

**Some aspects of
Isrá’íliyyát and the emergence
of the
Bábí-Bahá’í Interpretation
of the Bible**



A thesis submitted to the Department of
Religious Studies of the University of
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the requirements of Ph.D.



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Digitisation and editing comments

The digitisation and formatting of the image PDF file of this dissertation was extremely slow and difficult. Although the text on the original page images is clear, there are a number of issues with the text:

1. A sans serif font is used.

2. The macrons sit on or are very close to the letters.

3. A very large number of unusual contractions is used (not always consistently).

4. The number and variety of typing errors are vast, including missing transcription marks and the reversal of consonants in transcribed[[1]](#footnote-1) words.

5. The standard of English is poor, and often poorly punctuated (largely not addressed).

Some inaccuracies have been found in the quotes, their references, and in the bibliography. It is feared many more such errors remain.

Based on the above, the question then arises, why spend time working with a very flawed document? There are four main reasons:

1. Some information in the dissertation helped refine or expand the information in my “Glossary and transcription for Arabic & Persian terms” list (copies are available online)

2. Resolving errors or searching for additional information led to new information that was added to my list

3. Images of text in Arabic, Persian, Hebrew and Greek were largely identified and converted to text font using *Perplexity AI* software. The software was also used to clarify issues and obtain additional information. This proved to be a very useful learning process.

4. Besides providing useful mental stimulation, it was also an opportunity to further train my brain to recognise if words are correctly transcribed.

**NOTE**: The author assumes (using so-called **“influence study**” principles) that any similarity between the works of the Báb or Bahá’u’lláh to information or ideas in previously published works indicates that They had access to, and obtained Their information or ideas from, or were influenced by, these earlier publications.

It is better to avoid **any** suggestion that the Manifestations of God (and ‘Abdu'l-Bahá) derive Their understanding from the words of men. Although the writings of men may have been chronologically earlier, whatever truths they were inspired to utter originated with God Who is not limited by time or space. Likewise, “The Prophets, unlike us, are pre-existent. The soul of Christ existed in the spiritual world before His birth in this world.” (Shoghi Effendi, *High Endeavours—Messages to Alaska*, p. 71).[[2]](#footnote-2) Furthermore, it is incorrect to suggest that Their teachings on issues such as holy war and global unity evolved over time. Rather, the teachings of the Manifestations of God were revealed progressively in accordance with the growing understanding of Their followers.

Abstract

‘Some Aspects of Isrá’íliyyát and the Emergence of the Bábí-Bahá’í Interpretation of the Bible’

Stephen N. Lambden

This thesis deals with Islamic Isrá’íliyyát (“Israelitica”) literary traditions, the Bible and the relationship to them of two closely related post-Islamic movements, the Bábí and Bahá’í religions. It concerns the Islamic assimilation and treatment of pre-Islamic, biblical and related materials and their level of post-Islamic Bábí-Bahá’í assimilation and exposition. More specifically, this thesis focuses upon select aspects of the biblical and Islamo-biblical (“Islamified”, “Islamicate”) traditions reflected within the Arabic and Persian writings of two Iranian born 19th century messianic claimants Sayyid ‘Alí Muḥammad Shírází, the Báb (1819–1859) and Mírzá Ḥusayn ‘Alí Núrí (1817–1892), entitled Bahá’-Alláh, the founders of the Bábí and Bahá’í religions respectively.

The presence of Islamo-biblical citations and the absence of canonical biblical citations within the writings of the Báb will be argued as will the emergence of the Bahá’í interpretation of the canonical Bible though its founder figure Bahá’-Alláh who first cited an Arabic Christian Bible version whilst resident in Ottoman Iraq (Baghdad) towards the end of what has been called the middle-Bábí period (CE 1861–1862). This laid the foundations for the Bahá’í interpretation of the Bible which was greatly enriched and extended by oriental Bahá’í apologists, Bahá’-Alláh’s eldest son ‘Abd al-Bahá’ Abbás (d. 1921) and his great-grandson Shoghi Effendi (d. 1957) who shaped the modern global Bahá’í phenomenon. Over a century or so the neo-Shí‘í millennialist faction that was Babism (the religion of the Báb) evolved into the global Bahá’í religion of the Book.

Throughout this thesis aspects of Isrá’íliyyát will be analysed historically and the Islamic, especially Shí‘í-Shaykhí background to and the Bábí-Bahá’í messianic renewal of the Isrá’íliyyát rooted tradition of the ism Alláh al-a‘ẓam (Mightiest Name of God) will be noted and commented upon.

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Preface

This thesis was begun about nineteen years ago. For medical reasons it was largely abandoned for more than a decade. Several actual or nominal doctoral supervisors encouraged me, though I was initially unable to accomplish much. I did, however, manage to collect relevant material, struggle to keep up to date in the research area, maintain contacts in the fast evolving field of Bábí-Bahá’í studies, and attempt to become computer literate.

My initial supervisor within the Dept. of Religious Studies (Univ. of Newcastle upon Tyne) Dr Denis MacEoin (1982–1986, then lecturer in [Arabic and] Islamic Studies) had been and (unofficially remained) wonderfully supportive and generous with advice and loans from his excellent library. After him the now retired head of the Newcastle Dept., Prof. John Sawyer, offered encouragement and support for an extended period, witnessing little evidence of completion. More recently and despite multitudinous academic and other commitments, Dr William Telford generously and patiently guided me on the right path through writing up and submission.

In the early 1980s I benefited considerably by extending my meagre knowledge of Arabic and Persian though the study of Persian grammar and the translation of Bábí-Bahá’í texts at the University of Durham with Dr Paul Luft (until recently, at Manchester Univ.) and his assistant, the now late Dr Reza Navabpour. A good many professional and lay and experts in the field of Shi‘ism and Bábí-Bahá’í studies have also, over the years, assisted in various ways; including, for example, Dr Juan Cole (Univ. Michigan), Dr B. Todd Lawson (Univ. Toronto), Dr Moojan Momen (Cambridge), Dr Sholeh Quinn (Athens, Ohio) and Dr Peter Smith (Univ. Mahidol, Thailand). The institutions at the Bahá’í World Centre (Haifa Israel), the family of the late Hasan Balyuzi including the trustees of the (now Tonbridge, UK based) Afnán Library, as well as numerous other families and friends, generously provided me with an almost unending supply of the primary Persian and Arabic and other Bábí-Bahá’í source materials as well as notice of important books and mss. of diverse kinds. I remain in great debt to all of the above persons and to others too numerous to mention here, for their longstanding

patience, friendship, support and understanding.

Introductory note

Bábí-Bahá’í studies had its apologetic genesis in the first half of the 19th century when learned, predominantly Shaykhí, disciples of the Báb expounded and defended their religion in the face of increasingly hostile, largely Shí‘í clerical attacks. Later, numerous apologetic writings of the founders of the Bábí and Bahá’í religions and their followers were written. Bábí-Bahá’í primary, and to some extent secondary literatures, are extremely vast and in a very wide range of languages. Many Bábí and Bahá’í manuscripts and documents remain uncatalogued and unstudied awaiting academic examination and publication. Secondary literatures are often uneven. They exhibit a very wide range of perspectives from the banal and uninformed to works of considerable insight and integrity. Most academic writing remains highly speculative and often misleading in a field that remains in its infancy.

The prominent western orientalists who published studies in the nascent Bábí (-Bahá’í) religions, include several persons then active in Tsarist Russia, including Alexander (Mírzá) Kazem-Beg (1802–c. 1870), Alexander G. Tumanski (1805–1881) and their German born associate, Jean-Albert-Bernard Dorn (1805–1881). It is a curious twist of history, however, that the notorious French journalist, diplomat, and ‘Father of Racism’, Joseph Arthur, Comte de Gobineau (1816–1882) in his *Les religions et les philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale* (Paris, 1865 + many subsequent editions), made spirited and more than passing mention of the religion of the Báb. He thus stimulated interest in the Bábí rooted Bahá’í religious movement which ultimately promoted an anti-racist universal perspective highlighting the oneness of humankind. It was this volume of Gobineau which first inspired the Cambridge scholar E. G. Browne (1862–1926) to devote many years to the study of the Bábí-Azalí and to a far lesser extent Bahá’í religion.

The genius of the idiosyncratic ‘Father of Islamic Studies’, Ignaz Goldziher (1850–1921), penned an occasional paper on matters Bábí-Bahá’í. He had cordial association with ‘Abbas Effendi, ‘Abd al-Bahá, the son and successor of Bahá’-Alláh. So too did his early mentor, the

turkologist Armin Vambery (1832–1913), a Jewish-Hungarian linguist and one-time dervish who ultimately considered himself a Bahá’í. This also became the professed religious orientation of the Oxford Hebraist, Thomas K. Cheyne (1841–1915). The one time Oriel Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture’ at Oxford, Cheyne adopted the epithet Rúḥání (“Spiritual”) and authored a now largely forgotten Bahá’í book, *The Reconciliation of Races and Religions* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1914).

Scholars, orientalists and academics of the subsequent couple of generations following Browne’s death, largely paid little or no attention to the Bábí-Bahá’í religions. This despite the fairly impressive global diffusion and growth of Bahá’í (now approx., 5–6 million, Smith, 1996:132). They tended to dismiss it as an insignificant outgrowth of Islam, an alien movement or crankish faction neither exactly Islamic nor Christian and frequently attacked by narrow-minded followers of both these world Faiths. It has largely been in the last few decades that things have begun to change. There are now several professorships in Bahá’í studies and a growing number of lectureships in the subject in academically respectable universities including the Hebrew University at Jerusalem.

Bábí-Bahá’í studies was a fairly respectable orientalist-academic pursuit from the 1860s up till roughly the 1920s. The succeeding decades up to the 1960s were very largely a period in which Bahá’ís were persecuted in the Middle East and, on the whole, no longer taken particularly seriously in the West. The majority of Bahá’ís were heavily engaged in matters evangelical. Intellectual adherents were generally marginalised or too ensconced in their own academic or other careers (sometimes in the field of Iranian-Middle Eastern Studies) to give sustained or serious attention to the academic analysis of their own Faith. Until recently few built upon or scrutinized the findings of the above-mentioned pioneer orientalists. Very little non-evangelical writing or research had, for practically 60 years, been published within or without the Bahá’í community.

It was largely amongst western Bahá’í intellectuals in Europe and America in the late 60s and early 70s that early glimmerings of an academic Bábí-Bahá’í studies appeared. This

was partly inspired by the example and writings of the academically oriented Bahá’í historian and apologist, Hasan M. Balyuzi (1908–1980). Through him British Bahá’ís became fascinated with seemingly approachable aspects of Bábí-Bahá’í history. The largely historically oriented legacy of Browne and others began to be pondered and critically assessed. Very little or no attention was initially given, however, to the academic analysis of Bábí-Bahá’í religious doctrine, to the intricacies of its theologized historiography, theology or theophanology. Few analysed the Bábí-Bahá’í phenomenon and its sacred writ. Among the exceptions was the somewhat unique 1923 Edinburgh University doctoral thesis of S. Alter entitled *Studies in Bahaism*. This thesis attempts to research some aspects of the genesis of Bábí-Bahá’í religious doctrine, the origins of its biblical citation and interpretation in the light of Isrá’íliyyát (Israelitica); loosely, Abrahamic biblical and related materials within Islamic sources.

Abbreviations and terminology

In view of the existence of a myriad Shírázís of note, the name of Sayyid ‘Alí Muḥammad Shírází (CE 1819–1859) will not be abbreviated in this manner. Rather, his well-known title the Báb (‘The Gate’) will be used. Mírzá Ḥusayn ‘Alí Núrí (1817–1892) who came to be entitled Bahá’-Alláh (‘The Splendour of God’) and founded the Bahá’í religion, will be abbreviated BA\*. His eldest son and successor ‘Abbás known as ‘Abd al-Bahá’ (1844–1921) will be indicated by AB\* and his great-grandson, the Bahá’í leader Shoghi Effendi (Shawqí Rabbání; c. 1896–1957) by SE\*.

Calendral and general abbreviations

Years will be given (when appropriate) according to the Islamic Hijri calendar followed by a forward slash and then the corresponding date[s] of the Common Era. CE indicates the date of the Common Era and AH (*Anno Hegrie*) that of the Muslim (lunar) calendar. The calendral abbreviation BE will indicate the solar Bábí-Bahá’í or Badí‘ (new) era which began in May 1260/1844 and is in use by contemporary Bahá’ís.

General and bibliographical abbreviations

A variety of general abbreviations will be used at various points throughout this thesis. Apart from Heb. for Hebrew, Ar. for ‘Arabic’ and Per. for ‘Persian’ a few further examples are:

HB Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) K. Kitáb (book)

Kh. Khuṭba (= Homily, Sermon) L. Lawḥ (tablet)

NT New Testament Q. Qur’án

Sh. Sharḥ (Commentary) T. Tafsír (Commentary)

Abbreviations for periodicals and other sources, generally follow those set out in key western academic literatures in the fields of Biblical, Iranian and Islamic studies, e.g. the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (1:lii–lxxxviii), *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (xxi–xlviii); the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd ed. 1:ix–xii) and *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (1:8–19). Most of these major abbreviations are indicated alphabetically in the bibliographies (1-->3 p. 216ff).

Terminology: Islamo-biblical, Islamified, Islamicate

Academic terminology expressive of the creative Islamic utilization and reinterpretation of the Bible and Abrahamic and other religious materials is undeveloped and inadequate. As succinctly defined the following terms will be utilized here:

1. Islamo-biblical = Islamic citations or recreations of biblical data. Something Islamo-biblical may express a conscious or unconscious Islamic assimilation of biblically rooted materials.

2. Islamicate or Islamified will be used to express aspects of the Islamic utilization of pre-Islamic (Jewish, Christian, etc.) religious and cultural materials.

Transliteration of Arabic and Persian

The system of Arabic-Persian transliteration used throughout this thesis is essentially that adopted in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*2 (-->EI2) except that all underlining is dropped, the letter ج is transliterated j (not dj) and “q” is used for ق (not “k”). The Persian termination ة ‘ih’ will usually be used for distinctly Persian sources and names (as opposed to the Arabic *a*).

1.
Isrá’íliyyát: Some aspects of the
Islamic and Bábí-Bahá’í background

Sayyid ‘Alí Muḥammad Shírází, the Báb (‘the Gate’; CE 1819–1850) and Mírzá Ḥusayn ‘Alí Núrí, entitled Bahá’-Alláh (= BA\*, ‘The Splendour of God’, CE 1817–1892) were contemporary Iranian born messianic claimants who founded religious movements which have evolved into the now globally diffused, neo-Shí‘í, Bahá’í ‘religion of the book’. The voluminous Arabic and Persian Bábí-Bahá’í scripture which they set forth includes exegetical, prophetological and eschatological themes and motifs. A proportion of this literature is directly or indirectly expository of the Bible and the Qur’án (= Q.) as well as Isrá’íliyyát traditions expressive of motifs and themes originally Jewish Christian or Abrahamic. While, as will be argued, the Báb made no direct use of the canonical Bible, BA\* and his successors evinced an increasingly detailed knowledge of the Bible. Post-Bábí Bahá’í writers were progressively and more markedly influenced by the Bible though this text had a relatively minor influence compared to the foundational Shí‘í and associated Islamic universe of discourse.

Of primary background importance to Bábí-Bahá’í scriptural studies is the Arabic Q. which often reflects biblical material. This influential book was frequently cited as divine revelation by the Báb and BA\*. Both were born into Qajar Shí‘í families where at least the consciousness of its importance and the rote learning of something of its contents was standard. The architects of the Bábí and Bahá’í religions both show a wide knowledge of the Q. They produced sometimes neo-qur’anic Arabic writings modelled upon it. Directly and allusively, often typologically and allegorically, they commented upon the Q.; upon certain of its surahs, verses, words and/or letters, at times in a novel, rewritten or *waḥy*—‘revelation mode’. Their Arabic-Persian style was much influenced by the content, vocabulary and rhyming prose of the Q. A good deal of Bábí-Bahá’í prophetology and theophanology (Ar. *maẓhariyya*) is rooted in an exegesis of the often biblically rooted prophetology of the Q. Many writings of the Báb and BA\* draw upon and expound, from a basically neo- or post-Shí‘í standpoint, Islamic traditions which have a biblical-qur’anic substrate.

Bahá’í scripture seeks to re-interpret both the Bible and the Q. This in the light of its claim to fulfill previous major Abrahamic eschatological expectations and extend the eternal religion of God (= renewed “Islam”). While the writings of the Báb contain huge quantities of *tafsír* and Q. influenced texts, those of BA\* additionally contain numerous directly, biblically influenced *pericopae*. Select extra-biblical, Islamo-biblical and other Abrahamic religious materials from primitive Islamic times dubbed Isrá’íliyyát (= “Israelitica”) are likewise interpreted in novel ways. The Báb, BA\* and their successors creatively utilized and interpreted qur’anic and extra-qur’anic motifs, *pericopae* and narratives collectively found in the Islamic *qiṣáṣ al-anbiyá’* (Stories of the prophets) literatures. These prophetological materials are intimately related to and here considered a part of the Isrá’íliyyát stream of religious tradition.

The Báb and BA\* were both influenced by aspects of the vast corpus of orthodox and heterodox Islamic literatures which in one way or another contain, assimilate or expound pre-Islamic scripture, legends of the prophets and associated materials. Dimensions of such Isrá’íliyyát materials pertinent to the background of this thesis will be selectively surveyed below (-->2.1ff). The result will be a source-critical trajectory which will sometimes follow pathways outside of mainstream Sunní and even Shí‘í Islamic norms. The complex, multi-faceted often Shí‘í-Shaykhí and associated background material demands this (-->5.1f). Just as the non-mainstream, ‘heterodox’ Qumran and associated Jewish texts throw light on emergent Christianity, so does the Bábí-Bahá’í religious ‘universe of discourse’ have key doctrinal roots in the byways of the Islamic mystico-intellectual world. From time to time in this opening and the following chapters key Bábí-Bahá’í hermeneutical and doctrinal teachings will also be summarily noted. First a few notes upon the significance of the term Isrá’íliyyát.

1.1 Isrá’íliyyát and its Islamic assimilation

The Arabic plural إِسْرَائِيلِيَّات, Isrá’íliyyát (loosely, ‘Israelitica’; sing. Isrá’íliyya) is an Arabic plural derived from the Hebrew proper name יִשְׂרָאֵל (yisrá’êl, lit. ‘contender with God’), namely (Ar.) إِسْرَائِيل Isrá’íl, the designation of the renamed Jacob, who was the father of the twelve tribes (Gen.

32:28, 35:10). In its narrow sense it may indicate oral or written Islamic traditions thought to have been transmitted by or derived from the “children of Israel” (*baní isrá’íl*). More inclusively it can indicate a range of biblical or Abrahamic scripture, folklore, hagiography and legend. The term Isrá’íliyyát indicates diverse traditions to a greater or lesser extent Islamicate (= ‘Islamified’) or Islamo-biblical in the sense of having been doctrinally assimilated within Islam or exegetically reinterpreted by Muslims.

The word Isrá’íliyyát has been in use since the early Islamic centuries when it initially had purely descriptive and neutral connotations (Adang, 1996:9 fn. 49). In later centuries this word came in some circles to be used pejoratively though this negative use of Isrá’íliyyát was not and never has been adopted universally in the Muslim world. In numerous Islamic sources Isrá’íliyyát has a long, disparate and not yet fully articulated semantic history. There is no standard, clear cut or agreed upon Islamic or modern academic definition of Isrá’íliyyát. In this thesis, as in much modern academic writing, Isrá’íliyyát will be used neutrally to indicate all manner of source materials expressive of the Islamic adoption of biblical, extra-biblical, Abrahamic and related religious materials of the kind registered in Muslim literary sources to be listed and partly discussed below (-->3.1ff).

Islamic Isrá’íliyyát traditions often originated with early converts to Islam from the Abrahamic and related religions. Some derive from non-Muslim Arabs who had intimate contact with Jews, Christians and other Abrahamic religionists (Vajda, EI2 IV:211). Jewish, Christian, Manichean and other converts to Islam did not simply abandon their cherished sacred writings and religious traditions. They often came to be assimilated into an Islamicate intellectual universe where Jewish, Christian and other streams of scripture and tradition were assimilated and deemed fulfilled; where proof-texts and eschatological traditions were given new dimensions of meaning. Elements, for example, of biblical, pseudo-biblical, pseudepigraphical, and Rabbinic, (targumic, midrashic and Talmudic, etc.) thought were registered or reflected in the Isrá’íliyyát traditions. So too on occasion were apocryphal Gospel and other Christian materials assimilated within nascent

Islam (Hoyland 1997; Wasserstrom 1994). A dynamic and creative symbiosis between emergent Islam and Abrahamic and associated religious ideas was a feature of early Islam that is reflected in the Islamicate and Islamo-biblical Isrá’íliyyát traditions (Wasserstrom, 1995).

Early Muslim transmitters of Isrá’íliyyát

From the early Islamic centuries charismatic and sometimes literate converts to Islam became *quṣṣaṣ* (sing. *qáṣṣ*), story-tellers or pious *wu‘‘áẓẓ* (= “preachers”, sing. *wa‘íẓ*). These persons were basically popularises of Islamo-biblical or ultimately Islamicate stories which can often be traced back to legends of the *ahl al-kitáb*, the ‘People of the Book’ (= Jews and Christians, etc.) or the *baní isrá’íl* (children of Israel = Jews). Though Muslim converts from the *ahl al-kitáb* sometimes perpetuated fantastic, entertaining myths, others were respected and influential fountainheads of oral and literary Isrá’íliyyát. The *quṣṣaṣ* were important in the dissemination of biblical and extra-biblical materials as well as Abrahamic and Persian-Zoroastrian, Manichean and other materials into Islam. Through their storytelling they expounded and interpreted the implications of the qur’anic and post-qur’anic Islamic message. This in the light of Abrahamic scripture and tradition which they Islamified or made expressive of Islamic perspectives.[[3]](#footnote-3)

It must suffice here to introduce three key figures among those who transmitted Isrá’íliyyát from the earliest times. Still cited as authorities today in many parts of the Muslim world the following persons lived during the period of emergent Islam. The Isrá’íliyyát they creatively transmitted was often attributed to Muḥammad, certain of the Shí‘í Imams, or to other worthies of the first Islamic centuries. It helped shape centuries of Islamic attitudes towards pre-Islamic scripture and the ‘people of the Book’. The following three persons were among those especially

important as transmitters of Isrá’íliyyát.[[4]](#footnote-4)

1. Abú Isḥáq Ka‘b al-Aḥbár b. Máti‘ (d.c. 32/652)

Possibly a Yemenite Rabbi and Jewish convert to Islam, Ka‘b al-Aḥbár is said to have “read and explained the Torah in the mosque of Medina” (Adang, 1996:8). He is believed to have written such now lost works as a ‘Book on Adam and Eve’; ‘The Tradition of Dhú’l-Kifl’; a *Sírat al-Iskandar* (The Story of Alexander) and the *Wafát Músá* (Passing of Moses). Ibn ‘Abbás and Abú Hurayra (d.c. 58/678) were allegedly among his pupils. They transmitted a very large body of tradition (esp. from ‘Abd-Alláh b. Salám) which falls within the category of Isrá’íliyyát.[[5]](#footnote-5)

2. ‘Abd Alláh b. Salám al-Ḥaríth (d. 43/663–664)

A Medinan Jew of Meccan origin, ‘Abd-Alláh b. Salám converted to Islam after the Hijra. He is said to have aided Muḥammad “in obtaining correct biblical information from the Rabbis” (Abbott 1977). The Prophet is said to have promised him a place in paradise. To him are attributed books on magic and amulets as well, for example, as ‘Traditions from the Book of Daniel’. Numerous Islamicate, Isrá’íliyyát traditions originated with him. They were often relayed by the prolific traditionalist Anas b. Malik (d. Basra, c. 91–93/709–711?). Clusters of traditions, including an important *K. al-Masá’il* (‘Questions and Answers’) text, are attributed to this key transmitter of Isrá’íliyyát. He figured as an archetypal, Jewish convert to Islam (Sezgin, GAL 1:304; Horovitz, EI2 I:52; Wasserstrom 1995:175–8).

3. Abú ‘Abd-Alláh Wahb b. Munabbih

Probably another Yemenite Jew of Persian descent, Wahb (b. Sana c. 34/654–655–d.c. 110/728 or 114/732?) was an important authority on Abrahamic scripture and legend, especially South Arabian lore. Though perhaps another name for part of his *K. al-mubtadá’* (‘Book of Creation’), *K. al-Isrá’íliyyát* is the title of one of his several lost books (Duri, 1983:128f). It appears to have been a work whose contents were acquired from Yemenite Jewish *hakhamim* and Christians (Hirschberg, EJ 16:241–2). These works of Wahb b. Munabbih are attested as early as 229/843–844 (Rosenthal, 1968:335 fn. 2) and in even earlier streams of the *Tafsír* tradition. Other works evidence his wide interest in Isrá’íliyyát as Abrahamic fables, folklore and history. Among works ascribed to him is a *Ḥikmat* (“Wisdom book”) associated with the sage Luqmán, a version of the *Zabúr* (Psalter) entitled *Mazámír Dáwúd* (Psalms of David) and a *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* (Stories of the Prophets) work.

Also attributed to Wahb b. Munabbih is a *Tafsír* (Q. commentary) and a *Sírat an-nabí* (Treatise on the Life of the Prophet), a *Maghází Rasúl Alláh* (Account of military expeditions of the Messenger of God) and a compilation entitled *K. al-qadr* (Book of Destiny). A recension of his *K. al-Mulúk … min Ḥimyar* … (The Book of the Himyarite Kings …) by Ibn Hishám, known as the *K. al-Tiján fí mulúk al-Ḥimyar* (The Book of the Crowned Kings of the Himyarites) has been described as “a rich mine of Arabian fable, legend and garbled chronicles” in which may be seen “the powerful influence of Rabbinical, Syriac and Persian lore in both poetry and prose.” (Norris, CHAL 1:385). Muḥammad is said to have stated that God bestowed *ḥikma* (wisdom) upon Wahb b. Munabbih (Ibn Sa‘d, Tabaqát, V:395). Numerous respected Muslim authorities, including Ibn Isḥáq, aṭ-Ṭabarí and al-Kisá’í cite him approvingly though some modern Muslim anti-Isrá’íliyyát authorities regard him as unreliable. Adang has recently referred to Wahb b. Munabbih as the “foremost transmitter of biblical narratives” (1996:10).[[6]](#footnote-6)

1.2 Early Islamic/Shí‘í attitudes towards Isrá’íliyyát (positive and negative)

So, if thou art in doubt regarding what We have sent down to thee ask those who recite the Book before thee (tr., Arberry) (Q. 10:94).

In certain early, allegedly prophetic traditions, the Muslim appropriation of material from the *baní isrá’íl* (“children of Israel” = the Isrá’íliyyát traditions) is viewed as perfectly acceptable. (Goldziher, 1902; Kister, 1972) Existing in different forms in a wide range of early Islamic works including the *Jámi‘* of Ma‘mar b. Rashíd (d. 154/770), the *Risála* of ash-Sháfi‘í (d. 204/820), the *Musnad* of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) and the *Saḥíḥ* of al-Bukharí (d. 256 /870), it is reported that Muḥammad stated, according to one positive version of the *ḥaddíthú ‘an baní isrá’íla* (“Narrate from the children of Israel!”),

Transmit of my [prophetic] authority be it even one verse [from the Q.], narrate [traditions] concerning the children of Israel [*ḥaddíthú ‘an baní isrá’íla*] and there is nothing objectionable [in that]; he who [intentionally] tells a lie on my authority—let him take his place in hell … (tr. Kister 1972:215–6)

Versions of this ḥadíth were widely circulated and variously understood by Muslim writers. At times it was a directive which formed part of a complex ḥadíth bidding the faithful to (a) transmit qur’anic verses and (b) narrate traditions concerning the “children of Israel” but not to c) lie when transmitting traditions from Muḥammad (Kister, ibid., 217). On the authority of Abú Hurayra a variant of this tradition was recorded to the effect that when asked whether Muslims should narrate stories about the children of Israel, Muḥammad replied,

Narrate concerning them, there are always [Islamic?] things which are more wonderful (Kister, ibid., 218–9).

Another positive version of this *ḥaddíthú ‘an baní isrá’íla* reads, “Transmit on my authority be it even one verse and narrate concerning the Children of Israel and there is nothing objectionable (in that)” (cited Kister 1972:217).[[7]](#footnote-7)

For some early Muslims these and similar traditions legitimized the whole scale incorporation of Isrá’íliyyát traditions into Islam. Converts to Islam from the “people of the Book” were free to disseminate and incorporate the Isrá’íliyyát heritage. Key figures of later generations often followed their example and Isrá’íliyyát appear in a very wide range of Islamic literatures (-->2.1ff). The term Isrá’íliyyát is used positively, for example, by the historian Ibn Khaldún (d. 808/1406) in his famous *Muqaddima* … (Prolegomena [to History] *Muqaddimah*, 15, tr. Rosenthal, I:19f)[[8]](#footnote-8) and by the Persian Sunni scholar Faḍl-Alláh b. Rúzbihán Khunjí-lṣfahání (d. 927/1521) in his systematization of history, the *Tá’ríkh-i ‘álam áráy-i Amíní* (Khunji-Iṣfahání, ed. Woods, 1992:9, [Per.] 88).

Shi‘ism and narration from the *baní Isrá’íl* (“children of Israel”)

Widely read in the Islamic east, the third volume of the detailed history *K. al-Bad‘ wa’l tá’ríkh* (The Book of Creation and History, written c. 355/966) of the Shí‘í historian Mutahhar b. Ṭahir al-Maqdisí (fl. 3rd/10th cent.) cites a positive version of the *ḥaddíthu ‘an baní isrá’íl*, “Narrate from the children of Israel without hesitation (*lá ḥaraja*)”: This in the context of his discoursing upon the miracles of Moses and the wonders of the children of Israel (K.Bad‘ III:93f). Maqdisí records a great deal of Isrá’íliyyát and other details of Abrahamic religion and history (Adang, 1996:48–50; 84–7; 126–31; 233–4). So too the biblically learned Shí‘í historians al-Ya‘qúbí (d.c. 292/905) and al-Mas‘údí (d. 345/956) (-->3.1).

The weighty *Biḥár al-anwar* of the Shí‘í polymath and one time Shaykh al-Islám, Muḥammad Báqir Majlisí (d. 1111/1699) does not contain especially negative forms of the *ḥaddíthú ‘an baní isrá’íla* or register trenchantly anti-Isrá’íliyyát traditions (Bihar2 14:494f). A fairly positive version of the tradition about narrating from the Israelites going back to the Prophet through Ja‘far as-Sádiq is cited by Majlisí in his *Biḥár al-anwár* from the *Qiṣaṣ an-anbiyá’* work of

Quṭb ad-Dín al-Rawandí (d. Qumm, 573/1177). It is included in a section of the *K. Nubuwwa* headed *nawádir akhbár baní isrá’íl* (“The curiosities of the narrations regarding the children of Israel”) (Bihar2 14:486ff). With a few minor variants, the recent printing of the *Qiṣaṣ* of al-Rawandí (1409/1989 -->bib.) contains this tradition in division five of its 9th section headed *fí baní isrá’íl* (On the children of Israel) (al-Rawandí, Qiṣaṣ, 187). It is cited from an unspecified work of Ibn Bábúya (4.2 -->) as transmitted through his father back through a certain ‘Abd al-A‘lá b. A‘yun who is said to have informed Abí ‘Abd-Alláh (= Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣádiq) that a tradition (*ḥadíth*) had been transmitted by the people (*an-nás* = Sunnis?) to the effect that the messenger of God [Muḥammad] said, “Narrate from the children of Israel (*ḥaddath*[*ú*] *‘an baní isrá’íla*) and without hesitation (*lá ḥaraja*)”. Imám aṣ-Ṣádiq affirmed that this was the case without further comment. The tradition, however, continues thus:

I said [to Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣádiq], ‘So is it the case that we should transmit from the children of Israel and should not discount this testimony?’ He [Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣádiq] said, ‘Have you not heard what he [Muḥammad] said?’, Man is the best liar if he transmits everything he hears’. Then I said, how is that? He [Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣádiq] replied, ‘It may not be [contained] in the Book (= Q?) but be something [sanctioned] among the children of Israel, so transmit what belongs to this community and don’t hesitate about it” (Bihar2 14:494–5).

