i creeds and prayers. (al-Ḥallāj, *Akhbār al-Ḥallāj* 49). The editors also draw attention to the existence of this ‘*aqīda* in al-

God thus being unalterably removed from creation (*Deus absconditus*), the problem arises when we seek to know more about what precisely is being manifested when one speaks of His self-manifestation, *tajallī*. Ultimately, it is God's glory and not His self that is manifested. A clue to this is offered in the following statement cited above from the hierarchical dimensions of *hidāya*, **guidance**⁴¹ that follows this hadith. Describing the lowest level, the Báb says:

And to each thing [**guidance**] is given according to its reality (*bi-mā huwa 'alay-hi*). And all of the above is his ('Alī's) manifestation to everything other than him by means of everything other than he (*tajallī-hi li-mā siwā-hu bi-mā siwā-hu*). And in the glory of his own greatness (*fi 'izz janābihi*) he is a leader (*hādī*) and not one who is led (*mahdī*). "He is now as He was." And His **guidance** is the same as **godfearing**.⁴²

Further clarification of the problem is found in the Báb's comments on the frequent Quranic word **naḥs**: **soul/self**. Assuming that the pronouns in the phrase *la-hu bi-hi* refer, in some way, to the spiritual dimension of what Corbin so helpfully termed the amphiboly of divine self-manifestation, it is important that we have some idea of the way the soul is discussed in this commentary. Before looking at this material, it will be useful to have some knowledge of the basic presuppositions the Báb is likely to have had on this matter.

One of the most frequently cited Quranic verses in the Báb's commentary on the *Sūrat al-baqara* (particularly towards the end of the work), and one which is alluded to in countless other passages, is the first half of Q 41:53.⁴³ Some of these citations will be encountered in the following quotations from the *Tafsīr*. The verse itself, like the Light Verse (Q 24:35), or the Throne Verse (Q 2:255), is of course widely quoted by Muslim authors in general, and has, like many other verses of the Quran, occasioned a wide variety of interpretations. The verse is translated by Arberry as follows:

Qushayrī's *Risāla* (written in 1045), although they do not mention its use in al-Kalābādhi (ca. 990), *Kitāb al-ta'arruf* (See Arberry's translation, *Doctrines*, 15–16).

41 I.e., 'Alī.

42 The interesting idea of mystical union of the Shi'a with 'Alī is suggested. *Al-ān ka-mā kāna: "He/it is now as it was [and always has been and will always be]"*, usually reserved as a reference to the unknowable divine essence, is used here quite unambiguously to refer to 'Alī. *Baqara* 17–18; C f. 6b: *wa hidāyatu-hu naḥsu 'l-muttaqīn*; I 164: *wa hidāyatu-hu kānat naḥsa 'l-muttaqīn*. *kānat* has been inserted in *Baqara* as an afterthought or correction.

43 E.g. *ad* Q 2:2 (*Baqara* 16); Q 2:89 (*Baqara* 232); Q 2:92 (*Baqara* 234); Q 2:97 (*Baqara* 240); Q 2:99 (*Baqara* 241); Q 2:106 (*Baqara* 249); Q 2:113 (*Baqara* 258); Q 2:118 (*Baqara* 265); Q 2:125 (*Baqara* 278); Q 2:128 (*Baqara* 285); Q 2:137 (*Baqara* 292).

We shall show them Our signs in the horizons (*al-afāq*) and in themselves (*anfusihim*), till it is clear to them that it/He is the truth (*al-Ḥ/ḥaqq*). [Q 41:53]

One may also understand this to refer to the macrocosm and the microcosm as the two places where the divine signs are shown. The background for the way in which the Báb read soul, may be seen to be provided in a commentary on this verse by Shaykh Aḥmad. He says that the word *anfus* “souls” must be considered under two aspects. The first is that it means Muḥammad and his family, according to the statement in the Quran: *Now there has come to you a Messenger from among yourselves (min anfusikum) ...* [Q 9:128].

That is to say (*ay*) *There has come to you a Messenger* from the family of Muḥammad because they are the souls of mankind (*anfus al-khalq*) and their essences (*dhawāt*), which is to say they are the souls of the souls (*anfus al-nufūs*) and the essences of essences (*dhawāt al-dhawāt*). The point here is that mankind (*al-khalq*) knows God through them because they are the greatest signs (*al-āyāt al-kubrā*, cf. e.g. Q 20:23). ‘Alī said: ‘God has no greater sign than me and no greater (*a‘zam*) announcement (*nabā’*, cf. Q 78:2) than me.’⁴⁴ This is also corroborated by the verse: *Indeed, he saw one of the greatest signs of his Lord.* [Q 53:18]⁴⁵

According to Shaykh Aḥmad, the verse means that Muḥammad saw ‘Alī as that one whom ‘God has no greater sign than’ during the night of the *mi‘rāj*, Muḥammad’s ascent through the seven heavens. And at the place (viz, *sidrat al-muntahā*, “the tree beyond which there is no passing”) to which Muḥammad attained, he saw ‘Alī before him and God spoke to him with his [‘Alī’s?] tongue (*bi-lisānihi*). “This is the highest meaning of the verse. As for the hadith (viz, *man ‘arafa nafsahu*, discussed earlier by Shaykh Aḥmad) it then means: ‘He who knows them [the Imams] knows God.’”⁴⁶ In another work, Shaykh

44 Early in the tafsir the Báb quotes a variant of this tradition in the form of a rhetorical question: “Which of God’s signs is greater than me and which announcement is greater than me.” (*Baqara* 26)

45 *Ziyāra*, iii:202. This sura tells the story of Muḥammad’s ascent (*mi‘rāj*) and contains several verses and words that were eventually to provide technical vocabulary for theologians, philosophers, and mystics of the most diverse temperaments and views. It should be remembered here that Shaykh Aḥmad did not support the idea of the Prophet’s bodily ascension to the seventh heaven but insisted that the event took place in the imaginal world.

46 *Ziyāra*, iii:203.

Aḥmad directly addresses the usage *la-nā bi-nā*, discussed above, in explaining this tradition:

That is, each soul is an indication of his Lord (*dalīl rabbihi*) and His sign because he is an evidence of His act (*athar fi'lihi*). So, whoever knows it, namely that description (*dhālika 'l-waṣf*) knows that to which the description pertains (*al-mawṣūf*). This is clear. Previously, I said: "We are that attribute which is real in us, through us and which is therefore known by us through [knowing] ourselves."⁴⁷ Now I say: "That is, our **souls**, namely our essences (*dhawātunā*) are most certainly that attribute because when God desired us to know Him He created us in the form of His knowledge."⁴⁸

The second aspect of the verse, we are told, is that **souls** means directly the souls of mankind (*anfus al-khalq*), that is to say: **We will show them Our signs**, namely the **signs** of **Our** knowledge (*ma'rifatinā*) in **their souls**. Here Shaykh Aḥmad refers to a point he made earlier where he used the examples of two mirrors: the first receives the image of, say, a face and the second receives the image of that face as reflected from the first mirror. The image in the second mirror necessarily distorts the image from the first mirror. The image in the first mirror is therefore more accurate, but this does not negate the value of the second mirror as long as it is acknowledged to be less reliable than the first. "After you have known your self you know that God describes Himself to you through the Imams (*fi-him wa bi-him*). And He means for them to be known because knowledge of them is true knowledge of God."⁴⁹

While both aspects of the verse lead ultimately to the same conclusion, it is important to bear in mind the noetic function described in the second aspect, inasmuch as both work together. In the Báb's *Risālat al-sulūk*, we find a clear endorsement of the second half of Shaykh Aḥmad's commentary. Included is an additional statement that pertains to the doctrine of the Fourth Support, identified as the Shi'a, which seems to correspond to Shaykh Aḥmad's second mirror. The Báb opens the *risāla* by suggesting that the proper quest is depen-

47 *wa nahnu dhālika 'l-waṣf al-wāqī' 'alaynā bi-nā fa-qad tu'urrifa la-nā bi-nā.*

48 al-Aḥsā'i, *Sharḥ al-fawā'id* 26. This work is a commentary on the same author's *K. al-Fawā'id* (written in Yazd in 1797), which is designated by *qultu*; his *Sharḥ* (written 1817 at the request of one Mullā Mashhadī b. Ḥusayn 'Alī) follows *aqūlu*. On this work see *Rafati* 60. See now also the important study by Hamid, *The metaphysics*. The last statement quoted is a reference to the "**I was a hidden treasure**" hadith.

49 *Ziyāra*, iii:202.

dent upon devotion to the principle of *tawḥīd*. Although “the paths to God are as numerous as the souls” themselves, there is, in reality, only one soul and one religion, which is the same as the command/cause of God (*wa mā amrunā illā wāḥidatun*, Q 54:50). The Báb continues:

This religion is supported (*mutaqawwam*) by four supports (*arkān arbʿa*): affirmation of divine unity, prophecy, *walāya*, and the Shiʿa. They are four gates of which the first is useless without the last [e.g., all are equally important]. Altogether, they amount to the face of God which will never pass away [cf. Q 28:88], [a face] which is [ultimately] the love of the Family of God, which is the same as the love of God, and it is the “hidden treasure”. The Prophet alluded to this station with a hint, when he said: “Above every good deed (*ḥasana*) is another good deed until one loves us. When one loves us there is no good deed higher.” Thus *al-ḥubb*, *al-ḥabīb*, *al-muḥibb*, and *al-maḥbūb* are four [separate] signs from the radiance of the Family of God that are within you, and they are your very soul.⁵⁰

The following examples from the tafsir further show the similarity of the Báb’s thought with Shaykh Aḥmad’s. At verse 9 the Báb takes the opportunity to analyze the problem under the term *naḥs*—self/soul.

They would trick God and the believers, but only themselves they deceive, yet they are not aware. [Q 2:9]⁵¹

After discussing the ways in which this verse relates to the *walāya* of ‘Alī, and those who were unfaithful to it because of their “regarding themselves” and “taking undue account of multiplicity [as opposed to unity]”, the Báb says:

This verse has also an absolute meaning (*maʿnā ḥaqīqī*), which I will recount in order that the people not err. Namely, God put a sign of His self (*naḥsi-hi*) in the realities of all created things (*fi ḥaqāʾiqi ʿl-ashyāʾ*), that they might know (*ʿarafa*) Him thereby. This sign is generated and created (*ḥādithatun makhḥūqatun*), but no thing resembles it, because He [Him-

⁵⁰ *Sulūk* 73. These words of the Prophet are also quoted in *Baqara* 25 & *I* 170.

⁵¹ There is variation among the *mss.* in the way the Quran is quoted. *C f.* 19b quotes the verse in full before the commentary begins, in which parts of the verse are again quoted. *Baqara* 52 and *I*, 190 simply cite parts of the verse in the course of the commentary.

self] is a thing which not even a sign of God, the Truth, resembles, in that **Like him there is naught.** [Q 42:11] and No god is there but Him, exalted be He above the action of the polytheists.⁵²

With this statement the Báb brings up several themes that recur frequently in his tafsir. First, is the very important hermeneutic principle of multiple meanings: any given verse may, and usually does, carry numerous intentions (precisely: *ma'ānī*), which operate simultaneously with equal, force, presumably at every verse. This principle is invoked here through the Báb's reference to "absolute meaning" as opposed to the other possible, more conditional ones. Second, the doctrine of signs expressed here is a virtual axiom of Muslim spiritual philosophy. But in this commentary, the greatest sign is the Imam. Thirdly, the adjective *ḥādithatun* used here, appears exactly the same way in the writings of Shaykh Aḥmad, who is concerned that the mere sign of God run no risk of being confused with the absolute. Thus the "spark of the divine" which the mystics say is in humans, should not, according to Shaykh Aḥmad and the Báb, really be described as such. This then is another example of the by now familiar stark apophaticism which characterizes the contents and method of this tafsir. It is perhaps unnecessary to add (or repeat) that in the context of this theology, there can be no question of divine incarnation. Shaykh Aḥmad continues his discussion of *tawḥīd* by citing a second hadith, the famous *naḥnu al-a'rāf* statement (on which see Chapter Two above, p. 62 and *Corbin*, i:310–320). In this hadith the Imam says, **"We are those heights without knowledge of which God is unknown."** *naḥnu 'l-a'rāfu 'l-ladhīna lā yu'rafu 'llāha illā bi-sabīli ma'rifati-nā.* This *tawḥīd* and "knowledge" then, are read in light of the fact (derived also from hadith) that God describes Himself by an attribute to those of His servants who seek knowledge of Him by an attribute. Such an attribute is of necessity generated and is also not like any other created thing.⁵³ The Báb continues:⁵⁴

'Alī said: **Each thing upon which the name [of being] a "thing" has been put is ipso facto created, with the exception of God.** Therefore, this sign is the soul (*naḥs*) of that thing [which bears a name]. Its reality (*ḥaqīqa*) is from its Lord, and it is its eye (*ṭarf*, also may be translated as "aspect") by which [that thing] looks to God [as in the exhortation] **Know ye God through God!**⁵⁵ The Messenger of God said: **The one who knows himself**

52 *Baqara* 53.

53 *Ziyāra*, i:25.

54 The following quotation may be found at *Baqara* 53–54.

55 *A'rifū 'llāha bi-'llāh!*

best from among you is the one who knows best his Lord. ‘Alī said: He who knows himself knows his Lord. And in the Gospel God said: “Know your self that you might know your Lord. Your exterior (*ẓāhir*) is destined for extinction, and your interior (*bāṭin*) is Myself.”⁵⁶

He who knows God by way of this soul, which is in him, has certainly known God.⁵⁷ And there is no other way than this for the servants. Moreover, there is no distinction in the knowledge (*maʿrifa*) except that he [or it] is His servant and His creation. He who knows him as God knows, exalted be He,⁵⁸ has really known Him. But he who has known Him by an attribute of the contingent things (*bi-ṣifat al-mumkināt*) has not known Him. And he [the one who has known God properly] is the sign of *tawhīd*, and the form (*shabah*) of divine aloneness (*tafrīd*) and the highest possible object of knowledge for humans (*ghāyatu ḥaqqi ʿl-mumkin*) by means of the gift of the Ancient One.⁵⁹

All of this would seem to indicate that it is the Imam here who is the subject of discussion. Self-knowledge can be accomplished most perfectly by the Imam. Conversely, self-knowledge can never be perfectly accomplished by the believers. The only “way” open to them is knowledge of the sign of the Imam that is in them. It is clear that this knowledge can have both an external and internal referent. Whether Shaykh Aḥmad opted exclusively for the internal is something of which Corbin was firmly convinced (*Corbin*, iv:286–300) but which has been questioned (*Rafati* 167–217). Judging from the slightly later *Tafsīr sūrat Yūsuf*, there can be no question that for the Báb this eschatology was (at least eventually) to be mediated through both the external and internal worlds.⁶⁰ But ultimately it is clear that here the sign/soul (*āya/naḥs*) is the Imam’s, and probably ‘Alī’s, rather than the comparatively accidental identity of the individual believer. The above hadith, *the one who knows himself best from among you* (*aʿrafukum bi-naḥsihi aʿrafukum bi-rabbihi*) is also cited by Shaykh Aḥmad in the context of the above-mentioned discussion of his commentary on Q 41:53.

56 This is an apocryphal statement that I have been unable to trace.

57 *man ʿarafa allāha bi-sabīl hādhi-hi al-naḥs al-ladhī* (sic all mss.) *fī-hi qad ʿarafa ʾllāha*.

58 *lā farq fīʾl-maʿrifati illā anna-hu ʾabdu-hu wa khalqu-hu man ʿarafa-hu ka-maʿrifati ʾllāhi subḥāna-hu fa-qad ʿarafa-hu*.

59 *Baqara* 53–54. There is some disagreement among the mss. here. Both *Baqara* 54 and *I* 191 have inserted *li-anna-hu* before *huwa āyat al-tafrīd*. This suggests that *Baqara* was being “corrected” while *I* was being copied from it: ... *fā-lā yaʿrifu-hu li-anna-hu huwa* ... instead of ... *lā yaʿrifu-hu wa huwa* ... [C f. 20a] The connective *wa* is crossed out in *Baqara* while it seems never to have been written in *I*. The above translation follows C.

60 *Gnostic passim*.

The author of *al-Mujlī* cites the same tradition when he discusses the problem of the clear and ambiguous verses of the Quran in which he outlines a doctrine of “three scriptures” viz: [1] a macrocosmic book (*kitāb al-aḥqāqī*); [2] the Quran proper (*kitāb al-qur’ānī*); [3] a microcosmic book (*kitāb al-anfusī*). A reading of any one of the three in the correct way constitutes reading them all. Concerning this last book, Ibn Abī Jumhūr quotes the famous statement here attributed to Muḥammad: **He who knows himself knows his Lord**. The author adds: “Because he is a true knower (*‘ārif*) who knows himself properly (*‘alā mā yanbaghī*) and peruses his book properly (*‘alā mā huwa ‘alay-hi fī nafsi-hi ‘alā mā yanbaghī*).” At this point the Quranic statement is cited: **Read thy book! Thy soul suffices thee this day as a reckoner against thee**. [Q 17:14] Then comes the following important statement which—because of the background it provides not only for the Báb’s understanding of *tajallī*, but also for a deeper general understanding of Shi’i scriptural interpretation, will be quoted in full:

In this way he who peruses the scriptural book (*kitāb al-qur’ānī*) accordingly (*‘alā jihat al-taṭbīq*) *al-ḥaqq* appears (*tajalla*) to him in the form of words and phrases (*alfāz, tarkība*), and appears to him (*ḡahara la-hu*) under the guise (*taḥta malābis*) of His/its letters and His/its verses and His/its words as a spiritual manifestation (*tajallīyyan ma’nawīyyan*) like that which ‘Alī alluded to:

Verily He has appeared to His servants (*la-qad tajallā li-‘ibādi-hi*) in His words but they do not perceive (*yabṣirūna*).

And he who peruses the cosmic book (*kitāb al-aḥqāqī*) properly (*‘alā mā huwa ‘alay-hi*), the Truth will appear to him in the forms of His nominal manifestations (*fī ṣuwari maẓāhiri-hi al-asmā’iyyati*) in the guise of actions and thoughts (*fī’līyyat wa ‘aqliyya al-kawnīyya*), those things which are designated by letters and words and verses, which are expressed through all existing things high and low (*al-mawjūdāt al-‘ulūwwīyya wa’l-saflīyya*), and created things (*makhluqāt*) both spiritual and material, absolute and concrete (*al-iṭlāq wa’l-ta’yīn*) [will appear] as a clear (*‘iyānan*) testimonial manifestation, because there is nothing in existence other than God and His attributes and His names and His acts. Therefore, all is He and by Him and from Him and to Him (*fa’l-kullu huwa wa bi-hi wa min-hu wa ilay-hi*).⁶¹

61 *al-Mujlī* 168–169. To further point up the similarity between al-Aḥsā’ī’s method and that of the author of this book, attention is drawn to the discussion by Ibn Abī Jumhūr of the *mi’rāj*, immediately following these words at *al-Mujlī* 169.

The Báb continues:

But those who would know God but know **only their own selves**, they are those who **would trick God ... and only themselves they deceive** [Q. 2:9]. **And in each thing of His is a sign which points out that He is one.**⁶² And this **sign** is the mirror of God in all things. They behold in it the beauty (*jamāl*) of God, that is (*ay*) whatever He manifested to them by means of them. And it (the **sign**) is their own souls.⁶³ Even though the [perceptual] tools (*al-adawāt*) point [only] to themselves,⁶⁴ nevertheless he knows who knows our word. And none knows it except he who takes our provisions and travels with us.⁶⁵ ‘Alī said: **Pierce the veils of glory without any pointing.**⁶⁶

This refers to those servants who see the **Face of the Lord**,⁶⁷ and no thing is closer to Him and His reality than this, in the estimation of God, exalted be He. Indeed, God sees Himself by means of the servant, and also manifests Himself to him and takes account of him by means of him, exalted be He beyond the reach of the contemplation of anyone of his creatures.⁶⁸

62 *wa fi kulli shay’in la-hu āyatun tadullu ‘alā ann-hu wāhidun*, frequently cited in classical Sufism and Shi’i theosophical literature is from a poem ascribed to Ja’far al-Šādiq (*Ziyāra*, i:277. See, e.g., the Báb’s older contemporary, Mullā Hādī Sabzavārī (1798–1878), *Sharḥ al-manẓūma*, who quotes it in explanation of his own statement: *anna ‘l-ma’dūma lā yu’ādu bi-‘ayni-hi*, 78).

63 *Baqara* 54: *ay bi-mā tajalla la-hum bi-him wa hiya anfusu-hum*. This statement also occurs in *Sulūk*.

64 Czōa adds: “and the instruments (*al-ālāt*) point only to what is comparable (*naẓā’iri-hā*) to them.”

65 This must be a hadith or maxim, but it is not ascribed to anyone in any of the *mss*.

66 *Baqara* 54: This is another reference to the often-quoted exchange between the first Imam and Kumayl (mentioned above p. 14). The statement comes as a response to Kumayl’s question: **What is Reality (*mā al-ḥaqīqa*)?** For the connection between this hadith of Kumayl and the so-called “authoritarianism” of Shi’i Islam, see also *Corbin*, i:110–118.

67 *kashf subuhāt al-jalāl min ghayri ishāratin mushāhadatu ‘l-‘abd wajha ‘l-rabb*. The **face of the Lord** is a common designation of the Imam, see *Anwār*, 333–334. Cf. also above, the passage translated from *Sulūk*. It might be translated as: the things which the servant sees as the face of the Lord: the **veils of glory** are the *mushāhadati ‘l-‘abd wajha ‘l-rabb*.

68 This may be thought a *par excellence* expression of at least one aspect of what Corbin refers to as the paradox of monotheism while at the same time being another expression of the mystery articulated in the *Kuntu kanz makhfī* tradition. The Arabic is: *wa laysa aqrabu min shay’in min nafsī-hi ilay-hi wa ḥaqīqati-hi laday-hi wa inna ‘llāha subḥāna-hu nāẓirun bi’l-‘abd bi-hi wa mutajallī-hi bi-hi wa muḥāsibu-hu bi-hi subḥāna-hu min an tanāla (sic; C f. 20b & I, 192: yanālu) ilay-hi tawajjuh aḥadīn min khalqī-hi*. C f. 20b: *nāẓiran*; and omits *mutajallī-hi bi-hi*; also, possibly reads *nāẓara bi’l-‘abdi bi-hi*. The meaning appears to

The Imam has said: Everything which you have distinguished by means of your minds (*awhām*) in attempting to sort out its subtle meanings (*ma'ānī*), the same is created, just like you yourselves are; it returns upon yourselves. Nothing is permitted to go beyond its own principle (*mabda'*). Contingency ascends only to contingency. There is no way to the Pure Pre-eternal by any means (*bi-wajh min al-wujūh*) because whatever is other than Him is pure non-existence, in comparison to Him (*'inda janābi-hi*).⁶⁹ He is now as He was. The master of all existing things [Muḥammad] said:⁷⁰ We do not know Thee as befits Thee.⁷¹

Verily God has accepted this inability (*'ajz*) of His servants to know His Self,⁷² because anything else is not possible in contingency. The Imam said: There is no way except the way of knowledge of us (*ma'rifatanā*). This is the meaning (*ma'nā*) of *lā ilāha illā 'llāh*. That soul is the same as this word (*kalima*, i.e., *lā ilāha illā 'llāh*); it [the soul or the word] is generated and created; yet pointing to God by affirming the divine unity. And this is apparent to the People of Heart (*ahl al-fu'ād*) because God has sent it down by the pen upon the tablet of truth thus.⁷³

There follows a long section which returns to the discussion of the unfaithfulness of the first three caliphs to the *walāya* of 'Alī. The Báb closes his commentary on this verse by discussing the phrase *yet they know not* (*wa lā yash'urūna*).

be that God does not enter into any relationship, thus all relations are on the level of *wajh*, which is at the same time the *sign*, and the innermost reality (*nafs, haqīqa*) of any "thing" created.

69 It is not clear where the quotation ends.

70 *qāla sayyid al-mawjūdāt fi 'l-inkān*; I 192 changes the sense somewhat: *qāla sayyid al-mawjūdāt ṣalā allāh 'alayhi wa ālihi fi 'l-inkān* ... Incidentally, I, as a rule, uses doxographical formulae more frequently than the other mss.

71 *Baqara* 54–55, commonly cited hadith. See Muḥsin Fayḍ, *Kalimāt* 3, where a similar statement is ascribed to 'Alī.

72 The vocabulary used here may be an allusion to the statement traditionally ascribed to the first Caliph Abū Bakr: *wa 'l-'ajz 'an daraki 'l-idrāk idrāk*: "Acknowledgement of one's inability to know is knowledge." See *Fuṣūṣ*, i:62. The subject under discussion is similar to the idea expressed here, namely that God beholds himself through man, it concludes judiciously, with "the whole matter is prone to intricacy and ambiguity." (*Bezels* 65)

73 *Baqara* 55: *wa dhālika zāhirun li-ahli 'l-fu'ād li-anna 'llāha qad anzala-hu min majrā al-midād 'alā lawḥ al-sadād ka-dhālika*. See *Mashāriq* 63, where Bursī, in a commentary on Q 17:32 and in a style frequently emulated by the Báb in this tafsir, associates *fu'ād* with *walāya*.

Because true **awareness** (*al-shu'ūr al-ḥaqīqī*) is that which concerns the sign of *tawḥīd* (i.e., the Imam), and its place (*maḥallu-hu*) is the *fu'ād*. It is the highest perceptive faculty of man (*wa huwa a'lā mashā'ir al-insān*). And when those disbelievers **thought to deceive** concerning [the matter of] 'Alī, the sign of the *tawḥīd* of God, their **awareness** vanished (*raf'at shu'ūruhum*) and God exchanged their **awareness** for non-recognition (*inkār*). And they will never have **awareness** because [ultimately] **awareness** is an attribute of believers.

The Imam said: “**Fear the perspicacity (*firāsa*) of the believer for he sees by means of the light of God.**”⁷⁴ And it is the light of God which He created him from, while the disbeliever sees by means of himself, and is created from it.

Thus (the **unbeliever**) has no **awareness**. The believer recognizes the *zuhūr* by means of the light of God, the Forgiver.⁷⁵

Although the soul has within it an a priori capacity, as is symbolized in the day of the covenant myth at Q 7:172, according to this tafsir recognition of God is impossible without the Imam. This is of course the standard view of Shi'ism and is exemplified in the tafsir literature where numerous *akhbār* are cited in which an original revelation of Q 7:172 naming Muḥammad and 'Alī as those to whom the **Yea verily! (*balā*)** of recognition is also addressed. These *akhbār* explain that this original revelation was corrupted and violated by the enemies of the Shi'a so that today in the Uthmanic codex the names of Muḥammad and 'Alī are no longer part of the verse.⁷⁶ This pre-creational ability or capacity of the soul is, of course, in perfect harmony with Ibn Arabī's theory of the *a'yān thābita*, a theory that is also hermeneutically linked to Q 7:172.⁷⁷ This pre-creational ability is encountered numerous times through this commentary

74 *ittaqu min firāsāt al-mu'min fa-innahu yanzuru bi-nūr allāh wa huwa nūr allāhi al-ladhī khuliqa minhu wa'l-kāfir nāzir bi-naḥsi-hi wa khuliqa min-hu* (all mss.) This tradition is mentioned in *Dimensions* 205 where *firāsa* is defined as the “cardiognosia” of the sufi shaykh specifically. Schimmel discusses the hadith as it is found in Rūzbihān Baqlī, *Sharḥ-i shaṭḥiyyāt*, paragraph #190, 326. Here the statement is ascribed to Muḥammad. In determining the end of the hadith as quoted by the Báb I have followed this text. If the Imam's identity is unspecified by the Báb, it usually means that the speaker is 'Alī. I 194 alone specifies this Imam as such.

75 *Baqara* 57. The entire commentary is at *Baqara* 52–57, one of the longer commentaries on an individual verse. This last sentence is doubtless a reference to the awaited return of the hidden Imam.

76 Lawson, A 'New Testament'.

77 Lawson, Mythic.

as when the Báb mentions that humanity was created according to what it was originally at that pre-creational time—*‘alā mā huwa ‘alayhi*, or some variation.

The many quotations common to Sufi literature point to both the similarity and difference between the two traditions on the problem of the knowledge of God. In classical Sufism, the role of spiritual guide is assigned to the Shaykh/Pīr/Murshid. In Shi‘ism, the guide can only be from among the Family of God. Shaykhism, however, took great pains to locate the Imam in a realm accessible through the individual soul (i.e., *‘ālam al-mithāl*), obviating the necessity for the historical presence of either Shaykh or Imam.⁷⁸ We are told by the Shaykhis that in the nature of things only a few of the Shi‘a will achieve the spiritual presence of the Imam. The Báb also holds that the Imam, as the principle of one of the four supports of religion (i.e., *walāya*), finds his proper home in the soul of the believer. However, he makes no explicit mention of the imaginal worlds of the Shaykhis. It is therefore important to examine in more detail the Báb’s notion of soul as it appears in this commentary.

Self

Thus far in this discussion of *tajallī*, we have seen that the *naḥs*, *soul/self*, is the conduit for its transmission.⁷⁹ We have also seen that the *naḥs* of the Prophet and the Imams appears to be on a different level than its counterpart in the common believer. Moreover, we have seen briefly that the perceiving, recognizing and knowing organ, as it is invoked in hadiths such as *man ‘arafa naḥsahu*, appears to have less importance as a locus of manifestation, but is still a major factor in individual spirituality.

78 It should be remembered, however, that al-Aḥsā’ī is referred to in the works of his successor, Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī as *al-Shaykh al-Akbar*, the title traditionally reserved for Ibn Arabi. There can be no question that al-Aḥsā’ī was the object of the kind of veneration which sufi shaykhs commonly commanded. Indeed, the eponym “Shaykhi” is originally a derisive term coined by critics to emphasize that the group, in venerating Aḥmad al-Aḥsā’ī to such a high degree, had somehow gone beyond the pale of 12er Shi‘ism and committed that venerable doctrinal faux pas of “exaggeration” *ghuluww*. The group itself preferred to think of themselves as the *Kashfiyya* or “Intuitionists”. See *Rafati* 48–49.

79 *N-F-S* is one of the more frequent trilateral roots in the Quran (×298). The primary reference here is the plural form in Q 41:53: *We shall show them Our signs in the horizons and in themselves (anfusiḥim)*.

Just as the *nafs* may be seen in a positive light, it is also seen in a negative one. Thus, at Q 2:14 *their satans* are glossed as *anfusi-kum*.⁸⁰ At Q 2:44 the Báb says that those who have *forgotten themselves* are those who live in the inclusive unity (*wāḥidiyya*, here a term for false *walāya*) even though God taught them that “the Truth is with ‘Alī”.⁸¹ ‘Alī is again referred to as the sign of the *nafs* of God, and even though such a sign is created (*makhlūq*), there is no distinction between it and the One who produced it (*munshi’-hā*).⁸²

At Q 2:45 the term *inniyya* is used as descriptive of that which must be completely effaced in order that the servant become a *maẓhar*—“place of manifestation”—of the inclusive unity, here apparently positive, and become *truly humble*.⁸³ The term itself requires some comment, inasmuch as the contexts in which it appears suggest that the proper term would be *anāniyya* (“ego”), read here as *aniyya*.⁸⁴ However, the Leiden manuscript, which provides vowel marks, consistently gives the word as *inniyya*. The term *aniyya*, sometimes seen as *anāniyya*, is a standard one for “ego”,⁸⁵ while *inniyya* “quod-dity” is a technical philosophical term translated by Izutsu as “is-ness”, as in the

80 *Baqara* 62. It should be added that the verse is seen as descriptive of the events surrounding the rejection of ‘Alī’s *walāya*.

81 Reference to the well-known hadith: *The truth is with ‘Alī and ‘Alī is with the Truth, it turns wherever he turns* [or vice versa]. Cited in full by the Báb, *Baqara* 16.

82 *Baqara* 172–173; C f. 64b; I 281; L 5.

83 *Baqara* 173; L 6 is clearly vowelled: *wa lā abqā li-nafsi-hi inniyyatan*; C f. 65a may be *inniyyata-hu*. Nūr ‘Alī Shah speaks in similar terms about the level of Inclusive Unity. Cf. de Miras, *La méthode* 324–325. Cf. also the verse ascribed to Ḥallāj:

baynī wa baynaka ‘anniyyun yuzāḥimunī

fa’arfa’ bi-‘anniyyika ‘anniyyi min al-bayni

Akhbār al-Hallāj 76; see here also the commentary by Ibn Taymiyya (1328) written in response to a statement made about the verse by Suhrawardi (*al-Maqtūl*), 78–80.

The verse may be translated:

Between me and Thee there is an “I am” which torments me,

O please! Take away by Your own “I am” my “I am” from between we two.

(*Akhbār al-Hallāj*, my translation of the French text, 93.)