Majlisí himself found it necessary to attempt clarification of this somewhat ambiguous tradition apparently legitimizing Isrá’íliyyát transmission from the *baní isrá’íl* (Jews). He appended several interpretations to it (Bihar2 14:495). He first cites a certain Jazrí who explained that such transmission from Jews is perfectly acceptable as long as it is an accurate transmission and is not relayed through aberrant persons. The tradition obviously gives legitimacy to Shí‘í Muslims transmitting from Jews, in relaying, it appears, Isrá’íliyyát traditions. This Shí‘í version may be contrasted with the often more negative Sunní versions of the ḥadíth.

The question of the specifically Shí‘í position(s) regarding Isrá’íliyyát, biblical *taḥríf* (“corruption”) and related matters needs detailed investigation and is beyond the scope of this

thesis though some further notes will be sketched in subsequent chapters (esp. 5.2).[[9]](#footnote-9) It can be noted though, that a proportion of Shí‘í thinkers from both early and later times held back from viewing pre-Islamic scripture and tradition as absolutely corrupted. Numerous Shí‘í writers had a tremendous openness towards the assimilation of biblical texts and Isrá’íliyyát traditions (-->4.2f). Records of the *Iḥtiháját* (Religious Disputations), the debates of the (twelver) Imams, the ahl al-kitáb and others show the considerable and positive by the Imams of Abrahamic scripture and tradition. From the earliest times (proto-) Shí‘í writers seem to have delighted in finding a nexus of typological intimations and prophetic testimonies to their Shí‘í beliefs and practices in the Bible and Isrá’íliyyát. They held that Shí‘í perspectives were upheld and intimated in pre-Islamic scripture. It was assumed in the interests of apologetics that the pre-Islamic age was really a proto-Shí‘í era. Shí‘í Islam existed from primordial times as evidenced in ancient history and biblical scripture. Isrá’íliyyát materials and biblical texts were drawn upon within Shi‘ism in order to highlight an allegedly ancient Shi‘ite wisdom. Developed Bábí-Bahá’í globalism and ecumenism owes a good deal to the openness of Sufi and Shí‘í thinkers.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Muslim opposition to Isrá’íliyyát traditions

Bypassing the implications of Q. 10:94 (cited above) other pious Muslims were not at all well-disposed towards Isrá’íliyyát traditions. They gave weight to negative versions of the *ḥaddíthú ‘an baní isrá’íl* (Narrate from the children of Israel) and other more explicitly restrictive traditions. It came to be believed in pietist, orthodox circles that the acceptance of traditions from

the unbelieving “people of the Book” was something unwise or interdicted (Kister, 1972, esp. 234f; Montgomery-Watt, 1956[7]:60–62). The sources confirm an early Muslim reaction against an increasing tendency to accept guidance from Jews and Christians seen as unbelieving purveyors of possibly “corrupt” non-qur’anic scripture. In allegedly prophetic traditions and writings influenced thereby, grave misgivings were voiced regarding Isrá’íliyyát materials. One such tradition reported through Zayd b. Aslam has the prophet state,

Do not ask the people of the Book (*ahl al-kitáb*) about anything, because they will not show you the right path having already led themselves astray.[[11]](#footnote-11)

The companion Ibn Mas‘úd similarly reported from the prophet:

Do not ask the people of the Book [*ahl al-kitáb*, Jews and Christians] about anything [in *tafsír*] for they will not guide you aright, seeing they have misled themselves, and you will (find yourselves) disbelieving something true and believing something false (tr. Montgomery Watt, 1957:61 citing *Jámi‘ bayán al-‘ilm* of Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr [d. 463/1070]).

These negative, restricting traditions were generally ineffective (so Kister, 1972). They did, however, lead to the expression of caution; especially with reference to *Tafsír* (Q. commentary). Summing this matter up Brinner has written,

The Muslim collectors of the stories (*Qiṣaṣ an-anbiyá’*) often state the line of transmission of a given tale or version as going back to early Jewish converts to Islam. This gave rise to a labelling of such tales as *Isrá’íliyyát*, a term that took on a rather negative aspect with the flourishing of a brilliant Islamic civilization connected with the vast, wealthy and powerful early ‘Abbásid caliphate. Becoming culturally self-assured and independent, the *‘ulamá’* tended to discourage and even to forbid recourse to non-Muslim sources (Brinner, EAL 2:466).

Though they failed to inhibit the transmission of Isrá’íliyyát, these negative opinions had a continuing effect. Even the ecumenically and mystically inclined Ibn al-‘Arabí (d. 638/1240)—whose writings are rich in gnostically interpreted Isrá’íliyyát themes and motifs—in his encyclopaedic *Futúḥát al-makkiyya* (Meccan Illuminations) has a section (in the O. Yahya edition) headed, ‘The [use of the] narratives of the Jews in commentary upon the Qur’án: the Isrá’íliyyát’. In the light of authoritative texts he warns the *mufassirún* (Q. exegetes) against giving precedence to Jewish traditions or Israelite prophets (*an-anbiyá’ al-isrá’íliyyín*) thereby confounding the

authoritative guidance of Muḥammad:

whoso has expounded the Qur’án by means of the traditions of the Jews (*bi-rawáyat al-yahúd*) has assuredly gainsaid the directive of the Messenger of God (*amr rasúl Alláh*) and whoso goes against the Messenger of God [Muḥammad] has gainsaid the very command of God … (Futuhat-Y 14:217–8/Futuhat II:00000).

It was within 14th century Sunní *tafsír* (exegetical) and related circles that the term Isrá’íliyyát came be used highly dismissively. This negative attitude is evident in writings of the polymathic controversialist Táqí ad-Dín Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328) and in those of his pupil and associate Ibn Kathír (d. 774/1373). These pious Muslims generally considered Isrá’íliyyát traditions unsound, extraneous materials related by unseemly heretics among the misguided ‘people of the Book’ (Ibn Kathír, *al-Bidáya* …, I:5–6; *Tafsír* 1:12f, Rippin, 1993; ‘Tafsír’ EI2 X:85).[[12]](#footnote-12)

An apparently early, not wholly dismissive attitude towards Isrá’íliyyát traditions, is seen in Ibn Taymiyya’s succinct, hermeneutical treatise *Muqaddimatún fí uṣúl at-tafsír* (Treatise on the Principles of Tafsír). Here he noted that the companions of the Prophet legitimately recounted traditions from the *ahl al-kitáb* (people of the Book). Permission was granted to “narrate [traditions] from the *banú isrá’íl* (Children of Israel) without constraint” (citing Bukharí, tr. McAuliffe, [in Renard ed.] 1982:35–43). Ibn Taymiyya comments on this by stating that Isrá’íliyyát may be used for the “purposes of attestation” but not “as a basis of belief”. He viewed Isrá’íliyyát as of three kinds, those [1] *saḥíḥ* (sound) or [2] *kadhíḥ* (unsound) and those [3] *maskut‘anhu* (ambiguous, or of uncertain veracity) (ibid., 38; cf. Bosworth 1982, 1995:175).

Towards the beginning of his massive history *al-Bidáya wa’l niháyah*, Ibn Kathír again quotes a version of the *ḥaddíthú ‘an baní isrá’íl* from the *Saḥíḥ* of al-Bukharí (*K. ash-sháhadát*, no. 29) which he immediately follows with this negative remark:

So he [Muḥammad] was burdened (*maḥmúl*) with respect to the Isrá’íliyyát. In our opinion they are a cause of uncertainty. Wherefore it is neither within our power to affirm nor to deny them and it is thus that we operate in this our book … (al-Bidáya …, I:5–6).

In the prolegomenon to his huge *Tafsír al-qur’án al-‘aẓím*, Ibn Kathír cites *ḥadíth* about Isrá’íliyyát deriving from the “people of the Book” and, like Ibn Taymiyya, enumerates three kinds of Isrá’íliyyát when considering ‘The most favourable modes of exegesis (*at-tafsír*).’ Like his master he reckoned three kinds of Israelite traditions (*al-aḥádíth al-isrá’íliyyah*) for “such as consider evidence” (*al-ishtisháhad*). They are [1] expressive of “strong faith” (*al-i‘tiqád*) which are *saḥíḥ* (sound), [2] those demonstrably false and [3] those which pose unresolvable questions even for the *‘ulamá’* of the ‘people of the Book’. A few examples of this third type of Isrá’íliyyát are given. They may, for example, detail the names and exact number of the *aṣḥáb al-kahf* (‘Companions of the cave’, Q. 18:9ff) or of the colour of their dog (Ibn Kathír, *Tafsír*, I:12–14). Elsewhere in his *Tafsír* Ibn Kathír actually forbids the consultation of allegedly corrupted pre-Islamic scripture:

Some of the Isrá’íliyyát were invented by some of their *zanádiqa* [heretics]; some of them may be sound, but we do not need them: what is written in the Book of God [Q.] is sufficient for us and we do not need to look for it in the remaining books [dating] before it; neither God nor his Messenger caused us to lack their knowledge (*Tafsír* IV.282, tr. Kister 1972:237).

Despite these predominantly negative attitudes towards Isrá’íliyyát their whole scale abandonment was never systematically achieved in the Islamic world. Like numerous other Muslim writers, the works of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Kathír themselves relayed numerous “sound” and “ambiguous” Isrá’íliyyát traditions.

In recent times some Sunní (e.g. Egyptian) Muslims, influenced by the above attitudes, have come to view Isrá’íliyyát extremely negatively. Isrá’íliyyát are viewed as spurious traditions stemming from subversive Jews intending to undermine Islam (Juynboll, 1969). In such Muslim circles today Isrá’íliyyát indicates nothing but “superstitious nonsense” (Adang: 1996:9 fn. 47). In recent decades a number of Egyptian and other Muslim thinkers have defined and used the term Isrá’íliyyát with extreme contempt: especially as a result of anti-Jewish sentiments following Middle-East conflicts. Many anti-Israeli [“Semitic”] examples, can be seen in the proceedings of

the al-Azhar sponsored, Cairo located ‘Fourth Conference of the Academy of Islamic Research’ (Sept. 1968; not long after the Arab-Israeli war of 1967).[[13]](#footnote-13) Several of these aforementioned conference papers touch directly and very critically upon the Bible and Isrá’íliyyát traditions.[[14]](#footnote-14)

1.3 Modern academic definitions and discussion of Isrá’íliyyát

Over the last century or more modern academic Islamicists have variously defined and discussed Isrá’íliyyát. Among western educated Islamicists there are the classic discussions of Isrá’íliyyát by Goldziher (esp. 1902) and Goitein (1935) and a considerable number of important, more recent contributions only a few of which can be summed up here.

Nagel in his 1967 thesis *Die Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyá’* equates *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* with ‘biblical legends’ which include Isrá’íliyyát stories. In his view, however, only those specifically and restrictively dealing with the Israelites between the death of Moses and the Israelite entry into the promised land are considered Isrá’íliyyát (1967:66). This position is not wholly in line with many Muslim statements about the nature and contents of the Isrá’íliyyát traditions. Sayings of Jesus, for example, are cited in Islamic sources as being among the Isrá’íliyyát. Such sayings are, for example, cited in Islamic sources as coming from the *Traditiones israëliticae*, the Israelite traditions, as Asin et Palacios translated *al-Isrá’íliyyát*, into Latin in his learned *Logia et Agrapha Domini Jesu*, 1946:415, 423).

Vajda, in his 1978 EI2 entry ‘Isrá’íliyyát’ (IV:211–212) more adequately gives Isrá’íliyyát a

broad and inclusive definition. For him it indicates “an Arabic term covering three kinds of narratives, which are found in commentators on the Kur’án, the mystics, the compilers of edifying stories and writers on various levels”.[[15]](#footnote-15) In the widely acclaimed and previously drawn upon study of the ḥadíth about transmitting from the baní *isrá’íl* Kister gives a more comprehensive viewpoint of the contents of *Isrá’íliyyát*,

The themes covered by the stories about the Children of Israel are very extensive. They include stories about prophets and others, about sins committed by the Children of Israel and the punishment inflicted on them, about the sufferings of the righteous and pious and the reward granted to them by God, about utterances and sayings of sages and wise men, about supplications of prophets and pious men, about speeches and wills of nobles, saints and martyrs. These stories usually called “Isrá’íliyyát” included predictions of the early prophets about the appearance of the Prophet and descriptions of dynasties, about the Mahdí and signs heralding the Day of Judgement. This lore was transmitted by Jews and Christians or by members of these two religions who studied their Scriptures and embraced the faith of Islam (Kister, 1972:231–2).

Another later article by the same writer further includes within the body of Isrá’íliyyát those traditions and texts celebratory of Jerusalem, the *Faḍá’íl bayt al-maqdís* (Praises of the Sanctified House [Jerusalem] (Kister, 1981:185–6).

Hasson identifies Isrá’íliyyát with biblical quotations and “Traditions dealing with Jews and Christians” (Hasson, 1981:174). In her *Women in the Qur’an*, Stowasser similarly used the phrase “Bible-related traditions” for Isrá’íliyyát (1994:22). Firestone in his 1990 *Journeys in Holy Lands* also noted that “Muslim writers occasionally refer to certain narrative traditions treating pre-Islamic biblical and extra-biblical characters as Israelite Tales (Isrá’íliyyát)”. He adds that this term is best defined as “of Israelite origin” though such traditions in their Islamicate versions come to transcend their origins (1990:13ff, cf. 183, fn. 5). Lazarus-Yafeh in her *Intertwined Worlds* indicates that Isrá’ílíyát may constitute “Biblical and Midrashic material” or “alleged quotations from the Bible” (1991:112, 114).

In *Between Muslim and Jew* (1995) Wasserstrom at one point states, “Generally speaking Isrá’íliyyát are the manifold and miscellaneous traditions that the early Muslim community received, through various channels, from the Banu Isra’il, the ‘Children of Israel’ … from Judaism and, to a lesser extent, from Christianity … Isrá’íliyyát were more than merely superstitious, popular legends …” (1995:172). He cites approvingly an article of Bosworth (*The Concept of Dhimma* …, 1982) which underlines the applicability of Isrá’íliyyát to Jewish, Christian and other streams of influence which were legitimately embraced in Islam. Wasserstrom has it that “… Isrá’íliyyát provides us with a clear case of open, acknowledged, and religiously condoned borrowing” (1995:173).

In her *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible*, Adang touches upon the relationship between *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* and Isrá’íliyyát. She follows Khoury in finding a “very thin” line between these terms and uses Isrá’íliyyát “to indicate the whole genre of Islamicized biblical legends” (1996:8–10). Brinner’s succinct yet comprehensive entry ‘Isrá’íliyyát’ in the second volume of the *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature* (ed. Meisami, 1998) somewhat literally translates Isrá’íliyyát with ‘Israelite matters’. That it had neutral and pejorative senses is noted as is the fact that the term generally refers to “stories based on material of ancient Israelite (i.e. Biblical) origin”.

Nettler in a 1998 consideration of ‘Early Islam, Modern Islam and Judaism: The Isrá’íliyyát in Modern Islamic Thought’ like most others focuses upon Sunní Islam. He explores the intertwining of ideas, history and politics in his excellent reconsideration of the Isrá’íliyyát. An early religious “cosmopolitanism” among the various religious traditions came to be eclipsed by an actual or imagined consciousness of “borrowing” and being “borrowed” from: “The Isrá’íliyyát most certainly derived from this milieu” (1998:3). The Isrá’íliyyát within Islam betoken “Islamic-Jewish cultural interaction and symbiosis which implicitly overrode the built-in monotheistic exclusivism on both sides …” (ibid.).[[16]](#footnote-16)

McAuliffe in her ‘Assessing the Isrá’íliyyát: An exegetical conundrum’ (Leder ed. 1998:345–369) recognises the fluidity of definitions of Isrá’íliyyát and the 20th century attention this matter has received. Discussing various definitions she notes that Isrá’íliyyát may signify actual written texts (cf. Wahb b. Munabbih <–) indicative of a genre of Islamic literature or a particular non-*isnád*-laden “generalized corpus of oral and written material that is distinguished less by its content than by its ascription”. This writer yet favours the translation “Jewish memorabilia”; a translation also occasionally used by Lassner in his *Demonizing the Queen of Sheba* (1993:121; McAuliffe, 1998:346). Bernstein in an essay in honour of William Brinner translates Isrá’íliyyát as “Israelite material” or “Israelitica”. This he succinctly refers to as “material included in the Islamic traditions about biblical characters and events” (Hary ed. 2000:157, cf. also index Isrá’íliyyát).

In the Studies in *Islamic and Middle Eastern Texts and Traditions in Memory of Norman Calder* (ed. Hawting, et. al.), P. S. Alexander in his ‘Jewish Tradition in Early Islam: the case of Enoch/Idris’ (2000) identifies the Isrá’íliyyát as expressions of “Jewish tradition” in “early Islamic sources, starting with the Qur’án itself” (2000:11). He clarifies this by writing, “I use Isrá’íliyyát not in any negative sense, but simply as a convenient designation for all those elements in the Qur’án, Tafsír and *ḥadíth* which have clear parallels in Jewish sources”. This usage, he asserts, “corresponds to the older use of the word [Isrá’íliyyát] in Islamic sources”. Alexander not only acknowledges that Jewish traditions influenced nascent Islam but highlights the fact that Islamic sources had an impact upon such Jewish works of the midrashic Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer and the writings of Saadya Gaon (fl. 9th cent. CE) (2000:11 + fn. 1, 13).

Finally, though not exhaustively, it might be noted that Moreen has referred to Is[h]má’íliyyát (= loosely, Ishmaelitica), the reverse phenomenon indicated by Isrá’íliyyát which she defines as “Islamic lore penetrating Jewish midrashic and literary texts” (Moreen, 2000:185f), the importance of which has been underlined by Alexander and others (2000:12–13). Though the Jewish intertextual penetration of Islamic sources is undoubtedly significant as expressed by the neologism “Ismaelitica”, no such term could be so easily coined for the Isrá’íliyyát (Israelitica) and

Is[h]má’íliyyát (Ismaelitica) intertextual penetration and reinterpretation within Bábí-Bahá’í scriptural sources.

1.4 Isrá’íliyyát and its Bábí-Bahá’í assimilation and exegesis

The various modern, academic discussions of Isrá’íliyyát (“Israelitica”) are both helpful and somewhat disorienting. In its wider senses it is now evident that Isrá’íliyyát indicates more than “Jewish memorabilia”, as it is sometimes translated. In view of the wide, often extra-Judaic senses Isrá’íliyyat has appropriated in a wide range of Islamic sources, this rendering seems restrictive for a term virtually synonymous with the modern expression “Abrahamic”.[[17]](#footnote-17) This since Isrá’íliyyát can indicate Jewish, Christian, Islamo-biblical and/or Islamicate streams of tradition often but not always relayed by Jewish (*baní Isrá’íl*) and other converts to Islam among the *ahl al-kitáb* (people of the Book) and others.

In Islamic sources the Isrá’íliyyát traditions and motifs to a greater or lesser degree, express an Islamo-biblical or Islamicate perspective. In their post-Jewish/Christian hermeneutical and religious context they encapsulate a distinctly Islamic mode of discourse. While Jewish materials (“memorabilia”) sometimes predominate, the term “Abrahamic” perhaps more befittingly sums up the range of Isrá’íliyyát materials contained in the various literatures representative of the Isrá’íliyyát traditions (cf. Adang, 1996:8–10).

In this thesis (as already indicated) Isrá’íliyyát will largely have its wide and inclusive sense. It will denote the whole range of orthodox and heterodox Abrahamic scripture, Islamo-biblical texts, legends and traditions found within Islamic literatures. Prior to its later, post-Baghdad (post-1860s) Bahá’í development, Bábí-Bahá’í Arabic and Persian scriptural sources cite, incorporate and interpret Islamo-biblical citations and other Isrá’íliyyát rooted motifs and traditions.

Abrahamic traditions or Isrá’íliyyát materials were adopted, assimilated and ‘Islamified’ by Muslims. The Isrá’íliyyát motifs and traditions might be deemed Islamicate (to utilize terminology initially coined by M. Hodgson) in that they are Jewish and or Christian rooted materials that have become distinctly Islamic. Abrahamic traditions contained within the Isrá’íliyyát often, to a greater or lesser degree, shift from being in some sense Jewish or Christian to being conceptually or hermeneutically Islamic. Then, when subject to Bábí-Bahá’í (re-) interpretation, another intertextual shift in their hermeneutical universe of discourse has taken place.

Some Islamic *isrá’* (“night ascent”) and related *mi‘ráj* (lit, “ladder” = “ascension”) traditions, for example, are Isrá’íliyyát in the sense of being Jewish/Christian informed elaborations of Q. 17:1ff (and related texts, cf. 53:1f; 83:19f). When subjected to Bábí-Bahá’í, essentially neo- or post-Islamic interpretations, they express a Bábí-Bahá’í viewpoint. The *masjid al-aqṣá* (Furthermost Mosque) motif of the Islamic *mi‘raj* traditions, for example, in developed Bahá’í texts is no longer a Jerusalem locale (nigh the *qubbat as-sakhrá* = “dome of the rock”) but the Acre-Haifa located celestial *Haykal* (“Temple”) of the person of BA\* (or the shrine of the Báb; BA\* AQA 4:176–7; AQA 5:29; cf. Báb QA 68:274; 91:364; R. Jasad).

One time Isrá’íliyyát and associated materials become textually Bábí-Bahá’í through the exegetical revelations of the Báb and BA\*. Identifying and analysing such traditions source-critically and in terms of their new hermeneutical, doctrinal and apologetic or theological characteristics, lies at the heart of this thesis. The intertextual shifts undertaken by religious motifs and blocks of tradition are sometimes such that they span several religious traditions: from their Jewish roots to possibly Christian and then Islamicate-Muslim to Bábí and/or Bahá’í post-Islamic expository levels. A tradition or motif from being Jewish might become in some sense Christian then be distinctly Islamo-biblical or Islamicate. Such materials may thus also be seen to have subsequently appropriated post-Islamic senses in Bábí-Bahá’í sacred literatures.

In the following paragraphs and chapters it will be seen how widespread and deep rooted

was the Sunní and Shí‘í Islamic reinterpretation of biblical and Isrá’íliyyát traditions. The post-Islamic Bábí-Bahá’í phenomena are recent examples of religious movements which have reinterpreted and assimilated Isrá’íliyyát. They have refashioned Abrahamic religious traditions and assimilated Islamicate Bible citations. Isrá’íliyyát traditions are often allegorically reinterpreted in Bábí-Bahá’í sources. They are sometimes demythologized in a rationalist, neo-Shí‘í, Bábí-Bahá’í religious sense. Bábí-Bahá’í scripture sometimes exhibits exegetical demythologization as well as exegetical re-mythologization (to draw on Bultmannian rooted terminology).

The re-mythologization of Isrá’íliyyát traditions is, for example, evidenced with the basically Isrá’íliyyát-rooted Bábí-Bahá’í theology of the *ism Alláh al-a‘ẓam* (Mightiest Name of God) as it appears in developed Bábí-Bahá’í sources (-->7.1f). That God has a greatest or Mightiest Name is at root a Jewish concept. In Muslim Isrá’íliyyát traditions such concepts have been thoroughly Islamified and given further levels of meaning as may be seen in the writings of Muslim esotericists-magicians, mystics and theologians. Originally closely related to the power and transcendence of the tetragrammaton (Y-H-W-H = Yahweh, traditionally pronounced as Adonai, “Lord”), the *al-ism al-a‘ẓam* concept entered Islam in the early centuries. Today, in recent times, a neo-Isrá’íliyyát theology of the *ism Alláh al-a‘ẓam* informs numerous Bábí-Bahá’í scriptural texts as well as a good many semi-ritualistic Bahá’í practises (Lambden, 1997, cf. MacEoin, 1994).

Two Bábí-Bahá’í related aspects of Isrá’íliyyát will most often be focussed upon in this thesis, (1) the citation and absence of citation of Islamicate biblical and pseudo-biblical texts and (2) the appropriation within Bábí-Bahá’í primary sources of originally Jewish, later Shí‘í Islamicate and ultimately Bábí-Bahá’í concepts of the *ism Alláh al-a‘ẓam* (God’s mightiest Name). For the rest of this chapter some basic aspects of Islamic chronology will be sketched forming something of a background to the consideration of Islamic and Bábí-Bahá’í prophetology of the following chapter.

2
From Islamic *nubuwwa*
to Bábí-Bahá’í *maẓhariyya*

In the four sections of this chapter some basics of the Islamic and Bábí-Bahá’í positions regarding *Anno Mundi*, millennialism, prophetology and theophanology relative to the traditional ‘twenty-eight’ Islamic prophet-messengers will be sketched as will the status of several of them as Bábí-Bahá’í divine manifestations (sing. *maẓhar-i iláhí*). The Bábí-Bahá’í exegetical transcendence of the Islamic *khátamiyya* (“sealedness”) through an eternal continuity of divine guidance mediated through human representations of the Divine Will (*mashiyyat*) will be briefly explained as will the roots of the Bábí-Bahá’í doctrine of the *maẓhar-i iláhí* (divine theophany, manifestation of God).

2.1 *Anno Mundi*, millennialism and chronological aspects of Islamic and Bábí-Bahá’í prophetology

Unlike the Hebrew Bible with its chronologically oriented materials and genealogical notices specifying the lifespan of Israel’s ancestors (Genesis 5, 11 etc.), the Q. displays little or no concern with chronological data pertaining to ancient history, nations, prophets or peoples. The relative dating and chronological order of past messengers and prophets is not systematically presented in this Arabic text. Even the dates and genealogy of Muḥammad himself are not present. Muslims, however, have variously and repeatedly calculated the period between the *anno mundi* (creation/the era of Adam, allegedly the ‘first man’) and the days of the prophet Muḥammad. They made many attempts to narrate the lives and give a precise dating and chronological order to ancient patriarchs, prophets, philosophers and other worthies of past ages.

Despite the qur’anic dictum regarding an exclusive divine knowledge of the eschatological “Hour” (Q. 7:187 + similar traditions in numerous Islamic sources), there exist sacred traditions as well as Muslims writers who, with varying degrees of alleged chronological precision, have attempted to fathom the time of the eschatological *yawm al-qiyáma* (“Day of

resurrection”) or of the messianic *parousia*. As in 19th century Protestant and other millennarian factions, such speculations were widespread in the Muslim world in the same and certain earlier centuries. The consummation of the ages was widely deemed imminent, the “time of the end” at hand (Amanat, 1989:70f; Eraqi Klorman, 1993). Important authoritative traditions register Muslim calculations about the span of world history which often presupposes the ‘time of the end’, an eschaton that has been frequently pushed forward in view of its non-literal realization. Numerous Islamic sources bear upon these matters which cannot be discussed in detail here. The following notes must suffice to sum up some key points in relation to Islamic and Bábí-Bahá’í chronology and millennialism.

Islamic and Bábí-Bahá’í Millennialism

It was primarily a result of an often Zoroastrian rooted Judaeo-Christian influence that a large number of Muslim traditions and sources reckon the span of world history as extending into a fifth, sixth, seventh or even an eighth millennial era. The frequently cited Yemenite Jewish convert to Islam, Wahb ibn Munabbih, for example, on one occasion is said to have reckoned a period of 5,600 years AM up to the Islamic era (Ṭabarí, *Táríkh*, 1:15). On another he is cited as having maintained that around 6,600 years had transpired in view of the fact that “God created the heavens in six days and established the magnitude of each day at 1,000 years” (Maqdisí, *K. al-Bad‘* III:150).

Lying behind a large number of Islamic computations of the period separating the *anno mundi* and the time of Muḥammad are Byzantine Christian chronological and associated speculations expressed in millennial terms. Jews and Christians from at least the opening centuries CE divided the scheme of the ages of the world into millennial periods on the basis of such texts as Genesis 2:2 and Psalm 90:4 (cf. II Peter 3:8; Rev 20:1ff).[[18]](#footnote-18) Early Jewish, Hellenistic, pseudepigraphical, and later Rabbinic literatures implied, and various Christian

texts explicitly utilized, diverse millennial schemata extending world history for several thousands of years (AM). Four, five or six 1,000 year periods were often envisaged as being consummated by a seventh millennial age of fulfilment and eschatological beatitude.[[19]](#footnote-19) Indicative of this is the following foundational passage from the early Christian Epistle of Barnabas, 15, CE 125?), which cites Gen. 2:2a and Psalm 90:4 maintaining that:

… in six days—six thousand years, that is—there is going to be an end to everything. After that, he rested on the seventh day [Gen. 2:2b] indicates that when His Son [Christ] returns, He will put an end to the years of the Lawless One, pass sentence on the godless, transform the sun and moon and stars, and then, on the seventh Day, enter into His true rest” (tr. Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 214).

Influenced by such early Christian traditions inherited from Papias bishop of Hierapolis (d.c. 130?) and Justin Martyr (d. CE 165?), the Christian theologian and heresiologist Irenaeus of Lyons (d. CE 200) held that the world would end after 6,000 years (Irenaeus, *Haer*. 5. 28. 3; 5. 32f; cf. Justin, *Dial*, Tryph. 80–81). So too Hippolytus of Rome (d.c. 236; *Comm. Dan*., 4.24), Julius Africanus (of Jerusalem; d. after c. 240) and other chronographers of the apostolic, patristic and later eras. Lactantius c. 260–c. 330) was expectant of a future “hedonistic enjoyment by the just” in a sabbatical millennium to be realized after a 6,000 year period (*Instit*. vii.14, 24; Loi, EEC II:470; cf. 166–7). Like some of the speculations among the former Christian writers whose chronology was frequently based upon that of the Greek Septuagint (LXX; early 3rd cent BCE), Eusebius of Caesarea (d. 340) thought that the world would last for 6,000 years (six millennia) and that Jesus Christ was born in AM 5,500 [later 5,199] (cf. Augustine, C.D. xxii. 30.5).[[20]](#footnote-20)

The originally Syriac *Me‘árath Gazze* (‘Cave of Treasures’ 4th cent.? CE), which exists

in various (post 6th cent. CE) Arabic recensions, reckons a 5,500 year period between Adam and Christ (Bezold, 1883–1888; rep. nd.; Gibson, 1901; Budge, 1927:10, 221). For many early Eastern Christians a period of at least 500 years before the end-time *parousia* (6,000+) was thus presupposed. These figures were later abandoned or adjusted by Christians when eschatological events seemed soon to be realized as in the late 7th century (Syriac) Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius.[[21]](#footnote-21) For the pious in the Islamic community, such millennially based chronological speculations were set out in numerous authoritative prophetic *ḥadíth*/*akhbár* from the (Twelver) Imams.