84 See the verse from *Gulshān-i rāz* quoted in Landolt, *Deux opuscles* 211. The author points out that the term seems to have been used exclusively in a perjorative sense by ‘Abd al-Rahmān Isfārāyīnī (1317), one of the main teachers of the more famous ‘Alā al-Dawla Simnānī who may be a direct influence on the *Shaykhīyya* as mentioned above p. 48.

85 Afnan, *Philosophical* 93. About the terms *ana*, *aniyya*, *anā’iyya*, and *anāniyya*, he says:

“These are a set of mystic terms which have been often confused with philosophical terminology somewhat similar in orthography though entirely different in sense.”

For *aniyya* as a variant of *anāniyya* in a mystical context see, Isfārāyīnī, *Révélateur* 107 and note for the Persian text.

phrase: *al-ḥaqq ta'āla inniyyatun širfatun*.⁸⁶ It may be that this philosophical usage overlaps with the spiritual, existential or psychological usage intended here.⁸⁷ This could be seen as a natural result of the general effort in Shaykhism, and indeed *ḥikmat-i ilāhī* philosophy in general, to reconcile “reason and revelation.” Corbin translates it as “haecceity” (“thisness”) and adds the following note:

The Arabic term *anniyya* (*sic*) has posed more than one problem to scholars of Islamic philosophy. For example, among the understanding is this one from Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī ...: “The *anniyya* of a thing is its reality when this same thing is seen as positive and true.”⁸⁸

Furthermore, there is no agreement on the proper vowelling of this term, *anniyya* being preferred by some⁸⁹ and *inniyya* being preferred by others.⁹⁰ Regarding *anniyya*, Goichon confidently states: “Do not confuse it with *'inniyya*, the abstract derived from the conjunction “if” which indicates the conditionality of a judgement.”⁹¹ In the Báb's tafsir the word certainly indicates conditionality, but it is an ontological conditionality, rather than the grammatical one asserted by Goichon. And however much grammar and Being might be otherwise interrelated, it seems clear that for our purposes Goichon is wrong.

If the scribe of the Leiden manuscript writes *inniyya*, it is possibly due to his own philosophical preoccupations. The lack of vowel marks in the other manuscripts do not allow this to be stated categorically, but a comparison of the relevant passages indicates that one is left with the choice of reading *aniyya*, *anniyya*, or *inniyya*. None of the manuscripts use the quite unambiguous term *anāniyya*.

Even with all of these distinctions and disagreements, it may be possible to read *aniyya* and *inniyya* as being in some way synonymous. If the latter stands for quoddity, or thatness, it may be thought to refer to the individual identity insofar as it is at some distance from God. *Inniyya/anniyya* has also been

86 *Sharḥ-i manẓūma* 598. On *inniyya* and references to other discussions of the word, see Ivry, *al-Kindī* 131–133.

87 Afnan, *Philosophical* 93. A similar conflation seems to occur in al-Jīlī (d. between 1408 and 1417). See Nicholson, *Studies* 83–84.

88 Corbin, *Mashā'ir* 102.

89 Afnan, *Philosophical* 94; Ivry, *al-Kindī* 132; Goichon, *Lexique* 9–12.

90 E.g. M. Abū Rīḍa (ed.) *Rasā'il al-Kindī al-falsafīyya*, v. 1, Cairo: 1953, 97 (cited by Ivry, *loc. cit.*); Izutsu (cited above).

91 Goichon, *Lexique* 12.

termed the opposite of *huwīyya*,⁹² translated as “essence and individuality”.⁹³ Therefore, it might be thought to refer to that quoddity which is eventually annihilated (i.e., the ego), as the Báb has indicated with the word “effacement” (*maḥw*, see above p. 90). Even if the term is taken in its broad, abstract meaning as Izutsu’s “is-ness”, if applied to anyone other than God, it would be contingent (*imkānī*) “is-ness” that would be intended by the Báb. In the cause of consistency, however much the choice may ultimately have been a mistake, the term *innīyya* in the following discussion will be translated as “ego” (cf. *nafs*), the traditional Sufi meaning.

The term occurs again at Q 2:34, in the course of a very long commentary⁹⁴ on the important account of Iblīs and his refusal to bow before Adam. The Báb makes the following comments.

God has placed the manifestations (*maẓāhir*) of His ownership (*mulk*) in all things. To manifest knowledge (*‘ilm*) he has appointed Adam as the agency of active lordship (*al-rubūbiyyat al-maqbūlīyyat*), and Iblīs (*sic: al-Iblīs*) has been appointed as the agency of polytheistic ego (*al-innīyyat al-mushrika*) throughout all the worlds ... And the believers are the victorious angels, in them is the aspect of lordship while the aspect of *al-innīyya* is absent from them.

The Messenger of God said: Each soul has a satan. It was said [to him], Even you, O Messenger of God? He said: Yes, but it has submitted to me (*bi-yadī*).⁹⁵

Following this hadith there is a long lyrical disquisition on the praiseworthy qualities of the *believer*.⁹⁶ At Q 2:35, in which Adam and his wife are forbidden to approach the *tree*, the following comment is made:

That is the Muḥammadan Tree in which the sign of the exclusive unity appears. And it is the highest aspect of the divine will. Adam *al-ūlā* and her mate⁹⁷ approached it through knowledge (*‘ilman*), not deed (*lā ‘amalan*), and thus became wrongdoers.

92 Goichon, *Lexique* 9.

93 Afnan, *Philosophical* 97.

94 *Baqara* 131–150, or approximately 1/15 of the entire commentary.

95 *Baqara* 135. This is a famous tradition, *Dimensions* 113 & 196.

96 *Baqara* 135–137.

97 This is a reflex of those verses in the Quran that speak of God’s having created mankind from a single soul (*nafs wāḥida*) and from it its mate (*wa khalaqa minhā zawjahā*) [Q 4:1 & Q 7:179; cf. Q 39:6]. By this allusion, the Báb seeks to identify the single soul as Adam. As

And the meaning (*murād*) of their **drawing nigh**, is the property of contingency that is the property of ego that was in them.⁹⁸ Thus their **drawing nigh** was [the act of] considering the contingent world (*bi'l-khuṭūr al-imkānī*)⁹⁹ after God had taught them that the Tree of Ego which grows out of the earth **has no stability** (*qarār*, cf. Q 14:26) [and to] not draw nigh unto it with even a single glance/thought (*bi-naẓar al-istiqlāl*: poss. “independently” of Muḥammad) toward it. Because the signs of *tawḥīd* are the signs of Muḥammad which God manifested to him by means of him (*la-hu bi-hi*).

Then they drew nigh this tree by a false oath of the ego (*bi-qasam kadhb al-innīyya*), knowing that it was possible [to draw near within the limits of] contingency.

So they became wrongdoers. This **wrong** is that which God ascribed to them and is by relationship to their **drawing nigh** to the Originator of Origination (*mubdi' al-ibdā'*, viz, Muḥammad, as in the “Muḥammadan Tree”). In all other cases this **wrong** refers to the impious approach to the depth of the exclusive unity. Had the first two not made bold to **draw nigh** the *mubdi'* then others would not have committed this **evil** (*ẓulm > min al-ẓālimūn*) either.¹⁰⁰

for Adam *al-ūlā* (*sic* all mss.), it may be seen as deriving from comments such as those *ad* Q 2:34 (*Baqara* 131, cited above) which speaks of the *mashhad al-ūlā* or the “place of witnessing”, which pertains to the primordial *yawm al-mithāq*, and where Adam is identified as ‘Alī. We have also seen in the discussion of hierarchies, the reference to the eighth or highest heaven as *al-jannat al-ūlā*. The frequency of the adjective in such unlikely places is probably a function of its status as a technical term in Shaykh Aḥmad’s lexicon; cf. *Ziyāra*, i:156, where the three words in one of the verses of the visitation prayer (*al-dunyā, al-ākhirā, al-ūlā*) are given specific meanings. This commentary is discussed below, in chapter 5, “Qā’im”.

98 *Baqara* 151–152: *ay al-ṣulūḥ al-imkānī al-ladhī kānat (sic) fī-himā min jihati 'l-innīyya; all other mss.: al-lati kānat fī-himā.*

99 *Baqara* 152 & *L* 1; *C* f. 57a: ? *ḥuzūr*; *I* 265: *ḥuḍūr*. *Khuṭūr*, (usually *khawāṭir*) is of course another classical term of Sufi psychology. According to the influential Iranian mystic, Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā (1220), they are the ideas which occur spontaneously to the soul, particularly in a state of retreat, and may be either divine or satanic in inspiration. This is mentioned in *Dimensions* 256; Frank, *Created* 71, translates its use in a theological context as “unreflected impulse to action”.

100 *Baqara* 152. The last sentence is not a translation but an attempt to give the sense of the Arabic: *wa illā hādihā 'l-ẓulm 'inda mā siwā'humā lujjat al-aḥādīyya lā yaṣīlu ilayhā aḥadun min al-ashyā'*. This appears to be, among other things, an echo of the famous *ḥadīth*: **The good deeds of the pious ones are the sins of the near ones.**

Towards the end of the commentary on this verse, the Báb makes the following interesting statement by way of offering another level of meaning:

So, when Adam **drew nigh** the **tree** of reality [which was] the manifestation of Fāṭima in the precincts of Being, he disobeyed his Lord because God had commanded him not to **draw nigh** unto her (*lā taqrab-hā*) except through an ecstatic experience (*illā bi'l-wijdān*), because at the time of such ecstasy the one who **draws nigh** is [in fact] the **tree** and nothing else.¹⁰¹

And when Moses said to his people, ‘my people, you have done wrong against yourselves by your taking the calf; now turn to your Creator and slay one another. That will be better in your Creator’s sight, and He will turn to you; truly he turns, and is all-compassionate.’ [Q 2:54]

[This verse refers to] When ‘Alī said to those who abandoned the depth of his *walāya* (*li'l-khārijīn ‘an lujjat walāya*) **you have done wrong against yourselves** by your lingering (*wuqūf*) in the sea of the veils of glory (*baḥr al-subuḥāt*) and [mere] allusions. Turn away from **the calf** by taking that which will direct you to the *tawḥīd* of your Lord and return to the divine *walāya* (*al-walāya al-ilāhiyya*) by turning away from the love of anything but it (*walāya*).

And **slay** your worldly egos (*inniyātakum al-imkāniyya*) that have veiled you from attaining to your Creator. Because my *walāya* is the *lujja* of the exclusive unity. And that will be better for you in your **Creator’s sight**.¹⁰²

101 *Baqara* 155. The passage begins: *fa-lammā qaruba Adam bi'l-shajarat al-ḥaqīqa al-mutajjal-līyya min Fāṭima ‘alayhā al-salam bi-qurb al-wujūd*. As a matter of fact, the figure of Fāṭima plays a very important role in this tafsir. See, e.g., *Baqara* 11, 23, 45, 87, 112, 131, 154, 159–160, 179, 192, 198–200, 211, 213, 273. This is explored further in Lawson, *Feminine*. On the subject of “ecstasy/instasy” (*al-wijdān*) see below pp. 149–150.

102 *Baqara* 185; *C* f. 69b; *I*, 290; *L* 8. The terminology in this section shows some distinct parallels with *Ṣāfi*, although none of the hadith in the corresponding passage of that work have been quoted. It is possible that the Báb composed this part of the tafsir while reading *Ṣāfi*, note the similar language at 1:132–133 e.g.: thirty days of fasting; “forty nights” = twenty nights and twenty days; “**they wronged themselves** concerning the *walāya* of Muḥammad and ‘Alī, and their people the pure, even so, God pardoned them”; God tells Moses about the excellence of Muḥammad and his brother and Trustee ‘Alī, and the Shi’a; God caused those who worshipped the calf to hesitate (*waqafa allāh*). See also *Burhān*, 1:96–98 #1 & 98 #2; *Nur*, 1: 68, #197 for a variant of this last.

The subject of *innīyya* or negative self, recurs in the comparatively short commentaries on a series of verses, which continue the ordeal of Moses in the wilderness with the Children of Israel.¹⁰³ The point here is that refusal by the followers of false *walāya* to accept the *walāya* of ‘Alī, as announced as binding by the Prophet at Ghadīr Khumm, is a direct result of this ego, specifically “their uprooted, lifeless egos” (*innīyātahum al-mujattatha*) and “other selfish interests” (*shu’ūnāt al-nafsānīyāt*). The first designation takes the modifier from Q 14:26:

And the likeness of a corrupt word (*wa mathalu kalimatin khabīthat*) is as a corrupt tree uprooted from the earth (*ka-shajaratīn khabīthat ijtuththat min fawq al-arḍ*) having no stability (*mā la-hā min qarār*).

This section is also a good example of the way in which the spiritual world is seen as being connected to the events of the historical world. The Quran is read as speaking about the fracturing of the Muslim community at the death of Muḥammad. The “metahistorical” *sabab* (translated as “*moyen*” rather than “cause”) for Q 2:67 is thus the famous speech at Ghadīr Khumm and is read as referring to the historical Moses in only a secondary sense. This reflects the spirit of Akhbari commentary, which reads the verse as referring to the “excellence of Muḥammad and his family”;¹⁰⁴ but the Báb’s language is much more explicit than these sources.¹⁰⁵ The true test of the *naḥs* then, is how it responds to this challenge to the unity of the community, the *umma*.

The *naḥs* as an organ of perception and as a spiritual or psychological principle is related to others such as the *fu’ād*, *qalb*, *rūḥ*, and *‘aql*, of which it may be thought to be the lowest.¹⁰⁶ It is important therefore to notice briefly the way in which these subjects are treated by the Báb. The earliest mention of *qalb* is in the following verse:

¹⁰³ Q 2:67–73 (*Baqara* 201–205).

¹⁰⁴ *Burhān*, i:108–112.

¹⁰⁵ *Baqara* 200–201.

¹⁰⁶ This is in line with classical Sufi scales derived from the Quran’s depiction of the *soul*, esp. at Q 12:53, Q 75:2 and Q 89:27. In another work, the Báb seems to use *naḥs* for the totality of spiritual or human faculties. See *Sulūk* 73, where the four principles of the soul are *qalb*, *fu’ād*, *rūḥ*, and *jism*. In this context, these four correspond respectively with the four supports of religion: *tawḥīd*, *nubuwwa*, *walāya*, and *shī’a* which may be thought in turn to correspond to *ḥubb*, *ḥabīb*, *muḥibb*, and *maḥbūb*, the four signs from the manifestation of the Family of God which are “in you and are you”.

In their hearts is a sickness, and there awaits them a painful chastisement for they have cried lies. [Q 2:10]

The heart (*qalb*) is the foremost manifestation (*maẓhar*) of the mindful heart (*fu'ād*, cf. Q 53:11) and is in reality two hearts. One is the location (*maḥall*) of the First Intellect, which is the heart of Muḥammad, and the other is the inverted heart (*qalb ma'kūs*), which is the place of Universal Ignorance.¹⁰⁷ This one is the heart of Abū Bakr. They are two mines (*ma'dinān*). The first is the source of all good (*aṣlu kulli khayrin*), and one of its results (*furū'*) is *tawḥīd* and all righteousness (*birr*). The second is the source of all evil (*kulli sharrin*), and one of its results is the rejection of God (*i'rāḍ 'an allāh*) and all evil (*kullu sharrin*). It represents the totality of all the hearts of all disbelievers (*tamām qulūb al-kāfirīn*) ... The way to [the first] is blocked (*mardūd*); but a First Intellect which tells the story in the contingent world about what is in the heart of Muḥammad is the soul of 'Alī.

'Alī said about this primal universal divine soul (*al-nafs al-ulūhiyya al-kullīyya al-awwaliyya*): "It is a divine power (*quwwatun lāhūtiyyatun*) and a simple essence (*jawharun basīṭun*) which lives with the Essence. Its source is the Intellect (*'aql*). It begins from it and summons on its behalf (*da'at 'an-hu*) and indicates and alludes to it. Its return is to it whenever it is perfected and becomes like it. From it begin all existing things (*mawjūdāt*), and to it they ultimately return." Thus it (the soul = this particular soul, i.e. Muḥammad) is the exalted essence of God (*fa-hiya dhāt allāh al-'aliyyan sic*) and the tree of blessedness (*shajara ṭubā*, cf. Q 13:29) and the Lote-tree beyond which there is no passing, and the garden of repose (*mawā'*). He who recognizes it (the soul) will never err and he who is ignorant of it errs and trespasses.¹⁰⁸

This excerpt introduces several important features of the Báb's theology as its expression had developed by this time. These ideas are found quite early in Shi'ism, both "12er" and Isma'ili.¹⁰⁹ The First Intellect is here identified with Muḥammad. As for intellect (*'aql*), the Báb quotes several popular traditions

107 The opposition of *'aql* and *jahl* has occupied the minds of Shi'i authors from earliest times. See, e.g., *Kāfi*, v. 1, 10–29; *Kitāb al-'aql wa'l-jahl*. A most useful study of some of this early literature is Crow, "The Teaching".

108 *Baqara* 58–60. It is of some interest that we find in this commentary no detailed hierarchy of the human interior like those taught by earlier Iranian mystics such as Isfarāyīnī, *Révélateur*, e.g., 139, or Simnānī, his student (see Corbin, *Man of Light*, 121–131).

109 Cf. Corbin, i:251.

on the subject after citing a hadith from ‘Alī, in which true philosophy is that which is conducive to good morals (*al-akhlāq al-nafsāniyya*).¹¹⁰

For those who think (*al-‘uqalā’*), all of the above is perceived in the verse: *Thee only we serve and to thee alone we pray for succour*. [Q 1:5]. Therefore, let the pen flow in the mention of the Intellect (*al-‘aql*), and I myself will recount its virtue in order that its people might know its value (*qadrahu*).

The Messenger of God said: *God has apportioned nothing more excellent for His servants than the intellect. The sleep of the wielder of intellect is more excellent than the wakefulness of the wielder of ignorance. The halting of the wielder of intellect is more excellent than the traveling from place to place (shukhūṣ) of the wielder of ignorance. And God never raised up any prophet or messenger until He had perfected the intellect in him. And his intellect is more excellent than the whole community (umma)*. This means: That which the Prophet keeps in his heart (*mā yuḍmiru*) is more excellent than the independent reasoning of all the religious scholars (*ijtihād al-mujtahidīn*). And the servant does not really attain to the proper execution of the religious obligations until he understands it [with his intellect]. That which comes (*balagha*) to the wielder of intellect and the wielders of intellect will not come to all the servants no matter how excellent their servitude (*‘ibāda* = religious discipline). These [former] are *men possessed of minds* [*ulū al-albāb*. Q. *passim*.] those about whom God has said: *only men possessed of minds remember* [Q. 13:19 & 39:9].¹¹¹

And ‘Alī said: *I opine that the intellect is two intellects: a priori (maṭbū‘) and acquired (masmū‘)*. The acquired is no use if there be no a priori, just as the light of the sun which is blocked (*mamnū‘*) is no use to the eye.¹¹²

And he said: *The loss (faqd) of the intellect is the loss of life. And it can be compared with nothing except death*.¹¹³

Ṣādiq said: *Verily the reward (al-thawāb) is in proportion to the intellect. It is the best loved of all things to God*.

110 *Baqara* 78. A printed variant of this hadith is in Muḥsin Fayḍ, *Kalimāt* 78.

111 The same hadith appears in *Kāfī*, i:13 #11. N.b. the implied indictment of *ijtihād*, further evidence of the very early roots of the *akhbārī/ūṣūlī* controversy. On this, see Gleave, *Scripturalist*.

112 *Baqara* 79.

113 This is part of a longer hadith preserved in *Kāfī* 1:12 #8.

Riḍā said: The intellect is a [source of] shame from God. But good behavior is a duty. He who feigns good behavior will eventually benefit. But he who feigns intellect will increase only in ignorance ... the hadith.¹¹⁴

In a very long hadith, which preserves a conversation between the sixth Imam, Ṣādiq, and his disciple Mufaḍḍal b. Juʿfī, which the Bāb quotes *in extenso*¹¹⁵ during the course of his commentary on Q 2:27, a number of features of the intellect are further identified:

How is it that meaning abstracted from any form can occur in my mind? And can the Essence be imagined, or divided, or partitioned or changed from its *kiyān*, or fancied in the intellects as moving or at rest? And how can the Unseen appear “mixing” with weak creation? And how is the created thing able to regard the Creator, considering the weakness of created things?

Ṣādiq said: O Mufaḍḍal! In the creation of the Heavens and the earth and the separation of night and day are signs for those possessed of minds. [Q 2:164] O Mufaḍḍal! Our knowledge is terribly abstruse (*ṣaʿb mustaṣʿab*) and our secret much too difficult for the tongue to speak of in any but the most allusive language. Whatever our Shiʿa knows, the same is according to their cognizance of us and their knowledge of us. Away with him who transmits what he does not understand and believes that which does not agree with reason or with what has matured in the mind.¹¹⁶

Here we see a kind of syzygy of reason and revelation in which the *ʿaql* is indispensable for right religion, although it appears that on its own it is unable to properly register the Unseen. As is the case with other faculties, or principles, the intellect is two-edged. Not only is it quite clear that the *ʿaql* is only profitable insofar as it is used to contemplate the Imams, but that it is also capable of lead-

114 Baqara 80: *al-ʿaqlu ḥayāʾ min allāh wa ʿl-adāb kulfatun man takallafa ʿl-adāba qadara ʿalay-hi wa man takallafa ʿl-ʿaqla lam yazdād bi-dhālika illā jahlan al-ḥadīth*. See Kāfī, i:23–24 #18; n.b. the typographical error, 24: *hibāʾ* for *ḥayāʾ*.

115 Baqara 96–104; C f. 36a–40a. The *isnād*, one of two given in the entire commentary, is: al-Shaykh al-Thiqā Abī al-Ḥusayn Muḥammad bin ʿAlī al-Ḥalabī ʿan Shaykhi-hi al-Sayyid Abī ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥusayn ibn Aḥmadān al-Khuṣaybī, qāla, ḥaddathnī Jaʿfar ibn al-Mālik al-Farārī al-Kūfī ʿan ʿAbd Allāh ʿan ʿAbd Allāh bin Yūnis al-Mawṣulī ʿan Muḥammad bin Sadaqatī ʿl-ʿAbdī ʿan Muḥammad bin Sanān al-Zāhirī ʿan Ṣafwān bin Yaḥya al-Kūfī ʿan al-Mufaḍḍal bin ʿUmar al-Juʿfī qāla *qultu li-mawlānā al-Ṣādiq al-waʿd min-hu al-raḥmatu wa qad khabwatu bi-hi* ...

116 Baqara 97.

ing to error. It would appear that the *naḥs*, *fu'ād*, *qalb*, *lubb*, and *'aql* are equally incapable on their own and must be assisted through the Imam in some way to receive a divine manifestation of glory, *tajallī*.

In this passage we encounter again the all-important “hadith of difficulty”. The expression *ṣa'b mustaṣ'ab* is a clear allusion to the hadith discussed and fully translated above (p. 42) where it is used by Shaykh Aḥmad to explain the three kinds of proofs mentioned in Q 16:25 (*wisdom, fair admonition, disputation*) which, together with Q 41:53, the verse of *signs*, has been quoted to explain aspects of Q 2:3, specifically how the believer should *expend* the faith and knowledge received from the Imams to others. Shaykh Aḥmad says that *wisdom* is the method to be used by the true believer because the heart of the true believer is the only place it exists as a result of the process mentioned in the “hadith of difficulty”. The long hadith quoted here by the Báb, for which the brief allusion to the *ṣa'b mustaṣ'ab* tradition is something of an introduction, is not mentioned at *Kāfī* 1:401–402 where the tradition and several variants are listed. Traditions transmitted through Mufaḍḍal are sometimes thought to be tainted because of his supposed *Khaffābiyya* allegiances.¹¹⁷ It is noteworthy that in the earlier allusion above, the topic also turns to the “perspicacious heart”—*fu'ād* which is also there contrasted with the blindness (*inkār*) of an *uncouth rabble*.

Fu'ād

It was the *fu'ād* which was earlier described as the “highest perceptive organ of humans (*wa huwa a'lā mashā'ir al-insān*)”. At Q 2:8, the Báb says that the “name of the hidden one (*ism al-maknūn*) is the place where the Shi'a testify to the covenant of love [for the Imams which is binding upon them] (*mashhad 'ahd al-maḥabba li'l-shi'a*). Its station is the *fu'ād* where the Ḥujja (the hidden Imam) appears (*wa maqāmuhā al-fu'ād aẓharahā al-Ḥujja, 'alayhi al-salām*).”¹¹⁸ Later, at verse Q 2:97, the Báb says that the *heart* (*qalb*) is the first thing which was produced by Origination (*ibdā'*), and *Gabriel* was appointed by God to carry to the

117 See the references in Kohlberg, *An unusual* 147. The material preserved in *Kāfī* is found elsewhere, e.g. *Mashāriq* 16; Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitāb-i iqān* 64/99 (Pers/Eng.).

118 *Baqara* 51. *Aẓharahā* may refer to *maḥabba* or *shī'a*. The idea is that it is only the *fu'ād* that has been touched somehow by the Imam, which is important. Another reading might suggest that it is love for the Shi'a itself, presumably incumbent upon believers, which enables the *heart* to recognize the Imam.

heart that which is sent down from the mindful heart (*fu'ād*).¹¹⁹ Here the *fu'ād* appears to be beyond the contingent world, which poses the problem of how it can function as a *mashhad* for the Shi'a. But it should be remembered that the heart here is Muḥammad's (*qalbika*) and therefore, presumably qualitatively different from others. This verse is part of a series, which bears on the subject of the *qā'im* and will be treated at greater length below. Unfortunately, none of the 16 separate Quranic instances, either in singular or plural, of the word *fu'ād* are in the sura of Baqara. It is possible that the Báb would have described its several hierarchical levels, had the occasion arisen, in which further details of its function would have become clear.¹²⁰

Ecstasy as Noetic

Before leaving this chapter on the way in which the divine appears or occurs to creation, it will be important to notice the treatment by the Báb of a subject introduced earlier, namely *wijdān*—intensified being, conscience, ecstasy or perhaps even instasy, which appears in two other passages of the tafsir. At verse Q 2:29 the Báb says the following:

As for the sign of the exclusive unity—it is in all things. And even if there is composition (*tarkīb ≠ basīṭ* “simple”) in their knowledge, God will remove (*rafā'a*) at the time of ecstasy (*'inda wijdān*), whatever (*li-mā hiya fī-hā*) was causing spiritual deficiency.¹²¹ Nor [at this time] will there be in them any trace of mixture or plurality, because they [at such time] are a proof (*dalīl*) of the Living, the Self-subsisting. And God did not make multiplicity a proof of His exclusive unity.

... No one knows Him, and none understands His mode except Him. Nevertheless, the known (*ma'rūf*) is His Will [i.e., Muḥammad or the Imams] which is the intended ultimate goal of contingency (*ghāyat al-imkān*) as a result His bounty (*fayḍ*) in all regions (*aṣqā'*) is according to what they are (*bi-mā hiya*) and have (*li-mā hiya*) of the glorious manifestations (*tajalliyyāt*) of His will according to what they are (*'alā mā hiya*).

119 Baqara 239.

120 On the heart, especially *fu'ād*, in the Báb's later writings, see now Saeidi, *Gate* esp., 50–51 and *passim*.

121 Baqara 115; *iftiqār*. Izutsu translates the word in Ibn Arabi's writings as “ontological need”. (Izutsu, *Sufism* 168.)

Commenting on the Quranic *whoso follows My guidance* (*man tabīʿa hudāʾī*) at verse Q 2:38, the Báb says:

Following (*al-tabīʿiyya*) has several degrees. The paths to it (*ilayhā*) are as numerous as the souls of the creatures.¹²² ... I testify that the thing followed is his [ʿAlī's] *walāya*, inasmuch as none can follow the guidance of God like him, because God's glory appeared (*tajallā*) in him by means of him, and verily He is the truth [Q 41:53], Like Him there is naught [Q 43:11], He is the Exalted (ʿAlī) the Great (*kabīr*). [Q 22:62; Q 31:30; Q 34:23; Q 40:12].¹²³ And he (ʿAlī) is the Followed One in reality and therefore the most great example (*al-mathal al-kubrā*, cf. greatest sign Q 20:23; Q 53:18; Q 79:20), and whatever is other than him if purified from accident, and caused to abandon the lifeless forms (*ashbāḥ*), and mere similarities, and caused to enter the House of Glory, manifesting the beauty of ecstasy (*muṭliʿan ilā jamāl al-wjūd*)¹²⁴ oblivious of the clouds of the contingent world (*ghāfilan ʿan saḥāʾibi ʿl-imkān*), then he has succeeded in following¹²⁵ the guidance of God by means of accidental form-ness (*biʿl-ʿarḍiyyat al-shabahīyya*), so that no fear shall be on them, neither shall they sorrow [Q 2:38].¹²⁶

Ecstasy is a translation of *wjūd* (or *wajdān*, the vowelling is not specified in *L*), a word derived from the root *WJD* from which is derived *wajada* "he found". *Wujūd*, of course, means existence, or "the state of being found". The intensive noun forms can also mean "finding" but it is generally reckoned that its use by Muslim mystics refers to a special state in which a person finds himself and which at the same time is perhaps unheralded or unanticipated. This is in line with that element of the verb "to find" which connotes "coming upon something unawares". As an intensive form of *WJD* one might also translate the term as "superexistence".¹²⁷ Whatever the intent of *wjūd* in classical Sufism might

122 This is a variation on the famous hadith quoted by the Báb also in *Sulūk* 73: *al-ṭuruq ilā allāh* ... The purpose of the substitution is clear in what follows.

123 That is, all of these Quranic verses are read as referring to ʿAlī. See Bursī, *Al-Durr Al-Thamīn* for a study of the 500 Quranic passages that mention, according to the author, ʿAlī by name.

124 *Baqara* 165–166, C f. 62a, *L* 4 (clearly vowelled: *muṭliʿan ilā*), possibly for *muṭalliʿan ilā jamāl al-wjūd*; *I*, 175: *muṭlaqan*. But all of the preceding verbs are in the feminine passive perfect tense.

125 *Ittabaʿa* (as opposed to the Quranic *tabīʿa*) connotes also "investigate," "examine," "study".

126 *Baqara* 165–166.

127 Cf. Corbin's translation of *baqāʾ* as *surexistence*, *Corbin*, i:224. On ecstasy in general see now Lewisohn in Lewisohn (ed.), *Ecstasy*, especially 38–52.

be,¹²⁸ it is clear that the Báb associates it here not with the unreachable divine Essence, but with 'Alī, who could presumably be substituted for by any other member of the *ahl al-bayt*.

In the passage quoted earlier, it was also clear that the *wijdān* experience caused a total absorption of the subject into the object, a thickening or intensification of being, as it were. This is of course in line with the Sufi usage, but also reminiscent of the specifically Iranian *ḥikmat-i ilāhī* as it developed from Suhrawardi to Mulla Sadra and beyond to the Shaykhiyya. The idea of "knowledge by presence" (*'ilm-i ḥuḍūrī*) is much akin to the idea expressed by the Báb, but with the characteristic difference, at least with respect to Mulla Sadra, that the highest "object" with which the soul can attempt union is the Will, as hypostasized by Muḥammad and the Imams. In this respect, the Báb is faithful to the teachings of Shaykh Aḥmad.¹²⁹ It may be speculated that the Báb's reference to *wijdān* stems from his own experience. Recall that according to his statement in the earlier *Risālat al-sulūk*, the meeting with the Imams occurs within the seeker: "They are in your soul and they are your soul." Thus it emerges that instasy may in fact be the best understanding of this experience. It is not a "standing beside" the self but rather an entering into the self that produces the experience of oneness with the object of love, a oneness which paradoxically effaces the self in which the object of love already resides. Intimacy here gives rise to an ecstasy which is, in fact a true knowledge and love of the self and therefore instasy: standing within the self.¹³⁰ The Báb's mysticism finally is not directed towards God as such but towards the Imams. Whereas in classical Sufism the seeker spoke of ecstasies and intimacies with the godhead, for the Báb and his fellow Shi'is, this would be sacreligious. Nonetheless, the "morphology and syntax" of classical Sufism remains very much unchanged once we adjust for what in the final analysis may amount to a quibble over semantics. *Wijdān* as ecstasy or instasy may be of a special kind. Taking here a cue from Persian usage in which the word means "consciousness", it would seem to suggest a revelatory ecstasy or instasy of knowing. We close this chapter with the following comments of Annemarie Schimmel from her magisterial study of classical Islamic mysticism. Here she is describing the quest of the believer

128 Cf. e.g., al-Kubrā, where *wijdān* is the fifth level of a hierarchy of eight spiritual conditions ranging from the lowest, *manām*, to the highest, *takwīn*. In this scale, *wajd* is fourth. See Meier, *Die Fawā'id*, Arabic text, *faṣl* 41 & 95. Meier translates *wijdān* as "being touched inside" (101 German text).