The early *Kitáb aṭ-ṭabaqat al-kabír* (Great book of the Classes) of Ibn Sa‘d (d. Baghdad, 230/845) has a section dealing with the time span between Adam and Muḥammad. Millennial (1,000 year) periods were recorded between Adam and Noah (= ten 100 year generations), Noah and Abraham and Abraham and Moses. A tradition of Ibn ‘Abbás (d.c. 68/687) is cited reckoning a period of 1,900 years between Moses and Jesus, and a fairly precise figure of 569 years is said to separate the birth of Jesus and the time of the prophet Muḥammad. The reader might thus be led to think of a roughly 5,500 year period, a 5,469 year period between Adam and Muḥammad (= 1,000 × 3 + 1, 900 + 569) (Ibn Sa‘d, ibid., I:53). This is in line with the realization of millennial eschatological hopes. Certain earlier and many later sources more explicitly presuppose Judaeo-Christian chronological speculations.

The rich in Isrá’íliyyát *Muḥaḍarát al-abrár* … (Conference of the Pious) of Ibn al-‘Arabí (d. 638/1240) contains a section headed ‘The record of the diversity of the nations regarding what has elapsed of the time span between Adam and the *hijrah*’. Here there is reference to a tradition of Ibn ‘Abbás reckoning a period of 5,575 years between Adam and Muḥammad. Then it is recorded that al-Kalbí (d. 204/819) transmitted the duration of 6,019 years between Adam and Muḥammad. Ibn al-‘Arabí further had it that al-Wáqidí (d. 207/823) thought the

period from the fall of Adam to the birth of Muḥammad was 4,600 years and that Muḥammad ibn Isḥáq (d. 150/767) transmitted a period of 5,451 [5,416] years.[[22]](#footnote-22)

The early Muslim historiographer Abú ‘Ísá ibn al-Munajjim (fl. late 8th cent.?) drew upon Syriac and Greek Byzantine Christian historiographical traditions[[23]](#footnote-23) in his lost but partially cited survey of pre-Islamic chronography perhaps entitled *al-Bayán ‘an ta‘ríkh siní zamán al-‘alam ‘alá sabíl al-ḥujja wa’l-burán* (Exposition of the Chronology of years of the Duration of the World according to the way of Proof and the Evidence) (Rosenthal, 1968:72–3, 511 n.1; Stern, 1972). Familiar with Jewish and Persian scripture and tradition, he to some extent wrote “according to the accounts contained in the Torah and the stories of the prophets and the kings [*akhbár al-anbiyá’ wa’l-mulúk*]” (al-Mas‘údí, *Murúj*, I:23; tr. Stern, 1972:438). Like Eusebius and ‘the historian Abú al-Fiḍá’, Ibn al-Munajjim (who was utilized by the former) reckoned 6,216 years from the fall of Adam until the *Hijra* (*Táríkh*, 1:(9) 21; Stern 1972:441). This also places his pre-Islamic age of the world into the early seventh millennium.

Chronological traditions registered in Ibn Qutayba’s (d. 276/889) early and wide-ranging survey of world history, the *K. al-Ma‘árif* (Book of Knowledge) include the tradition that “Adam lived 1,000 years”, or “according to the Torah” (Gen. 5:5 cf. Q. 29:14) “1,000 less 70 years”. In his *K. al-Bad‘ wa’l-ta’ríkh* (‘The Book of Creation and History’, written 355/966) al-Maqdisí (d. fl. 10th cent. CE) drew on Ibn Qutayba and included a lengthy section on the span of world history mentioning a 6,600 year period and reckoning the period between Adam and

Muḥammad as 7,852 years (Ibn Qutayba, *K. al-Ma‘árif*, 33–4; Maqdisí, *K. al-Bad‘* II:145ff).[[24]](#footnote-24) Roundly summing up this view, Maqdisí held that from the “covenant of Adam” (*‘ahd Ádam*) until [the time of] Muḥammad a period of 7,800 years had elapsed (*al-Bad‘,* II:150–151). The idea of creation in seven millennial “Days” is also mentioned by al-Maqdisí as are various complex Hindu rooted notions of aeons of cosmic and worldly time.[[25]](#footnote-25)

At the very beginning of the *Ta’iríkh al-rusul wa’l-mulúk* of Abú Ja*‘*far aṭ-Ṭabarí (d. 310/923) there is a section about the duration of *zamán* (“time”) from “beginning to end” (*Taríkh*, I:15–19; tr. Rosenthal, I:172f). It is noted that certain traditions reckon the “total extent of time” as 7,000 years (a “week of the other world”, cf. Mas*‘*údí, *Akhbár al-zamán*, 31) of which 6,0[2]00 (mss. vary) were thought to have passed. Ṭabarí himself favoured the passing of around (AM) 6,500 years up till the time of Muḥammad. He also registered the period from the creation of Adam until the time of the *hijrah* (CE 622) as calculated by Jews (= 4,642 years AM) and by Greek Christians (= 5,992) years AM (*Taríkh*, I:19; tr. Rosenthal, 183–5).[[26]](#footnote-26)

Probably early traditions attributed to the (Twelver) Imams bear upon the time span of the pre-Islamic era. Among them are those indicating that certain of the 29 sets of (so-called) isolated letters of the Qur’án (*al-fawátiḥ aṣ-ṣawar; al-ḥurufát al-muqaṭṭa’át*) should be understood in chronological or predictive terms relative to their *abjad* (“numerical”) values (cf.

Krotkoff, ‘Abjad’, EIr. 1:221–2). An interesting example is ascribed to the fifth (or the sixth) Imám (Abú Ja*‘*far) Muḥammad al-Báqir (d.c. 126/743) as cited by al-Ayyáshí (fl. 9th-10th. cent. CE) in his Tafsír as transmitted by Abú Labíd al-Makhzúmí:

O Abá Labíd! There is abundant knowledge (*‘ilman jamman*) in the isolated letters of the Qur’án (*al-ḥurúf al-qur’án al-muqaṭṭa‘ah*) for God, exalted be He, sent down [the qur’anic revelation] “*Alif*, *Lím*, *Mím* (A+L+M). This Book” [Q. 2:1–2a] and Muḥammad rose up until his light was made manifest and his word was established. He was born on a day when there had elapsed 103 years from the seventh millennium (*al-alf as-sábí‘*) … (Fayḍ al-Káshání, *Tafsír al-Ṣáfí*, 1:77–8; Majlisí, Bihar2 52:106).

It is indicated here that the year AM 6103 had been reached at the time of Muḥammad’s birth (CE c. 570). This figure is very close to the 6,122–6,123 given by the polymathic scholar and scientist Abú Rayḥán al-Bírúní (d. 442/1051) in his comparative chronology *al-*Á*thár al-báqiya* … (‘Vestiges of Bygone Days’) (Rosenthal, op. cit. 184 fn. 147). However 6,103 is to be precisely, chronologically understood, its basic import is that the seventh millennial era indicative of end-time fulfilment had commenced because 6,000+ years had passed. The above Shí*‘*í tradition certainly seems to presuppose early speculations about the time of the mission of Muḥammad in millennial terms after the (Abrahamic-Islamic) *anno mundi*. In his *Risála fí’l-nubbwa al-khaṣṣa* the Báb cites this *ḥadíth* of 6,103 (INBMC 14:245) as does the Bahá’í apologist, Mírzá Abú al-Faḍl Gulpáygání (d. CE 1914) in his *Sharḥ áyát al-muwarrikha* (Commentary on the Chronological Testimonia, Hamadan, 1888:8ff.). It was utilized in Bábí-Bahá’í texts as evidence of eschatological fulfilment.

This 6,103 seventh millennial Shí*‘*í tradition continues by having the Imam state that the clarification of the 6,103 figure is “in the Book of God (= the Q.), in the isolated letters (*al-ḥurúf al-muqaṭṭa‘át*) if they are counted them without repetition” (T. Sáfí, 1:78; Bihar2 52:106). This confirmatory numerical value of the twenty nine qur’anic isolated letters is 5,995 (+ 5 = 6,000 + 10 = 6005) which is again a figure of almost 6,000 which would definitely place the mission of Muḥammad well within the 7th millennium of fulfilment even if he were born just before it (cf. Báb P. Bay. VIII:17, 302).

The Persian version of the *Tafsír aṭ-Ṭabarí* of Bal‘amí (written CE c. 963), referring to the Sháh-Námah tradition and to Ḥamza al-Iṣfahání, mentions a period of 6,013 years from Adam until the era of the Prophet as well as to a period of 5,900 years (Per. *Táríkh*, 1:5). The numerical value of the qur’anic isolated letters is again associated with the time span of world history and there is mention of a possibly Zoroastrian influenced figure of 14,000 years (7,000 + 7,000). Like other Islamic sources, this source relates the creation in “six days” to a period of six millennia in the light of Q. 32:4 and Q. 22:47b (Ṭabarí, *Tafsír* ed. Yaghmá’í 4:968f; 1:32; ed. Sadeghi 1:3).

Evidently desirous of showing that Muḥammad ushered in the new 7th millennial era, early Muslim apologists and historians consciously or unconsciously based their calculations upon such (Judaeo-) Christian figures as have been mentioned above. Their chronological age of the world speculations suggested millennial fulfilment. Just as the essentially mythical biblical chronology is infused with schemata suggestive of a pre-ordained, providential (heiro-) history with eschatological implications, so too are certain of the chronologies of Islamic world history which draw upon early *ḥadíth* or Isrá’íliyyát traditions. They are often underpinned by an apologetically rooted millennial scheme (Johnston2 1988:36). A similar orientation is presupposed and mirrored in aspects of the developed and extended, millennially oriented Bábí-Bahá’í cyclic view of salvation history.

The Qá’im-Mahdí and the chronology of qur’anic isolated letters

The qur’anic isolated letters are also seen in Shí‘í imamological traditions as indications of the dates of the appearance of the Imams or, the (for twelver Shí‘ís) the time of the advent of the twelfth of them, the Qá’im-Mahdí. Majlisí in one of the sections of his celebrated Biḥár al-anwár entitled *at-tamḥíṣ wa’l-nahí ‘an at-tawqíyah* (‘The proving and the modes of understanding from the letters’, Bihar2 52:101–121) records and briefly discusses several interpretations of these isolated letters, the *fawáṭíḥ as-sawar* (opening of the Surahs) deriving from the Prophet and the Imams. The 7th (6103) tradition of the 5th Imám (cited above) continues as follows:

There is not among the disconnected letters a letter which will find its realization save there should rise up a Qá’im (“Ariser”) from the progeny of [Baní] Háshim …. The “A” (*al-alif*) is one; the “L” (*al-lám*) is thirty, the “M” (*al-mím*) forty and the “Ṣád” (*Ṣád*) ninety which [abjad numerical value] amounts to 161 years. Then came to pass the emergence of Ḥusayn son of ‘Alí [3rd Imám Ḥusayn; d. 61/680]. “*Alif*, *lám*, *mím* (“A” + “L” + “M”) *Alláh* (God).” So when its period came to pass there rose up a Qá’im of the progeny of ‘Abbás nigh *Alif* + *Lám* + *Mím* + *Ṣád* (Q. súra 7; total = 161] and there rose up our Qá’im nigh their termination in *Alif* + *Lám* + *Rá’* (= Q. súra 13; total = 231). So understand [this]! Pay heed [memorize]! and keep it secret!” (cited from the *Tafsír ‘Ayyashí* in Majlisí, Bihar2 52:106).

On the basis of such traditions the Báb,[[27]](#footnote-27) BA\* and subsequently Bahá’í apologists understood the value of the qur’anic isolated letters from A-L-M [-Ṣ] (Q. 2 [3]) up till A-L-M-R (Q. 13) to be indicative of the time of the advent of the Qá’im or Mahdí (= the Báb). These seven sets of isolated letters from Q. 2 (Baqara, Cow) until Q. 13 (*Ra‘ad*, Thunder) compute to yield: 71 (Q. 2) + 71 (Q. 3) + 161 (Q. 7) + 231 (Q. 10) + 231 (Q. 11) + 231 (Q. 12) + 271 (Q. 13), totalling 1,267. This is understood to indicate lunar years AH for the Báb initiated his mission in Shíráz on 22 May 1844 or in the year 1260, seven years away from the figure 1,267 (cf. Báb P.DalS:47). By backdating 1,267 seven years or commencing at the time of the public mission of Prophet Muḥammad (AH - 7/CE c. 615?) the result is AH 1260 when the Báb initiated the Bábí religion in Shíráz, Iran. Aside from this 7 year adjustment the Báb also frequently dated the origins of the Islamic era to the *ba‘tha* (“Call to prophethood”) of Muḥammad which he reckoned as being 10 years before the *Hijra* (P.Bayan II:7; IV:14, 16, 18; VI:7, 8, 13; K.PanjS:319, etc.).

This year 1260/1844 or thereabouts is of great significance in the Bábí-Bahá’í millennial and cyclic scheme cryptically indicated in certain of the *ḥurúfát al-muqaṭṭa‘át* (Isolated letters) (Báb INBMC 98:35ff; BA\* *L. Ḥurufát*). In this connection BA\* writes in his *L. Ḥurúfát al-muqaṭṭa‘át* (c. 1857)

Then know that on another level God intended by these [qur’anic isolated] letters (*al-ḥurúfát*) the mysteries indicative of fulfilment (*asrár ilá niháyát*) by means of which he alludes to the period of concealment of the [eschatological] Beauty (*al-*

*jamál*) behind the pavilions of Glory such as is evidenced in the recorded traces of the [twelver] Imams of the Criterion (= Qur’án), [thus, for example, the words] “With the expiration of Alif - Lám - Mím - Ṣád (Q. 7) through Alif - Lám - Mím - Rá’ (Q. 13), the Mahdí shall arise” … (*L. Ḥurúfát*, ms. 15).

Bahá’í cyclic speculation and the millennium

Like certain Abrahamic streams of religious thought, most notably Ismá‘ílí Shí‘í sources, Bábí-Bahá’í doctrine maps out past and future human and heirohistory in terms of various kinds of religious cycles *dawr* (pl. *adwár*) or eras of a greater or lesser magnitude and time span. Successive aeons and religious eras are punctuated by the missions of founder *maẓhar-i iláhí* who appear from age to age with a new *sharí‘a* (religious law) and further dimensions of spiritual truth. Cycles of religious guidance are essentially prophetological cycles referred to by SE\* (and in modern Bahá’í sources) as “dispensations” (Ar./Per. *ẓuhúr*), an English term borrowed from western Protestant “dispensationalism”, biblically rooted theological notions of dispensations or eras of religious history (e.g. H. Grattan Guinness, etc.).

Certain controversial and novel issues associated with the dating of past Messengers, prophets and philosophers are evidenced in various writings of both the Báb and BA\*. They adopted a *badí‘* (“novel”, “new”) calendar and gave new, sometimes eschatologically oriented re-interpretations to earlier religious chronology. The writings of the Báb contain sometimes complex prophetological chronology and predictive schemata. Both the Báb and BA\* set out past world history based upon concepts of eternally renewed *maẓhariyya* (theophanology) and upon the claimed realization of eschatologically oriented events.

In his Persian *Bayán* and other writings the Báb identified with great accuracy the time of his 1260/1844 (= the year “sixty”) religious declaration, of being the *báb* (“gate”) to the hidden Imám, etc. It was exactly 2 hours 11 minutes on the eve (after sunset) on the 5th Jamád al-Awwal 1260 (= 22 May 1844) (P.Bayan II:7; cf. VI:13). This date marked the beginning of the *yawm al-qiyáma* (“Day of Resurrection”) of the Qur’án or the Islamic (and other) peoples. (ibid.) For Bahá’ís the date 1260/1844 marks the point of millennial transition from the pre-Bábí cycle of prophecy extending from the time of Adam until the end of Islamic era, 1,000 lunar

years after the death/passing into *ghayba* (“occultation”) of the 12th Imám, Muḥammad son of Ḥasan al-‘Askarí (d.c. AH 260/CE 874). In his *L. Mawlúd ism al-a‘ẓam* (Tablet of the Genesis of the Greatest Name) BA\* similarly highlights the importance of 19th century dates such as 1260/1844, the night of his birth (12 November 1817) and the Riḍwán 12 day period of his semi-secret declaration in Baghdad during 21 (22) April -->3 May 1863:

O Concourse of the hidden and the manifest! Rejoice then exalt within thine own beings for the Night hath appeared within which cycles (*al-akwár*) and eras (*al-adwár*) were intertwined and conflated. Nights and days have moved on such that the appointed times of the divine Cause (*al-amr*) were realized on the part of one Powerful, Almighty …. The Riḍwán (“Paradise”) of the All-Merciful hath appeared at the midmost heart of the cyclic scheme (*quṭb al-akwán*) for the Breeze of God hath wafted from the shore of forgiveness and the Hour hath, in very truth, come to pass …. (*L. Mawlúd*, 48).

For Bahá’ís an Adamic cycle extended from the time of Adam (viewed as the founder of an embryonic religion) until the end of the Islamic age in 1260/1844 or a few years later at the end of the Bábí period in 1269/1852–1853, the year of BA\*’s initial though symbolic prophetic call in Tehran. For Bahá’ís the mid. 19th century is believed to have ended a 6,000 year cycle echoed in the pattern of the six days of creation understood in millennial terms. The theological and eschatological implications of the biblical chronology as interpreted in Christian tradition lies behind the Bahá’í affirmation of a 6,000 year pre-Bábí-Bahá’í Adamic or prophetic cycle.[[28]](#footnote-28) Just as many early Muslims placed the birth or time of Muḥammad around 6,000 years AM into a 7th millennium of fulfilment, so Bahá’ís have identified 1260/1844 or 1269/1852–1853 as the end of a 6,000 year millennial period initiating a new Bahá’í universal cycle of fulfilment which as AB\* explained to a Zoroastrian enquirer, would extend 500,000 years into the distant future (Tablet cited SE\* Dispensation: 10–11; SE\* GPB: 100). After this 500,000 years Bahá’ís expect the advent of another great universal manifestation (*maẓhar-i kulliyya*) like BA\* (who initiated the “Bahá’í cycle”) to appear and initiate a new cycle of possibly inter-

galactic scope (SE\* letter cited DG: 7–8 No. 21; Hornby, Lights3: 473f, 475–63ff).

Bahá’í interpretations of the millennium (Lat. *mille* = 1,000+ *annus* = “year”; Rev 20:1–6) are basically pre-millennial. The Báb and BA\* are both considered the spiritual “return” of Christ and are seen by Bahá’ís to have initiated the onset of a millennial period or periods. When asked about the time of the biblical millennium, AB\*, apparently having 1269/1853–1854 in mind, wrote:

Concerning the one thousand years as recorded in the Book [Bible]: It signifieth the beginning of this manifestation until the end of its predominance throughout the contingent world …. It shall continue in elevation, exaltation, growth, … until it shall reach the apex of its glory in one thousand years—as the Day of this Manifestation is one thousand years …. (AB\* TAB III: 659–660).

Confirming and making more precise the developed Bahá’í position SE\*, writing a century after the event, stated that,

… the rise of the Orb of Bahá’u’lláh’s most sublime Revelation [in 1269/1852] making the consummation of the six thousand cycle ushered in by Adam, glorified by all past prophets and sealed with the blood of the Author of the Bábí Dispensation [ = the Báb]” (Cablegram of 8 Oct. 1952, MBW: 40).

This cablegram places the termination of the 6,000 year Adamic cycle at BA\*’s 1269/1852–1853 mystical experience in the “black pit” (*Síyáh-chál*) dungeon in Tehran (ESW: 13 /20f, 39f; cf. SE\* GPB: 100, Hornby, Lights, 501f). This would place the time of Adam at 6,000 years before 1269/1852–1853 or around 4148 BCE, a figure not far removed from the onset of the 6,000 year period held by many 19th century and some earlier Christians to reach its end-time consummation in that century. At the conclusion of his 1934 *The Dispensation of Bahá’u’lláh* SE\* also indicated, that the “New World Order” of BA\* would find its future consummation with the advent of the “golden millennium”. There is the millennium and the “golden millennium”, the former expressing millennial potential and the latter the millennial actuality of global peace and justice, etc. This latter “golden millennium”, SE\* added alluding to Rev. 11:15, would be “the [eschatological] Day when the kingdoms of this world shall have become the Kingdom of God Himself” which is identified as the “Kingdom of Bahá’u’lláh”

(Dispensation, 69).[[29]](#footnote-29)

It is thus the case that like certain Abrahamic streams of thought, most notably Gnostic, Manichean and Ismá‘ílí Shí‘í sources, Bábí-Bahá’í scripture maps out past and to some extent future human and sacred, heirohistory in terms of *dawr* (pl. *adwár* = religious cycles), eras of a greater or lesser magnitude and time span. The period from Adam to Muḥammad and successive aeons is understood in millennial terms as being punctuated by the missions of the founder *maẓhar-i lláhí* (manifestations of God) who, as will be demonstrated below, are basically reflections of the Shí‘í sent messengers (*rusul*) reckoned *ulú al-aẓm* (“possessors of steadfastness”).

Islamic chronology and the pre-Islamic prophets

Muslim sources not only contain speculations as to the *anno mundi* and associated millennial schemata relating to past salvation history, but include a diversity of traditions about the dating and lifespan of many pre-Islamic prophets, or the periods of time separating their missions, (Bihar2 11: 65f). The early Baṣran philologist Abú Ḥátim as-Sijistání (d. 255/1869) was among those who wrote volumes entitled *al-Mu‘ammarún* (‘The Long-Lived’; an-Nadím, Fihrist, 82f; Dharí‘a, 21:268), in which he discussed various amazing life spans including those of such figures as Khiḍr (immortal and undatable), Luqmán the Elder (lived 3,500 years), Noah (lived 1,450 years) and Adam (lived 950 years). This fascinating work opens by reckoning Khiḍr (“the Green One”, Ever Verdent, Eternal) the most long-lived figure, uncharacteristically identifying him as a grandson of Adam through Abel (al-Mu‘ammarún, 3ff). The second most long-lived is identified as Luqmán (the 1st—not the later sage Luqmán) an alleged son of the qur’anic Arabian prophet ‘Ad (cf. Ibn Isḥáq, *K. al-Mubtada*, [reconstructed] tr. Newby, 1989:55; Ibn Bábuwayh, Kamál, 507).

Ibn Bábuwayh, aṣ-Ṣadúq (d. 381/991), drew upon the above-mentioned work of as-

Sijistání and a wide range of imamate traditions in the course of explicating the mysteries of extended periods of prophetic (proto-) *ghayba* (“occultation”) in his lengthy Arabic *Kamál ad-dín* (‘Perfection of Religion’) as well as his *‘Ilál ash-sharí‘a* … (‘Causes of the Directives …’). A tradition is, for example, recorded from ‘Alí b. Muḥammad al-‘Askarí that Noah had a very extended longevity, “the age of Noah was 2,500 years” (‘Ilál, 45f, Kamál 134–7; 496, 503; cf. Kohlberg, XVI:52). In the *K. Nubuwwat* (Book of Prophethood) and elsewhere in his Arabic *Biḥár al-anwár*, Persian *Ḥayát al-qulúb* and other writings, Majlisí records various authoritative traditions and opinions about the miraculous lifespan of Noah and of numerous other pre-Islamic prophets (Bihar2, 11:13; Ḥayát 1:246ff). The following prophetic tradition, cited from Ibn Bábuwayh’s *Kamál ad-dín*, is especially noteworthy:

… The Messenger of God said, ‘The lifespan of Adam the father of humanity was 930 years; that of Noah 1,450 years; of Abraham 157 years; of Ishmael son of Abraham 120 years; of Isaac son of Abraham 180 years; of Jacob 120 years; of Joseph 120 years; of Moses 126 years; of Aaron 130 years; of David 100 years (including 40 years of his rule) and of Solomon son of David 712 years (Bihar2 11: 65).

The same Shí‘í encyclopaedist elsewhere records a tradition related from al-Wáḥidí and recorded in the *Tafsír* of Abú ‘Alí aṭ-Ṭabarsí (d.c. 548/1154), to the effect that Solomon son of David was given rule over East and West for 700 years and 7 months. On this figure Majlisí himself felt obliged to comment, referring to it as a *khabar gharíb* (“hidden report”). He seems to relate the basically 700 year length of Solomon’s global rule to his encompassing both eastern and western regions. Traditions such as this may conflict with others though they retain their authenticity and ultimate coherence (ibid., 14:80). Taken at face value Solomon’s 700 year rule contradicts traditions related from the 6th Imám Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣádiq (d.c. 148/765) which reckon a 400 (or 480) year period between David and Jesus. It would also indicate that Solomon outlived Jesus by around 300 years (Bihar2 14:80, 234, 351)! In line with other Islamic traditions, Majlisí somewhat more acceptably records a round 500 year period separating Jesus and Muḥammad on the authority of Imám Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣádiq (Bihar2 14: 349).

Such Islamic prophetological-chronological notices as the above are legion. They are

reminiscent of the ages of the early biblical patriarchs and of chronological data found in ancient near eastern, antediluvian genealogies. The biblical tradition is similarly replete with strange chronological discrepancies. The longest-lived biblical figure Methusaleh, son of Enoch, for example, died aged 969 at the time of the flood when Noah was 600 years old (Gen. 5f). Some Arabic and Persian Islamic historical sources contain detailed chronological data which, by modern historical standards, is confused and inaccurate. Chronologically oriented statements in Bábí-Bahá’í primary sources occasionally reflect the chronological idiosyncrasies of various, sometimes heterodox Islamic sources. This is at times evident in aspects of the novel prophetological schemata of the Báb and in the dating given by BA\* to certain pre-Islamic philosophers and prophets in his *L. Ḥikma* (as will be noted below).

Islamic minor and major prophets (*nabí and rasúl)*

The narrative portions of the Q. are mostly concerned with the pious example of twenty four or so all male prophet figures directly named therein (Q. 6:84–9; 21:48–91.). This number has traditionally been slightly extended to twenty-seven or eight (still all male figures) by the addition of a few persons not directly named in the Q. (e.g. Seth; Uzair [Ezra] -->). Around this number of messengers consolidated itself fairly early on (pre-12th cent. CE) through the mystical treatment of a listing of twenty-seven figures in the influential *Fuṣuṣ al-ḥikam* (Bezels of Wisdom) of Ibn al-‘Arabí (d. 638/1240). This number 28 for pre-Islamic prophets became especially well-known (cf. AB\* FWU:99, 24). The disciple of the Great Shaykh, Ḥurr al-Ámílí (d. 787/1385) also associated the stream of Islamic prophets with the number of letters in the Arabic alphabet (28).

Communicating messages from God, the twenty-eight called humankind to piety, guiding from primordial times until the era of Muḥammad whose own circumstances often coloured the largely non-systematic qur’anic presentation of past prophets. Roughly eighteen of these figures are mentioned in the Hebrew Bible though most of the major (and minor) biblical prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Habbakuk, etc.) are not (directly) mentioned in the

Q. Very few NT figures, aside from John the Baptist, his father Zechariah and Jesus along with his mother Mary, find direct mention in the Q.

Two major, sometimes synonymous terms exist in the Q. for persons who communicate the divine message. Firstly, agents of God may be *nabí* (*nabiyy* = prophet; pl. *nabiyyún*/*anbiyá*) meaning ‘one who speaks forth’ (cf. Heb. [Aram.] *náví*, tr. Gk. [LXX] *prophethês*). The term *nabí* occurs around seventy-five times in the Q. mostly referring to the prophet Muḥammad. Those so designated are largely biblical figures mostly not considered prophets in the Bible. Apart from Abraham and Moses, Elijah, Elisha and Jonah, none of the qur’anic prophets are so named in either biblical or mainstream post-biblical, Judaeo-Christian tradition. The following biblical figures become qur’anic prophets, Adam, Noah, Joseph and David.

Secondly, agents of God may be *rasúl* (pl. *rusul*), variously translated, ‘messenger’, ‘envoy’, ‘apostle’, etc. This term is most probably rooted in Jewish Christian (Elchasaite) and/or Manichean terminology (Ar. *rasúl* = Syr. *šĕlíḥa*, Fossum, 1993149f). *Rasúl* occurs over 300 times in the Q., and is also implied by *mursal* (lit. ‘sent one’; Q. × 36 in 14 *surahs*; Kassis, 807f; 1032–3). According to the Q. “Every *ummah* (community) has its *rasúl*” (Q. 10:47). Aside from Muḥammad himself, eight figures are specifically designated *rasúl* in the Q.: [1] Noah, [2] Shu‘ayb, [3] Húd, [4] Ṣáliḥ, [5] Lot, [6] Ishmael, [7] Moses and [8] Jesus.

Like Muḥammad, Jesus is explicitly designated *rasúl Alláh* (Q. 61:6). Several of these figures including Moses (Q. 19:51), Ishmael (Q. 19:54) and Muḥammad (Q. 33:40; 7:157f) are also referred to as *nabí*. Not all the *nabí* (prophets), however, are also *rasúl* and not all *rasúl* also reckoned among the *nabí*. Taking into account a chronological arrangement of the suras, many modern scholars see little or no distinction between the *nabí* and the *rasúl* [= *mursal*]. Descendants of Abraham, however, are particularly designated *nabí*/*anbiyá’* (Q. 29:26; 45:15; 57:26–7). Several Arabian, non-Abrahamic figures sent to miscellaneous communities (see 05–07 -->) are counted among the *rasúl* (Q. 10:47; 16:38, etc.). The words, “And We did not send before you any *rasúl* or *nabí*” (Q. 22:52) have been taken by some to indicate differentiation (Rahman, 1980:82).

*Nubuwwa* and *waláya*: modes of prophecy and divine providence

Islamic literatures contain numerous and divergent attempts to define, clarify and expound the non-systematic, qur’anic prophetological terminology. The term *nubuwwa* (prophecy, prophethood) occurs only five times in the Q. (3:79; 6:89; 29:27; 45:16; 57:26). It has no detailed explanation beyond the fact that *nubuwwa* was bestowed upon the progeny of Abraham and the “children of Israel” (Q. 29:27; 45:16). References in the *ḥadíth* literatures highlight the importance of *nubuwwa*. Muḥammad, for example, is reckoned to have stated that, “The genesis of your religion is *nubuwwa* and *raḥma* (Divine mercy)” (ad-Dárimí, *Sunan* IX). In the Q., the early ‘creeds’ and later doctrinal treatises, belief in the prophets and the power of prophethood are regarded as central to Muslim faith (Wensinck, 1938). Both Sunní and Shí‘í Muslims consider *nubuwwa* (prophethood) a fundamental element of religion. In Shí‘í Islam its importance is such that it often follows *tawḥíd* (the Divine Unity) among the five “pillars”. The closely related *waláya* concept (-->) has been regarded as a “sixth” pillar of twelver Shi‘ism.

A great many Islamic books and treatises have been written dealing with *nubuwwa* and related mode(s) of *waḥy* (divine guidance), concepts of *ilḥám* (inspiration) and the miraculous powers of various prophet figures attendant upon their prophetic commission. Anawati succinctly defined Islamic prophethood as “essentially an investiture granted by God to certain people” (ERel. 8:465). The relationship between the prophet and the angels, the jinn and humankind was likewise much discussed. In Shi‘ism discussions often centred upon concepts of *waláya* relative to the *nabí*, the *rasúl* and the role of the exalted imams.[[30]](#footnote-30)

By the 3rd/9th century, Islamic discussions of prophecy were part of comprehensive *kalám* (theological discourse) (Strousma, 1985:102f). A theory of prophecy, furthermore, was an essential element in Islamic philosophical systems (Brinner, 1988:66). Philosophical,

mystical, theosophical and other dimensions of prophetological theory contributed to the huge and very rich Islamic prophetological legacy. All manner of theories were entertained about the nature and significance of modes of communication between God and humankind. Worth citing at this point is the following passage from the *K. al-Arba‘ín fí uṣúl ad-dín* of Abú Ḥamíd Muḥammad al-Ghazalí (d. 505/1111) which constitutes excellent summation of the orthodox position regarding angels, prophets and *waḥy* (divine inspiration):

Know that God created the angels (*al-malá’ikat*) and raised up the *anbiyá’* (prophets) and enabled them to perform miracles (*al-mu‘ajizát*). The angels are one and all [no more than] His servants who did not wax proud on account of service to Him, neither did they weary of it. Day and Night they utter unceasing praise. The *anbiyá’* (prophets) are those sent unto his creatures. He transmits His *waḥy* (divine revelation) unto them through the instrumentality of the angels. Wherefore do they [the prophets] cry out through *waḥy* (divine inspiration) and this is not *waḥy* from their own self …” (al-Arba‘a, 19–20).

Shí‘í discussions of these matters often make much of the differences between *nabí* and *rasúl* relative to the position of the *walí* (locus of divine guidance) and the sanctified Imám. This can be seen, for example, in the *‘Ilm al-yaqín* (The Knowledge of Certainty) of Mullá Muḥsin Fayḍ al-Kashání (d. 1090/1679) (‘Ilm 1:366f).

Along with *nubuwwa* (prophethood) the term *waláya* (= *wiláya*) is generally expressive of God’s providential overseership mediated by such agents of his power, salvific intimacy and purpose as the *nabí*, *rasúl*, imams and saints. The *waláya* concept lies at the very heart of Shí‘í religiosity, often indicating “adherence to the imams and the recognition of their mission” as infallible exponents of the Q. and possessors of *‘ilm al-ghayb* (knowledge of the unseen). Within Shi‘ism *waláya* is especially related to the role and sanctity of ‘Alí and the Imams of the *ahl al-bayt* (House of the Prophet) who are the trustees and bearers of the divine command (*wálí al-amr*) as is the messianic Qá’im, entitled *ṣáḥib al-amr* (bearer of the command). The identification of the believer with the imamate as the fountainhead and locus of *wiláya* is essential to Shi‘ite soteriology (Landolt, Enc.R 15:316f; Anawati, Enc.Rel. 7:464f).[[31]](#footnote-31)

Ibn al-‘Arabí (d. 638/1240) and various of his numerous commentators have made much of concepts of *nubuwwa* (prophethood) and *wiláya* (“sainthood”). For the Great Shaykh *waláya* is essentially the *báṭin* (inner depth) of *nubuwwa*, itself of various kinds as the following passages from the *Futúḥát al-Makkiyya* must suffice to illustrate:[[32]](#footnote-32).

*Waláya* (divine guidance) is expressive of *nubuwwa ‘ámma* (general prophethood) and that prophethood which is legalistic (*at-tashrí‘*) also known as *nubuwwa kháṣṣa* (specific prophethood) …. Muḥammad is the *khátam an-nubuwwa* (seal of prophethood) for there is no prophethood (*nubuwwa*) after him. Yet after him was the like of Jesus among the *ulú al-‘azm* (those characterized by steadfastness) of the Messengers (*ar-rusul*) and certain specified Prophets (*al-anbiyá’*) … [in due course] there will be disclosed a *walí* (“saint”) possessed of absolute prophethood (*nubuwwa al-muṭlaqa*) … (Futuhat, 2:24, 49; cf. 1:200, 429; Fusus, 134–6; 160, 191).[[33]](#footnote-33)

Ibn al-‘Arabí saw himself, Jesus and the future Mahdí as loci or “seals” of various modes of *wiláya*. Jesus, for example, is the seal of the general, absolute *wiláya* (*khatm al-waláya al-muṭlaqa*) (Qayṣarí, Sh.Fusus, 255, 456, 460, 843; Landolt, Enc.Rel. 15:320f).

In the course of commenting upon n*ubuwwiyya* (“prophetology”) in the utterance of Jesus (*kalimat ‘ísáwiyya*) in his *Sharḥ fuṣús al-ḥikam*, Qayṣarí (d. 751/1350) makes key statements about *nubuwwa khaṣṣa* and *nubuwwa ‘amma*, general and specific prophethood respectively. Much commented upon by Ibn al-‘Arabí and his devotees this terminology was utilized and commented upon by the Báb in his *Risála fí’l-nubuwwa al-kháṣṣa* (Trestise on the specific prophethood). Therein he explained the *an-nubuwwa al-khaṣṣa* (specific prophethood) of Muḥammad as an expression of the *mashiyy*a (Divine Will):

The bearer of the *an-nubuwwa al-kulliyya* (universal prophethood) is the *mashiyya* (Divine Will) which … descended from the world of His Essence … the *mashiyya* was the genesis (*mabdá’*) of *nubuwwa al-khaṣṣa* (specific

prophethood) and the absolute *waláya*, the divine Light and the Lordly mysteries … (Báb, R-NubuwwaK 14:331–2).

*Shí‘í ‘irfání* (“gnostic”) writers of the Safavid and other periods indulged in complex discussions about the relationship between *nubuwwa* and *waláya*. A few notes from the *Kalimát-i maknúnih* (Hidden Words) of Fayḍ al-Káshání (d. 1007/1680–1681) will illustrate this in that this work contains an interesting discussion of the senses in which *al-Insán al-kámil* (The Perfect “Man” [“Human”]) could be considered a *nabí* (Prophet) or a *walí* (bearer of *wiláya*, ‘benefactor’, ‘saintly guide’). Káshání states that *an-nubuwwa al-muṭlaqa* is “ultimately real prophethood” (*an-nubuwwa al-ḥaqíqa*), an eternally existing reality like *an-nubúwa al-‘ámma* (general prophethood). It is the force through which Muḥammad infuses all existence and is the locus of all *Ḥaqq* (Ultimate Reality). Its bearers are variously entitled *al-khalifa al-a‘ẓam* (Most Great Khalifa), *quṭb al-aqṭáb* (Pivot of Pivots) *al-insán al-kabír* (The Great Human) and *Ádam al-ḥaqíqa* (The Adam of Reality). Therefrom the “Supreme Pen” (*al-qalam al-a‘lá*) inscribes reality as the *al-‘aql al-awwál* (First Intellect) and the *ar-rúḥ al-a‘ẓam* (Most Great Spirit). This *an-nubuwwat al-muṭlaqa* (absolute prophethood) is alluded to as the first creation of God, the “Light” (*núr*) of Muḥammad, the locus of his being a *nabí* (Prophet) when “Adam was betwixt water and clay” (Káshání, *Kalimát*, 186).

This same writer further maintains that the *báṭin* (interiority) of absolute *nubuwwa* is the “absolute *waláya*” (*báṭin al-waláyah hiya al-waláyah al-muṭlaqa*). It is related to the supernal “Light” of Imám ‘Alí’s utterance “I was a *walí* (bearer of *waláya*), when Adam was betwixt water and clay”. The prophethood of all prophets results from their being channels of *an-nubuwwat al-muṭlaqa* (absolute prophethood) (Fayḍ, Kalimát, 186–7). Shí‘í *irfání* speculation focuses upon ‘Alí (as opposed to Jesus) as the locus of the eternal *waláya* by virtue of which he, Muḥammad and all the prophets, express the absolute *waláya* in their absolute prophethood.

*Waláya* and associated doctrines are expounded in the works of the first two Shaykhí leaders, Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsá’í and Sayyid Káẓim ar-Rashtí (-->). Commenting on *maṭla’*

(Dawning Point), for example, in his *Qaṣida al-lámiyya* Sayyid Káẓim states that this indicates *waláya*. This he defines as an eternally elevated phenomenon without beginning, as “the Eternal Light (*an-núr al-azal*), the Primordial Designation (*at-ta‘yín al-awwal*), the secondary Eternality (*al-azaliyya ath-thániyya*), the Bearer of Eternality upon Eternity without Beginning (*ṣáḥíb al-azaliyya al-azaliyya*) and the sanctified, most holy Emanation (*al-fayḍ al-aqdas asl-muqaddas*)”. It is something closely associated with the divine Essence (*hiya ḥaqíqa adh-dhát aḥad*). *Waláya*, furthermore, has the station of the Primal *Dhikr* (Remembrance) (*adh-dhikr al-awwál*) and is the genesis of the divine Names and Attributes (*mabdá’ al-asmá’ wa’l-ṣifát*) and a great deal more besides (ar-Rashtí, *al-Qaṣída*, 6).

*Wiláya* concepts are sometimes central to the Báb’s imamological and gematric interpretations of the letter *wáw* (= *waláya*) and central to his exegesis of various *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* episodes (T.‘Asr 69:33ff on the 1st wáw = *wiláyat al-kulliyya* … etc.; 36f, 55f on letter 35 (= wáw), etc.). His treatment of Adam and the angels in his early, highly imamologically oriented *T. Baqára* is also of interest in this connection. BA\* likewise made use of concepts of *wiláya* though these have yet to be investigated (e.g. *L. Ḥurúfat*, 74). Commenting upon the word “moon” in Q. 91:2 in his *T. Shams*, BA\* has it indicate *waláya*. Ultimately Bahá’í *wiláya* was focussed in SE\* as the (Per.) *Valíy-i amr Alláh* (Guardian of the [Bahá’í] Cause of God).

2.2 The traditional ‘twenty-eight’, the myriad prophets and the *ulú al-‘azm* (“possessors of steadfastness”) in Islamic and Bábí-Bahá’í literatures

The annotated paragraphs set down below on the traditionally twenty-eight prophets and envoy-messengers sum up the qur’anic references. They introduce a few basic aspects of the Islamic and Bábí-Bahá’í positions respecting these figures. Islamic and Bábí-Bahá’í sources for the most part assume the largely doubtful historicity of these twenty-eight by arranging them in a partly traditional yet still highly speculative chronological order.[[34]](#footnote-34) The

concrete human existence and/or precise dating of most of these figures accords with Islamic historical perspectives, although concrete historical information is for the most part unknown, if not historically meaningless. The dates sometimes given here for these twenty-eight reflect either the theories of modern biblical scholarship or traditional (though often variant) Islamic chronological assumptions.

Where figures listed have originally Hebrew names found in the Bible they are also given in this language after the Arabic. A few unnamed pre-Islamic figures of the Q. are loosely chronologically listed and identified by the double zero (= 00). Frequency of mention in the Q. is at times indicated by (= Q. x\_) along with the number of qur’anic surahs containing reference to these figures. The (usually) qur’anic indicated status as *nabí* (prophet) is indicated by (N) and/or that of the *rasúl* (= *mursal*, ‘sent messenger’) by R and/or the speculative (M = R). Figures counted in developed Bábí-Bahá’í doctrine as (Per.) *maẓhar-i iláhí* (Manifestations of God -->5.4) are indicated by an M with an asterisk (M\*). Only a brief synopsis of the Bábí-Bahá’í position regarding these twenty-eight (and a few others) will be registered below.

Primordial, Antediluvian figures

01. Ádam, آدَمَ R+N+M\* (= Heb. אָדָם, ádám = “humankind”), Adam the first man in biblical and Islamic tradition who was believed to have lived and flourished soon after the creation (Q. × 25 in 9 suras). Several of the genesis motifs and narratives about Adam/the first couple have qur’anic parallels (Q. 7:20; 20:120ff, etc.).[[35]](#footnote-35) Created from clay he was fit to be the primoridial father of humanity, a khalífa (‘viceregent’, ‘substitute’) and a prophet-Messenger on earth who was taught the names of all things (Q. 2:28f). As in Genesis Adam married Ḥawwá’ (Eve) who was created from one of his ribs (Q. 4:1b cf. Gen. 2:22), the first couple being caused to slip by Satan. They were ultimately expelled from paradise (Q. 2:36). On earth God forgave Adam guided him and made a covenant with him (Q. 2:36f; 20:115 … etc.). Influenced by Jewish, Gnostic, Christian and other traditions, post-qur’anic Islam greatly elevated the first man. While

his pre-existence is implied in early Sunní *ḥadíth* numerous Shí‘í sources additionally reckon Adam a major manifestation of the Logos-like nor *al-Muhammadíya* (“Muhammadan Light”). It was pre-eminently through his “loins” that this pre-existent “Light” which is the essence of the Prophet and the Imams was transmitted (see Bihar2, 15:1ff; Rubin, 1975).

For the Báb Adam appeared 12,210 years before AH 1260/CE 1844, an essentially composite (millennial + centennial + decadal) symbolic dating (11 × 1,000 + 12 × 100+ 10 [adjustment] = 12,210) which cannot be fully unravelled here (Lambden, 1985). Though there were *‘awálim qabl-i ádam* (“worlds prior to Adam”) (P.Bayan IV:14; BA\* L. Qabl-i ádam) he was the first *maẓhar-i lláhí* (divine Manifestation), emanated from the *mashiyyat* (Divine Will), the *Dhikr-i awwal* [*azal*] (“Primal Remembrance”) in a “prophetic cycle” which to some degree terminated with the advent of the prophet Muḥammad (P.Dal., 2–3). Adam brought a “book” and founded an “embryonic religion” such that all subsequent *maẓhar-i lláhí* (divine theophanies) stood in need of him and were his “spiritual” return (P.Bayan III:13, VI:11, P.Dal. 3).

As a primordial Bábí-Bahá’í messenger many narratives and details respecting Adam in Abrahamic and Islamic scriptural sources are given symbolic interpretations in the writings of the Báb and BA\*. The details of Gen. 1ff are non-literally interpreted, including the creation in six days and the biblical-qur’anic story of the fall of the first couple from an Edenic paradise (Gen. 3ff + qur’anic parallels). Under gnostic and esoteric (*‘irfání*) Islamic and Shaykhí influences a multiplicity of exalted Adams are mentioned in Bábí-Bahá’í scripture (T. Kawthar, 15b, 21b T. Qadr., 69:19; cf. K.Panj.S 100).

02. Shíth, شِيثَ (trad. N) (= Heb. שֵׁת‎, Šēt), Seth was the unnamed (Q. × 0) third son of Adam and Eve (Gen. 4:25ff.). He is often considered an important post-Adam prophet in extra-qur’anic sources as one of the recipients of *waḥy* (“divine revelation”). Aside from this reference Seth is very seldom mentioned in Bábí-Bahá’í sources. In Shí‘í and other sources his progeny in particular, as opposed to that of his brothers Cain and Abel (Ar. Ḥábíl and Qábíl, unnamed cf. Q. 5:27) are seen to constitute the truly “righteous” primogenitors (Quinn, 1962; Klijn, 1977; Huart [Bosworth] EI2 IX:489–90). BA\* briefly narrates his story as Adam’s son Seth in his late Iraq period *S. Nuṣḥ* (Súra of the Counsel, 244). He is represented as a rejected messenger of God to his contemporaries who failed to orient themselves in the direction of the *wajh al-jamál* (“the beauteous Divine countenance”).

3. Idrís, إِدْرِيسُ N (= ? Heb.חֲנוֹךְ, ḥánók), Enoch (Gen. 4:17f; Q. × 2 = 19:57; 21:85) the biblical son of Jared who “walked with God” (Gen. 5:21–4) an “upright man and a prophet” (Q. 19:57–8; 21:85). Numerous legends are related of Enoch (Vajda, EI2 III:1030–1; Fraade, ‘Enoch’ Enc.Rel. 5:116–118). Numerous legends about Idrís exist in Islamic sources. He is “said to have introduced several sciences and arts, practised ascetic piety, received revelation, and entered paradise while still alive” (Fraade, ‘Enoch’ Enc.Rel. 5:116–118). Enoch is occasionally mentioned in Bábí-Bahá’í sources as the father of *ḥikmat* (wisdom-philosophy, etc.) and, as in Islamic sources, is equated with the first of the thrice born ‘Hermes’ (Martin, ‘Hermes’ DDD:771–783; ‘Hirmis’, EI2 III:463; BA\* L. Ḥikmat, tr.148; Má’idih 7:143)

4. Núḥ, نُوحٌ R+N+M\* (= Heb. נֹחַ, núḥa), Noah (fl. [trad.] fl. 3000? BCE) the biblical son of Lamech who in both the Bible and the Q. is reckoned to have lived at least 950 years (Gen. 9:29; Q. 29:13–14) and to have survived the flood along with his family (Q. × 43 in 28 suras). As an prototype of Muḥammad and one blessed with *waḥy* (divine inspiration, Q. 11:36) the legend of Noah and the associated story of the all-encompassing “flood” and salvific “ark”, is important in the Q., one súra of which is named after Noah (Q. 71 [title]). He is mentioned 43 times in 28 suras of the Q. his story being repeated around ten times. The Noah story is frequently told in *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* and other post-qur’anic literatures.

Little concrete information about Noah, the *maẓhar-i iláhí* is given by the Báb or BA\* though motifs deriving from his story are frequent in many primary texts. Much utilized is the Islamicate motif of the “Ark” of salvation providing refuge from the “flood” or “storms” of ungodliness.[[36]](#footnote-36) Important rewritten exegetical accounts of the story of Noah are found in the QA of the Báb and in BA\*’s *S. Nuṣḥ* (‘Súra of the Counsel’, 244–6). Early on the Báb understood the “Ark” to be the salvific “Ark of the messianic Dhikr” (*safínat adh-dhikr*), the refuge of the eschatological *ahl al-bayt*, the truly believing “people of the House” (of Shi‘ism as proto-Babism, QA 82:333). In the QA and elsewhere the Báb also used the motif of “the crimson-coloured and ruby arks” (*sufunan* *min yáqúta al-raṭba al-ḥamrá’*, QA 57:226) assigned to the “people of bahá” whom BA\* subsequently identified as his followers, the Bahá’ís (lit. ‘characterized with radiance’). BA\* also frequently and in a number of different ways glossed

the term “Ark” as, for example, the “Ark of the Spirit” (*safínat ar-rúḥ*) in his *L. Baha’* where he also speaks of the “Ark” motif as being his eternal religion:

Say: O people! Embark on the Ark of Eternity (*safínat al-baqá’*) which traverseth the crimson sea …” (L. Bahá’, 72; cf. L. Ruh, L. Tuqa)

In 1949 SE\*’s secretary explained that for Bahá’ís the story of Noah’s “Ark” and the “Flood” are “both symbolical” (LG: 509 No. 1716).

For Shi‘is the issue of the length of Noah’s lifetime went beyond scriptural norms (<-- over 950 years). This in part in connection with their desire to justify going to extreme lengths for the *ghayba* (occultation) of the hidden, messianic Qá’im. Several symbolic Bahá’í interpretations of Noah’s longevity also exist especially in view of BA\*’s mentioning the figure 950 years in his *K. íqán* (KI:6/7 -->4.2).

Three pre-Islamic Arabian prophets[[37]](#footnote-37)

5. 5. Húd هود R (= Heber? Heb. עֵבֶר, ḥeber), possibly (Ar.) ‘Ábar the Kenite descendant of Hobab and father-in-law of Moses (? Judg. 4:11). Q. title súra 11 and × 7 in 3 suras. Alternatively, a purely allegorical ancestor of the Jews (? cf. EI2 Wensinck [Pellet] art. Húd’). Seven times mentioned in 3 suras of the Q. Húd is also the title of súra 11. In the Q. Húd is a messenger sent to his people ‘Ád whose story is related three times in three suras (Q. 7:63–70; 11:50–60; 26:123–40). His monotheistic message was ridiculed by the ‘Adites (of *al-aḥqáf*, “the sand dunes”; Q. 46:21). In consequence they were largely destroyed by the violent *ṣarṣar* (“clamorous [raging] wind”). Húd finds succinct *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* (-->2.4) rooted mention in select Bábí-Bahá’í sources. In his *S. Nuṣḥ* (c. 1861?) BA\* refers to him as a *nabí* (prophet) sent to both orient and occident (S. Nuṣḥ, 246; cf. KI:7–8 /6–7).

6. Ṣáliḥ, صَالِح R+N is mentioned × 9 in 6 suras of the Q. He was a (pre-Abrahamic?) prophet sent to the tribe of Thamúd (Q. 7:73–9, etc.). He came with the “sign”, “proof” or “test” of the *náqa* (‘[she-] camel’) but was rejected. His mocking audience were all destroyed by a storm or earthquake. BA\* explained (the tribe of) “Thamud” allegorically as opponents of truth, in any

age (BA\* *T-Shams*, 15–16; cf. *S-Nuṣḥ*, 246; KI 7–8/7). He quite frequently utilized the motif of the “she-camel” (L-Dhi‘b/ESW, index). On one occasion AB\* explained that the *náqa* indicates Ṣálíḥ’s “sanctified self” (*nafs-i muqaddas*). Being “hamstrung” indicated an event within Ṣálíḥ precipitated by his enemies which prevented him from proffering the “milk” of spiritual beatitude to his people (AB\* Má’idih 2:99).

7. Shu‘ayb, شُعَيْب R+N, perhaps [the uncle of?] Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses (Exod. 3:1; 4:18; 18:1ff]? Q × 11 in 3 surahs). A messenger-prophet sent with *risálát* (“messages”) to the people of Madyan (Midian, NW Arabia? cf. Q. 20:40; 28:22f) or the *aṣḥáb al-ayka* (“people of the thicket”; Q. 7:83–91, etc.).[[38]](#footnote-38) A qur’anic *rasúl* though not a Bábí-Bahá’í *maẓhar-i iláhí*, Shu‘ayb is infrequently mentioned in Bábí-Bahá’í sources (BA\* KI:7–8 /7).

Abrahamic patriarchs and associated figures

8. Ibráhím, إبراهيم N+M\* (= Heb. איברהים, abráhám) Abraham (fl. 19th cent.? BCE).

Frequently mentioned in the Q. (Q14 [title] × 69 in 245 verses within 25 suras) Abraham in the Q. is a son of Ázar (Q. 6:74 cf. the Eliezer of Gen. 15:2f and Gen. 11:26 where the father is Teraḥ). He is the *khalíl-Alláh* (‘the friend of God’, Q. 4:125; 6:125) and scriptural father of monotheism. For Muslims Abraham became a proto-Muslim proponent of primordial Islám, the *millat Ibráhím* (“religion of Abraham”, Q. 2:130 etc.). Neither genealogically a Jew nor a Christian (Q. 3:67) Abraham is several times accorded the epithet *ḥaníf*, loosely, ‘pure monotheist’ (cf. Syr. *ḥanpo* pl. *ḥanpe*, Q. 2:135; etc.). According to Q. 29:27 God established *nubuwwa* (‘prophethood’) and *al-kitáb* (‘The Book’, ‘Scripture’) “among his progeny” (-->09 & 10).

In Bábí-Bahá’í sources Abraham is a centrally important *maẓhar-i iláhí*. (BA\* S-Nuṣḥ, 246–7; KI:8/7–8). Several legendary episodes within Abraham’s life are given a spiritual interpretation, including his being cast into the “fire” (*an-nár*) which became “light” (*an-núr*) and his unfulfilled sacrifice of [Isaac] Ishmael (BA\* S.Nuṣḥ, 247–8, etc.). For AB\* his exiles prefigured those of BA\* (AB\*, SAQ:IV).

9. Isḥáq, اسحاق N (= Heb. יִצְחָק), Yiṣḥáq), Isaac (Q. × 17 in 12 suras) according to Gen. 22:1f the son of Abraham. In the biblical tradition he was the one bound for sacrifice (Heb. עֲקֵידַת יִצְחַק, *‘Aqēḏaṯ Yīṣḥaq*, cf. Gen 22:9). Though this is not explicit in the Q. some early Persian and other Muslim sources supported his status as *dhabíḥ* (‘the one [well-nigh] sacrificed’).[[39]](#footnote-39) Isaac is rarely mentioned in Bábí-Bahá’í primary sources. BA\* and AB\* have commented upon the meaning and discrepancy between the biblical (Isaac) and qur’anic exegetical (Ismá‘íl) references to different sons of Abraham involved in the near sacrifice (Mázandarání, AK 3:196–201). They held that both narratives enshrine the same “spiritual” truth.

10. Ismá‘íl, اسماعیل R+N (= Heb. יִשְׁמָעֵאל, Yishmá‘él, “God will hear”), Ishmael (Q. × 12 in 8 suras) the biblical eldest son of Abraham and Hagar (Gen. 16:11ff) said in the Q. to have received divine revelations (Q. 2:136; 4:163). In the Q. he (or a second Ismá‘íl -->)[[40]](#footnote-40) is explicitly named a prophet-Messenger (*rasúlan* *nabíyyan* Q. 19:54b) though little concrete information is given about him. He most probably was the one who (it is implied) among other things assisted his father in establishing the Meccan Ka‘bah as the centre of pilgrimage (Q. 2:125f) (Paret, ‘Ismá‘íl’ EI2 IV:184–185 + bib., Firestone, 1988; 1990). Some Muslims hold that he was the *ghulám ah-ḥalím* (“the wise youth”) whom Abraham prepared as the *dhabíḥ* (‘one [well-nigh] sacrificed’, Q. 37:101–7). Abraham’s intended sacrifice of Ishmael is occasionally mentioned in Bábí-Bahá’í sources where he is a paragon of detached, personal sacrifice (BA\* Tablet to Riḍá’ GWB:XXXII). Following the post qur’anic story BA\* likened the actual death of his son Mírzá Mihdí (d. 23 June 1870) in Acre, to Abraham’s intended sacrifice of Ishmael (ibid.). As in various Islamic (Shí‘í) and Shaykhí texts, Bábí-Bahá’í primary sources mention two Ishmaels, one the son of Abraham and the other the *rasúl* and *nabí* mentioned in Q. 19:54–5 as interpreted by Imám Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣádiq and others (Bihar2 13:388–91; AB\* & SE\* unpublished). This second Ismá‘íl is sometimes identified as the Israelite prophet, Ismá‘íl son of Ḥizqíl (son of Ezekiel; Shaykh Aḥmad, JK 1/1:101).

11. Lúṭ, لوط R+N (= Heb. לוֹט, Lôt) Lot, the biblical son of Haran and nephew of Abraham (Gen. 11:27f; 13:5–13, 7f). In the Q. Lot is an envoy-prophet mentioned 27 times in 14 suras. He is said to have survived the catastrophic, meteor-like stoning (with *sijjíl*) of “upturned” (*mu’tafika*, pl. *mu’tafikát*), ‘vice-ridden’ cities such as (the unnamed) Sodom. Lot is seldom mentioned in Bábí-Bahá’í primary sources though aspects of his biblical-qur’anic story are non-literally interpreted. In a letter dating to 1938, for example, SE\* defended the integrity of Lot relative to the incestuous episode narrated in Gen. 19:29–38 (SE\* Dawn:201).

12. Ayyúb, أَيّوب N (= Heb. אִיּוֹב, ‘áyôb) Job is a non-Hebrew, universal legendary hero known from the biblical book of named after him and various post-biblical sources including the Qumran texts. In the biblical book Job is pictured as an inhabitant of Ur (= Edom?). He is four times mentioned in 3 suras of the Q., twice in lists (Q. 4:163; 6:84). Twice mentioned in fragmentary allusions to his story (Q. 21:83–4; 38:41) this Islamic legendry hero is sometimes considered a descendant of Abraham through Isaac (Ṭabarí, *Táríkh* I:194).

Job and his (unnamed) wife are greatly celebrated in the opening pages of the twenty-five page Arabic epistle of BA\* variously entitled the *L. Ayyúb* (Tablet of Job) and *Súrat aṣ-ṣabr* (Surah of Patience, March 1863; Ar. text, *Ayyamí*: 282–313). Therein are registered Islamicate forms of originally Jewish-Hellenistic Job materials such as are found, for example, in the *Testament of Job* (1st. cent. BCE/CE ?; Kohler, 1897; OTP 1:829–868). Job, though not the biblical book, also figures in a few other *alwáḥ* of BA\* (e.g. L.Sarráj, MA 7:65). AB\* occasionally interpreted verses of the biblical book of Job (SWAB: 171–2 on Job 19:25–27) and gave Q. 38:41 an allegorical interpretation. The “spring” (*mughtasal*) in this latter verse [recte, Q. 38:42] is interpreted as the “spring of divine prophethood” (*chashmihy-i nubuwwat-i iláhí*). On entering it Job was cured of both spiritual infirmities (*amraḍ-i rúḥání*) and physical strictures (*taqayyád-i nafsání*) (Ganj, 58–9).

Israelite patriarchs, prophets and other miscellaneous figures

13. Ya‘qúb, يَعْقُوبُ N (= Heb. יַעֲקֹב, ya‘áqôb), Jacob also known as (Heb.) יִשְׂרָאֵל, yísra’el, (Ar.) إِسْرَائِيل, Isrá’íl (= Israel, cf. Q. 3:87, etc.), the son or brother of the biblical Isaac (Q. 37:113;

6:84). Jacob may have flourished in the mid. 2nd millennium BCE. He is reckoned as a *nabí* and is 16 times mentioned in 10 suras of the Q. The father of the (twelve) tribes (Q. 2:126f) including that stemming from his beloved son Joseph. It was over separation from this “son of his old age” (Gen. 37:3b) that he was blinded with grief until Joseph’s “coat” (*qamíṣ*) was cast upon his head thereby restoring his sight (Q. 12:93–4). In Shí‘í tradition the sacred *qamíṣ* (“garment”) was *thawb min thiyáb al-janna*, (“one of the robes of Paradise”) with which God through Gabriel clothed Abraham. It was handed down to Jacob who bestowed this scented (*ríḥa*) garment (Q. 12:94b) upon Joseph (Bihar2 12:249).

Jacob-Israel is infrequently mentioned in Bábí-Bahá’í sources save relative to his being the father of Joseph. In his *K. Asmá* the Báb interpreted messianically the qur’anic episode of Jacob’s sight being restored through the healing scent of the garment of Joseph. The motif of Joseph’s sight bestowing, life-giving, resurrecting *qamíṣ* is important in both Bábí and Bahá’í writings. In his *K. Asmá’*, for example, the Báb, commenting upon the Name of God *al-Bashír* (“the Herald of Good Tidings”, Q. 12:93) refers to a garment of the “Joseph of Bahá’”. In a passage inspired by Q. 12:93 he writes,[[41]](#footnote-41)

Hearken! Then take ye firm hold of the garment of the Joseph of Bahá’ (*qamís yúsuf al-bahá’*) from the hand of His Exalted, Transcendent herald of Glad-Tidings (*mubashshirihi al-‘aliyy al-a‘lá*). And place it upon thy head in order that thou might be endowed with insight (*li-tartadda baṣíran*) and discover thyself truly aware (*khabíran*) (text cited QI 4:1875).