129 Cf. *Mashā'ir* 224 (French text).

130 On instasy, see Nwyia, *Exégèse* 254, discussing the teaching of Kharrāz (899 or 890).

for God which culminates in finding, *wajd*. Once the word “God” is substituted with the word “Imams” in her comments, we see how well they apply in the present instance:

In the overwhelming happiness of having found Him, man may be enraptured in ecstatic bliss. Nwyia has proposed ... calling this state “instasy” instead of “ecstasy” since the mystic is not carried out of himself but rather into the depths of himself into “the ocean of the soul” as the poets might say.¹³¹

131 *Dimensions* 178. See also Ernst, *Stages*.

Qā'im

Divine Glory Embodied

Introduction

One of the more controversial topics in the study of Shaykhism is the problem of the Qā'im. The argument revolves around whether the Qā'im is to be understood as a personal spiritual principle, the appearance of which would be restricted to a *ẓuhūr* in the soul of the believer, or whether the Qā'im is to appear on the plane of history, as a specific and unique individual: the heretofore hidden Imam, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī. The question is therefore important for the study of the development of the Babi religion. Depending upon the way it is answered, the Báb will be seen either as a "dissident" Shaykhi, or his eventual claim will be seen as the fulfillment (and therefore the continuation) of Shaykhi teachings.

In the second half of the twentieth century, Henry Corbin was the first of a small number of scholars to publish on Shaykhi thought in any detail. His analysis of the intricacies of Shaykhism, while undoubtedly colored by personal biases,¹ has shed much light on this obscure movement,² which in its early stages had an impact on the formation of the Báb's religious ideas.³ His study of the subject led him to the conclusion that the function of the Qā'im in Shaykhi thought was restricted to the interior spiritual life of the individual, and that there could be no question of an actual parousia of an historical personage to be recognized in the social and/or political realm as the Qā'im. Corbin speaks therefore, of the "tragedy" of Bābism and Bahā'ism, precisely because they have recognised just such a historical advent.

1 See Adams, *The Hermeneutic*, and Algar, *The Study* for a rather harsh appreciations of his work.

2 There are other opinions. Denis MacEoin, in his recent substantial publication on the career of the Báb and related issues, repeats what strikes one now as the rather sophomoric assessment of Corbin that appeared in his thesis for Cambridge University in 1976: "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." MacEoin, *Messiah* xiv.

3 Since Corbin's pioneering investigation, a few scholars have taken up the topic from one perspective or another: Mangol Bayat, Juan Cole, Denis MacEoin, Stephen Lambden, Moojan Momen, Muhammad-Ali Amir-Moezzi, Idris Samawi Hamid, Vahid Behmardi, Armin Eschraghi, and the present writer. See bibliography.

In his commentary on Q 2:8, the Báb makes some important statements pertinent to the whole discussion.

And some men there are who say, “We believe in God and the Last Day”, but they are not believers.

But another *mashhad* remains, and it is the *dharr* of the Fourth Support, the establishment of the Qā'im,⁴ may God hasten his glad advent, in beginning his appearance (*ẓuhūr*), which is the *dharr* of taking the covenant by confessing that their [the Imams'] Shi'a are the word of divine magnification (*kalimat al-takbīr*, technically *allāhu akbar*) in the joyous midst of the holiness of praise (*fī buḥbūḥa quds al-tasbīḥ*).

Therefore, when the Imam arises⁵ to reveal this great covenant and noble allegiance to their Shi'a, the manifestations of their ancient selves, then the 313 companions⁶ will flee from that covenant and allegiance. Then, they will return and believe in the Ḥujja by means of this allegiance and that *mashhad*. Even if it involves three *mashāhid* completely and potentially, its being and detailing is most certainly about the establishment of the Ḥujja.

And of mankind are those who believe in God and His messenger and his trustees, but they are not believers because they do not believe in their Shi'a. And he who does not believe in them enters under the implications of this verse. While the believer is he who believes with his soul because of the secret of the hadith: *tajallā la-hā bi-hā*.⁷

Ṣādiq alluded to this subject (*al-maqām*) in his statement, when he said: “God created a name with letters without sound and with a term that has no articulation (*bi'l-lafẓ ghayr manṭiq*) and with a body which is not corporeal (*bi'l-shakhs ghayr mujassad*), and with a similarity that is not describable, and with a color that has no tint, banished from all lands, it is far removed from all limitations, and perception of all imagination is veiled from it—concealed without being hidden.

So God made it (i.e., this “name”) a perfect word in four parts, while no single part has precedence over the other.⁸ And because of the needs

4 *Baqara* 50 & *I* 188: *dharr al-rukn al-rābi' iqāmat al-Qā'im*; *C* f. 18b: *dharr rukn rābi' aqāmahu al-ḥujja* ...

5 *Baqara* 50 & *I* 188: *li-dhā lammā aqāma al-imām* ...; *C* f. 18b: *wa li-dhā qāma al-imām* ...

6 Traditional number of the army of the Qā'im. See Sachedina, *Messianism* 162. Cf., also the idea in early Sufism of the emanation of humanity from the pre-existent light of God in Böwering, *Mystical* 153–157.

7 See above pp. 119–120 for the full hadith.

8 See the passage from The Báb's earlier short work, *Sulūk*, above, p. 130.

of creation for them, three names appeared from it, while one remained veiled. And that is the Hidden Treasured Name (*al-ism al-maknūn al-makhzūn*) ... ”.

The Hidden Name is the *mashhad* of the covenant of the love of the Shi'a, and its station is the heart (*fu'ād*), which the Ḥujja makes appear.⁹ As for the three visible names:

- [1] The first is God and it is the *dharrat al-ūlā*,¹⁰ i.e., the affirmation of the *tawhīd* of God.
- [2] And the second is His name and it is the *dharrā* of the praise of God, and it is the affirmation of Muḥammad and his *nubuwwa*.¹¹
- [3] And the third is His name and it is the *dharr* of *lā ilāh illā allāh* on the day of *al-ghadīr*. And it is the affirmation of the Trusteeship of 'Alī and eleven of his descendants and Fāṭima.¹²

God caused these three to appear according to the need of creation for them. And He concealed one due to the incapacity of people (viz, to recognize it: *wa ḥajaba wāḥid al-'adam iḥtimāl al-khalq*); but it is hidden within the souls of the Shi'a. Verily the one with keen insight (*al-mutafarris*) recognizes it/him by means of the light of reality (*bi-nūr al-ḥaqīqa*).¹³

In the passage on the Greatest Name, quoted above in chapter 2, we read that the Shi'a—collectively—are considered to be its fourth letter, or fourth support (*rukn*). Here, it would seem that the Shi'a itself is/are the repository of this Greatest Name as Qā'im. The Qā'im, as such, would then be a personal spiritual principle, the appearance or realization of which is dependent upon the spiritual development of the individual member of the Shi'a. An understanding of the relation between the Greatest Name and the Qā'im is therefore of the first importance.

9 *huwa mashhad 'ahd al-maḥabba li'l-shī'a wa maqāmu-hā al-fu'ād aẓhara-hā al-ḥujja 'alayhi al-salām.*

10 *Sic, C f. 19a: dharr al-awwal.*


11 *Sic, C f. 19a: wa'l-thānī ismuḥu tabāraka wa ta'āla wa huwa al-ḥamdu li'llāh wa huwa al-iqrār bi-Muḥammad bi'l-nubuwwa.*

12 See Kazemi, *Mysteries of Alast*, for a thorough and penetrating exploration of this theme in Babi/Bahai literature. Cf. also the three *dharr* in Tustarī: Muḥammad, Adam, and the offspring of Adam discussed in Böwering, *Mystical* 153. For an overview of Twelver Shi'ism, Amir-Moezzi, *Cosmogony*.

13 *Baqara* 47–52; cf. possible resonance with Q 33:72.

Qā'im and the Greatest Name

To Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, whom the Báb refers to as “my dear teacher” in the introduction to this commentary, is ascribed a short treatise on the subject of the Greatest Name, a topic we have encountered in previous pages and a brief analysis of which will not be out of place here.¹⁴

Commenting on the graphic representation, or amulet of the Greatest Name ¹⁵ which is the subject of his treatise, Rashtī says the following:

The star (*khātām*) refers to the appearance of the name (*ẓuhūr al-ism*), that is, the greatest manifestation ... on five levels. And there is no ceasing to these levels and tokens. In every level God is known, by means of them, by him who knows that [there is no distinction between Him and between](#) [such levels] [except that they are His servants and creation.](#)

- [1] The first is the *maqām al-bāṭin wa'l-sirr al-muqanna'*¹⁶
- [2] The second is the *maqām ẓuhūr dhālīka al-ism al-a'ẓam*, insofar as it is the *maqām al-bāṭin*, it is the beginning, as related in the tradition: [I desired to be known.](#)
- [3] The third is the *ẓuhūr fī maqām al-ẓāhir*, the *maqām al-'amā'*.
- [4] The fourth is the *ẓuhūr* in the visible station as visible, and the station of the mystery and the *bāṭin al-bāṭin*.
- [5] The fifth is the station of the appearance and the dawning of the [light](#) (*ishrāq al-nūr*) and it is the grade of the glorious divine manifestation (*tajallī*), ... the places of the [meanings](#) (*ma'ānī*, e.g., the Imams) and the place where the banner of praise appears (*mazhar liwā' al-ḥamd*) ... and [the oil which would almost shine forth though](#)

¹⁴ Rashtī, *Risāla fī 'l-sharḥ*.

¹⁵ Variations of this amulet may be found in Strothman (ed.), “*Risālat al-ism al-a'ẓam*”; MacEoin, *Some Baha'i* 11; MacEoin, *Talismans* 92–93. See also Anawati, *Le Nom* 23–30; Canaan, *Decipherment* 142–144. All authors cite al-Būnī (1225), *Shams al-ma'ārif*. See Anawati, 22, for a discussion of the various editions of this work which he describes as “le vade-mecum de tous les ‘professionnels’ en talismans en Islam.” This device is also found in the Báb’s *Tafsīr sūrat al-qadr* where he says that whoever inscribes it on a ring of red cornelian (*‘aqīq*) will have all good and be protected from evil. Moreover, this device “speaks of” the three grades of the Torah, the four [grades] of the Gospel, and the five [grades] of the Quran. (*Majmū'a* 18).

¹⁶ See above, Chapter Two, for the source of this and the following phrases.

no fire touched it; Light upon light; God guides to His light whom He will. And God strikes similitudes for men, and God has knowledge of everything. [Q 24:35].¹⁷

In commenting on another element of the device (see the inverted Arabic letter *wāw* with the extended “tail” in graphic 2, the second element in the device from left to right), Rashtī says:

The reversed *wāw* (*wāw munakkas*) is an allusion to the Ḥujja, Ibn al-Ḥasan ... because it represents the culmination of perfect doubled numeration in the visible grades of visible *walāya* which is on the visible Throne of the knowledge of God. Its day is Friday, because it is the sixth (*wāw* = 6 in abjad numbering) of the seven days [of the week]. From it [comes] the *wāw* and all the manifestations of the *hāʾ* [another element of the device, see above, its value is 5. N.b. these two letters form the pronoun *huwa*] in detail because the *hāʾ* is the symbol of totality (*ṣāhib al-jamʿ*) while the *wāw* is the symbol of particularity (*ṣāhib al-taḥṣīl*) ... The mystery of the reversal (*sirr al-tankīs*) is his (*al-Ḥujja*’s) return after concealment and his appearance after being hidden ... And the *alif* is the *Qāʾim*, the “one who abides over the two gulfs” (*al-wāqif bayn al-tuṭunjayn*) and the *barzakh* [Q 23:100; Q 25:53; Q 55:20] between the two worlds and the one who purifies the earth of all defilement.¹⁸

One implication of this is that the two *wāw*’s may also be seen as forming a circle. That is the circle suggested when a second *wāw*, this time not inverted or reversed, is visualized in tandem with the reversed *wāw* (along the lines of the Taoist yin yang ☯). Such represents an eloquent expression of fulfillment and totality as well as depicting the illusoriness of time as normally construed, especially in Islamic terms, since the reappearance of the Imam represents the coalescence of the two poles of time, the Day of Alast and the Day of Judgment. Thus, the straight path, as Ibn Arabi observed, is circular.¹⁹

Rashtī later quotes the Imam Riḍāʾ:

¹⁷ *Risāla fīʾl-sharḥ*, ff. 271a–272a.

¹⁸ *Risāla fīʾl-sharḥ*, f. 272a. See below, p. 158 for a graphic representation.

¹⁹ Chodkiewicz, *Seal* 157 & 173. For an elaboration of this union in the writings of the Báb and a comparison cognate figures in modernist English literature, see Lawson, *Quran* 143 & 154.

The basmala is closer to the Greatest Name than the black of the eye is to the white.²⁰

For this reason, what appears from it appears from it ... since all wonders are from them and by them and towards them and in them. This proximity is a proximity of intimacy (lit. “interpenetration” *qurb al-mudākhala*), which is nearer than mere connection (*al-mulāṣaqa*) ... And the Family of Muḥammad are this Greatest Most Ancient Name. For further information you should consult my commentary on the *Khuṭbat al-tuṭunjiya* as well as what I have said in my other studies ... It is all connected to the sayings of the Imams: **We are the most beautiful names** [Q 17:110] **which God commanded his servants to call on Him by.** They are **the loftiest example** (*al-mathal al-a'lā*) [Q 30:27].²¹

The purpose of these quotations is to draw attention to the emphasis placed on intimacy or proximity and *zuhūr* by Rashtī, the Báb's recently deceased beloved teacher, and thereby emphasize the link in technical terminology and scriptural interpretation between the two authors. While the *zuhūr* mentioned here may be restricted to a spiritual location such as the **barzakh** (although there is no explicit mention in the Báb's work of *‘ālam al-mithāl* or Hürqalyā), it is obvious that the references to such an appearance could evoke in the mind of the reader the advent of an actual historical event. Such an interpretation of this or similar statements by Rashtī, form the background for the Bab's eventual claims and the acceptance of these by his earliest followers, all of whom are identified as having been Shaykhis.²²

The same may be said for the statements of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī, who has also commented on this reversed *wāw*, and seen it as a symbol of the Qā'im. In a letter responding to a follower's question on whether the **return** of the hidden Imam will be in normal historical time or whether it will be restricted to a spiritual realm (e.g., *‘ālam al-mithāl*), Shaykh Aḥmad responds

As for the matter of his appearance (*zuhūr*), may God hasten his glad advent, and the explanation of its time and place, know that in this world he feared his enemies, and when he fled from this (realm) called the world below (*al-dunyā*), he transferred his residence to the (realm of) the primal (*al-ūlā*). The creation travels towards him, but he, on him be peace, is

20 A frequently-quoted hadith, e.g., *Burhān*, i:41, #2 (ascribed to al-Ṣādiq).

21 *Risāla fi'l-sharḥ*, f. 274a. The term *al-mathal al-a'lā* is also taken up in a commentary on a verse of the *Ziyāra*, i:145–152.

22 See Smith and Momen, *Bābī Movement* 60.

swift in his progress and has traversed the distance in an instant, whereas mankind's progress towards the primal is controlled by the divine decree (*al-taqdīr*) at the speed of a ship with its passengers on this stagnant river called Time (*al-zamān*). The two ends of Time, its beginning and its end, are both subtle (*latīf*) according to the subtlety of the bodies that stand in them and the subtlety of those places. But the middle of Time is dense like the density of its bodies and its places. So, when they reach him, he shall rise in the cause and the religion shall appear in its totality.

The days are ... three ... The first day is the World (*al-dunyā*), and the second day is the Primal (*al-ūlā*), which is the day of his rising up (*qiyām*) and his return (*rajʿa*) with his fathers ... and their followers (*shīʿa*), and the third day is the day of the Great Resurrection (*al-qiyāma al-kubrā*). In the *Ziyārat al-jāmiʿa* (are the words): "[The Imams are] the Proofs of God unto the people of the World (*al-dunyā*) ... and the hereafter (*al-ākhirā*) ... and the Primal (*al-ūlā*) ..." And that time is subtler and its people are subtler and its places are subtler to the extent that, at its end, the subtlety of his Time shall be seventy times greater than that of this Time. And this is the meaning of my statement that he is in Hūrqalyā and that he is in the eighth clime.

[T]he Imam, on him be peace, shall not return as a [purely spiritual?] form but he and all those who return with him and with his fathers shall return in the same bodies in which they [originally] appeared in the World ...

And when the World ... ends, its last minute shall be the first minute of the Primal (*al-ūlā*). 'Alī, on him be peace, referred to this in his *khutba* when he said **I am he that stands between the two gulfs** (*wāqif ʿalā ʾl-tuṭunjayn*). And in the blessed name transmitted from him, the inverted *wāw* is the Qā'im ... and its being inverted is a reference to the fact that its form is thus: واو

[T]he first (*wāw*) is a reference to the six days in which *al-dunyā* was created, while the second *wāw* is a reference to the days in which *al-ūlā* was created, and the *alif* between them is a reference to the fact that he is the Qā'im ... between *al-dunyā* and *al-ūlā*, which are the two rivers (cf. gulfs) [viz. of time]. The Qā'im ... shall return in *al-ūlā*, not in the archetypes, and, as regards his departure (from Hūrqalyā?), he shall be in his elemental body (*haykal*) in the realm of the elements (*al-ʿunṣuriyya*), and in his archetypes in the realm of archetypes (*al-mithālīyya*), and in his eternal body (*jasad*) in the eternal bodies, and in his true body (*jism*) in the true bodies, and in his soul in the souls, and in his spirit in the spirits (i.e. he will take on the nature of each of these realms) ... The truth of

al-dunyā with regard to *al-ūlā* is like that of the shadow with regard to the one who casts it. And God guides to the straight path.²³

To begin with, it is important to bear in mind that the basic technical terms of this commentary, *al-dunyā*, *al-ākhira*, and *al-ūlā*, are taken from one of the verses of the *Ziyārat al-jāmi'a*, upon which Shaykh Aḥmad wrote a very dense commentary, many times referred to in these pages.²⁴ A part of his commentary may be translated as:

The meaning of the first (*al-ūlā*) is the return (*raj'a*) of the Family of Muḥammad, or the rise of their Qā'im, or (the rise of) most of them. It is called *al-ūlā* in relationship to *al-ākhira*.

Shaykh Aḥmad then quotes two traditions relevant to the Quranic verse **and remind them of the days of God** [Q 14:5]:

The **days of God** are the day on which the Qā'im shall arise, and the day of the return (*al-karra*), and the day of resurrection.

The **days of God** are three: the day of the Qā'im, and the day of death, and the day of resurrection.

MacEoin says:

At its most basic, it would seem that al-Aḥsā'ī thought in terms of three days or ages, the first the present state of things (*al-dunyā*), the second the day of the appearance of the Qā'im and the return of the Imams (*al-ūlā*), and the third the last, general resurrection ... But ... from the foregoing and from a wider reading of al-Aḥsā'ī's writings on related subjects [it is apparent] that he did not conceive of a rather crude, linear movement of three successive ages, but a much more sophisticated system in which concepts of time, space, movement and so forth are elaborately interrelated.²⁵

23 From Shaykh Aḥmad's "*al-Risālat al-Rashtiyya*," *Jawāmi' al-kilām*, 2 vols. (Tabriz, 1273/1856 & 1276/1859) v. 1, pt. 2, 103, translated by MacEoin, Some 11–23. This slightly adapted extract is from 16–18. See also the comments in Lambden, A Tablet 42.

24 *Ziyāra*, i:56–62.

25 MacEoin, Some 19–20.

Shaykh Aḥmad's theory of time represents a relatively recent development in a traditional discourse. The concepts of subtle (*latīf*) and dense (*kathīf*) time and space have been a subject in Islamic philosophy since at least the 13th century.²⁶ Later, Qāḍī Saʿīd Qummī (1691), a student of Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī, was particularly attracted to the subject and developed a theory which Corbin has referred to as the "Enfoldment of time and space". According to this, everything which exists concretely, that is to say everything which is compact and dense, is at the same time material (compact and dense) and spiritual (subtle) and forms a unity, a unique individuality. Just as there is a *quantum* (*miqdār*) of matter and a *quantum* of space imparted to each individuality, there is also for each individuality a *quantum* of personal time which is his alone. The quantity of this time varies according to the individual ... The more subtle (spiritual) the body, the more subtle the *quantum* of time and the more it is capable of being enlarged. There is therefore the dense (*kathīf*) time of the sensible world, and there is the subtle time of the *malakūt* (imaginal, not to be confused with *zamān mawhūm* "imaginary time"). There is finally the time which is absolutely subtle (*alṭaf*) in the world of *jabarūt* (intelligible and intellectual). Subtle time is spoken of sometimes in terms of enfoldment, and sometimes dilation, according to the circumstances. The *quantum* of time given to a spiritual individual can encompass an immensity of being; it can also have present to itself a multitude, namely the totality of moments of being in a perfect synchronicity. Succession becomes simultaneity; time becomes space. Speaking of the time and space of prophets, he says: Their subtlety is such that the time and movements in our experience are enfolded in [their] *malakūti* time and movements.²⁷

Corbin has also analyzed the subject as it appears in the writings of Shaykh Aḥmad himself, and fortunately, specifically as it relates to the "six days of creation" represented by the *wāw* (= 6 in abjad reckoning) discussed in the above commentaries of Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī and Kāẓim Rashtī. This *wāw*, it should be remembered, is susceptible of being broken down into two *wāws* and an *alif*. The first *wāw* then has been seen as representing *dawr al-satr*: a cycle of concealment; the second, the *dawr al-kashf*: a cycle of revelation. The *alif* represents the Qā'im as standing between the two "gulfs", graphically presented in the circular or cyclic shape of the *wāw* (viz, *al-tuṭunjayn*) of time. Corbin sees here a striking analogue of the medieval Church's preoccupation with the "six

26 Cf. Landolt, *Sakralraum* 352–355 for the discussion of the thought of Shaykh Mahmūd-i Ushnuhī (13th century) and the work ascribed to him *Ghāyat al-imkān fī dirāyat al-makān*.

27 This is an adapted translation of *Corbin*, iv:156–157.

days of creation", the hexameron, in which the totality of sacred history coalesces on the seventh day which is thus a totality (cf. *jam'*) or *isomorphisme* of time and space. Both the Shaykhis and the Isma'ilis produced important studies of this theme, especially as it pertained to the particular eschaton contemplated in their respective communities. Shaykh Aḥmad's contemplations on the specific question of the Imam of the Resurrection, the return of the hidden Imam, the Qā'im al-Qiyāma, culminates in the spatializing of time on the seventh day in which the "conflict of space and time" comes to an end.

Once perceived, the simultaneity to which the succession of "six days" leads acquires the sense of a "seventh day" and spatializes the time of the Imam of the resurrection (*Qā'im al-qiyāmat*). The "seventh day" puts an end to the conflict between time and space. It is the perspective through which we may detect the connection between eschatology and the isomorphism of temporal forms and spatial forms.²⁸

The "six days" according to Shaykh Aḥmad have a double meaning (a function of the two *wāws* mentioned above—n.b. the *wāw* has a numerical value of six). The first is that they represent the six worlds which constitute the macrocosm, the worlds of: 1) the Intellects, 2) Souls, 3) Nature, 4) Substances, involving atoms (*al-habā'*), matter (*maddā*) or light (*nūr*), 5) the world of the Image (*mithāl*), and finally 6) the world of material bodies.

The second meaning of the "six days" is determined by the idea of a "second creation" (*khalq thānī*) (cf. Q 50:15) which takes place after the Day of Alast (Q 7:172) according to this reading. In this context, they are seen as being the elements which compose each existing thing. None of these "days" can appear before the other. These six are: quantity (*kamm*), modality (*kayf*), time (*waqt*), place (*makān*), aspect (*jihat*), and rank (*rutba*). *Waqt* is divided into the three categories found in the writings of Qāḍī Sa'īd, namely: *kathīf*, *latīf*, and *alṭāf*. There is therefore chronological time (*zamān*), which is divided into three categories: subtle, medium and dense. These correspond to the different states of the body, from the subtle to the material. There is also *dahr* "sempiternité" which is in three parts as well: the time of *jabarūt* (the world of Intellects)

28 Corbin, iv:293:

Une fois perçue la simultanéité à laquelle est reconduite la succession des "six jours", voici qu'à son tour le sens du "septième jour" est de *spatialiser* le temps de l'Imam de la restauration (*Qā'im al-Qiyāmat*). Le "septième jour" met fin au conflit de l'espace et du temps. C'est l'aspect sous lequel nous avons à saisir le lien entre l'eschatologie et l'isomorphisme des formes temporelles et des formes spatiales[.]

which is subtle; the time of *malakūt* (the world of Souls) which is medium; and the time of *sarmad*, eternity. *Sarmad* also has three levels, corresponding to the creative act: subtle, which is associated with the divine will; medium, which is the time of the “prestructuration” of beings (prior to *yawm al-mithāq*); and a third which is dense and opaque, representing the divine decree (*qaḍā*) and signature (*imḍā*). This schema, according to Corbin, supplies all that is needed in order to establish the above mentioned isomorphisme between time and space and to realize the transmutation of time into space to signal the eschatological passage from time in this world to another world and thus putting an end to this one. With such a theory of time and its complexity, Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī reveals certain clear resonances with classical Ismaʿīli theosophy, especially the thought of Nāṣir Khusraw.²⁹

According to Nāṣir-i Khusraw, the “six days” are susceptible of a double interpretation. The first is the “day” which is measured by the rising and setting of the sun. The second, or esoteric interpretation, sees the “six days” as the six forces of nature which function within a given exoteric day: movement, rest, matter, form, time, and space.

All of these forces of nature leave a permanent imprint on every being and thing which exists in the material world. The form of all that is material presents six sides or directions: high and low, rear and front, right and left. The six sides of the physical solid are the hexameron, the six “permanent” days of creation. The seventh day is the totality itself, the solid (or the physical person) which supports the six sides. It is the soul that perceives—and therefore in some fashion *is*—such totality, not the separate physical senses. Here, Shiʿism, whether 12er or 7er, teaches that the Qāʾim, the eschatological figure “awaited” with such profound implications for the spiritual life in both communities, teaches that the return is a return that occurs in a suprasensible dimension perceived by the soul as a totality (*jamʿ ≠ taḥṣīl*) of time and space.³⁰ As Corbin observes, it is the purpose of interpretation (*taʾwīl*) to lead the sequential back to its single “creational” moment when everything, including time and history, was created all at once, what the Ismaʿīli philosophers refer to as the “single creational impulse” (*daʿātan wāḥidatan*) which is likened to the single moment mentioned in the Quran: **Our command is as unto a single glance.** [Q 54:50].³¹ In short, the goal is to see in the *taḥṣīlī* nature of worldly experience “cluttered with uncountable phenomenon the single, *jamʿī*, originary existential reality of

29 Corbin, iv:295.

30 Corbin, iv:297.

31 Madelung, Aspects 56–57.

which it speaks”.³² All of the above may be considered a distinctive explication of the sacred tradition referred to many times in the previous pages: **God was alone, and nothing was with Him. It is now as it was.** This may be considered a philosophical analysis of that *wijdān* the Báb speaks of, whether as ecstasy, instasy, or consciousness. It entails an “oceanic” experience of totality.

Being the seventh “side” of the solid with six sides, in three dimensions, the “seventh day” is therefore something like a fourth dimension. Seen as the totality of the cosmos, it is the human form “achieving and prolonging beyond itself the cosmic process”. Seen as *hiérocósmos* in the spiritual world, it is the form of the Resurrector (*Qā'im*), the last Imam, who in giving the signal for the Resurrection of Resurrections (*qiyāma al-qiyāmat*), inaugurates the passage from our world in the present cycle of occultation (*dawr al-satr*) to the cycle of epiphany (*dawr al-kashf*) which must succeed it.

MacEoin is therefore correct in referring to the complexity of Shaykh Aḥmad's thought. Indeed, we have seen how history was also quite maleable at the hands of the Báb. For example, in his interpretation of Quranic verses which “appear” to refer to pre-Islamic history, but which are read as referring to Shī'i salvation history. This method has been shown to derive from Akhbari exegesis, which of course also supported the more speculative projects of men like Qāḍī Sa'īd Qummī and Shaykh Aḥmad. It is important to repeat: the typical vocabulary of these speculations (e.g., *Hūrqalyā*, *al-zamān al-laṭīf*, *ālam al-mithāl*) is completely absent from the Báb's tafsir, although it is also obvious that that work certainly resonates with Shaykhi thought and indeed bears direct influences from it. This would seem to argue for a less technical system informing this work. But to return to Shaykh Aḥmad and his system, the following remarks are worth quoting:

When the Shaykhis call this perception of the mystical or *malakūti* dimension, a “vision of things in *Hūrqalyā*” they are speaking of an eschatological vision. But this is an eschatology that is not some event which will “happen” at some distant time in the future. Rather, it is an eschatology that is now in process. This is the meaning of “to see things in *Hūrqalyā*”. That is to say, to perceive here and now, through their mystical dimension, the totality of beings and things which the succession of chronological time allows us only a partial perception.³³

32 Sous un autre aspect, c'est une mise en oeuvre du *ta'wīl*, qui ici consiste à « reconduire » le successif au simultané. *Corbin*, iv:293.

33 *Corbin*, iv: 287.

As seen above in the long translation from the letter of Shaykh Aḥmad on the subject, the return of the Qā'im is precisely this total return or vision, occurring "not [? only] in the archetypes" but "he shall be in his elemental body in the realm of the elements and in his archetypes in the realm of the archetypes". This statement implies that the return will happen at every level of the cosmos and would therefore include or could at least be easily "misinterpreted" to include, the realm of mundane time, space and history. Corbin denies the possibility of such an interpretation in his severe critique of Bābism and Bahā'ism. Corbin's insistence on a "style gothique" in his reading of Shaykhism obviously represents only one of several possible interpretations. This is particularly so in view of the event of the Babi *parousia* and, more significantly, the recognition of this by his first followers, all of whom were Shaykhi students and sympathizers. Although the Báb does not explicitly speak of it in this work, it will be quite evident in the *Qayyūm al-asmā'* that time has in fact undergone profound adjustment. In that work (and this), whatever else *al-ūlā* is thought to stand for it definitely stands for the "first" or primordial Day of Alast. In the *Qayyūm al-asmā'* this primordial day is joined (cf. *jam'*) with the day of Judgment to constitute one "sacramental" day of manifestation and perception.³⁴

It is also important to bear in mind that Corbin was greatly influenced in his opinions of Babism and Bahaism by what in this context must be recognized as the later Shaykhism which developed under the impetus of Karīm Khān Kirmānī who emphasized the "vertical" dimension of his forebears' teachings.³⁵ As Corbin says, this vertical perspective and trajectory can cause the typical historical consciousness to lose its footing. This is why the "adventure" of this world, according to Kirmānī, may be likened to the man "who must be brought up from the bottom of a well".³⁶ We will see, again in the next major work by the Báb, the *Qayyūm al-asmā'*, just how important such a Josephian allusion and image will be.³⁷ That Joseph continues to be an important emblem or symbol of the hidden Imam, even among the later Shaykhis, bespeaks a remarkable resonance that no doubt finds its source in a common teaching of the first two masters of the Shaykhi school. Thus, we find Sarkār Āghā Abū'l-Qāsim Ibrāhīmī

34 Lawson, *Quran* 141–146.

35 Kirmānī was closely related to the Qajars, the ruling dynasty of Iran at the time. His father, Ibrāhīm Khān, was a cousin of Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh (r. 1797–1834), governor of Kirmān and Baluchistān. He was also a great friend of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī. It may be that for this reason he chose to elaborate his teachers' thought in ways which would not threaten the status quo. MacEoin, *Shaykhi Reactions* argues along these lines. See also *Corbin*, iv: 236–242; *Rafati* 138–141.

36 Corbin, *Spiritual Body* 237.

37 *Gnostic*, esp. 93–139.

(1969) explaining that the mystery of the hiddenness of the expected Imam may be clarified by reference to the story of Joseph who even though he lived in the midst of his perfidious brothers was nonetheless not recognized. It is only when the hidden Imam is recognized that the return may be understood as having taken place, as when his brothers finally realize that it is Joseph who is the one vested with authority in Egypt and who will rescue them from famine.³⁸ In order to recognize the hidden Imam one must purify the senses from their terrestrial habits so that they may see things “in Hūrqulyā”—the permanent abode of the Imam.

Corbin’s reading of the Shaykhi teachings about the return may be summed up in this sentence:

The parousia of the Imam is not an external event which will happen unexpectedly one fine day, but a Presence that is accomplished through continued anticipation.³⁹

It would appear that such a statement may be somewhat too categorical and absolute in denying the possibility of any exterior event. As has been illustrated in the preceding pages, both from the writings of the Báb and the various references to the writings of Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kāẓim, the exterior and the interior form a basic syzygy both in the interpretative act as well as in Being per se.⁴⁰ To emphasize the importance of one over the other may not in the end have been true to the spirit (or letter) of the writings of these thinkers and may therefore do violence to the total vision promulgated by them.