The Bahá’í apologist Ishráq Khávarí understood this passage relative to BA\*’s being the Bábí messiah figure *man yuẓhiruhu Alláh* (Ishráq Khávarí, QI 4:1870ff).[[42]](#footnote-42)

On theophanological lines is the exegesis of *qamíṣ* (“garment”) presupposed in the *Súratal-qamíṣ* (The Súrah of the Robe, c. 1865) of BA\*. This 25 page Arabic work which opens by identifying the supernatural “Garment” as a reality evident as the *haykal*

(Temple) of the Person of BA\* “betwixt all the worlds!” (S-Qamíṣ, AQA 4:41). In the course of this S.Qamis BA\* is addressed by a supernatural voice as the *yúsuf al-kibriyá’* (“Joseph of the Divine Grandeur”) in *Abha’* (All-Beauteous) garments (*qumuṣ al-abhá’*) bidding him,

… deprive not the ears from the melodies of Thy holiness (*naghamát qudsika*) nor the eyes (*al-abṣár*) from smearing with the *kohl* (eye makeup) of the gnosis of thy Beauty (*‘an kuḥl al-‘irfán jamálika*) nor the suns (*ash-shumús*) from the flashes of the Lights of Thy Grace (*bawáriq anwár faḍlika*) …

Commenting on Q. 3:93a in his *L. Kull aṭ-ṭa‘ám* (Tablet of All Food, c. 1854), in a completely different context, BA\* gives “Isrá’íl” (Israel) and the “children of Israel” a mystical interpretation relative to the religion of the Báb at the same time censoring the antinomian proclivities of early Bábí factions:

Then know that the significance of “food” (*ṭa‘ám*) is [the one who is] the Locus of Knowledge (*nafs al-‘ilm*), that is, all branches of learning (*kull al-‘ulúm*). “Israel” signifies the *nuqṭat al-ulyá* (Primordial Point = the Báb) and the *baní Isrá’íl* (“children of Israel”) he whom God, on His part, made a [messianic] Proof (*ḥujjat*) unto the people in these days [= BA\*?]. “Except what Israel made unlawful for itself [or himself]” (Q.) indicates that which the Primal Point [= the Báb] made unlawful for His elevated ones and His servants (BA\*, Má’idih 4:371).

As far as I am aware this understanding of “Israel” (= the Báb) is not taken up in Bábí or Bahá’í literatures though, as will be noted below, it has something of a Shí‘í-Shaykhí hermeneutical precedent (-->5.1; al-Aḥsá’í, Sh. Ziyara, III:278).

14. Yúsuf يُوسُف M [=R]+N+M\* (= Heb. יוֹסֵף/יהוסֵף, Yôsêf), Joseph after whom Súrah 12 is named, is mentioned 27 times in the Q., twice outside Q. 12 (Q. 6:84 and 40:34). He is the biblical eleventh son of Jacob (= Israel) and Rachel. Though according to the Q. He came with “clear proofs” (Q. 6:85b; 40:34b) he was doubted as a prophet. In Islam Joseph is an important messenger-prophet of God. His story is the longest continuous prophetological narrative in the Q. (111 verses) mirroring the extended biblical narrative (Gen. 37–50). The *Súrat Yúsuf* (Q. 12) is reckoned the *aḥsan al-qaṣaṣ*, the “most beauteous of narratives” (Q. 12:3). It contains dimensions of the extended biblical story (Gen. 37–50) with supplementary haggadic-rooted and other unique features. In Islamic tradition Joseph is reckoned a paragon of handsome

beauty (*ḥusn/jamál*) and one eminently righteous (*aṣ-ṣiddiq*).[[43]](#footnote-43)

Joseph is figure of great importance in Bábí-Bahá’í primary sources. He is mentioned numerous times in a great many texts. The first major work of the Báb, his *Tafsír Súra Yúsuf* (Commentary upon the Surah of Joseph) or *Qayyúm al-asmá’* (lit. ‘The Self-Subsisting of the Divine Names’) is an Arabic neo-qur’anic, messianic, esoteric and quasi-qabbalistic expanded rewrite of select qur’anic *pericopae*. For the Báb Joseph was a key proto-Shí‘í type of the occulted, messianic Qá’im as well as one who prefigured the martyred and expected to “return” Imám Ḥusayn (d. 61/680). As in Shí‘í messianism Ḥusayn’s eschatological role is anticipated in the QA, *K. Asmá’* and other writings of the Báb.

The Qá’im/Ḥusayn-Joseph typology is central to Bábí-Bahá’í sacred writings. The eschatological Qá’im and Ḥusayn are pictured as “hidden” and “secreted” in a messianic *ghayba* (occultation) just as Joseph was “hidden” in the “pit” of his eschatological theophany by his jealous “brothers” who at times represent the 12 letters of the *kalimat at-tawḥíd* (“Word of the Divine Unity”), the *sháhada* as the cryptic expression of Shí‘í orthodoxy.

A qur’anic *nabí* (prophet) Joseph in developed Bahá’í doctrine was elevated to the position of *maẓhar-i iláhí* (M\*). SE\* expressed this as follows, “Joseph was one the ‘Sent Ones’ [= *mursal*] of the Qur’án, meaning a Manifestation of God [*rasúl* = *maẓhar-i iláhí*)” (LG:497). The allegorical-typological Bahá’í identification of Joseph with BA\* contributed markedly to his being elevated from Islamic “prophet” to an exalted, pre-existent Bábí-Bahá’í *maẓhar-i iláhí* (Divine manifestation, theophany). For Bahá’ís the all-eternal, paradigmatic *ḥusn*, *jamál* (“beauty”, cf. the messianic 3rd Imám Ḥusayn) of the biblical-qur’anic Joseph, became the *bahá’*/*abhá*, the radiant and glorious “Beauty” of the person of BA\* in his role as the incarnation of the powerful *al-ism al-a‘ẓam*, the Mightiest Name of God.

BA\* frequently claimed to be the new, true, supremely beauteous (*abhá*) Joseph. Bahá’í exegesis has it that the story of Joseph as interpreted by the Báb parallels and anticipates the person and fate of BA\*. This especially in terms of his Ottoman imprisonment and 1866–1867 rejection by his half-brother, Mírzá Yaḥyá Núrí. SE\* wrote that the Joseph story “forecast what the true Joseph [BA\*] would, in a succeeding [Bahá’í] Dispensation, endure at the hands of one who was at once His arch-enemy and blood brother” (GPB:23 + index).

15. Músá مُوسَى R+N+M\* (= Heb. מֹשֶׁה, mōšeh), Moses (13th cent.? BCE) in the Bible is the son of the Levites Amram and Yochebed (Exod. 2:1 ff). The central lawgiver and prophet figure in biblical Judaism, Moses is also a key prophet-messenger of the Q. A major prototype and annunciator of Muḥammad (Q. 7:156) Moses is mentioned in the Q. more frequently than any other prophet figure (Q. × 137 in 502 verses within 36 suras).

Many of the biblical episodes associated with Moses have qur’anic counterparts; examples are the Sinaitic call, theophany (Q. 7:142–3) and revelation of the Torah (*tawrát*; more commonly, *tawráh*); Pharoah and the exodus and various miracles associated therewith (Q. 20:12; 7:143f; etc.). As in the Q. Moses the exalted divine manifestation is very frequently mentioned in Shaykhí and in Bábí-Bahá’í literatures. The interpretation of the theophany on Sinai was foundational for the self-understanding and claims of the Báb and BA\*. This especially as it is mentioned in the semi-*ghuluww* (extremist), Shí‘í *khuṭba aṭ-ṭutunjiyya* (loosely, “Sermon of the Gulf”) ascribed to Imám ‘Alí (Lambden, 1986:84–5).

16. Hárún, هَارُون R+N (= Heb. אַהֲרֹן, ‘aḥárön) Aaron fl. 3th cent.? BCE) is the biblical elder brother of Moses (Exod. 2:1f) and an Israelite priest of the tribe of Levi. In the Q. he is 20 times mentioned in 13 suras. He is is the *wazír* of Moses (Q. 20:30; 35:17) with whom he is almost always mentioned. Aaron is again very seldom mentioned in Bábí-Bahá’í sources save in association with Moses.

17. Dáwúd, دَاوُود N [+M\*?] (= Heb. דָּוִד, dāwîd) David (fl. 11–10th cent. BCE/ c. 1037?–c. 961(970)? BCE) the biblical youngest son of Jesse (I Sam. 16:1, etc.). He is a *nabí* mentioned six times in 9 suras of the Q. The Q. twice states that God revealed the *zabúr* (Book, Psalter) to David (Q. 4:163; 17:55). God is said to have taught him *‘ilm* (knowledge) and *ḥikma* (‘wisdom’ Q. 21:78f) as well as how to make armour and soften iron (Q. 21:80; 34:10). David in the Q. is considered God’s just *khalífa* on earth (Q. 38:35–38, cf. 2 Sam. 11–12, cf. Q. 21:78). His victory over *Jálút* (Goliath) is specifically mentioned (Q. 2:251) as are a few other episodes in his unusual and ultimately pious life. Abrahamic religious traditions picture David as a type of both the eschatological messiah and his enemy the anti-messiah or *Dajjál* (Deceiver). He is a figure of great importance both for the Báb and BA\* as, among other things, the revealer of the *Zabúr* (Psalter). In this respect he has a sweet singing voice. Just after the

divine his claim “I am *al-bahá’* (the glory/Beauty), the Báb, addressing the “Concourse of Lights” (*malá’ al-anwár*) in QA 108 claims, “This is the Bird (*aṭ-ṭayr*) which singeth in the firmament of heaven with the elevated accent of David (*‘alá laḥn al-dáwúd*)” (108:433). This same prophetological motif is utilized by BA\* in the eighth couplet of his early proclaimatory *Halih, Halih, halih, yá Bishárat* (Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, O Glad-Tidings! CE c. 1862):

This sweet Davidic voice (*naghmihy-i dáwúdí*) came from the Divine Lote-Tree (*sidrihy-i láhútí*), with the messianic Spirit (*rúḥ-i masíḥhá*) … (BA\* Ganj, 34).

Though the troubled, apparently far from *‘iṣmat* (life of *purity*) personal life of David spelled out in the Bible would seem to ill-befit his occupying an elevated position, the Islamic David is often represented as an extra pious penitent, a major prophet whose shortcomings were forgiven by God. Though not now regarded by Bahá’ís as a *maẓhar-i iláhí* (Manifestation of God) David is given high rank by BA\*. In his *K. íqán*, for example, he refers to David son of Jesse as being among the “greatest of prophets” (*anbiyá’ yi a*‘*ẓam*; BA\*, KI:39/51). Most probably as a result of Shí‘í ‘Irfání or Ahl-i Ḥaqq influence, the prophetology of the Báb recognizes a David prior to David the son of Jesse (Báb Ar. Dal. Per. Dal., TBA. Ms. 6007C:[189–197], 195; K.Panj.S 424ff; cf. Nuq. Káf, 27; Muḥadarát, 1:371f). This second pre-Mosaic David is most probably the Dáwúd exalted by the Ahl-i Ḥaqq faction known as the Dawúdís (“Davidites”) whom the Báb encountered in Ádhirbayján and elsewhere (Fr. Anastase the Carmelite, *ad-Dáwúda aw ad-Dáwúdiyyún* in al-Mashriq VI [1903], 60–67).

18. Sulaymán, سُلَيْمَان N (= Heb. שְׁלֹמֹה, šēlōmōh) Solomon (fl. 10 cent. c. 961–922? BCE) was the son and successor of David (and Bath-Sheba, 2 Sam. 12:24f; cf. Q. 27:1b, 16) as the Israelite king. In the Q. he is a *nabí* mentioned 17 times in 7 suras. He is a faithful servant of God (Q. 38:29) and another important antitype of Muḥammad. Solomon is credited with esoteric knowledge including the speech of animals and birds (Q. 27:16, 19) as well as great powers of magic and divination. In Islamic and other magical sources he is reckoned to have been privy to the secret of the *ism al-a‘ẓam* (mightiest Name of God). Rooted in the biblical text and Jewish traditions, the tale of Solomon and the variously named Bilqís, the Queen of Sheba, is recounted in Q. 27:20–45).

Like David, Solomon son of David is greatly revered in Bábí-Bahá’í sources. The Báb knew of Solomon as a paragon of knowledge and one universally accepted (K.Panj.S 28). In

his chronologically Islamo-biblical *L. Ḥikmat* (Tablet of Wisdom) BA\*, like Shaykh Aḥmad and others (JK 1/2:96) refers to Pythagoras (6th cent.? BCE) as a contemporary of Solomon (c. 986–930) and one who “acquired Wisdom (*al-ḥikma*) from the treasury of prophethood (*ma‘dan an-nubuwwa*),

Empedocles [c. 493–433], who distinguished himself in philosophy (*al-ḥikmat*), was a contemporary of David (Ar. *fí zamán dáwúd*) (c. 1037–967 BCE), while Pythagoras [6th cent.? BCE] lived in the days (*fí zamán*) of Solomon [c. 986–930 BCE], son of David, and acquired *al-ḥikma* (“wisdom) from the treasury of prophethood [= Solomon?] (*ma‘dan an-nubuwwa*). (TB 45/ tr. 145)

Bahá’í attempts to resolve the chronological disparities in the above passage originate with AB\* and SE\*.[[44]](#footnote-44) In his analysis of this data Cole has argued that the chronology of the *L. ḥikmat* is indebted to Sunní historical works, most notably the *al-Milal wa’n-niḥal* of ash-Shahrastání and the *al-Mukhtaṣar fí akhbár al-bashar* of Abú al-Fidá’ (d. 1331) which might (directly or indirectly) have been available to BA\* himself (Cole, WO 1979:30). This may indeed have been the case through the Acre located library of the al-Jazzár Mosque. It may be though that other Ishráqí, Shí‘í ‘school of Isfahan’ or Shaykhí sources lie behind this chronology.

The notice regarding the somewhat enigmatic Múriṣtus [Múriṭús?] (= “Martos” [sic.] in Holley, ed. *Scriptures* 198 [333]) in the same section of the *L. Ḥikma* of BA\* (41/150) may, as Cole also asserts, be (indirectly) derived from al-Qifṭí’s (d. 1248) *Táríkh al-ḥukamá’* (ed. 322, through ‘Abú al-Fidá’?). It was Múriṣtus (spellings vary, pointing uncertain) who, as detailed in his (?) *Ṣan‘at al-urghin al-búqí* (“On the construction of the flue-pipe organ”), invented a hydraulic organ which could produce very loud, terrifying sounds and be effectively utilized in warfare. Its inventor is mentioned in numerous sources including, for example, the early (*Muntakhab*) *Ṣiwán al-ḥikma* (ed. Dunlop, 82) of Abú Sulaymán as-Sijistání (4th/10th cent.) and the much later Persian *Násikh at-táwaríkh* (vol. II:15) of Sepher (-->4.1).[[45]](#footnote-45)

19. Ilyás, إِلْيَاس M [=R?]+N (= Heb.אֵלִיָּהוּ, ‘ēlíyáh, Gk. Elias), Elijah (fl. mid. 9th cent. BCE, 1 Kings 17ff; 2 Kings 1–2) is three times mentioned in two surahs of the Q. He is referred to as a sent messenger and a prophet. Ilyás is reckoned “among the righteous” (Q. 6:85) having been a staunch opponent of the cult of Baal (Q. 37:123ff). He is not mentioned very frequently in Bábí-Bahá’í sources though the biblical story of the confrontation between Elijah and the priests of Baal was demythologized by AB\*. The “altar of sacrifice” represents the human heart, the “heavenly fire” divine love and the “bullocks” sacrificed carnal desires entirely consumed by the fire of divine love (StarW VII:27). The biblical Elijah is regarded by Bahá’ís as one whose spiritual “return” has taken place twice: first as “John the Baptist” as the NT indicates (-->26) and again as the person of the Báb (SE\* GPB:58; Citadel, 95). BA\* and AB\* are both said to have reverentially visited the traditional site of the Cave of Elijah on Mt. Carmel.

20. Alyasa‘ اَلْيَسَع (N; = ? Heb. אֱלִישָׁע, ‘ělíšâ‘) Elisha, most likely the biblical prophet Elisha son of Shaphat (? 9th cent. BCE), the (Heb.) *‘ísh ‘élóhîm* (“man of God”) commissioned by Elijah (no. 19) whom he succeeded (1 Kings 19:16f; 2 Kings 2f). In the Q. Alyasa‘ is only mentioned in two lists of prophet figures, “Ishmael, Alyasa‘ [Elisha], Jonah and Lot/Dhú’l-Kifl” (Q. 6:86; 38:48). He is only very rarely mentioned in Bábí-Bahá’í sacred writings (cf. AB\* in PP:12).

21. Dhú’l-Kifl ذُو الْكِفْل (trad. N?), ‘The twice recompensed’ (Q. × 2 = 21:85; 38:48) is an unknown figure, thought by aṭ-Ṭabarí to be a pious *nabí* (prophet) named Bishr (or Bashír), allegedly a son of Job (*Tárikh*, 1:195,).[[46]](#footnote-46) Other Islamic sources variously, for example, reckon that he was Joshua, Ezekiel, Elijah, a cousin of Elisha or Zacharias (Tha‘labí, *‘Ará’is*, 144–5, 231–2; Kisá’í, Qiṣaṣ, tr. Thackston, 204, 351 n. 97; 399–400). He remains an obscure figure and is very rarely named in Bábí-Bahá’í primary sources (Táríkh, 1:195).[[47]](#footnote-47)

22. Yúnus, يُونُس M [=R]+N (= Heb יוֹנָה, yôníh) Jonah who may be the (mythical?) son of Amittai [Mattai] (8th cent.? BCE; II Kings 14:25). One biblical book and one qur’anic súra bear the name of Jonah (Q. 10). In the Q. Jonah appears as a sent messenger and a prophet and is 4 [+2] times mentioned in 4 [+2] suras. He seems once designated *dhu’n-nún* (“Lord of the fish”, Q. 21:87) and once *ṣáḥib al-ḥút* (“Man of the Fish”, Q. 68:48).[[48]](#footnote-48) Having been swallowed but cast out of a large fish (*al-ḥawt*) he was called by God to prophesy against a people (100,000 or so Assyrians of Ninevah) whom he induced to faith (Q. 37:139ff).

The story of Jonah is frequently interpreted allegorically in esoteric (*‘irfání*) Shí‘í-Shaykhí sources and occasionally in Bábí-Bahá’í primary texts. In his commentary upon the *bismi’lláh* and letter “n” (ن *nún*) prefixed to Súra 68, BA\* explained that among the innumerable significances of “n” is “fish” (*al-ḥút*) a sense it also has according to the Hebrew of the *jafr* alphabet of Ibn Síná (Massignon 1997:70). Figurative understanding of the story of Jonah and the fish is reckoned to indicate Muḥammad as one “drowned in the ocean of ecstatic revelation (*baḥr al-mukáshifat*) and mystical insight” (INBMC 56:38–9). AB\* gave allegorical explanations to the story Jonah and Dhú’n-Nún. In one text he states the “fish” (*ḥút*) represents the human propensity to materiality, the danger of being engulfed in the dark “ocean” of contingent existence (Má’idih 5:21).

23. ‘Uzayr, عُزَيْر N (=? Heb. עֶזְרָא, ‘ezrá’), Ezra, (N) the biblical sage and scribal priest of the Archaemenian monarch Artaxerxes I (fl. late 5th cent.? BCE early 2nd Temple Period). He led some exiled Jews from Babylon back to Jerusalem and is believed to have been the post-exilic restorer of the Mosaic Law (Ezra; 4 Ezra). Ezra is only mentioned in Q. 9:30 (cf. Q. 2:259) which probably records the opinion of Medinan Jews that he was the ibn Alláh (Son of God; so Ayoub, 1986). The issue of Ezra’s “sonship” is several times mentioned and contested by the Báb. BA\* and AB\* rarely refer to Ezra save in connection with his role as restorer of the text of the Torah.

24. Luqmán, لُقْمَان (N) an unknown figure (Q. 31 [title]; 31:12–13 [×2]) though traditionally a son of Ád, a wise and pious sage and one *al-mu‘ammar* (“one long-lived”), a venerable Aesop-like

teller of fables. Associated with the Islamic wisdom tradition, he occasionally figures in this role in Bábí-Bahá’í primary sources. In the *Valley of ḥayra* (“Wonderment “) of his mystical *Haft Vadí* (Seven Valleys, CE 1858), BA\* cites a saying of Luqmán whom he says had “drunk from the wellspring of *ḥikmat* and tasted of the waters of mercy” (SV: 34–35; *Call of the Divine Beloved*, 13). As far as I am aware this is the only substantial reference to Luqmán in Bábí-Bahá’í primary sources.

25. Dhú’l-Qarnayn, ذُو الْقَرْنَيْن ([trad.] N?), ‘Possessed of two horns’ is three times mentioned in the súra of the Cave (18:82–98 only). Though this is not at all certain, various Syriac and many post-qur’anic Islamic sources apply this epithet to Alexander the Great (III of Macedon, 356–323 BCE). Islamic sources make many identifications of Dhú’l-Qarnayn including for example, *al-Khiḍr* (the ‘Verdent’) and (in certain Shí‘í sources) ‘Alí b. Abí Ṭálib (d. 40/661) (Majlisí, Bihar2 12:172ff; Mittwoch, SEI:76). AB\* repeats this latter identification with ‘Alí but finds *ramzí*, a cipher or esoteric sense in every aspect of his scriptural story which he classifies as existing in verses *mutashábihát* (“needing interpretation”; Tablet to Jináb-i Nushábádí in Má’idih 2:42–3).

According to Q. 18:94 Dhú’l-Qarnayn built a barrier to protect the people from the (ultimately eschatological) ravages of *Ya’júj* and *Ma’júj* (‘Gog and Magog’, cf. Q. 21:96, Ezek. 38–39; Rev. 20:8). Both the Báb and BA\* interpreted the qur’anic story Dhú’l-Qarnayn and mystically applied this epithet to themselves. In QA 76 the Báb exegetically rewrites, in *waḥy*, (revelation mode) parts of the story of Dhú’l-Qarnayn (Q. 18:83ff). As the eschatological Imám ‘Alí, the Báb in various ways identified himself with Dhú’l-Qarnayn. It was in this imamological persona that he made various abstruse dualistic pronouncements regarding his theological station. In dialogue with God he at one point in QA 76 writes,

O Solace of the Eye[s]! The people shall ask thee about Dhí’l [Dhú’l]-Qarnayn.

Say [then in reply]: ‘Yea! By my Lord!

I am indeed the King of the two Originations (*malik al-bad’ayn*) in the two horns [eras, dominions?] (*al-qarnayn*).

I am the elevated possessor of a Horn [Dhú’l-Qarn] in the two bodies (*al-jismayn*).

I am the Sinaitic Fire in the two cosmic Waters (*al-má’ayn*).

I am the cosmic Water (*al-ma’*) in the two [Sinaitic] Fires (*an-nárayn*).

So hearken unto my call from these two [Sinaitic] Mounts (*aṭ-ṭúrayn*) …

We verily, established him [= Dhú’l-Qarnayn = the Báb] in the land and We, in very truth, bestowed a letter [of the alphabet] from the name of the *Dhikr* upon this Arabian Youth (*al-ghulam al-‘arabí* = the Bab) such that

the ways and means to all ends became his ….

In his early Edirne *Lawḥ-i Sayyáḥ* (“Tablet to the Traveller” CE c. 1864?), BA\* similarly seems to rewrite with reference to his theophany aspects of the story of Dhú’l-Qarnayn. At one time BA\* also identified “Gog and Magog” with his dual latter-day Bábí antagonists Mírzá Yaḥyá Núrí (his half-brother) and Sayyid Muḥammad Iṣfahání, subsequently considered antichrists of the Bábí era (Ma’idih 4:99, cf. 146).

Jesus and Christian origins

00. Zakariyya, زَكَرِيَّا, N, Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist (fl. 1st cent. BCE/CE., Lk 1, etc.) is seven times mentioned in four suras of the Q. (3:37f; 6:85; 19:2f, 21:89). He had charge of Mary, the mother of Jesus in the Jerusalem Temple (Q. 3:37f). Despite his advanced age and the barrenness of his wife (Elizabeth) God granted him the (allegedly) uniquely named son Yaḥyá (Q. 19:7b). In Islamic sources he is one of the ultra-pious believed to have suffered cruel martyrdom. Occasionally mentioned in Bábí-Bahá’í primary sources both the Báb and BA\* refer to traditions of his martyrdom.

26. Yaḥyá, يَحْيَىٰ (N) = John the Baptist (--> Syr. Yoḥannan?) executed by Herod Antipas CE c. 29–34. He apparently renounced the priesthood, lived as an ascetic, announced the near advent of the kingdom of God and preached a baptism of repentance. Very few details are given in the Q. where he is five times mentioned in 4 suras (Q. 3:39; 6:85; 19:7, 12; 21:90). The angels make mention of his birth as *muṣaddaqan bi-kalimati min Alláh* (one “confirming a Word [= Jesus] from God” Q. 3:39). Given *ḥikma* (wisdom, judgement) as a child he was exhorted to “take firm hold of the Book (*kitab* = the Torah) (Q. 3:46). Yaḥyá is called a *sayyid* (leader, authority) and his piety is celebrated, “and [We gave him Yaḥyá] *ḥannán* (compassion, tenderness) from Us and *zakat* (goodness, purity); making him *taqí* (pious, god-fearing, devout) and kind to his parents, neither arrogant nor rebellious” (Q. 19:13–14).

Though the Báb rarely mentions Yaḥyá, BA\* quite frequently referred to him and cited the NT record of his words (e.g. IQ:95ff). This especially during the Edirne period (1863–1868) when he was countering the emergent Azalí Babism of his half-brother Mírzá Yaḥyá Núrí (c. 1841–1914). To this end BA\* cited both the bible and Q. in his establishing his own claims. In his *K. Badí‘* (c. 1868), for example, BA\* specifically established a typology between himself

and Jesus and between the Báb and John the Baptist:

By God! The theopahny (*ẓuhúr*) of the Primal Point [of Reality = the Báb] and this most wondrous, most splendid theophany [= BA\*] is the exact correspondence of the theophany of Yaḥyá ibn Zakariyya (= John the Baptist) and the Spirit of God [= Jesus] (*K. Badí‘*, 114).[[49]](#footnote-49)

Though the Q. refers to Yaḥyá (John the Baptist) as a *nabí* (prophet), BA\* in his *K. Badí‘* apparently elevates the status of Yaḥyá to that of a *rasúl* and the herald of a *rasúl* (= Jesus). This in the light of the fact that both he (BA\*) and the Báb were *maẓhar-i iláhí* (= *rasúl*):

Yaḥyá was a *nabí* (prophet) and a *rasúl* (envoy-messenger) from God and, moreover, a herald of the forthcoming theophany (*ẓuhúr*) [of Jesus]. Wherefore did he say, “O people! I announce unto you the glad-tidings of the Kingdom of God and it has assuredly drawn nigh … (*K. Badí‘*, 114).

Extending further this typological parallelism, BA\* associates Yaḥyá-John the Baptist with a new religious law (*sharí‘a*) and with the baptizing Sabaeans (= Ṣábi’ún, Q. 2:62; 5:69; 22:17 = Mandaeans?]), remnants of whom exist today in southern Iraq, Iran, the USA and other western locations (Drower, [1937] rep. 1962; Gündüz, 1994). As Azalí Bábís adhered to Bábí legalism and continued to await a future messianic theophany so, BA\* states, did the followers of Yaḥyá (John the Baptist = “Sabeans” = Mandaens) act similarly by continuing to await the appearance of a saviour (*K. Badí‘*, 114ff; AA 4:233).

00. Maryam, مَرْيَم (Heb. מִרְיָם, Miryam, Miriam), Mary the mother of Jesus (CE d.c. 3?; Q. 19 [title] and × 34 in 12 suras) is the only woman called by her proper name in the Q. though often in the phrase *‘Isá b. Maryam* (Jesus son of Mary, Q. × 24). The qur’anic stories of the annunciation-conception and birth of Jesus to some degree reflect Christian apocryphal writings and select Gospel *pericopae*. The virgin birth is upheld (Q. 19:21; 21:91; 56:22) as is the chastity of Mary who is once curiously referred to as the “sister of Aaron” (Q. 3:37–8; 66:12; 19:29). The Báb, BA\* and AB\* all salute the purity of the virgin Mary and affirm the “miracle” of the virgin birth. BA\* referred to her in his *K. íqán* as an *ṭal‘at-i kubrá* (“that Supreme Countenance”, SE\* tr., “most beauteous countenance”) and *mukhaddaray-i baqá’* (SE\* tr., “that veiled and immortal Countenance”) (KI: 43–4/36–7).

AB\* explained Maryam’s bearing the qur’anic epithet “sister of Aaron” as intimating her being pure like Aaron not a sister of the brother of Moses. SE\* seems to have affirmed the reality of her “Immaculate conception” (being born with the stain of ‘original sin’), though he may have confused this with the Virgin birth itself (PDC:53; LDG:123). With Fáṭma and other “exalted heroines” Mary is seen by Bahá’ís as the outstanding woman of the Christian era (SE\* GPB:347). It is Mary the mother of Jesus and Mary Magdalene who are especially exalted in Bahá’í literature.

27. ‘Ísá, عِيسَىٰ R+N+M\* (= Heb. יֵשׁוּעַ Aram, Yeshú[a], a late form of the name Joshua, ‘YHWH saves’; cf. Gk. *leμsous*) Jesus (CE c. 6?– c. 30?) the founder of that Jewish faction which became Christianity. He has a prominent, elevated place in the Q. (× 93 times in 15 suras). As the “son of Mary” (Q. × 33) he allegedly spoke from the cradle (Q. 3:41; 5:109; 19:30). Jesus both affirmed the Torah and received the *Injíl* (*evangelion* = Gospel[s]) from God (Q. 3:43f; see 1.4 below). Not literally “a son of God” or a deity consubstantial with God (Q. 9:30f; 5:19f; 43:59), Jesus is said to be *al-masíḥ* (the messiah, Q × 11), a prophet (*nabí*) and a messenger (*rasúl*) as well as His “Word” (*kalimat*; Q. 3:45; 4:171) and a “Spirit (*rúḥ*) from Him” (Q. 4:171); one aided with the “Holy Spirit” (*bi-rúḥ al-quds*; Q. 2:81; 5:109:19:30; 58:22). While Jesus’ ability to perform miracles (= *áyát*, “signs”) is affirmed and several times evidenced (Q. 3:43f; 5:110f) his crucifixion appears to be denied (Q. 4:155f). Though his ascension is mentioned (Q. 4:157) Jesus’ second coming or role at the eschaton is only alluded to (Q. 43:61) (Anawati. ‘Ísá’ EI2 IV:81–6; Wensinck [Bosworth], ‘al-Masíḥ’ EI2 VI:776; Parrinder, 1965 esp. 55ff).[[50]](#footnote-50) Islamic sources greatly expand and celebrate the figure of the Islamic Jesus and see him as a very great prophet and servant of God, the “Spirit of God” (*rúḥ Alláh*). Bábí-Bahá’í primary sources exalt and frequently refer to Jesus.

Bábí-Bahá’í primary sources greatly exalt and frequently refer to Jesus. In his commentary on the Islamic tradition *man ‘arafa nafsahu* (He who has known himself …) the Báb in Ṣúfí fashion has referred to Jesus as the *ashraf al-anbiyá’* (“most honourable of the prophets) (INBA Ms. 6007C:64). Going beyond the qur’anic and later Islamic exaltation of

Jesus, BA\* affirmed his (subordinate) divinity and position as an exalted *maẓhar-i iláhí* with all that this entails. In his *L. Hirtík* (CE 1872) he states that a true appreciation of the exalted station of Jesus is “beyond the comprehension of humanity”.