A recent study of Shaykhism has emphasized the *zamānī* or historical implications of the eschatology in the writings of Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kāẓim.⁴¹ The author indeed seems to take for granted that these two foresaw an actual advent of the Imam, in a historical individual. Inasmuch as both men were in fact 12er Shi‘ites, writing at a time close to the long-awaited eschaton of their faith, it would not be surprising to discover that they expected (in addition to the spiritual and esoteric *qiyāma* indicated above) an actual individual to arise as Qā’im. This would seem to be in line with the univer-

³⁸ Corbin, *Spiritual Body* 266.

³⁹ Corbin, iv:289.

⁴⁰ As we have seen this syzygy is not reducible to only two basic elements, *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* but involves also the *ẓāhir al-ẓāhir*, the *ẓāhir al-bāṭin*, the *bāṭin al-ẓāhir*, the *bāṭin al-bāṭin*, and others, including the *bāṭin bāṭin al-bāṭin*. Shaykh Aḥmad has written special treatises on these various categories. See Ibrāhīmī, *Fihrist*, ii:48 & 67.

⁴¹ Rafati, *passim*.

salinity of their thought, a thought which sees oneness in multiplicity (“*vaḥdat dar kašrat*”), the esoteric in the exoteric, that which is above in that which is below, and so on. Indeed, this seems to have been the very point of the isomorphism we see explicated above by Corbin. A refusal to countenance the advent of a spiritual superman is perhaps in line with the kind of mistrust of historical heroes, or authority, which has developed in our time. It would be wrong to retroject upon the writings of al-Aḥsāʾī an interpretation which may be faithful to twentieth century philosophical tastes but, which for that, ignores several important features of the *Sitz im Leben* these works must necessarily reflect.

The fact that the Báb makes no mention of subtle time, or any of the other terms mentioned above, could be taken to suggest (from silence) that he thought the Qāʾim would actually arise as a historical verifiable person, *fīʾl-dunyā*, in earthly time and space. Depending upon one’s interpretation of Shaykhism, this could mean either that the Báb, in this work, had seized upon a single aspect of *qiyāma* as taught by that school, or that he departed from its teachings on this subject. In the latter case, the Babis might be seen as dissident Shaykhis. Much more work needs to be done on this question. The following citations represent the balance of the Báb’s comments on the subject of the Qāʾim in this early Quran commentary.

Qāʾim in the *Tafsīr sūrat al-baqara*

In addition to the earlier statement identifying the Qāʾim as the Fourth Support and functioning as a spiritual principle in the “souls of the Shi’a”, there are numerous other mentions of the Qāʾim throughout the tafsir (particularly toward the end). For convenience, much of this material is presented below, beginning with the earliest mention and covering all the Báb’s significant statements on the subject in his *Tafsīr sūrat al-baqara*. There are ten Quranic verses which he understands as referring to the Qāʾim. Even though we have already examined some of this commentary above in other contexts, we will look at them again, in Quranic order, to focus on the all-important topic of the appearance of the Qāʾim, the hidden Imam, whose advent, in one form or another, was intensely expected by the Twelver Shiʿi community at this time.

Who believe in the unseen, and perform the prayer, and expend of that We have provided them [Q 2:3]

As for the unseen (*al-ghayb*), it is Muḥammad, because he is absent to whatever is other than him. None knows his true essence (*kunh*) but God.

As for the specific [intention] of this **unseen** (*wa tafṣīl hādihā al-ghayb*) it is the Qā'im, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan.

And he is the one about whom al-Ṣādiq ... said: **He is the hidden proof** (*al-ḥujjat al-ghā'ib*).⁴²

And 'Alī is the same (*naḥs*) as the Messenger of God, as is clearly indicated in his lofty statement: **My ṣāḥir is imāma and my bāṭin is a forbidden hiddenness of which none is aware.**

And there are an unlimited number of possible grades to **the unseen**. The possible world is **unseen** by the actual world in each universe accordingly (*bi-ḥasabihi*). And the actuality (*kawn*) of the higher chain (*silsilat al-a'lā*) is **the unseen** of the lower chain (*silsilat al-sāfil*). Thus it proceeds in the case of the universal and the particular, realities and [mere] attributes *ad infinitum*.⁴³

And as for the *Ahl al-Bayān*, **the unseen** is the same as the visible (*al-shahāda*), and the visible is the same as **the unseen**. And none knows **the unseen** except God.

And according to the *Ahl al-Zāhir*, which [*ṣāḥir*] is the same as *al-bāṭin* according to the *Ahl al-Bāṭin*, it is as Abū al-Ḥujjat al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī said in the tafsir of this verse:

Those who believe in the unseen, meaning in that which is hidden from their senses about those things which faith obligates them, like the resurrection, the judgment, Paradise, Hell, and the *tawḥīd* of God, and the rest of whatever is not known by seeing, whereas it is known by rational proof. [They are those whom] God appointed, like Adam and Eve and Idrīs and Nūh and Ibrāhīm and the prophets upon which faith was obligatory, and the proofs of God, even though they do not see them ...⁴⁴

Discussion of the Qā'im is also found at the Báb's commentary on Q 2:51:

And when We appointed with Moses forty nights then you took to yourselves the calf after him and you were evildoers. [Q 2:51]

And the truest meaning (*fa'l-murād bi'l-ḥaqīqat al-awwaliyya*) of **Moses** is Muḥammad.

42 This is part of a longer hadith, see *Burhān*, i:53–54 #5.

43 C f. 8b: *al-imkān ghayr al-akwān fī kullī 'ālam ...*; I 169: *al-imkān ghayb al-akwān ...*; *Baqara* 24: *al-imkān ghayb al-imkān ghayb al-akwān ...*

44 *Baqara* 23–24. The same tradition is found in *Burhān* i:56–57#11. The Báb has omitted the final phrase which contains a Quranic quotation: **and they believe in the unseen, trembling because of the hour.** [Q 21:49] C f9a has *li-Adam* instead of *ka-Adam*.

And [the meaning of] **forty** is ‘Alī, and the ten Proofs (*ḥujaj*) from his progeny.

The Merciful **appointed** for Muḥammad thirty nights with the meaning (*murād*) of ‘Alī since he remained after the death of Muḥammad for thirty years. So [the **forty**] is completed by ten: Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, and the eight Imams from the progeny of Ḥusayn.

And the allusion to **nights** is the concealment (*ikhtifāʾ*) of their glory (*jalālātihim*) in the darkness of disbelief.

So, when God (*al-ḥaqq*) caused the *walāya* of His Prophet and Trustees to appear, He informed [them] about the disbelief of his enemies together with [the idea of] their taking for a Trustee (*waṣīy*) the First. And he is **the Calf** [which they took] after the Messenger clearly imposed (*tabayyana*) the Trusteeship of ‘Alī on them.

That was [the cause of] the allegiance (*baʿya*) to Abū al-Dawāhī, may God curse him [they are] **the evildoers**.

And the Qāʾim, when God manifests His cause at the time of the **return** (*fīʾl-raǧʿa*), that which I have only alluded to will clearly appear. And his station is [specifically] for the advent (*ẓuhūr*) of his sovereignty (*al-saltāna*), on the part of God some specific day (*ʿinda allāh kāna yawman*). And he is Muḥammad, and Muḥammad is he. May God hasten both their days. Because the promise of God is as good as accomplished (*waʿd allāh mafʿūlan*).⁴⁵

At Q 2:64 further words on the reality of the Qāʾim are given by the Báb:

Then you turned away thereafter, and but for the bounty (*faḍl*) and mercy of God towards you, you had been of the losers. [Q 2:64]

Before God, the meaning (*waʿl-murād laday al-ḥaqq*) of **bounty** is the Qāʾim. And he is the **bounty of God** in all the worlds. And were it not for him, Origination would not have been originated and Invention would not have been generated. By him Origination rose up⁴⁶ and by him the fruit of Invention acquired existence (*wujīdat*) from the **sign** of the pure exclusive unity, and the **signs** of the pure inclusive unity.

45 *Baqara* 183–184. Note insistence on a “specific day” in contrast with Corbin’s words above, p. 165.

46 *bi-hi qad qāmat al-ibdāʾ*, sic, *ibdāʾ* treated as feminine in all mss. This is probably due to the standard Shiʿi theosophical doctrine of Fāṭima as the hypostasis of the creative principle (viz, *Fāṭima Fāṭir*). Such is upheld in this commentary (see above for references to those passages which deal with Fāṭima. See also *Baqara* 199 ad Q 2:65 where **the sabbath** is glossed as Fāṭima). On the subject in general see Corbin, *Spiritual Body* 51–73. See now Lawson, Feminine; Ruffe, *Gender*, and Klemm, Fāṭima.

He who believes, insofar as he is capable (*bi-mā huwa 'alayhi*) in the divine unity (*al-wahda*) and the kingdom (*al-jabarūt*), will have gathered to himself the **bounty** from his Lord and will be purified of the baseness of **the losers** by means of an unearned gift (*jūd*) from his Imam.⁴⁷ But only a few believe in him.

If **the covering be removed** [cf. Q 50:22] to the extent of but a single drop (*rashḥa*) from his unity (*waḥdati-hi*), and a single allusion from his dominion (*jabarūtiyyati-hi*), then all created things would be dumbfounded by his grace and would long for the atmosphere of his love by **entering into the city** [Q 28:15] of the form (*shabaḥ*) of his self, oblivious of all but him, so that only immortality remains as his **sign** (*faqad baqiya 'l-baqā' li-āyatihi*). And the heavens and the earth would be filled with the sound of **There is no god but God**, and **to Him is the final return** (*maṣīr*) [cf. Q 3:28 & *passim*].⁴⁸

Those to whom We have given the book and who recite it with true recitation, they believe in it; and whoso disbelieves in it, they shall be the losers. [Q 2:121]

The intention here (*murād*) is the Family of God. By **the book** is meant the appearance (*ẓuhūr*) of God to them by means of them (*la-hum bi-him*), they cause God to appear to themselves through themselves as a true appearance, in such a way that their stations do not show up in any world except on the authority of the manifestation of the absolute truth (*illā 'an al-maẓhar al-ḥaqq al-muṭlaq*). Whatever is other than them belongs to the contingent world, according to what each merit through Origination, and whatever is in its potential through Invention. And Invention, and whatever is dormant in it, glorifies their splendour (*jalla jalālatahum*).⁴⁹ They are not heedless of the least thing in all of the worlds of contingency and actuality concerning the **true recitation** of the Quran. **They believe in** God alone, because they point the way on the authority of God alone. **And whoso disbelieves in it/him** (*bi-hi*), that is to say, the Qā'im, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan, during his life, and during his return and his advent and his rule (*dawlati-hi*), **they shall be the losers**. Because they will have **lost** for their souls during their lives the radiance which comes from the brilliance of purchasing (*ishtarā'*; continues the commercial metaphor of **loss**, *khusr*) the **sign** of his [the Qā'im's] self, that

47 *fa-qad jama'a la-hu al-'aql*, but *al-faḍl* is written over this last word. Cf. 74a has *al-'aql* only; Both L 11 and I 300 have *al-faḍl*.

48 *Baqara* 198.

49 *Ibdā'* & *ikhtirā'* are treated as feminine nouns here.

which God has deposited in the potential (*imkān*) of all created things. Therefore, they became losers.⁵⁰

And those that believe and do deeds of righteousness—those are the inhabitants of paradise; there they shall dwell forever. [Q 2:82]

[This means that] those that believe that the signs of God in all the worlds are the signs of the signs of ‘Alī, through Origination.

And verily the Essence has no road to It, nor does it have a sign. And none knows Its “how” except It. If It did have a sign that would necessitate connection (*iqtirān*). And It is exalted [above such].

‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn said: By God, the signs are our signs, and *walāya* is one of them.

And do deeds of righteousness means none can perform [anything] in the world except through God (*bi-‘llāh*) and for God (*li-‘llāh*). And if in all his motions, he moves on the authority of God, he will not abandon the depth (*luġja*) of the exclusive unity for an instant, even though he sees created things. Then, his soul is a single soul. God (*al-ḥaqq*) said: Your creation and your upraising are but as a single soul. [Q 31:28]

And his soul is that which causes to appear the soul of God (*al-ḥaqq*) with all attributes and names. His (the Qā’im’s) forgiveness is His (God’s) forgiveness, his patience is His patience, his tolerance is His tolerance, his self-sufficiency is His self-sufficiency, and his gift is His gift.

Therefore, he is [implicated] in the attributes of the exclusive unity and divinity (*ulūhiyya*) and *rahmāniyya* and *wāḥidiyya*, and in all these allusions.

Verily, the servant fears none but God in his doing. And when it is like that then has he performed deeds of righteousness—those [deeds] are the companions (inhabitants > *aṣḥāb*) of the Qā’im, truly. And they will dwell forever in the most great *riḍwān* [cf. Q 9:72]. Because the Proof (*al-ḥujja*) is the face of the Worshipped One, and there is no end to him (*lā zawāl la-hu*). He who enters into his *walāya*, by means of his [the Qā’im’s] immortality (*fa-bi-baqā’i-hi*), that one shall be immortal.

But, [even] that face is a generated face which God has related to His self, nobly. Nevertheless, that is the highest limit (*ghāya*) of immortality from the bounty (*ḥayḍ*) of God for the people of the world of contingency.

He who is in the *walāya* of the Qā’im is then in paradise dwelling forever.

50 Baqara 269–270.

But the **face** of the Lord which appears to all created things, by means of them (*la-hu bi-hi*) is not devoid of [other] meaning.⁵¹

And We gave to Moses the book, and after him sent succeeding Messengers; and We gave Jesus son of Mary the clear signs, and confirmed him with the holy spirit; and whensoever there came to you a messenger with that your souls had not desire for, did you become arrogant, and some cry lies to, and some slay. [Q 2:87]

And [the meaning of] **and We gave Jesus son of Mary the clear signs**, is the immortality (*al-baqā'*) attendant upon the honor of the meeting (*li-sharaf liqā'*) with the Proof, Muḥammad bin al-Ḥasan, the *Ṣāḥib al-Amr*.

And he is **the clear signs**, in the estimation of God.

And the Proof will **confirm him** (Jesus), during the **return** through his government (*wizāra*). And he is the intention (*murād*) of **with the Holy Spirit**.

And it [this **holy spirit**] is the greatest of the angels, because the angels are like letters joined in grammar while the Holy Spirit, his station, with respect to [this analogy with] letters, is as a **single** letter, [which] however, has a comprehensive intent. Its grade is with [both] mankind and the angels. And he is the **angel** (*malak*) which God created for the purpose of educating (*tarbiyya*) the body (*jism*) of Muḥammad and his Family in this world. And he is the greatest servant (*al-khaddām*) of the Family of God.

God **confirmed Jesus** through him because he is the most noble of the Shi'a of 'Alī in the contingent world. So, **whenever** the Proof **came to you** from God **with that which your polytheistic souls did not desire, did you become arrogant, and some cry lies to, and some slay**.⁵²

But they will never long for [death], because of that their hands have forwarded; God knows the evildoers. [Q 2:95]

God tells about those who swerved from the love of al-Ḥusayn. **They will never long for** the coming of the Qā'im (*ẓuhūr al-Qā'im*), may God

51 *Baqara* 222–223. *Ta'tīl* (not Quranic) “devoid of meaning” is of course an allusion, conscious or otherwise, to the general theological dispute between the “anthropomorphizers” and those who would “denude” God of all attributes—a dispute for which the Shi'ism expressed in this commentary provides its own solution. Cf. also Q 28:88. This is another example of the doctrinal contiguity between *Trfānī* Shi'ism and *waḥdat al-wujūd* despite protests to the contrary.

52 *Baqara* 228–229.

hasten his glad advent, because he in the estimation of God, is the **death** [meted out by] justice, if you judge fairly.⁵³

And We have sent down unto thee signs, clear signs, and none disbelieves in them except the ungodly. [Q 2:99]

And We have sent down by means of thee unto thee (*bi-ka ilay-ka*), O Muḥammad!, **signs** of the exclusive unity, **clear signs** of the inclusive unity, in thyself and its places of manifestation (*maẓāhir*) **in the souls** of thy Trustees. And [**We have sent**] the likeness of these two (thy soul and the souls of thy trustees) to **the horizons and the souls** [Q 41:53] of all others [than thy trustees and thyself].