In line with the Q. BA\* rejected the trinity and the incarnation of the absolute Godhead (*dhát al-dhát*). Unlike most Muslims he affirmed the historicity of Jesus’ salvific death upon the cross. Reminiscent of Shí‘í martyrology he viewed Jesus’ death on the cross as an historical event of cosmic, soteriological magnitude and regenerative power (L. Ibn., IQ:98, tr. GWB:85). AB\* demythologized the NT resurrection narratives also giving spiritual interpretations to Jesus’ miracles and to the NT resurrection narratives (SAQ, index). Both the Báb and BA\* claimed to be the spiritual “return” of Jesus and are so regarded by modern Bahá’ís (SE\* Disp. 50 citing AB\*). From the mid-late Edirne period BA\* claimed to be the second coming of Jesus. He claimed that at the eschaton he had come in the station of the “Father”. In his *L. Sarráj* (c. 1867) BA\* refers to Jesus as “my Son in the Supreme Concourse (*malá’ al-a‘lá*)” (MA 7:05, cf. 112). He drew numerous parallelisms between himself and Jesus and addressed both the Italian Pope Giovanni Maria Mastai-Ferretti, Pius IX (1846–1878) and the whole ecclesiastical panoply of oriental and occidental Christendom.

28. Muḥammad, مُحَمَّد R+N+M\*, Muḥammad b. ‘Abd-Alláh (CE c. 570–632) is mentioned four times in four suras of the Q. Súra 47 is named after this Arabian prophet-messenger who from time to time communicated an Arabic Q (= “recitation”) in 114 suras of varying length. Muḥammad believed that he was restoring and updating the perspicuous, “clear” (*mubín*) religion of Abraham. Considered by Muslims to be the greatest of the past messenger-prophets, Muḥammad was designated the *khátam al-nabbiyyín*, the acme (trad. “seal”= “last”) of the prophets” (Q. 33:40b)

The Bábí-Bahá’í religion grew out of Shí‘í Islám in a manner similar to the emergence of Christianity from sectarian Judaisms. The Báb and BA\* greatly praise and elevate Muḥammad. They regard him as eternally much more than an inspired human being seeing him as a very exalted and pre-existent *maẓhar-i iláhí*. They always speak positively of the Islamic religion and its founder prophet. The Báb wrote a fifty or so page Arabic treatise in proof of the mission of Muḥammad, his sometimes esoteric *Risála fí’l-nubuwwat al-Khaṣṣa* (1847) which was addressed to the then crypto-Christian, governor of Iṣfahán, Manúchihr Khán (d. 1847).

BA\* often and in various ways identified himself with the exalted, divine Muḥammad, as well as with Jesus and other elevated pre-Islamic agents of God:

Say: By God! I, verily, am ‘Alí [Muḥammad, the Báb] in the kingdom of Eternity, and Muḥammad in the *Jabarút* of Names, then the Spirit (*ar-rúḥ* = Jesus) in the plains of Eternity (*madá’in al-baqá’*) and also [Imám] Ḥusayn in this greatest theophany (*ẓuhúr*) (BA\* K. Badí‘, 151)

Muslims, Bábís and Bahá’ís all affirm the God-given status and reality of the above-mentioned twenty-eight agents of God. They are all either *maẓhar-i iláhí* and/or *nabí* “lesser prophets”. Additionally, as will be seen below, the Báb and BA\* upheld the divine status of a number of further pre-Islamic biblical and non-biblical figures. Among them Zoroaster (fl. c. 1200? BCE), another Ismá‘íl (Ishmael), a second David, and Gautama Buddha (d.c. 486 or c. 368? BCE). Echoing ideas rooted in Jewish, Christian and Islamic gnosticizing factions as well as various Ismá‘ílí thinkers, developed Bahá’í doctrine also sanctions the historicity and exalted status of several biblical figures not counted among the *ulú al-‘azm*, including Melchizedek, King of Salem and contemporary of Abraham (fl. c. 2100? BCE) and Joseph the one time ruler in Egypt and a prototype of BA\*.

For Muslims, Bábís and Bahá’ís all the above more than 28 figures in varying ways contributed to human progress by representing God. Some are of relatively minor importance in Islamic salvation history and are seldom mentioned in Bábí-Bahá’í primary sources. Others, for some Shí‘í, Ismá‘ílí and ‘Irfání Sufi authorities, as well as for the Báb and BA\*, were important divine (Per.) *maẓhar-i iláhí* (manifestations of God). In this exalted category are usually included (1) Adam, (2) Noah, (3) Abraham, (4) Moses, (5) Jesus and (6) Muḥammad. With additions and variations (-->) this list is basically an expansion of the Islamic *ulú al-‘azm* (“possessors of steadfastness”).

The myriad prophets and the *ulú al-‘azm* (possessors of steadfastness)

The traditional number of around twenty-eight prophet figures was vastly expanded in Islamic sources. The Q. itself holds that God sent a *nabí*, *rasúl* and/or a *nadhír* (“warner”) to every people (Q. 10:48) to deliver a clear message (*al-balágh al-mubín*, Q. 29:18b; 35:24; 10:47; 40:28). In this light al-Maqdisí in his *K. al-bad‘ wa’t-táríkh* (‘The Book of Creation and History’, 355/966) recorded from Wahb b. Munabbih a tradition of their having been twenty-three prophets in Sheba alone; one named Ḥanẓala ibn Afyún (Ṣafwán) aṣ-Ṣádiq and

another called Khálid b. Sinán al-‘Absí who was active in Arabia during the *fatra* (the silent ‘interval’) separating Jesus and Muḥammad (Maqdisí, III:1).

The names then of only a small proportion of the numerous past prophets and other figures such as sages, kings and philosophers, etc., find mention in the Qur’án itself (Q. 4:164). Some post-qur’anic Islamic traditions indicate a very large number of Israelite prophets. Ibn ‘Abbás, for example, reckoned there had been 1,000 besides other divinely sent figures,

Between Moses son of Imran and Jesus son of Mary was [a period of] 1,900 years. There was no *fatra* [‘cessation’ in divine guidance] between these two for between them He [God] sent 1,000 prophets (*nabí*) of the children of Israel; in addition to others whom He sent besides them … (cited Ibn Sa‘d, Tabaqat I:53).

A similar prophetic tradition relayed through the 8th Shi‘ite Imám, ‘Alí ar-Riḍá’ (d. 201/818) reads,

God … created 124,000 *nabí* (prophets) and I [Muḥammad] am the most noble of them … and God created 124,000 *waṣí* [Ar. waṣíy, pl. *awṣiyá’*] (successors) and ‘Alí is the most noble of them … (Bihar2 11:30–31).

Other Sunní and Shí‘í traditions speak of 124,000 bearers of the divine message, a number of whom, often 313 or so, were reckoned *rasúl*. The Sunní *Mishkatal-maṣábíḥ* (Niche of Lights) of Tabrízí records that Muḥammad told Abú Dharr of the number of *al-mursalín* (‘sent messengers’), “There have been three hundred and between ten and twenty all told”. Alternatively, it is reported that the prophet told Abú Dharr of “A hundred and twenty-four thousand among whom were three hundred and fifteen *rusul* (messengers) all told”[[51]](#footnote-51) (at-Tabrízí, Mishkát, III:1599, Nos 5737–8; tr. Robson, II:1229). In Shí‘í texts the same or similar figures are given. Majlisí records the following tradition from ‘Alí cited in Ṭabarsí’s *Majma‘ al-bayán*;

God raised up a black prophet (*nabían aswád*) whose story he did not relate unto us. The traditions (*al-akhbár*) differ as to the number of the prophets (*al-anbiyá’*). Some have related that their number is 124,000 while others have it that the number of the prophets is 8,000; 4,000 coming from the children of Israel and 4,000 from elsewhere with a “sign” (*bi-áyah*) … with a miracle and a proof (Bihar2 11:21).

In his *K. al-Bad‘ wa’t-táríkh* the Shí‘í historian al-Maqdisí gives many details regarding the various prophets (*anbiyá’*). He notes the Islamic traditions (*akhbár al-muslimín*) reckoning 124,000 nabí and 313 (or in his opinion 315) *nabí-mursal* (*rasúl* = sent messengers) also having prophetic status (Maqdisí, III:10. Other Islamic traditions reckon the pre-Islamic prophets (*anbiyá’* + *mursalún*) at either 8,000, 124,000 or 224,000 (Friedman 1989:50–51; Schimmel 1985:55f). Shí‘í sources count many myriads of divine messengers and a similarly large number of attendant *waṣí* (successor, agent) and *walí* (allies) are listed.[[52]](#footnote-52) Numerous actual or mythical ancient Persian (possibly Zoroastrian), Indian (Hindu) and other figures swell yet further the names of those mentioned in a range of Islamic sources.

In Islamic sources groups of those among the twenty-eight prophets (<--) and others have, for various reasons, been classified together. Wahb b. Munabbih, for example, transmitted a tradition of fivefold groupings: there were five Hebraic apostles (Adam, Seth, Idris [Enoch], Noah, and Abraham) and five Arab apostles (Salih, Hud, [Ibráhím] Ishmael, Shuayb and Muḥammad) (cf. Bihar2 11:32ff). Another important grouping is that of the *ulú al-‘azm*, those “characterized by steadfastness” which will now be considered.

The *ulú al-‘azm*, those “characterized by steadfastness” (Q. 46:35). In Shí‘í texts certain *rasúl* are representatives of *nubuwwat at-tashrí‘* (legislative prophethood) being empowered to found and maintain new religions and institute religious laws. They bring a new *sharí‘a* (law) while related *nabí* are placed on subordinate level.[[53]](#footnote-53) Though the Q. and certain *ḥadíth* have it that the faithful should make no distinction between the various messengers of God, some *rusul* (messengers) were exalted above others (Q. 2:253; 17:55; 46:35). The qur’anic mentions of unity yet distinction among the prophets inspired statements of oneness and brotherhood as well as hierarchical theories.[[54]](#footnote-54) The favouring of

“some above others” (Q. 2:253a) in terms of the favoured rank of those considered *ulú al-‘azm* will be noted as it is primarily these figures who became Bábí-Bahá’í *maẓhar-i iláhí* (manifestations of God).

The qur’anic phrase *ulú al-‘azm* came to have important prophetological implications in post-qur’anic Islam. It was much discussed and by many thought to be indicative of exalted *rusul* (sent messengers) as (sometimes) pre-existent beings endowed with constancy of mission, moral and intellectual infallibility (*ma‘ṣúm*) and the power of *waḥy* (divine revelation). In Shí‘í sources the *ulú al-‘azm* are the major founders of religions with a binding *sharí‘a* (“revealed law”) relevant to a given community (*umma*) or to all humanity (Bihar2 11:34ff). al-Maqdisí expressed a subsequently widely held opinion when he wrote, “of the *ulú al-‘azm* among the *rusul* there are five: [1] Noah [2] Abraham [3] Moses [4] Jesus and [5] Muḥammad (*Bad‘ wa’t-táríkh*, III:7). This is in line with traditions ascribed to the twelver Imams enumerating the *ulú al-‘azm* recorded in Majlisí’s *Biḥár* (11:34ff). In the following example Imám Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣádiq is cited as saying:

I heard Abú ‘Abd Alláh say, ‘The elite (*sáda*) of the prophets (*an-nabiyyín*) and messengers (*al-mursalín*) are five. They [five] are the *ulú al-‘azm* (ones “endowed with steadfastness”) among the messengers (*ar-rusul*). Around them the mill-stone (*al-raḥá*/*ruḥíy*) [of reality] turns: [they are] [1] Noah, [2] Abraham, [3] Moses, [4] Jesus and [5] Muḥammad (Káfí, I:175).

The Báb and BA\* go beyond these qur’anic and Islamic norms by allotting theophanic status (= *maẓhar-i iláhí*) to those mentioned in various Shí‘í lists of the *ulú al-‘azm* adding others to them. They include the frequently listed five mentioned above with the addition of Adam and others.[[55]](#footnote-55) Those divine manifestations are [1] Adam [2] Noah, [3] Abraham, [4] Moses, [5] Jesus and [6] Muḥammad (-->).[[56]](#footnote-56) To this basically Abrahamic list, developed, more

globally minded, Bahá’í theophanology adds the biblical figures, Melchizedek, King of Salem (Ar. Malik al-Salam, fl.c. 2100?), Joseph son of Jacob [Israel] (<--), possibly David the biblical king of Israel (d.c. 967 BCE <--1) and another pre-Mosaic David? (-->), John the Baptist (-->) and certainly also the ancient Persian prophet Zarathušra (= Zoroaster, fl. 1200? BCE). As well as Siddhártha Gautama, the Śákyamuni, and Buddha (Enlightened One d.c. 486 or 368 BCE) (AB\* TAB 2:469 cf. 3:565). To these also, it seems, that Bahá’ís add the earlier mythical figures) (?) [Brahma-] Sri Krishna (4000? BCE) (AB\* PUP:446; PT:35; SE\* GPB: 94). With various additions and omissions the Báb and BA\* become figures [8] and [9] in a largely Abrahamic (+ Asian) list—the number nine, being the Bahá’í sacred number as the abjad numerical value of the word *bahá’* = 1 + 5 + 1 + 1 = 9).

Like various Ismá‘ílís and other heterodox Islamic factions, Bábís and Bahá’ís see Adam as an exalted figure far greater than the largely symbolic figure who features in the Bible and Q. along with his wife Eve (*ḥawwá’*) in the Eden legend. His story is regarded as basically symbolic, as is his “fall” which, for Bahá’ís, is indicative of human frailty not a loss of the ancient or pre-existent, heavenly status of an exalted primogenitor named Adam (-->). In expressing these doctrines Bábí-Bahá’í writ echoes the high theophanology of gnostic Shi‘sm and, in the case of Melchizedek those ancient and modern gnosticizing factions which uphold the exalted status of Melchizedek, King of Salem (Gen. 11 etc.). As a prototype of both Imám Ḥusayn (d. 61/680) and BA\*, Joseph becomes a *maẓhar-i iláhí* going way beyond his biblical-qur’anic status as a one-time notable in Egypt whose concrete historicity remains doubtful to some biblical scholars and other academics.

The perspectives regarding the *ulú al-‘azm* among some Shí‘í Ṣufís of the school of Ibn al-‘Arabí (-->) such as Sayyid Ḥaydar Ámulí (8th/14th cent.) is worth noting. In his *Jámi‘ al-asrár* (Summation of Secrets) he at one point goes beyond a listing of the usual *ulú al-‘azm* (+ Adam, cf. Jámi‘, 281 [= § 553f.]) by associating the “seven stars” with the *ṣúrat* (form) of the seven *rusul* (sent messengers) who are *ulú al-‘azm*. On this cosmic, esoteric level it is not the usual five or six but seven who have a special relationship with ultimate realities (*‘ind al-*

*muḥaqqaqín*), (1) Adam, (2) Noah, (3) Abraham, (4) David, (5) Moses (6) Jesus and (7) Muḥammad (Jámi‘, 237 §465). Not normally considered among the *ulú al-‘azm* both Adam and a pre-Mosaic David are included here. Both these figures have an elevated position in Bábí-Bahá’í prophetology and theophanology.

The Báb and BA\* held that divine guidance to humanity through successive founder messengers referred to as *maẓhar-i iláhí*, was without beginning and will have no end. For them divine guidance will last as long as human history endures. The Muslim claim that Muḥammad was the last of God’s messengers was transcended by both the Báb and BA\* as will now be seen.

2.3 The Bábí-Bahá’í transcendence of *khátamiyya*, the finality of prophethood

Muḥammad is not the father of any man among but he is the *rasúl-Alláh* (Messenger of God) and the *khátam al-nabbiyyín*, (the ‘seal’, ‘last’, ‘acme’) of the prophets (Q. 33:40).

Understanding the reading *khátam* to mean “last” in Q. 33:40, Muslims have considered this verse foundational for the post-qur’anic doctrine of the ‘finality of prophethood’, that no *nabí* (or *rasúl*) would appear after Muḥammad, the final *rasúl Alláh* (messenger of God). Probably echoing earlier claims of Maní (d.c. 277), the son of a Parthian prince and messianic claimant (al-Bírúní, Sachau, 1879:190) the (Aramaic loanword?) *khátam* came throughout the Muslim world to indicate that the succession of prophets was “sealed up” or “ended” in Muḥammad just as it had been in Maní. It was thought that after Muḥammad even after the eschatological consummation no future prophet would appear to found a new or renewed religion. Many commentators on Q. 33:40 have it that the Islamic belief in the second coming of Jesus indicates the reappearance of this *nabí* (a prophet) in a role subservient to Muḥammad and Islamic law on the Day of resurrection (Zamaksharí, *al-Kashsháf*, 3:544–5).

The finality of prophethood through Muḥammad became a firmly accepted Islamic dogma. Even though it is not at all clear that the absolute finality of prophethood was the original intention of Q. 33:40, this is today a firmly entrenched in both Sunní and Shí‘í

orthodoxy (Friedmann, 1986; 1989: 49ff). Any hint of another post-Islamic prophetic claim or a challenge to the *i‘jáz al-Qur’án* (inimitability of the Q.) has generally met with the dire consequences of theological castigation, accusations of heresy and imprisonment or death. Early on in his *Izháq al-báṭil* (The Crushing of Falsehood, 1845) on the basis of his analysis the QA (-->) the third Shaykhí leader Karím Khán Kirmání (d. 1871) correctly accused the Báb of such heresy as went well beyond the constraints of Shí‘í piety.

From the outset of his six year messianic career (1844–1850) the Báb in his QA. (mid. 1260/1844) and other writings (INBMC 91) challenged both the finality of prophethood and the inimitability of the Q. In the light of his eschatologically charged, high Shí‘í-Shaykhí imamology, he modified the standard understanding of the ‘finality of prophethood’ by incorporating rewritten forms of the *khátim an-nabiyyín* (Q. 33:40b) into his first major work (QA):

O people of the earth! God did not create Muḥammad the father of any of your men but he made him in the midmost heart of the celestial Throne (*fí kabd al-‘arsh*) for His greatest [eschatological] Day. God, hath in very truth concluded this matter as something hidden and treasured up (QA 44:164).

The Báb’s rewrites of Q. 33:40 such as the above modify or pass over the note of finality which most Muslims read into Q. 33:40b. He regularly all but negates any tone of the finality of prophethood in Q. 33:40b. Through his supernatural link with the *Dhikr*, and/or occulted twelfth Imám, the *Ḥujjat-Alláh* (messianic ‘Proof of God’), the Báb several times radically modified any straightforward notion of the finality of prophethood.

In QA 4 the Báb addresses the *ahl al-madína* (“people of the city”, of Shíráz?) accusing them of polytheism if they acknowledge Muḥammad as the “seal of the Prophets” and affirm his book (the Q.) yet fail to bear witness to the fact that God also revealed the QA to the Báb (“Our servant”; cf. Q. 2:23) which is certainly “the like of it” (the Q.). In QA 64 the Báb similarly set down a messianic rewrite of Q. 12:63 in the light of Q. 33:40. He exhorts believing Muslims gathered before Muḥammad, the *khátam an-nabiyyín*, to utter the following words:

O our father [Muḥammad] the [messianic] *dhikr* (“Remembrance”), is a further

measure (*al-kayl*) which has been denied to us. So dispatch with us, the sign of the *Dhikr* for the greater magnification (*li’t-takbír al-akbar*) … (QA 64:260).

A few suras later in QA 66 the Báb speaks of a “Book” (= QA) sent down to inform the people that the messianic *Ḥujjat Alláh* (Proof of God = 12th Imám) is closely associated with the *Dhikr* even the likeness of the *Ḥujjat* (Proof) nigh Muḥammad, the *khátam an-nabiyyín*. It seems to be implied that the messianic “Hour” is about to be realized through the close relationship between the *Dhikr* (Remembrance) and the twelfth Imám or *Ḥujjat-Alláh*, the messianic Proof of God. In subsequent years (1848–1850) the sometimes thinly veiled ‘messianic secret’ of the Báb’s being the Qá’im/Mahdí was publicly broadcast and his more exalted claims openly promulgated.

In their writings the Báb and BA\* never ceased referring to Muḥammad as the *khátam an-nabbiyín* (INBMC 91; BA\* KI:05ff/87ff). Q 33:40b was not understood as underlining the finality of prophethood in the sense of out ruling an eschatological theophany. Great messianic, theophanological importance was given by the Báb and BA\* to the qur’anic references to *liqá’-Alláh*, *Alláh*, the latter day meeting or encounter with God (Q. 6:31; 130, 154; 7:51, 147; 10:7ff; 13:2 etc.). The word *khátam* in *khátam an-nabiyyín* need not signify “seal” implying “last” of the prophets but more appropriately indicate Muḥammad as the “acme of the prophets” during the era before the *yawm al-qiyáma* (Day of Resurrection) when the *liqá’-Alláh* through a messianic *maẓhar-i iláhí* would be realized. Then the *liqá’-Alláh* is realized through the parousia of the theophanic *maẓáhar-i iláhí*. In it on these lines that BA\* in his *K. íqán* argues that *khátam an-nabiyyín* as an epithet of Muḥammad underlines the elevated nature of the Arabian prophet and not the absolute finality of prophethood. Understood with the sense of utter finality, *khátam an-nabiyyín* degenerates into one of the *subuḥát al-jalál* (“veils of glory”) which hinder the realization of unfolding reality (KI:129f/ 107f, 136–7).

Among the earliest passages of BA\* dealing with the issue of the *khátam an-nabiyyín* (Q. 33:40b) is his testimony to the theophanic mission of the Báb in his *L. Ḥurúfát al-muqatta‘át* (Tablet on the Isolated Letters, c. 1858). The Báb, it is said, came with all manner

of “dazzling proofs” though the people “waxed proud” in their denial despite the qur’anic promise of the *liqá’-Alláh*. When God sealed prophethood (*khatama an-nubuwwat*) through Muḥammad (Q. 33:40) “he gave the servants the glad-tidings of the encounter with Him [God]” and the matter was “definitively resolved” (*khatama al-makhtúm*). In the person of the Báb:

God came [unto them] in the shadows of the clouds (*fí ẓulal al-ghamám*, Q. 2:210), breathed into the Trumpet of the Cause (*nafakha fí ṣúr al-amr*; cf. Q. 18:99; etc.), split the Heaven asunder (*inshaqqat as-samá’*, cf. Q. 55:37; 69:6; 84:1) and crushed the mountains to dust (Q. 56:5; 69:14, etc.) whereupon all retreated back upon their heels (cf. Q. 3:144; 6:71) (Ma’idih, 4:65).

BA\* continued to argue that in spite of the theophany of the Báb the people acted like Jews and Christians. They continued to await the realization of the promises and the eschatological *liqá’-Alláh*. In his decade or so later lengthy Persian Tablet to ‘Alí Muḥammad Sarráj (CE c. 1867), BA\* himself touches upon the subject of the obscurity of eschatological prophecies in Abrahamic religious scripture. He highlights the supremely clear implications (*aṣraḥ al-kalimát*) of finality in *khátam an-nabbiyyín* (Q. 33:40b) but thinks it as an unacceptable veil inhibiting post-Islamic faith in another supreme agent of God. Despite its implications of finality, pure-hearted persons still came to true faith in Point of the Bayán (*bi-‘irfrán nuqṭay-i bayán* = the Báb). Indeed, BA\* adds, such pure-hearted persons so comprehended the matter of *khátimiyyat* (“sealedness”) that they would happily acknowledge the appearance of a “prophet” (*nabí*) “from the beginning which has no beginning unto the end which has no end” (L. Sarráj, Ma’idih, 7:28ff).

For the Báb and BA\* the qur’anic *khátam an-nabiyyín* in no way rules out the theophany of divinity on the eschatological “Day of God” (*yawm Alláh*). Even if it is taken to out rule the finality of the appearance of a post-Muḥammad *nabí* (prophet) or even *rasúl* (sent one) it does not out rule an eschatological theophany. Both the Báb and BA\* claimed to be fully human yet fully divine *maẓhar-i iláhí* in a way that transcends issues revolving around the meanings of *khátam an-nabiyyín*. In fact BA\* so transcended these matters that in numerous theophanological passages he presents himself as having sent out the *nabí* and *rasúl* of the pre-Islamic era. In an important Arabic Tablet of the Acre period BA\* defends himself against

accusations that he has contradicted the Muslim understanding of Q. 33:40b by stating:

You have assuredly confirmed [the truth] by what you have announced [in citing Q. 33:40b]. We do indeed testify that through him [Muḥammad] messengership and prophethood (*ar-risála wa’n-nubuwwa*) were sealed up. Whomsoever after him [Muḥammad] makes claim to such an elevated station is indeed in manifest error …. The carpet of prophethood (*bisáṭ an-nubuwwa*) has been rolled up and there has appeared the one who sent them out (*irsál*) [= BA\*] in manifest sovereignty … (Untitled Tablet to Ḥasan [L. Khátam an-nabbiyín]).

Bahá’í arguments against the finality of prophethood usually operate on a somewhat lower level than these elevated theophanological challenges. In modern Bahá’í apologetics a distinction is often made between a future *rasúl* as a founding *maẓhar-i iláhí* (Manifestation of God) and the role of the (lesser) *nabí* or secondary prophet. Diverse lexical and Islamic understandings of *khátam* (kh-t-m) are commented upon in the light of the non-finality of prophethood. The Islamic understandings of Q. 33:40b might, it is sometimes held, out rule the further appearance of Israelite type *nabiyyín* (prophets) but this phrase does not negate future appearances of *rasúl* or *mursalín* (sent messengers) the like of which is hinted at in the following qur’anic verse:

O children of Adam! There shall come among you *mursalín* (sent messengers) from among yourselves rehearsing my signs unto you … (Q. 7:43)

Many thousands of eschatological traditions were assiduously compiled into sometimes bulky *Istidláliyya* (testimonia) tracts by 19th-20th century disciples of the Báb and BA\*. Considerable attention was given to overcoming any finality implied by Q. 33:40b.[[57]](#footnote-57) Some at BA\*’s command followed the lead of the Báb’s *Dalá’il-i sab‘ih* and his own *K. íqán*. This with a view to arguing that all manner of messianic predictions and apocalyptic “signs” had come to pass (cf. INBMC 80). Bábís and Bahá’ís claimed that for many thousands of years divine messengers (*rusul*) or *maẓhar-i iláhí* (divine Manifestations) will found and progressively renew the eternal religion of God (= Islám).

It is today a central Bábí-Bahá’í teaching that future divine messengers (*rusul*) or

*maẓhar-i iláhí* (divine manifestations) will, for many thousands of years, found and progressively renew the eternal religion of God (= ‘Islám’). The Báb’s claim to be the Shí‘í messiah did not prevent or inhibit his also predicting numerous future messianic advents of the originally Ṣúfí figure *man yuẓhiruhu Alláh* (Goldziher, 1921 tr. Lambden & Walker 1992). This is indicated in a passage from the Báb’s *K. panj sha’n* (Book of the Five Grades; CE 1850) where the following words could be taken to indicate an infinite number of future theophanies of the Bábí theophanic messiah, *man yuẓhiruhu Alláh* (‘He whom God shall make manifest’).

… And after the Bayán it is [ the theophany of ] *man yuẓhiruhu Alláh* (He whom God will make manifest) [1]. And after *man yuẓhiruhu Alláh* [1] *man yuẓhiruhu Alláh* [2]. And after *man yuẓhiruhu Alláh* [2] *man yuẓhiruhu Alláh* [3]. And after *man yuẓhiruhu Alláh*, [3] *man yuẓhiruhu Alláh* [4]. And after *man yuẓhiruhu Alláh* [4] *man yuẓhiruhu Alláh* [5]. And after *man yuẓhiruhu Alláh* [ 5] *man yuẓhiruhu Alláh* [6]. And after *man yuẓhiruhu Alláh* [6] *man yuẓhiruhu Alláh* [7]. And after *man yuẓhiruhu Alláh* [7] *man yuẓhiruhu Alláh* [8]. And after *man yuẓhiruhu Alláh* [8] *man yuẓhiruhu Alláh* [9]. (K. Panj: 314–5, cf. 397).

The position of the Báb is thus the exact opposite of the Islamic proponents of the doctrine of the finality of prophethood. The mention of nine successive theophanies most likely indicates their endless future realization. Towards the end of his life in his *Haykal ad-dín* (Temple of Religion, 1266/1850) the Báb made increasing mention of “He whom God will make manifest”. He variously indicated the time of his advent at after nine (= 1269/1852), nineteen (= 1279 = 1862–1863) or between 1,511 (abjad of Ar. *ghiyáth* = ‘the Assistance’) and 2,001 years (abjad of Ar. *mustaghath* = ‘The One Invoked for help’) from 1260/1844 (MacEoin, 1986:95–155). These latter figures were understood by BA\* as either numerically and messianically suggestive Names of God of non-chronological import, or allusions to the time of another theophany after himself (BA\* L. Khalíl Shírází; ‘O Thou Creator’ mss).

2.4 *Maẓhariyya*: The roots and significance of the Bábí-Bahá’í concept of the *maẓhar-i iláhí* (“Divine theophany”, “Manifestation of God”)

It was out of the above-mentioned nexus of Islamic prophetological, imamological and

theophanological Sufi and Shí‘í-Shaykhí concepts, that the terminology and many aspects of the Bábí-Bahá’í doctrine of the *maẓhar-i iláhí* evolved. The Báb personified the *mashiyya* (Primal Will) and made it, as the *maẓhar-i iláhí* (“Divine theophany”, “Manifestation of God”), the centerpiece of his theology. It was is by virtue of the *mashiyya* (Will) that God made himself indirectly known to his creation through the *maẓhar* of His own *nafs*, the Logos-Self which is the *maẓhar* (The Manifestation of God). In Bábí-Bahá’í usage *ẓuhúr* indicates the divine *tajallí* (theophany, divine self-revelation) of God through his *maẓhar* (theophanic manifestation) unto the worlds of creation. The study of the background of the centrally important *maẓhariyya* (theophanological) doctrines within the Bábí-Bahá’í religious universe of discourse, to some degree illustrates how aspects of Bábí-Bahá’í doctrine evolved out of heterodox Shi‘ism in a similar way to the emergence of Christianity from sectarian Judaisms. Only a few notes pertinent to this can be set down here (cf. MacEoin, maẓhar, EI2 VI:952–3).

Deriving from the triliteral Arabic root ẓ-h-r which may verbally indicate ‘to appear’, ‘be manifest’, the straightforward sense the Arabic noun of place *maẓhar* (pl. *maẓáhir*, cf. *ẓáhir*, ‘apparent’, ‘visible’ ‘outer’, ‘exterior’) is a ‘place of appearance’. It may also be indicative of an ‘outward expression’ or ‘mode of apparition’, and thus additionally indicate a ‘manifestation’ or ‘theophany’ (Corbin, 1972, IV:518, index). In his *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* Chittick prefers to translate *maẓhar*, “locus of manifestation” (Chittick, 1989:89).

The term *maẓhar* has a long history and rich semantic field in a multitude of texts expressive, for example, of the mediatory position of the prophets and imams as loci of divine realities. Murata has stated that many “cosmologists employ terms like *ẓuhúr* (manifestation) and *tajallí* (self-disclosure) to explain the relationship of the world to God” (Murata, 1992:11). *Maẓhar* is a term that lies at the heart of certain prophetological and imamological speculations within Islamic philosophy and theology. It is found within the writings of numerous exponents of Shí‘í mysticism, theosophy and gnosis.[[58]](#footnote-58)

The terms *ẓáhir*, *ẓuhúr*, *maẓhar* are frequently used and important within the theologically loaded writings of Ibn al-‘Arabí and of persons falling within his ‘school’ (Chittick, 1988:201–221, 470 [index *ẓuhúr*, etc.]; 1989:16, 478 index *ẓuhúr* etc.). Within the writings of Ibn al-‘Arabí *maẓhar* is a theological term rooted in the exegesis of Q. 57:3, “He [God] is the *ẓáhir* (Manifest) and the *báṭin* (Non-manifest) (Chittick, 1989:89; cf. *Futúḥát* III:484–5). For the Great Shaykh *ẓuhúr* is used of the *tajallí*, the divine ‘self-disclosure’ or the ‘manifestation’ of God. For him *maẓhar* can indicate the locus of a particular divine Name(s) and/or Attribute (*asma’ wa’ṣ-ṣifát*).

For Ibn al-‘Arabí the terms *ẓáhir*/*ẓuhúr*/*maẓhar* have an important place in Islamic thought (Chittick, 1988:201–221, 470 [index *ẓuhúr*, etc]; 1989:16, 478 index *ẓuhúr* etc.). *Maẓhar* is a frequently used theological term rooted in the exegesis of Q. 57:3, “He [God] is the *ẓáhir* (Manifest) and the *báṭin* (Non-manifest) (Chittick, 1989:89). At one point in the *Futúḥát* it is written, “God is the *ẓáhir* (Manifest) who is witnessed by the eyes and the *báṭin* (Non-manifest) who is witnessed by the intellects (*al-‘uqúl*)” (Fut. III:484–5). In his *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* Chittick prefers to translate *maẓhar* [as] “locus of manifestation” (Chittick, 1989:89). For Ibn al-‘Arabí *ẓuhúr* is especially used of the self-manifestation of God which is his *tajallí* (self-disclosure).

Among the many disciples of the “Great Shaykh” who have made fairly frequent use of *maẓhar* as a theophanological technical term was, for example, Ibn al-‘Arabí’s adopted son *Ṣadr ad-Dín Qúnawí* (d. 673/1274). His *K. al-fukúk*, (The Book of Unravellings) represents itself as a ‘key to the mysteries’ of Ibn ‘Arabí’s *Fuṣuṣ al-ḥikam* (Bezels of Wisdom). In his exposition of the section revolving around the prophet Ismá‘íl (here no. 7) and the implications of prophets being *maẓáhir* of the divine Names, Qúnawí (commenting on Q. 29:27a) categorically states “Every prophet is a *maẓhar* of one of the divine Names (*ism min al-asmá’*) (*K. al-fukúk*, 209). The same is also stated in the section devoted to Muḥammad: “every *nabí*

is a *maẓhar* of one of the Names of the Divine Reality (*ism min asmá’ al-ḥaqq*; idem, 310). In the section on Shu‘ayb it is stated that Moses’ education (*tarbiyat*) was initially taught by means of this Arab prophet. It was such that Moses’ *áyát* (verses, signs) were according to the dictates of the “outer Name” (*aḥkám al-ism al-ẓáhir*). When God desired the perfection of Moses he sent him to Khiḍr who is said to be a *maẓhar* (manifestation) of the hidden [Inner, Non-Manifest] Name (*al-ism al-báṭin*). (Qúnawí, *al-Fukúk*, 251).

Rajab al-Bursí (d.c .814/1411) in his influential *Masháriq* compiled much of relevance to this topic including a section dealing with the *anbiyá’* (prophets) as *maẓáhir asmá’ Alláh* (“manifestations of the Names of God”). They are all *maẓhar ism kullí* (‘manifestations of a universal [divine] Name = Alláh) whose *sharí‘a* (law) is likewise universal. All the prophets and messengers (*nabí* + *rasúl*) are reckoned as archetypally revolving around the following seven figures: (1) Adam, (2) Enoch, (3) Abraham, (4) Joseph, (5) Moses (6) Aaron and (7) Jesus. Among other things each prophet is associated with a particular divine Name. While Enoch, for example, is described as a *maẓhar* of the divine name *al-ḥayy* (‘the Living’), Joseph is the *maẓhar* of the divine name *al-muríd* (‘Disciple’) associated with *jamíl* (‘Beauty’). Beyond them Muḥammad is the *maẓhar* of the comprehensive divine Name (*al-ism al-jámí‘*) Alláh as well as the *maẓhar* of the (supernal) Lights (*al-anwár*) (*Masháriq*, 32–3).

Within the *Kalimát-i Maknúnih* (Hidden Words) of Mullá Muḥsin Fayḍ al-Káshání (d. 1090/1679), another Shí‘í thinker much influenced by Ibn al-‘Arabí, is a theologically oriented section (*kalimat*) about the significance of *al-ẓuhúr* (the Manifest) and *al-maẓhar* (the Manifestation). Within this section it is stated that “the manifestations of the True One (*maẓáhir al-ḥaqq*) is something independent (*muṭlaqa*) since the *maẓhar-i iláhí* is in that locale as something [independently] evident (*ẓáhir*) and manifest (*maẓhar*) (manifest)” (*Kalimat*, 114–5). Another section concerns the ultimacy of the of the theophany of the Ultimate Reality (*ẓuhúr al-ḥaqq*). Relative to the *maẓáhir* (Manifestations) this is said to be by means of the Divine Names (*al-asmá’ al-iláhiyya*). The Manifestation of the Name of Alláh (*maẓhar ism Alláh*) is identified as the person of the *al-insán al-kámil* (The Perfect Man [Human]). The perfection of

the name Alláh is evident in the manifestation of the Universal Perfect Human (*maẓhar-i jámi‘y-i insán-i kámil*).

Similar examples could be gleaned from numerous other philosopher-theologians of the school of Ibn al-‘Arabí and the ‘School of Isfahan’ and elsewhere.[[59]](#footnote-59) The famed *al-Insán al-kámil* … (The Perfect Human) of the Shi‘ite Ṣúfí ‘Abd al-Karím al-Jílí (d.c. 832/1428) contains a section dealing with the divine Names *al-jalál* (The Majestic) where it is stated that for every divine Name and Attribute there is a *athar*, a trace-impression which is a *maẓhar* of divine *jamál* (Beauty) or *jalál* (Majesty). (New ed., 97).

BA\*’s uses of *maẓhar* are numerous and generally fall into the theological-theophanological pattern set in the writings of the Báb. BA\*’s apophatic theology of the *maẓhar-i iláhí* (Manifestation of God), like that of the Báb (Lambden, 1997), categorically bypassed the potentially pantheistic *waḥdat al-wujúd* (“oneness of being”) speculations of Ibn al-‘Arabí (not his terminology) and his devotees (BA\*, *Haft vádí*, AQA 3:XX/tr. Seven Valleys, 39–40). The Unmanifest Godhead ever remains unknowably beyond number, gender, and all limitations. He/She/It, the absolute Godhead is only indirectly manifested through the *maẓhar-i iláhi* who, as the (subordinate) [of] “God”, makes the ‘Wholly Other’ knowable to human beings. Scriptural (Q. + Bible) statements about God actually have apophatic significance or only disclose something about his Will or His knowable mediatory theophanic manifestations. As a theological term central to Bábí-Bahá’í usage *maẓhar* precludes any hint of *ḥulúl*, the ‘incarnation’ of the absolute Divine Essence (*dhát adh-dhát*). The divine intermediary *maẓhar-i iláhí* (Divine Theophany, Manifestation) does not manifest the hidden, incomprehensible Deity the *dhát* or *dhát adh-dhát*. Rather, it is the totality of the (created) divine Names and Attributes (*al-asmá’ wa’ṣ-ṣifát*) that are exhibited in his Person. They are

manifested by any given *maẓhar-i iláhí* but only according to human capacity at a given point in history and for a divinely ordained era in time (*ẓuhúr* = “ theophanological dispensation”). The Bahá’í prophet’s notion of *tawḥid* (the Divine Oneness) is focussed on the non-ontological, spiritual “oneness” of the *nafs* (Logos-like ‘Self’) of the major founder Prophets of religion who are manifestations of the totality of the Divine Names and attributes. They indirectly make the incomprehensible God known through the partial *maẓhar* or disclosure of the knowable Divine Will (BA\*, *Lawḥ-i madinat at-tawḥíd*).

At the outset of an untitled writing BA\* writes, “The [eschatological] Day cries out announcing ‘The manifestation of the Divine Command has assuredly been made manifest (*qad ẓahara maẓhar al-amr*)’” (*La‘álí al-ḥikma*, 1:109 No. 170). He composed a number of *alwáḥ* designated *L.-i ẓuhúr* (The Tablet of the Theophany [Manifestation]) in which he detailed some theological aspects of the person of the *maẓhar-i iláhí*. In one of them he explained that,

The theophany of the Divine Manifestation (*ẓuhúr*) is not compounded of the four elements. Nay rather, he is the mystery of the divine oneness (*sirr al-aḥadiyya*), the Pre-Existent Being (*kaynuna al-qidamiyya*), the All-Enduring Essence (*al-jawhar aṣ-ṣamadiyya*) and the Hidden Ipseity (*al-huwiyya al-ghaybiyya*). He can in no wise be known apart from his own Self. It is not possible for anyone to establish that he was made manifest from the four elements (*‘anáṣir*), from such elements (*ustaqusát* = Gk. *stoicheion*) as are mentioned by the tongue of the practitioners of philosophy (*ahl al-ḥikmat*), or indeed, from any of the four natures (*aṭ-Ṭabá’i‘*). All such as this was created as a result of His Command and through His Will (*mashiyya*) …. In every world he is manifested according to the capacity (*bi-isti‘dád*) of that world. In the world of spirits (*‘álam al-arwáḥ*), for example, he reveals himself and becomes manifest unto them [the spiritual beings] through the vestiges of the Spirit (*áthár ar-rúḥ*). So likewise in the world of bodies (*ajsád*), in the world of Names and Attributes (*al-asmá’ wa’ṣ-ṣifát*) and in other worlds which none comprehends save God. All [of these worlds] derive their good-fortune (*naṣíb*) from this theophany of the Divine Manifestation (*ẓuhúr*). Wherefore does he appear unto them according to the requisite form in order that He might guide them unto God, His Lord, and draw them nigh unto the Abode of His Cause (BA\* L. Ẓuhúr, Ma’idih, 4:161f).

The following are a few Bábí-Bahá’í doctrinal teachings that are held to apply equally to all *maẓhar-i iláhí*. Bahá’í hermeneutics never permits the interpretation of sacred books or Isrá’íliyyát traditions in ways which might negate these theophanological doctrines:

1. Divinity and Lordship (*ulúhiyya*, *rubúbiyya*)

All representatives of the unknowable Godhead, the *maẓhar-i iláhí* are equally divine. They can all legitimately make the claim to (subordinate) divinity by saying, *aná Alláh* (“I am God”) or the like, though they can never claim to be ontologically identical with the Absolute Divine Essence, the Ultimate Godhead (BA\* KI:137/114).

2. Pre-existence

The pre-existence of the divine Manifestations (*maẓáhar*) is presupposed and affirmed in numerous Bábí-Bahá’í texts. This by virtue of their divine Logos-like Reality, their primordial *nafs* (Identity-Self-Soul). The multi-faceted Islamic doctrine of the pre-existent (Per.) *núr-i Muḥammadiyya* (“Muhammadan Light”) was foundational and is applied to all of the *maẓhar-i iláhí*. Like Jesus the Bábí-Bahá’í *maẓhar* can all utter such words as “before Abraham was I am” (Jn. 8:58b) or claim a central, pre-existent role in the origins of existence.

3. *‘Iṣma* (‘immunity from sin’, ‘moral infallibility’)[[60]](#footnote-60)

The Islamic doctrine of *‘iṣma* was gradually and in diverse ways incorporated within in both Sunní[[61]](#footnote-61) and Shí‘í Islam. It was championed by numerous Shí‘í thinkers including the Imámí writers Hisham b. al-Ḥakam (d. 179/795), Ibn Babúya (d. 381/991) and Shaykh al-Mufid (d. 412/1022). Within Shi‘ism the *‘iṣma* of prophets and the *ma‘ṣúm* (guarded from sin and error) of the Imams became and has remained an important article of faith. It was affirmed and in various ways integrated in Bábí-Bahá’í imamology and theophanology. All *maẓhar-i iláhí* are considered *ma‘ṣúm* in Bábí-Bahá’í scripture. Abrahamic sacred books (Bible and Q.) and Isrá’íliyyát traditions can never be interpreted so as to attribute sin and error to the divine Manifestations of God.

Numerous biblical legends and *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* narratives as well as doctrinal

utterances of past prophets, sages and agents of God are interpreted in Bábí-Bahá’i texts line with the doctrines of *‘iṣma*/*ma‘ṣúm*. Major Messengers are pictured as all wise paragons of pious virtue and miraculous power. Texts which contract this are allegorically or non-literally interpreted (AB\* SAQ III ch. 44). The hermeneutical maintenance of *‘iṣma*/*ma‘ṣúm* is a Bahá’í religious touchstone of exegetical integrity and historiographical soundness. In Bábí-Bahá’í exegesis, for example, Adam the *maẓhar-i iláhí* never sinned by eating the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2–3; Q. 2:25; 20:115; cf. Q. 7:19).[[62]](#footnote-62)

Following and expounding BA\*’s teachings both AB\* and SE\* made the upholding of *‘iṣma* an essential hermeneutical principle. AB\*, for example, probably following Islamic exegetical precedent, made lawful the Islamo-biblical notice that Abraham married his half-sister (cousin) or aunt Sarah (cf. Gen. 12:10f; Rippin EI2 IX:26–7) by writing,

During the time of the Abrahamic Prophethood it was considered allowable, because of a certain exigency, that a man should marry his aunt, even as Sarah was the sister of Abraham’s mother. (AB\* PUP:365)

BA\* himself claimed (Per.) *‘iṣmat-i kubrá* (the greatest infallibility) which he also made applicable to the Báb and the other *maẓhar-i iláhí* and to other lesser past worthies such as the twelver Imams and various *anbiyá’* (prophets) of Israelite history. While supreme theophanies, the *maẓáhir-i kulliyya* (universal manifestations) like the “Sun” have *‘iṣmat-i dhátiyya* (“essential infallibility”) other sanctified individuals and groups like “moons” luminous with divine light, can only evince *‘iṣmat-i ṣifátiyya* (“conferred infallibility”) (SAQ XLV:129ff/171ff).

4. The ability to perform of miracles (*mu‘jizát*)

Within Abrahamic scripture and tradition innumerable messengers of God, saints, Imams and others are credited with the working of miracles. Such supernatural acts are dealt with generally and specifically in Bábí-Bahá’í primary literatures. Though the Báb is credited with miracles in most 19th century Bábí-Bahá’í hagiographical histories he most frequently highlighted as his miracle his ability to reveal divine verses through *waḥy*. For him this was the true hallmark of his claim to divine *maẓhar* status (*Dalá’il*). The Báb gave spiritual interpretations to the various “miraculous” deeds of past prophets (e.g. Muḥammad’s alleged the “cleaving of the moon” Q. 54:1f; P.Dal. 13) and non-literally interpreted many cosmic eschatological signs including, for example, the rising of the “Sun of Reality” (*shams-i ḥaqíqat*) in the “West” which he related to his theophanic appearance in Shíráz (Fars, Iran) (P.Dal, 51–2).

BA\* is also credited with numerous miracles in the Bahá’í histories (cf. AB\* SAQ IX tr. 34–5), miracles of revelation, prophecy, resurrection and human transformation, etc. Though in his *Ṣaḥífay-i shaṭṭiyya* (Scroll of Gushing Torrent, c. 1857) BA\* plays down the miracles attributed to him this phenomenon is discussed here (INBMC 57:10–18) as it is in other of his *alwáḥ* and in many writings and discourses of AB\* (SAQ index). Miracles of past pre-Islamic divine messengers such as those ascribed to Jesus in the Gospels are very largely given “spiritual” interpretations in Bahá’í sources. Examples of biblical miracles which are ‘demythologized’ or given “spiritual” interpretations include God’s theophany before Moses (Exod. 33:18–23; Q. 7:143) the Exodus and the crossing of the Red Sea (Exod. 13:17ff) and the wars of the conquest of Canaan (Joshua 5ff),

The miracles which occurred during the war of the children of Israel with the ungodly which are mentioned in the Holy Bible (*kitáb-i muqaddas*) have a spiritual interpretation (*ta’wíl*) and meaning (*ma‘aní*). Despite this Bahá’ís do not seek to out rule or alter the miracles of the prophets (*anbiyá’*). (Ma’idih, 9:39)

Most NT miracles are allegorically interpreted in Bahá’í primary sources, including the feeding

to of (4) 5,000 (Mk. 6:35ff + //s; Jn. 6:1–14), Jesus’ walking on the water (Mk. 6:43ff + //s Jn. 6:15–21) various healing miracles and exorcisms, the raising of Lazarus, the resurrection of Jesus and the various resurrection appearances (Lk. 24:13ff, etc.). Miracles attributed to Muḥammad in various Islamic sources are likewise occasionally non-literally interpreted as are various qur’anic apocalyptic “signs” mentioned in the Q. and traditions (Lambden, 1987).

The developed Bábí-Bahá’í position regarding miracles is that they are accepted as within the power of the *maẓhar-i iláhí* though most mentioned in biblical and qur’anic scripture and tradition are of largely symbolic import. They are thus “spiritually”, non-literally interpreted. The directly or indirectly witnessed power of *waḥy* (divine revelation) is seen in Bábí-Bahá’í scripture as the supreme miracle, the hallmark of the divine providence.

In conclusion it can be stated here that Bahá’ís greatly revere the numerous aforementioned *maẓhar-i iláhí* and affirm their ability to perform supernatural miracles. This to such a degree that, transcending even Islamic norms, they consider their true station incomprehensible to human intellects (BA\* L. Hartík). Modern Bahá’ís do not exhibit pictures of the Báb, BA\* or any of the other the *maẓhar iláhí* (divine manifestations) out of respect for their sublimity and as a safeguard against worshipping the form or person of the *maẓhar* instead of the transcendent God who called (indirectly) manifested them. The Bahá’í interpretation of Abrahamic scripture and Isrá’íliyyát traditions attempts to preserve the high theophanological status of the divine messengers who are deemed infallible agents of the transcendent Deity. In the Bahá’í view they have a human body but all other aspects of their Logos-like Being are said to transcend worldly limitations.

3.
The Bible and Isrá’íliyyát.
Pt. 1: *Tafsír* (Qur’án commentary) and *aḥadíth*/*akhbar* (Compendia of traditions) in Islamic and Bábí-Bahá’í primary sources

3.1 The Bible and Isrá’íliyyát in Islamic and Bábi-Bahá’í sources

Islamicate (pseudo-) biblical citations and Isrá’íliyyát traditions appear in numerous Islamic sources. In the pages to follow (-->2.1ff) some details will be given about select sources rich in such materials along with a summary of their assimilation within Bábí-Bahá’í primary sources. Numerous Islamic literatures have a relationship to Abrahamic scripture and religious tradition. Though the Judaeo-Christian origins of such assimilated materials has sometimes been played down in reaction to the 19th-20th century missionary and orientalist attempts at demeaning Islam by identifying its alleged pre-Islamic substrate, Islamicate Bible citations and Isrá’íliyyát streams of tradition are widely attested. Biblical motifs, citations and paraphrases in Islamic sources as well as Isrá’íliyyát rooted traditions are often fully Islamicate. They often express a symbiosis, an Islamic intertextual re-creation having become an integral part of an Islamic universe of discourse.

The Báb and BA\* rarely identified their precise Islamic and other literary sources. They sometimes drew upon Abrahamic scriptural materials and pseudo-biblical texts which were subsequently reinterpreted thus adding a further Bábí-Bahá’í level of meaning. As will be seen, the Judaic-rooted, Islamic *al-ism al-a‘ẓam* (mightiest Name of God) concept is interpreted in this way. So also aspects of the biblical-qur’anic Joseph story. Drawing on Islamic prose and poetical sources, Bábí-Bahá’í writings give post-Islamic messianic, theophanological and other senses to biblical and Islamic traditions.

A selection of closely interrelated Islamic literary sources showing the presence or influence of the Bible and Isrá’íliyyát will now be surveyed. This in the first four of the following fourteen literary divisions all of which include significant bodies of biblical and/or Isrá’íliyyát rooted

materials. The following list is not in any strictly historical order:[[63]](#footnote-63)

1. *Tafsír* (Q. commentary) and associated works;

2. *Aḥadíth*/*Khábar* (Compendia of traditions);

3. *Sírá* (biographical works) and other forms of *Táríkh* (history writing);

4. Folklore traditions and *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* (‘Stories of the prophets’) works;

5. *Faḍá’il* (Excellences) and associated works;

6. Islamic messianisms, eschatological traditions and apocalyptic works;

7. Early Shi‘ism, the *ghulát*, (extremist factions), (proto-) Isma’ilism, etc.

8. Arabic gnomological traditions, wisdom literatures and philosophical compendia

9. *Adab* (belles lettres), encyclopaedias and associated doctrinal-theological works;

10. The *‘ulúm al-ghayb*, (Islamic esoterica);

11. Islam and the encounter with religions:

(a) Islamicate pseudo-biblical and pseudepigraphical texts;

(b) *K. al-masá’il* (‘Questions and Answers’) and *Iḥtijáj* (Religious disputation) works;

(c) The *Mu‘tazila* (“Seceders”) and the *Mutakallimún* (Rationalist theologians): Muslim exponents of *‘ilm al-kalám* (Dogmatic Theology) works and expressions of dialogue;

(d) *Dalá’il* (Testimonia), Muslim Proof texts.

(e) Polemical refutations of pre-Islamic religions;

(f) Islamic heresiographical and associated works.

12. Sufi hagiographical, mystical, Ishráqí and theosophical (*‘irfání*) literatures;

13. Persianate Sufi and poetical writings;

14. Devotional texts and literatures: *Ṣalát*, *Namáz*, *Du‘a*, *Munáját*, *Ziyárat-námih*.

Though most of these Islamic literary channels in which Isrá’íliyyát including (pseudo-) biblical materials are found were drawn upon within Bábí-Bahá’í primary texts, only the first four sections (3.1–2; 4:1–2) of this list can be discussed here. A very limited portion of materials falling within 5–14 (above) will be utilized within the chapters to follow. Chapter 5 below will cover aspects of the Bible and Isrá’íliyyát in connection with select literatures of the Safavid and Qajar periods as well as dimensions of the dialogue with missionaries. Paragraphs in chapter 6 on the Bible and Isrá’íliyyát in early Shaykhí writings will bring aspects of these issues up to the early Qajar period when the Bábí-Bahá’í religions emerged.

3.2 The Bible and Isrá’íliyyát in *Tafsír* (Qur’án commentary)

Undue reliance on Judaeo-Christian traditions relayed by *ahl al-kitáb* (People of the Book) for exegetical and other purposes came to be frowned upon in certain early Muslim circles (<--1.1). Such caution, however, failed to prevent the widespread exegetical use of Isrá’íliyyát in numerous early and later *tafsír* works.[[64]](#footnote-64) As one might legitimately speak of Isrá’íliyyát traditions in the Q., ‘*Tafsír Isrá’íliyyát*’ is a phrase used to indicate Muslim commentary by means of Abrahamic religious scripture and tradition. In this connection Newby has stated that “during the first century, material from the haggadic and midrashic sources of Judaism and the hagiologic writings of Eastern Christianity were assiduously collected for commenting on the Qur’án and for constructing histories of the pre-Islamic world” (1980:685 [Abstract]).

Early *tafsír* works rich in Isrá’ílyyát, including Islamicate bible citations and paraphrases, were composed by many Muslim Q. commentators. No comprehensive or detailed history of the presence (or absence) of Islamicate (pseudo-) biblical citations in *tafsír* literatures has yet been written though Goldziher (1878), Goldfield (1988, etc. -->bib.) and others have touched upon it as will be noted below.

Early *tafsír* works

‘Abd Alláh b. ‘Abbás (d.c. 68/687), a paternal first cousin of Muḥammad, was known as *al-ḥi*[*a*]*br al-‘arab* (Rabbi of the Arabs). Many Muslims have regarded him as the father of *tafsír* because he is thought to have written the first Islamic *tafsír* work (Goldziher, 1970:65f; Sezgin GAS I:25; Goldfield, 1981). Exegetical traditions stemming from Ibn ‘Abbás are especially rich in lexicographical insights and the Islamification of Isrá’íliyyát. A knowledgeable companion of the Prophet, he was an important collector and transmitter of biblical legends stemming from the Yemeni Jewish convert Ka‘b al-Aḥbár (<--1.1, Rippin 1991:166). Many of his associates and students were important second century *mufassirún* (Q. commentators) who also transmitted

exegetically influential Isrá’íliyyát. A number of versions of his (reconstituted) *Tafsír* entitled *Tanwír al-miqbás min tafsír Ibn ‘Abbás* are in print.[[65]](#footnote-65) At the very beginning of his *Tafsír* the following Judaeo-Christian rooted *ḥadíth* is cited relative to the first word *bism* of the first qur’anic *bismi’lláh*,

The “B” (*al-bá’*) is the splendour [beauty] of God (*bahá’ Alláh*), his delight (*biḥjat*), his adversity (*bilá*), his grace (*baraka*) and the commencement of his Name *al-bárí’* (The Creator) …” (*Tanwír*, 3; Lambden, 1986:1ff; Wasserstom, 1995:165–171).

Like other early mufassirún (Q. commentators) Ibn ‘Abbás made frequent use of non-literal, interpretation. Goldfeld has noted that his view that without being allegorized the Q. “might have no meaning to later generations” (1988:17, 25–27). There seems to have been a close relationship between the (first Imám) ‘Alí ibn Abí Ṭálib (d. 40/661) and Ibn ‘Abbás. The latter is reported to have said, “What I took from the interpretation of the Quran is from ‘Alí ibn Abí Ṭálib”. The possibly proto-Shí‘í companion, Ibn Mas‘úd, allegedly stated that ‘Alí was heir to both “the outward and the inward” dimensions of the Q. (Dhahabí, *at-Tafsír* 1:189–90 cited Naṣr, ed. 1987:29). Traditions expressive of the Shí‘í affirmation of deep, inner senses in the Q. are especially found in statements of the fourth and sixth Imams, Muḥammad al-Báqir (d.c. 126/743) and Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣádiq (d.c. 148/765). They allegedly held that

If the revelation of the Q. only had meaning with regard to the person or group of people to whom one or another verse was revealed, then the entire Q. would be dead today. Nay, rather! the sacred Book, the Q., is alive. It will never die for its verses will be fulfilled among the people of the future just as they have been fulfilled among those of the past (Ibn ‘Ámilí al-Iṣfahání, *Tafsír mir‘át al-anwár*, I:5–6; Corbin [paraphrase in]1995:90; cf. Lawson, 1993:195f).

In the *Tafsír* ascribed to him Imám Ṣádiq has stated that deep senses and mysteries are enshrined in the Q. His *Tafsír* contains a statement to the effect that the Q. consists of *‘ibára* (expression) and *ishára* (allusion). The former is essentially the *ẓáhir* (exterior) and *báṭin* (interiority) aspects of the Q. which are the preserve of the common believer. Its deeper allusive (*ishára*) dimension is the inward delight of the *khawaṣṣ*, the privileged elect (Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣádiq,

Tafsír, 123, cf. Nwyia. ‘Ishára EI2 IV:114, Exégèse, 156ff).

From the earliest times, a non-literal, hermeneutical orientation has been maintained in Imámí, Sufi, Ismá‘ílí, Twelver Shí‘í and other *tafsír* works. Exegetical authority is vested in the prophet and the Imams who are believed to have sanctioned non-literal modes of qur’anic exegesis (Bar-Asher, 1999:87ff). By means of allegory, typology and other forms of exegesis-eisegesis, the Q. was held to enshrine levels of meaning appropriate to successive generations. It has *báṭiní* (inner, esoteric) dimensions as well as *ẓáhirí* (outer, exoteric) senses. This is the case in those Shí‘í sources in which the *mutashábihát* (needing interpretation, Q. 3:7) verses of the Q. are given imamological or esoteric significances (Lawson, 1993; Habil, IS 1:24–47; Bar-Asher, EIr. X:116–119).

Sunní and Shí‘í sources regard Mujáhid b. Jabr al-Makkí (d.c. 104/722) as a diligent, apparently proto-Shí‘í Q. commentator and an avid collector of expository pre-Islamic lore. A rationalist pupil of both Ibn ‘Abbás and Imám ‘Alí, he collected Abrahamic and related materials expository of the Q. (Ibn Sa‘d, *Tabaqát*, 5:344, 467). Mujáhid is even said to have travelled to Babel (Babylon) in order to more adequately expound the qur’anic legend of the fallen angels Hárút and Márút. Isrá’íliyyát traditions linked to him are found throughout the *tafsír* tradition. They are registered in the influential *Tafsír* of Ṭabarí (-->). Probable [Judaeo] -Christian influence through Mujáhid is seen in exegetical traditions pointing to Muḥammad being, like the divine Jesus, “seated” upon the celestial Divine Throne (cf. Ps. 110:1; Rev. 3:21).[[66]](#footnote-66)

The possibly Zaydí (Shí‘í) commentator Muqátil b. Sulaymán al-Khurásání (d. Basra, 150/767) was a very important early transmitter of Isrá’íliyyat. In his historically oriented *Tafsír* he gave much attention to the “biblical pre-history” of verses, as Versteegh refers to the Isrá’íliyyát.[[67]](#footnote-67) Muqátil cited many exegetical traditions that can be traced back to the *ahl al-kítáb* (people of the Book). His haggadic type exegesis leaves little unexplained. The name, for example, of the *namla*

(female ant) with which Solomon held converse is given as *jarmí* (Muqátil, *Tafsír* III:299 on Q. 27:18).

That God taught Adam all the “names” is taken by Muqátil to mean those of the (post-) Edenic animals (idem 1:98 on Q. 2:32). The name of .مُوسَىٰ (Músá = Moses) is divided into two and given a Coptic etymological meaning: مُو *mú* (= water) + سَىٰ *sá* (= tree [?]) (Tafsír III:337).[[68]](#footnote-68) Rooted in Judaeo-Christian tradition (Josephus, *Antiq*. li.9.6; Philo *Vita Moys*, I.4, etc.) this exegesis was repeated and developed by later Muslim commentators including aṭ-Ṭabarí and Ibn ‘Arabí.[[69]](#footnote-69) It is an etymological exegesis repeated in the Shaykhí writings of Sayyid Káẓim and in at least one Bahá’í source (ar-Rashtí, Qásida, 9; AB\* cited in Ishráq Khávarí, QI. IV:1543).

A good example of Muqátil’s *tafsír* Isrá’íliyyát is the following comment upon a phrase of the celebrated ‘Throne Verse’ (*áyat al-kursí* = Q. 2:255). Without *Iṣnád* Muqátil quotes the following from Wahb b. Munabbih as deriving from the *ahl al-kitáb*:

“Four angels (*arba‘at amlák*) bear the [divine] Throne [Seat] (*kursí*); every angel has four faces. Their legs are situated beneath the [foundational] Rock (*aṣ-ṣakhra*) which lies beneath the lowest earth (*al-arḍ as-suflá*) extending [for the distance of] a 500 year journey; and between all [of the seven] earth[s] is a 500 year journey!

(1) [There is] an angel (*malak*) whose face has the appearance of a man [human form] (*alá ṣúrat al-insán*) which is the archetype of forms (*sayyid al-suwar*). Of God he requests sustenance for the progeny of Adam (*ar-rizq li’l-ádamiyyín*).