But only a few of them believe [*passim*] and do not **disbelieve in them**, that is, in the *walāya* of the Qā'im (*bi-hā*: Quranic fem. pl. pronoun in apposition to **signs** applied to a fem. singular noun *walāya*) in the **sign** of whose *walāya* (*walāyati-hā*) God placed each of the **signs** and **the clear signs, except** [for the] **the ungodly folk**.⁵⁴

Nay, but whosoever submits his whole being (*wajha-hu*, lit. "his face") to God, being a good doer (*muḥsin*), his wage is with his Lord, and no fear be on them, neither shall they grieve. [Q 2:112]

Nay, he will enter all the paradises whoever **surrenders** to the sign of God (*man aslama āyata 'llāhi*) which God manifested to each by means of each entity other than Himself (*li-kulli bi-kulli 'ayn ghayrahu*), both actually and potentially (*kawnan wa imkānan*).⁵⁵

And **submits his whole being** means the Family of God [**submitted**] to God because they tell nothing concerning (*lā yaḥkūna fī*) any world or station except on the authority of God.

He is a **good-doer** (*muḥsin*) means "one who knows (*mush'ir*)" when he enters Paradise and abides upon the throne of divine might that it (fem.) is one of the precreational eidetic forms (*shabaḥ min ashbāḥ*) of the Fam-

53 *Baqara* 237. All mss.: *li-anna-hu 'inda 'llāhi mawt al-'adl*. This is an allusion to Q 2:94: ... **then long for death—if you speak truly**. The **death** mentioned in the previous verse is interpreted by the Báb as: "**then long for** the love of Ḥusayn because he is **death** which is the **meeting with the Lord** (*liqā' al-rabb*)."
(*Baqara* 237.) That the Qā'im is also identified as **death** here may be a function of the frequently-expressed principle that there is no difference among any of the Imams. N.b., the "Quranistic" **meeting with the Lord** does not occur in this precise form in the Quran. However, there are numerous similar expressions such as *liqā' rabbihim* [Q 6:154], *liqā' rabbihi* [Q 18:110], *liqā' rabbikum* [Q 13:2]. The word *al-liqā'* is glossed in *Anwār* 297–298 as *ḥashr*, *ba'th* and *thawāb* among other possibilities.

54 *Baqara* 241.

55 *Baqara* 255.

ily of God, and [distinguishes between this and the fact that] to the One Essence (*al-dhāt al-aḥad*) there is no road for contingency.

So when he acknowledges, through servitude, the Family of God, in *paradise*, then he is a *good-doer* in the estimation of the Lord, so that *his wage will be with his Lord*.

When anyone *submits* as I have described, he is then one who has surrendered *the wage* which has come [to him] from the Family of God, because the very act of attaining the depth of the exclusive unity is itself the same as his *wage*. This depth is existentiated (*tadhawwatat*) at the time of (*min 'inda*) the advent of the Family of God. Those possessed of perception testify to *one upholding justice* [Q 3:18: *Qā'im bi'l-qisṭ*] therein. Whoever enters it his *wage* will be found with God. In [*Paradise*] there is *no fear* ... And there will be *no grief* for the one who attains it, because *grief* is not the grieved one (*al-maḥzūn*) and in *Paradise* there is no trace of change or distinction. *Nay rather* God made that sea pure for His own self, transcendent above the dust of anything but Him, purified from any but the mention of God. Exalted be God, its Originator (*mubdi'*), above what you attribute.

Those who *submit* their *wills* to God through the *walāya* of the Qā'im, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan, then their *wage is with* God during his *return*, inasmuch as God has promised that He would *be gracious to those that were abased in the earth* [Q 28:5], that is, the *earth* of divine power (*al-qudra*) and would *make them Imams* [Q 28:5: *a'imma*], that is in divine power like them. Whatever they desire exists (*mā yashā'ūna illā wajadū*), *and to make them inheritors* [Q 28:5], that is, *make them* firmly established in the sign of *tawḥīd*, because to God belongs the *inheritance* (*irth* for *mīrāth*) *of the heavens and the earth* [Q 3:180 & Q 57:10].

And that station is more honorable than the first because the first is absolute non-existence in its region. God will make good His promise, and the promise of God is near (*wa'd allāh qarīban*).⁵⁶ And there will be *no fear* concerning the *walāya* of the First for anyone who *submits his will* to the *walāya* of the Qā'im, *nor grief* concerning the *walāya* of the Second, inasmuch as these two [*fear* and *grief*] are their attributes. And God purifies those who acknowledge the *walāya* of the Family of God from the

56 Although this phrase is quite Quranic in tone, it never appears in the Quran itself. It is a combination of those verses which speak of the *promise* of God being *inevitable* [Q 17:107] or *true* [Q 40:55], the *promise of the hour* [viz, of *resurrection*, e.g., Q 45:32], and the *nearness of the hour* [Q 3:63].

attributes of those two, if they also become *qā'ims* (= arise in the divine cause, become upright: *law kānū qā'imīn*).⁵⁷

And when Abraham said, 'My Lord, make this a land secure, and provide its people with fruits, such of them as believe in God, and the Last Day.' He said, 'And whoso disbelieves, to him I shall give enjoyment a little, then I shall compel him to the chastisement of the Fire—how evil a homecoming!' [Q 2:126]

'Alī said: 'O My lord, make the sign of Muḥammad, [which is] in potential and actuality (*fī al-imbkān wa al-akwān*) this a land secure, purified for Thee alone, no partner hast thou, secure from the mention (*dhikr*) of all but Thee.

And provide its people with fruits from the power of origination and invention, according to whatever they want. Such of them as believe in God, He who there is no god other than Him, and in the Qā'im who is himself the Last Day, in the estimation of the Merciful.

God said: And whoso disbelieves in the sign of the exclusive unity, which is the land of Muḥammad, I shall give enjoyment [of] a little manifestation (*bī'l-tajallī*) of the immortality (*baqā'*) of the Family of God, and that was the command of God to 'Alī after the death of Muḥammad to deprive the necessities of life a little from the unbelievers.⁵⁸



There is a temptation, considering the Báb's eventual claims, to read into the above material a belief in an actual, historical appearance, particularly in those several passages which speak of the coming Qā'im's government (*salṭana, dawla, wizāra*) on a "specific day". This is also true of the passage that speaks of the 313 companions of the Qā'im, which because of its detail tends to evoke an actual historical event. At the same time, the Qā'im is described in personal "existential" or ontological terms as the fourth *mashhad*, which is also called the Fourth Support, "hidden within the souls of the Shi'a". In the commentary on Q 2:64, translated above, it seems clear that the Qā'im will return in the world of the Intellects (*jabarūt*). That the more or less abstract notion of Qā'im is identified with the name of a specific "historical" person, need not negate the possibility of its being only a spiritual principle. As has been amply

⁵⁷ *Baqara* 255–259.

⁵⁸ *Baqara* 281–282.

demonstrated throughout the preceding pages, the names of the members of the Family of God are very often seen as hypostases of theological or philosophical principles. However, this should not, in turn, obviate *ipso facto* the possibility that the Qā'im is also expected to appear as a specific individual. As Corbin has insisted, and has become clear by now, particularly with regard to the theory of **signs** found in this commentary, traces of all of the abstract principles have been deposited in the **horizons** and the **souls**: in both the material and spiritual realms, precisely to enable the individual to realize the “perfect” manifestation of such a principle when it appears. As Corbin himself observed:

When, because of our lack of knowledge, he is not inside of us, he cannot be recognized by us “anywhere”, because nothing can be known “on the outside” except thanks to a corresponding modality that it is in us.⁵⁹

From those passages discussed in the previous chapter which speak of *wijdān*, ecstatic superconsciousness or “instasy”, and in light of the clear authority with which the Báb comments on the Quran (e.g., “the meaning of this verse according to God/*wa'l-murād laday al-ḥaqq*,” or “I alone here am able to explain/*hā anā dhākir*”), it may be thought that the Qā'im was seen by the Báb primarily as an internal principle, but that finally his own experience or “encounter” with this principle was too strong to remain exclusively personal. That the intensity of his inner experience coincided with the Shi'i eschaton is of course of primary importance. Such a combination—demonstrated eventually in the literary style of the *Qayyūm al-asmā'*, a style we can see “in the making” in several passages in this work—was bound to produce changes in history. One of the changes would be an authentically Islamicate kerygma based firmly on cosmopolitanism and multiplicity—*vaḥdat dar kašrat*. This may also be seen here inchoately adumbrated in the numerous lands and seas, levels and hierarchies which—however schematically—account, to one degree or another, for every human whose pre-existent soul was present on the Day of the Covenant, *al-yawm al-ūlā*.

59 “Quand, par notre inscience, il n'est pas à l'intérieur de nous, il ne peut être ni connu ni reconnu de nous “nulle part”, car rien ne peut être connu extérieurement que grâce à une modalité correspondante qui soit en nous.” *Corbin*, iv:308–309.

A Mysticism of the Covenant

The title of this book *Tafsir as mystical experience* was chosen to convey the idea that the act of commentary here examined is mystical in at least two ways: (1) it refers to discursive mystical meaning, significance, information or knowledge as a “product” and (2) it also refers to a mystical state produced through the intimacy of reading the Quran, *the* theophanic phenomenon of Islam, as an “experience” akin to something like “holy communion” in which the words and verses of the holy book are internalized and lead to mystical transformation. The reading does not simply gloss the verses of the Quran for their mystical “meaning”. Rather, the engagement with the Quran also generates a mystical experience. This may also be thought of as meaning, especially if we bear in mind the Arabic technical term *maʿnā*, which as we saw seems to push the limits of speech and language to engage with realities beyond words and letters and is identified with the “Family of God”, the Prophet Muḥammad, his daughter Fāṭima and the 12 Imams, a companion theophanic phenomenon distinctive to Twelver Shiʿism.

The Báb’s encounter with the Quran also entails an encounter with the Imam. Through reading and contemplation of the Quran as understood and commented upon by his tradition, the Báb makes contact with the pre-eternal and glory-saturated *walāya* of the Family of God. The technical term bespeaks a cluster of salient and affective connotations and denotations among which are intimacy, kinship, mutuality, loyalty, authority, friendship and love. At certain points in the text, the reading and contemplation achieve an intensity which becomes ecstasy or, perhaps better, instasy (*wijdān*). The experiences of the Báb in this text are word-bound inasmuch as they rely upon the cosmogonic and communalistic verbal teachings of the Quran and Imami Shiʿism for their logic, rhetoric, syntax and morphology. In other words, no matter how “irrational” or “illogical” this discourse strikes a contemporary observer, even its most “irrational” elements provide sufficient rationale for the experiences of the Báb in the course of his commentary. Thus his encounter with divine glory and his intense love of the Family of God emerge as simultaneously and quintessentially reasonable. His expectation of the appearance of the Qāʾim, the embodiment of the ancient glory suffusing the images and arguments of the text and the hadith upon which the texts are based, is also perfectly reasonable within the terms of his tradition. His commentary makes his love of the Imams demonstrably reasonable and understandable largely as a result of

the apotheosis in the tradition of the intellect, *fu'ād*, *qalb*, *'aql*, as a traceable and largely explicable component of the way in which the so-called physical realm functions. At this point the technical terminology of the tafsir, like *dharr*, derived from the Quran, and others, like *ashbāh*, coming from more mysterious sources, are the terms of art for a new science elaborated by Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī and the Shaykhi school. The Báb is concerned here with knowledge of the highest order (Quran and Hadith) and so the operations indicated in the text are "scientifically" traceable and largely explicable components of the way in which the physical realm functions as well as being exquisitely experiential. The *dharr* (atom, seed) and the *ashbāh* (form of light) are, if you will, the "subatomic" components of the spiritual realm whose function in creation is as real as gravity. Further, their operation and function establish beyond doubt that the covenant, the originary Day of Alast, is not to be understood as an event of the unimaginably distant past but as a perpetually renewed cosmic event. Such an event is visible to the eye that sees the signs of God in all created things and audible to the ear that hears the question "Am I not your Lord?" in a silence that may be situated, as it were, between the perpetual destruction and recreation of the cosmos at every atom of time: a mysticism of the covenant.

As we have seen, much of the terminology in the tafsir is from the Sufi tradition and for this reason the work provides yet another source for the fascinating and complex historical relation between Sufism and Shi'ism and a contribution to the more restricted study of Shi'i esotericism.¹ The chief value of this study, however, is the degree to which it shows another aspect of the mystical dimension of the Quran itself and adds to the growing library of mystical Quran commentary. This book, it is hoped, also provides new information on the rise and development of the Babi religion of mid-19th century Iran and its later development, the Bahai Faith. In this regard it is one more contribution to the study of what has been characterized as the transformation of "a heterodox and seemingly negligible offshoot of the Shaykhí school of the Ithnā-'Ash'áriyyih sect of Shi'ah Islām into a world religion".² As such, it may be that this somewhat arcane study has interest for general religious studies and comparative religion with regard to the timeless process by which heresy becomes orthodoxy, for lack of more precise terminology.

1 See now the magisterial, Amir-Moezzi, *et alii*, (eds.), *L'Ésotérisme*.

2 Rabbani, *God* xii.

In the foregoing pages we have frequently mentioned the literary “device” known as typological figuration. One of the results of this study is a deeper appreciation of the way in which Shi‘i cosmogony and theodicy emerge as the substrate for the otherwise perfectly or nearly perfectly and virtually unstoppable process of identifying one character with a prototype or type from history as in those familiar transformations which sees Augustus identified as Romulus, Jesus identified as the Lamb of God, Muhammad identified as one of the brotherhood of prophets of the Abrahamic tradition. For Shi‘ism, and especially the Shi‘ism in this tafsir, such identifications are not merely imaginary or accidentally or even merely literary or poetic. They are based on the way the universe is understood to have been generated. Again, the entrance into the House of Glory, the intimate communion with the Family of God and the encounter with the hidden Imam conform to the laws of such a cosmos.³ Given the status of the hadith which preserve and transmit such information, and the commentary on such hadith by, for example, Aḥmad al-Aḥsā‘ī, the physics (nothing meta- about it) of mystical experience becomes scientifically verifiable and, one assumes, repeatable.⁴ Glory may illumine and it may veil, as is made clear by the many references in the tafsir to the *subuḥāt al-jalāl* “the glorious clouds [of self delusion]”. The Báb’s Quran commentary functions as a handbook on how to avoid the latter experience while being led to the former.

To some degree the cosmos in this work is one determined not only by the earliest hadith from the Imams and venerated especially by the Akhbari current of what may awkwardly be referred to as the Neo-Twelveverism of Safavid Iran and beyond. This comparatively recent iteration of Twelve Imam Shi‘ism was formed by the works of scholars who simply did not exist during the so-called classical period. From al-Ghazali, to Ibn ‘Arabi; from Suhrawardi to Ibn Abi Jumhur, and countless others, the Shi‘ism of this later period acquired a distinctive form, especially in its philosophical theology, Irfan or Hikmat. Axiomatic here is some version or another of the oneness of being so indelibly identified with Ibn Arabi or versions identified with his avid critics, like ‘Alā al-Dawla Simnānī,⁵ Aḥmad Sirhindī (1624),⁶ and Aḥmad al-Aḥsā‘ī. To be clear, the Báb does not quote Ibn Arabi in this tafsir, though he does quote him elsewhere fleetingly expressing mild disagreement on a particular point.⁷ The influence of the Shaykh Akbar on this tafsir is much more atmospheric and indirect. But it is

3 Amir-Moezzi, *Cosmogony*.

4 Kazemi, *Mysteries*.

5 Landolt, *Simnani*.

6 Friedmann, *Sirhindi*.

7 Rafati, Ibn ‘Arabi.

there. Thus we have the ancient, if you like “Kufan”, mythic structure of Imami Shi‘ism, especially as elaborated in the Shaykhi school,⁸ being given a home in this new cosmos elaborated by the viruosos of post Ibn Arabi intellectual history. A hadith read by someone formed in this later milieu simply cannot be read the way it was in the 10th century.

In closing, it remains simply to state the obvious, that the Báb’s thought and method in this commentary are fully Islamicate. There is no influence from outside the textual world of Islam. This work combines a knowledge of the Quran, of Hadith and apperceptions and aphorisms from the wider Sufi tradition and aspects of the Shaykhi teachings. Note, however, that our study establishes that there is no direct mention of the characteristic complex Shaykhi “anthropogenesis” which includes numerous bodies and realms for resurrection such as Hurqalya. Nor is there a detailed or structured discussion of the theories of time associated with the school.⁹ These things only appear through allusion or inference if they appear at all. It is quite possible, since the tafsir seems to have been begun as a tribute to the Báb’s “beloved teacher”, Kāẓim Rashti, that he fully intended to produce a commentary in the same style on the whole Quran. Such a plan was obviously way-layed by powerful eschatological events perceived in the soul and the world traceable to the mystical contemplations and experiences in this early Quran commentary.

8 Bausani, *Religiosa* 340–343 and *Corbin*, iv:206.

9 Corbin, iv: 256–300; Hamid, *Metaphysics*; and briefly described in MacEoin, *Cosmogony*.

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