(2) [There is] an angel whose face has the appearance of the exemplar of cattle (*malak wajhihi alá ṣúrat sayyid al-an’ám*) which is the Ox (*ath-thawr*). Of God he requests sustenance for the cattle [animals] (*al-bahá’im*).

(3) [There is] an angel whose face has the appearance of the exemplar of the birds (*sayyid aṭ-ṭayr*) which is the Eagle [Vulture] (*an-naṣr*). Of God he requests sustenance for the birds (*aṭ-ṭayr*) …

(4) [There is] an angel whose face has the appearance of the exemplar of beasts of prey (*ṣúrat sayyid as-sibá‘*) which is the Lion (*al-asad*). Of God he requests sustenance for the beasts of prey (*as-sibá‘*). (Muqátil, Tafsir I:213 on Q. 2:255b cf. v. 222)

This exegetical tradition is rooted in a version of the quasi-cosmological Merkabah (‘throne-chariot’) vision of the first chapter of Ezekiel which is foundational for later Jewish merkabah mysticism (cf. Ezek. 10). While Ezekiel 1:10 mentions “the four faces of the four creatures which

he visioned” the Ezekiel Targum understands this to signify four multi-faceted faces (4 × 16) equalling 64 faces (tr. Levey, AB 13:20; cf. Rev 4:6b–9). That the qur’anic image of the celestial Throne of God was of central cosmological and mystical importance is evidenced by the ‘Throne verse’ (Q. 2:255). This text was given a variety of symbolic and esoteric significances by the twelver Imams and by numerous Sufi and other exponents of the *‘ulúm al-ghayb* (Islamic esoterica).[[70]](#footnote-70)

Reputed master of the *‘ulúm al-ghayb* (the esoteric sciences) the sixth Imám Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣádiq (d. 148/765) is believed to have authored an allegorically oriented *Tafsír* work (aṣ-Ṣádiq, *at-Tafsír*, Habil, 1987 ch. 3; Sells, 1996:75f). One of his several acrostic interpretations of بِسْم (*bism*, “In the name …”) of the first *bismi’lláh* in the opening Súrah (*al-fátiḥa*, Q. 1) of the Q., states:

The *bism* (“In the name [of]”) is composed of thee letters: the ب (“b”) signifies his Eternity (*baqá*), the س (“s” or *sín*) his Names (*asmá’*) and the م (“m” or *mím*) his Dominion (*al-mulk*). Thus the faith of the believer is mentioned by him throughout his Eternity (*bi-baqá’ihi*) while the servitude of the aspirant (*al-muríd*) is indicated through his Names (*al-asmá’*) and of the gnostic (*al-árif*) in his transcendent abstraction (*faná’*) from the kingdom by virtue of His Sovereignty over it (*Tafsír aṣ-Ṣádiq*, 1978:125 cf. Ṭabarí, *Tafsír* 1:53–55; T. Ṣádiq, 125; cf. Bihar2 9:238).

Certain of Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣádiq’s interpretations of the Q. interpret prophetological themes including Moses’ request to see God (Q. 7:143, cf. Exodus 33:18–23). The Imám makes Moses a prototype of the *‘árif* (gnostic, ‘mystic knower’) while the request to see God becomes an interior event within the reality of Moses. The negative response to Moses’ request, the *lan tarání* (“Thou shalt not see me [God]”), is interpreted as indicating the impossibility of direct beatific vision because mystical *faná’* (annihilation of the “self”) precludes “seeing”: “How can that which passes away (*fánin*) find a way to that which abides (*báqin*)?” (tr. Sells, 1996:80). Through non-literal exegesis the transcendence of God is maintained.

Sufi allegorical-mystical *tafsír* is very closely related and at times identical to Shí‘í *tafsír*.

A non-literal hermeneutic is often adopted. The *Tafsír al-Qur’án* attributed to Sahl ad-Dín aṭ-Ṭustarí (d. 283/896) is perhaps the oldest continuous Sufi *tafsír*. It is related to but goes beyond the tradition of Ibn ‘Abbás (<--). Commenting upon the isolated letter *al-qáf* in the *súra* of the same name (Q. 50), Ṭustarí reckons that it outwardly (*ẓáhir*) indicates the first created, world-surrounding, Mt. Qáf (al Jabal, *Tafsír*, 92). The creation in six days mentioned in the *Súrat al-ḥadíd* (Iron, Q. 57:3, cf. Gen. 1) is expounded relative to the “He is the First and the Last” and associated with the *al-ism al-a‘ẓam* (most mighty Name of God), with the six verses which commence súra 50. (idem, 98).

Ṭustarí’s exposition of Q. 7:172 revolves around the concept of the pre-eternal covenant (Q. 7:172f; 33:7) which became highly significant in Shi‘ism, Sufism and Bábí-Bahá’í primary sources (e.g. QA 69:281; BA\* HWP: Nos 19 & 71). It is presupposed that a pre-existent, archetypal Adam was the primogenitor of a proto-humanity which mystically existed in the “loins” of this archetypal human. This Adam was further related to the Logos-like pre-existent *núr al-Muḥammadiyya* (Light of Muḥammad) (Bowering, 1980:145ff; Sells 1996:92–95).

The Arabic *Tafsír* of aṭ-Ṭabarí (d. 310/922) and its Persian recreation

Bypassing other early *tafsír* works, the foundational, massively erudite *Jamí‘ al-bayán ‘an ta’wíl áy al-Qur’án* (The Assembling of the Exposition of the Exegesis of the verses of the Q.) of Abú Ja‘far Muḥammad b. Jarír aṭ-Ṭabarí demands mention. It is cited approvingly in many Shí‘í sources including the *Biḥár* of Majlisí (-->2.2). Drawing on the accumulated mass of exegetical traditions, aṭ-Ṭabarí incorporates paraphrased biblical history and Isrá’íliyyát exegetical traditions often as relayed by Wahb b. Munabbih from the *ahl al-kitáb* (Newby 1980:688). Though he avoids the direct citation of both the Hebrew Bible and the NT he does make considerable use of biblical paraphrase including a “detailed account of the story of the conquest of Canaan by Joshua”[[71]](#footnote-71) and of Gospel narratives of Jesus’ life and miracles. In upholding the post-qur’anic notion of the literal *taḥríf* (“corruption”, “falsification”) of both parts of the Bible, he had a negative effect on the Muslim

view of the Bible (-->).

The Arabic *tafsír* of aṭ-Ṭabarí was early, freely “translated” (actually recreated) into Persian prose by a group of *‘ulamá’* including Abú ‘Alí Muḥammad Bal‘amí (d.c. 387/997). This for Manṣúr b. Núḥ (d. 365/976), the Samanid ruler of Transoxiana and Khurasan who found the Arabic difficult. The translation was apparently authorised by a *fatwá* rooted in Q. 14:4 which had it that all pre-lshmaelite prophets and kings had spoken Persian (*Tarjumahy-i tafsír-i Ṭabarí* 1:5; Storey, 1:2).[[72]](#footnote-72) Aside from the qur’anic text, relatively little of the Arabic *tafsír* is directly translated into Persian. Instead, the translation is interrupted by Persian versions of stories of the prophets and even legendary tales culled from the *Sháh-náma* epic of Firdawsí (d. 411/1019–1020). Numerous Isrá’íliyyát in the form of *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* stories absent in Ṭabarí’s Arabic original are scattered throughout and central to the reworked Persian *Tasfír* work of Bal‘amí.

In the Persian *Ṭabarí* Moses’ request to see God in Q. 7:143 is literally translated then commented upon in some detail. The shattering divine theophany is seen as an indirect vision of God’s *amr* (“Command”) which caused Mount Sinai to be split into six pieces. Three pieces were translocated to Mecca and three to Medina (*Tafsír* [Per.] 2:534–7). Within this Persian *Tafsír* select Judaeo-Christian and Zoroastrian traditions are registered. This perhaps with the aim of consolidating recent converts in their Islamic faith and/or inviting ‘people of the Book’ into the Islamic fold (Meisami, 1999:35–37).[[73]](#footnote-73)

Select Sunní *tafsír* works

Bypassing many Arabic and Persian *tafsír* works, mention should be made of the still largely unpublished *Tafsír* of ath-Tha‘labí (al-Nísábúrí, d. 427/1035) entitled *al-Kashf wa’l-bayán ‘an tafsír al-Qur’án* (‘The Unveiling of the Exposition of the Commentary on the Qur’án’) which has been highly praised by Muslim scholars and biographers (Goldfield, 1981:134). Like Tha‘labí’s better

known *‘Ará’is al-majális fí qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* (-->3.2) it contains much representative of the early *tafsír* tradition and thus much Isrá’íliyyát—which to some degree accounts for its remaining unpublished.[[74]](#footnote-74)

Abú Ḥamíd al-Ghazálí (d. 555/1111) wrote a massive, now lost Q. commentary, *Yaqút at-ta’wíl* (The Ruby of Spiritual Hermeneutics; so Habil, 1987:320–3) and other works important in the evolution of Q. Commentary. His famous *Mishkat al-anwár* (The Niche of Lights) is largely an interpretation of the ‘Light verse’ (Q. 24:35) and the ‘verse of darkness’ (Q. 24:40) along with the associated *ḥadíth* of the seventy thousand veils. It may be gathered from BA\*s *Haft-Vádí* (Seven Valleys c. 1858) and other works that from the late 1850s he had some familiarity with Sunní and Sufi exegetes including al-Ghazálí.[[75]](#footnote-75)

Fakhr ad-Dín ar-Rází (d. 606/1209) wrote an important rationalist *Tafsír* work, variously entitled *Mafátíḥ al-ghayb* … (Keys of the Unseen) and *at-Tafsír al-Kabír* (The Extensive Commentary). It incorporates multi-layered theological and rationalist philosophical speculations on qur’anic verses and has been examined by a number of scholars interested in Judaeo-Christian and biblical matters (e.g IsChr. 4:249 no. 31.1). Ar-Rází’s first-hand use of the Bible, especially the Gospel of John, has been noted. More than a century ago Goldziher gave examples of his citation of Islamicate biblical texts. These citations include a woe of God/Jesus (allegedly contained in súrah 17 of the *Injíl*, Gospel) against such as seek knowledge (*‘ilm*) but who are unable to differentiate it from ignorance (*al-jahhál*). The following statement of Jesus is cited in ar-Rází’s *Tafsír* from Muqátil b. Sulaymán (<--):

O Jesus! Magnify the learned (*‘ulamá’*) and be conscious of their distinction for it is I [God] who has magnified them above all my creatures, apart, that is, from the prophets (*an-nabiyyín*) and the sent messengers (*al-mursalín*). This even as the distinction of the sun above the stars, the hereafter (*al-ákhirá*) compared to this world (*ad-dunyá’*) and my distinction above everything that exists (Mafátíḥ 1:403ff cited Goldziher, 1878:384–5; cf. Margoliouth, ERE 9:482).

Fakhr ad-Dín ar-Rází was among those who denied the whole scale textual corruption (*taḥríf*) of the biblical books. For him *taḥríf* was a hermeneutical misunderstanding, a distortion of *ma‘ání*, (“meaning”) not a textual alteration.

Born to the north of Shíráz at Bayḍá’, the polymathic Sunní traditionalist ‘Abd-Alláh b. ‘Umar ad-Dín al-Baḍáwí (d.c. 700/1300) produced a well-known condensed though critical reworking of the influential Q. commentary of the Mu‘tazilite exegete and philologist Abú al-Qasím al-Zamaksharí (d. 538/1144).[[76]](#footnote-76) In this commentary al-Baḍawí shows an occasional knowledge of biblical data. In his commentary on the third súra of the Q., for example, he makes use of the Matthean genealogy of Jesus (Matt. 1:1–17).

Select Shí‘í and Sufi mystical *Tafsír* works

Among the foundational Shí‘í *tafsír* works mention should be made of the partially extant though influential Shí‘í *tafsír* works of Abú’l-Naẓr Muḥammad al-Ayyáshí (fl. 9th-10th. cent. CE) and the *Tafsír al-Qur’án* of ‘Alí b. Ibráhím (d. 10th cent.). It must suffice here to note that the latter work, includes comments upon the first set of isolated letters A-L-M (*Alif*-*Lá*-*Mím*, Q. 2:1), holding that they indicate “a portion of the letters of the *ism Alláh al-a‘ẓam* (The mightiest Name of God)” (Qummí, *Tafsír* 1:43). Qummí’s *Tafsír* includes many non-literal, imamologically oriented interpretations. Rippin has noted that Qummí did not simply define “Islam” as “submission” to God but reckoned it submission to the authority of the Twelver Imams (Enc.Rel. 14:241).[[77]](#footnote-77)

These two above-mentioned early (9th-10th cent. CE) Shí‘í *Tafsír* works had some influence upon the Báb.[[78]](#footnote-78) So too the *Tafsír al-‘Askarí* (Bar-Asher, 1999:34), a little studied *Tafsír*

work attributed to the 11th Imám, Ḥasan al-‘Askarí (d. c.260/873–4).[[79]](#footnote-79) About half way through his *R. Dhahabiyya* the Báb utilizes al-‘Askarí’s comments upon a verse of the *Súrat al-Baqara* (Q. 2) in connection with the *ummían* (“unletteredness”) of Muḥammad and his own relinquishing the *fiṭra* (innate, God-given identity, R. Dhah, 86:84).

Muḥammad b. Ḥasan aṭ-Ṭúsí (d. 460/1067) in his bulky (20 vol.) Shí‘í *at-Tibyán fí tafsír al-Qur’án* (The Clarification of Qur’án Commentary) explains the verse “When the Lote-Tree was covered with that which covered it” (Q. 53:16) as allusion to that which emanates from or covers the *Sidrat al-muntahá* (Lote-Tree of the Extremity). He states that “the *Sidra* (Lote-Tree) was covered with *al-núr* (Light), *al-bahá’* (Splendour), *aḥ-ḥusn* (Beauty) and *aṣ-ṣafá’* (Purity) so delightful that there is no end to its depiction” (Tibyán, 9:432).

*Tafsír* works of the Báb

Letter by letter exegesis-eisegesis according to various *záhir* and *báṭin* levels of meaning was much utilized by the Báb in various of his neo-*Tafsír* works, e.g. T-Basmala [recte T-Bismi’lláh],[[80]](#footnote-80) T-Aṣr, T-Kawthar. He had a special interest in the *‘ilm al-hurúf* (the science of letters). Precedent for this exists in numerous works of Islamic atomistic, qabbalistic exegesis including works of al-Ḥalláj (d. 304/922), Ibn Síná (Avicenna d. 428/1037) and various Sufi and ‘irfání Shí‘í gnostics associated with the tradition of Ibn ‘Arabí, as well as that of the Ḥurúfís, Nuqṭawís and Bekhtashis. Something of an example of this is provided by the following exegesis of the word *shajarat* “Tree” found in the Persian *al-Miṣbáḥ fí at-taṣawwuf* (The Light of Sufism) of the proto-Ḥurúfí (Shafí‘í, Ṣúfí) and Shí‘í inclined associate of Najm ad-Dín al-Kubra (d. 617/1220) and (indirectly?) Ibn al-‘Arabí (d. 638/1240), the much travelled Sa‘d ad-Dín Hammúya (d. 650/1252):

Know that [the letter] *shín* (ش) of the tree (*shajara*) alludes to the testimony of martyrdom (*shahádat*). And [the letter] *jím* (ج) indicates the paradise of the beauty of the Divine Countenance (*jannat-i jamál-i vajh*). The letter *rá’* (ر) points to the greatest Riḍván (Paradise, *riḍván-i akbar*) while the three dots of the [letter] *shín* (ش)

allude to [1] the Spirit of God (*rúḥ Alláh*), [2] the Holy Spirit (*rúḥ al-quds*) and [3] the Faithful Spirit (*rúḥ al-amín* = Gabriel).

The letter *thá’* (ث) of the fruit (*thamara*) is an allusion to the outbursting of meaning (*thawará-i ma‘ná*) which is the form of the tree (*ṣúrat-i shajarat*). The [letter] *mím* (م) points to the eschatological return (*al-ma‘ád*) and the [letter] *rá’* (ر) to the Lord of the return (*rabb-i ma‘ád*). And those three points of the [letter] *thá’* (ث) are allusive of (1) hearing, (2) vision and (3) articulate speech.

Thus, in reality the tree (*shajara*) is the Tree of the divine unity (*shajara-i tawḥíd*). The fruit (*thamara*) is the fruit of unicity (*thamara-i vaḥdat*). In its essential createdness (*khalqiyyat*), the “root”, the “trunk”, the “branch” and the “leaves” express the multiple forms. Then observe the multiplicity from the oneness (*vaḥdat*) and observe the oneness in the multiplicity (*vaḥdat dar kathirat*) (Hammúya, *al-Miṣbáḥ*, 124).

Though his own detailed and massive *Tafsír* on the whole Q. remains unpublished, Muḥyí ad-Dín Ibn al-‘Arabí wrote numerous *tafsír* works (Yahya, 1964 vol. 2: nos 725–736)[[81]](#footnote-81) including a *Tafsír súra yúsuf* (Commentary on the Súra of Joseph; Yahya, 1964, 2:484 no. 734a) and a *Qiṣṣat yúsuf fí’l-ḥaqíqa* (‘The inner reality of the story of Joseph’, idem, ii:422–3, no. 574). Both the terminology and Sufi hermeneutical style of Ibn al-‘Arabí’s non-literal, often gnostic type exegesis, is frequently reflected in the writings of Báb and BA\*. Though they condemned *waḥdat al-wujúd* (existential oneness) they show very considerable influence from the Great Shaykh and his disciples.

Influential also were the works of Ibn al-‘Arabí’s mystically inclined pupil ‘Abd al-Razzáq al-Káshání (d.c. 730/1330) whose *Tafsír* is often printed as if that of his master (Loiry, 1980). The following is an extract from Káshání’s commentary on the Súra of the Mount (*aṭ-ṭúr*, Q. 52:1–5);

“By the Mount!” (*wa’ṭ-ṭúr*). The “Mount” (*aṭ-ṭúr*) is the mountain on which Moses conversed with Him [God]. It [symbolically] signifies the human brain (*al-dimágh al-insání*) which is a seat of intellect and articulation (*maẓhar al-‘aql wa’n-nuṭq*) … its Being is the locus of the divine Command (*maẓhar al-amr al-iláhí*) and the seat of the eternal decree (*al-qiḍá’ al-azalí*). “And the Book Outstretched” (*wa’l-kitáb al-masṭúr*) is the all-encompassing form (*ṣúrat al-kull*) according to what interfaces with Him of the established order (*an-niẓám al-ma‘lúm*). It is what is engraved in the tablet of the decree (*lawḥ al-qiḍá*) and the Most Great Spirit (*rúḥ al-a‘ẓam*) … (Ibn ‘Arabí/al-Káshání, *Tafsir* 2:553).

Returning to a Shí‘í *tafsír* work, the *Majma‘ al-bayán li-‘ulúm al-Qur’án* (The Compilation of the Explanation of the Sciences of the Qur’án) of the Shí‘í theologian Abú ‘Alí aṭ-Ṭabarsí (d.c. 548/1153) has been called a Shí‘í “encyclopedia of Qur’anic sciences” (O. A. Abdul, 1977:78). Here aṭ-Ṭabarsí presents in Arabic characters a Hebrew transliteration of the biblical etymology of the tetragrammation (יהוה = Y-H-W-H, Yahweh), אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה (= ‘ehye ‘ásher ‘ehye, Exod. 3:14a, loosely), “I am that I am” (RSV). He considered it one of the forms of the *al-ism al-a‘ẓam* (Mightiest Name [of God]), said in Arabic to be *yá ḥayy yá qayyúm* (O Living One! O Self-Subsisting!) (Ṭabarsí, *Majma‘* XIX:226). In one of his many *alwáḥ* to oriental Jews, BA\* reflected such sources when he used the Arabic transliteration اهيه اشر اهيه for אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה and transliterated the (unvowelled) tetragrammaton يهوه (= Y-H-W-H) (BA\* Ma’idih 4:40; Lambden, 1983:22ff; 1988:66f, 155f).

The important Shí‘í, esoterically inclined *tafsír* works and *ḥikmat al-muta‘áliyya* (Transcendent wisdom) formulations of (Mullá) Ṣadrá ad-Dín Shírází (d. 1050/1640) deserve mention (Peerwani, 1991 -->4.2). His massive *‘irfání* (gnostic) *Tafsír al-kabír* (Weighty Commentary) expresses something of an integration of Avicennan thought, the theosophy of Ibn al-‘Arabí and the *ḥikmat al-ishráq* perspectives of Yaḥyá Suhrawardí. Islamicate biblical citations can be found in various of his works including his commentary on the *Uṣúl al-Káfí* (-->4.2). This integration was also furthered by Mullá Ṣadrá’s student and son-in-law Mullá Muḥsín Fayḍ al-Káshání (d. 1091/1680) whose *Tafsír aṣ-Ṣaáfí fí tafsír kalám Alláh al-wáfí* (The Pristine *Tafsír* …) was particularly influential.[[82]](#footnote-82) So also the Persian and Arabic *‘irfání* commentaries on select surahs of the Q. of the philosopher and polymathic pioneer of Judaeo-Christian dialogue Sayyid Aḥmad al-Alawí (d.c. 1050/1650). His works have been “considered to be one of the outstanding gnostic, theosophical commentaries in the Shi‘ite world”.[[83]](#footnote-83) Those relating to the bible and dialogue will be

commented upon below (-->4.2).

Various Akhbárí (‘tradition centred’) Shí‘í commentators utilized and highlighted the importance of a non-literal hermeneutic (EIr. 1:716–18; Lawson, 1993). On occasion they set down interesting interpretations to Q. rooted Isrá’íliyyát materials as found in the traditions (*akhbár*). Only passing mention can be made here to such exegetes. They include ‘Abd ‘Alí al-Ḥuwayzí (d. 1112/1700), author of the *Kitáb tafsír núr ath-thaqalayn* (The Book of the Commentary on the Light of the Twin Weights) and Sayyid Háshím al-Baḥrání (d.c. 1110 /1697) who wrote the *Kitáb al-burhán fí tafsír al-Qur’án* (The Book of the Evidence in the Commentary on the Qur’án).

The *Mir’át al-anwár wa mishkát al-asrár fí tafsír al-Qur’án* (Mirrors of Lights and Niches of Mysteries in Commentary upon the Qur’án) of al-‘Ámilí al-Iṣfahání (d. 1138/1726) contains an extensive prolegomenon highlighting and expounding the deeper hermeneutics of qur’anic exegesis. Included in its extensive alphabetical glossary of key Shi‘ite terms are expositions of many biblical-qur’anic figures including Gabriel, Adam, Abraham, Lot, Gog and Magog (*Yájúj* and *Májúj*), Joseph, Israel (*Isrá’íl*), Solomon (*Sulaymán*) and Jesus. Corbin described this volume as “one of the monuments of Iranian theological literature, furnishing inexhaustible material for comparative research on the hermeneutics of the Book among the “People of the Book” (Corbin, EIr. I:931–2; *Dharí‘a* 20:264f., no. 2893; Lawson, 1993:195f).[[84]](#footnote-84)

Before concluding this section mention should be made of the huge and widely-respected early 19th century commentary of the ‘Alíd Sunní Abú ath-Thaná’, Shiháb ad-Din al-Álúsí (d. 1270 /1854) entitled *Rúḥ al-ma‘áni fí tafsír al-qur’án al-‘aẓím* … (The Spirit of the Meaning in Commentary upon the Mighty Qur’án).[[85]](#footnote-85) A one-time muftí of Baghdad, Álúsí was aware of both early Shaykhism and Babism. Sayyid Káẓim ar-Rashtí the second Shaykhí leader (-->4.4) appears to have corresponded with him (Fihrist: 323 No. 256; Nicolas, Essai II:35 no. 100). Though Álúsí condemned Bábí heresy

at the time of the trial of Mullá ‘Alí Basṭámí (d. Istanbul, 1846), the Báb invited him to embrace his religion in an Arabic letter written from Mákú (1848) in which he claimed divinity and to be the awaited Mahdí: “I, verily, am God, no God is there except I myself, I manifested myself on the Day of Resurrection …. I am the Mahdí” (Zá’im ad-Dawlá, *Miftáḥ*, 212–15). For a few months in the early 1850s, Alúsí accommodated under house arrest the learned and revolutionary female Bábí, Fáṭima Baraghání, better known as Ṭáhira (d. 1270/1852) who may also have had a role in the evolution of Bábí-Bahá’í missions to the Jews its emergent bible exegesis (Áyatí, Kawákib 1:118; Mazandarání, ZH 6:703–4). Álúsí’s commentary and other writings apparently contain passing reference to the first two Shaykhí leaders as well as to the Báb and Ṭáhira whom he is said to have greatly admired (cf. Noghabá’í, 1983:137).[[86]](#footnote-86)

The *Rúḥ al-ma‘ání* … is a wide-ranging compendium of pre-19th century Islamic *tafsír* works. While *isnád* details are registered sparingly select Shí‘í and some mystical perspectives are sometimes recorded. al-Álúsí’s occasionally modernistic commentary shows some knowledge of the Bible. It exhibits a traditional yet ecumenical viewpoint registering a wide range of opinions (Smith, 1970:2251–9).

Considerable attention is paid by al-Álúsí to theological aspects of Isrá’íliyyát traditions related by such persons as have been mentioned above (<--1.1). The story of Moses’ request to see God (Q. 7:143), for example, is discussed at length *rúḥ* 5:43–52). Attention to detail is evident in the comments upon the *alwáḥ* (Tablets) which God gave to Moses on Sinai (*aṭ-ṭúr*). Expounding the words, “And We wrote from him [Moses] upon the *alwáḥ* (Tablets) something of everything (*min kulla shay’*; Q. 7:145a) Álúsí records various opinions as to the number of alwáḥ, their *jawhar* (substance), their *miqdár* (measure, scope) and their *kátib* (inscriber):

“[Regarding] their number, it is said that there were ten and [also that there were] seven or two … the *alwáḥ* were [made of] green emerald (*zumurrud akhḍar*). The Lord, exalted be He, commanded Gabriel and he brought them from [the Garden of]

Eden …. Others say that they were [made] of ruby …. And I say that they were of emerald …. It is related from the Prophet, ‘The *alwáḥ* which were sent down unto Moses were from the Lote-Tree of Paradise (*sidr al-jannat*) and the length of the Tablet(s) was twelve cubits” (*Rúḥ al-ma‘ání* V:55).

Finally, brief mention should be made of the Egyptian moderniser, reformist and commentator Muḥammad ‘Abduh (1849–1322/1905). He wrote an influential, incomplete *Tafsír* work revised and completed by his pupil Rashíd Riḍá (1865–1935) and also put out a short-lived periodical entitled *al-‘Urwa al-wuthqá’* (The Firm Handle) with the Iranian reformer Jamál ad-Dín Asadábádí [al-Afghání] (1838/1839–1897) who had probably spent some time with BA\* and the Bábís in Baghdad (Cole, 1998, index). ‘Abduh also wrote a *Risála al-tawḥíd* (Treatise on the Divine Oneness, 1897) and a work on Christianity and Islam *al-Islám wa’l-Naṣrániyya* (Cairo, 1902). He aligned himself with those who rejected the Islamic concept of *taḥríf* as the total corruption of biblical scripture and had some acquaintance with the Bible. ‘Abduh gave great weight to rationalism. Like AB\* whom he had met he argued that the existing bible must be authentic because it cannot have been universally corrupted.

The Bible, Isrá’íliyyát and Bábí-Bahá’í *Tafsír*

God revealed the Qur’án according to the likeness of the creation of all things (*bi-mithl khalq kulli shay’*) …. For every single letter of the Qur’án, as accords with its being totally encompassed by the knowledge of God, to the level of its existent particles (*min dhawát al-ashyá’*), there is a *tafsír* (interpretation). For every *tafsír* (interpretation) there is a *ta’wíl* (deeper sense). For every *ta’wíl* there is a *báṭin* level (‘deep inner sense’). For every *báṭin* there are also further deep inner senses (*báṭin*), dimensions to the extent that God wills …. (Báb T. Kawthar, fol. 8b)

Bábí-Bahá’í spiritual hermeneutics mostly follow the aforementioned Shí‘í-Ṣúfí-‘Irfání-Shaykhí non-literal hermeneutical methods. They accept ẓáhir (outer) and numerous báṭín (inner) senses of the Q. as did Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Káẓim (Sh-Qasida, 169–70). As indicated in the above passage from the Báb, BA\* and the Bábí-Bahá’í leaders generally upheld the position that the sacred word has an infinite number of deep senses, even down to the qabbalistic level of its letters and beyond. Bábí-Bahá’í primary sources have it that past sacred texts derive their ultimate meaning in and through the theophanic person and religion of the latest *maẓhar-i iláhí* (‘divine Manifestation’). The existence of *ẓáhir* (literal) and *báṭin* (inner) senses of sacred writ are affirmed

(BA\* T. Shams; T. Ta’wíl -->bib.) as are innumerable even deeper sometimes eschatologically meaningful scriptural senses. Such deep levels are often referred to as the *báṭin al-báṭin*, the interior of the interior, the most inward of the esoteric senses (<--Báb, *Kawthar*; BA\* KI:198/ [SE\*]163).

The importance of the Q. to both the Báb and BA\* can hardly be overestimated (<--1.0). Both cited it thousands of times and frequently commented upon portions of it. In his Persian and Arabic Bayáns the Báb divided the totality of his writings into five “modes” (“grades”, “categories”, *shu’ún*), the fourth of them being *tafsír* type revelations, Arabic verses in some sense expository of or comparable to qur’anic revelations. For the Báb the revelation of qur’anic like Arabic verses constituted a true miracle, the touchstone of assured prophethood.

From the outset many of the writings of the Báb were distinctly neo-qur’anic in form; having isolated letters, being divided into surahs and written in rhyming prose. The Báb associated his revelations with the *ta’wíl* (inner sense) or *báṭin* (interior dimension) of the Q. The use of non-literal *ta’wíl* in his first major work, the *Tafsír súrat yúsuf* (= QA; mid. 1844) suggests that he saw this work as unlocking the messianic *ta’wíl* or deeper senses of the entire Q. “O people of the earth”, the Báb writes towards the end of this neo-Tafsír, “This Book (= QA) is the *tafsír* of everything (*li-kulli shay’*) (QA 111:448; cf. 104:414 41:151; 38:142; 44:164; 61:242).

In an early letter the Báb refers to his partially extant and originally 700 súra *Kitáb ar-rúḥ* (Book of the Spirit, 1845) as a work which he “revealed upon the ocean on the return of the *Dhikr* (to Shíráz after the Ḥajj) in seven hundred surahs, in definitive, expository verses (*muḥkamat áyát bayyinát*) expressive of the *báṭin* of the Qur’án …” (INBMC 91:89–90). This work is thus identified with the *muḥkamat*, the established dimension of the (revealed) verses, though it is also an exposition of the *báṭin* of the Q. Here as elsewhere the Báb subtly challenges qur’anic *‘ijáz* (inimitability):

Yea indeed! We have sent down in the Book [K. Rúḥ, Báb’s revelations] certain verses which are the *báṭin* (interior meaning) of the Qur’án” (ibid.).

In another early (pre-June 1845) work addressed to Muslim clerics, the *Kitáb al-‘ulamá’*, the Báb

again associates the *báṭin* (interiority) of the Q. with revelations sent down through himself (“Our servant ‘Alí”) as a “proof” (*ḥujjat*) from the eschatological *Baqiyyat-Alláh* (Remembrance [*recte* Remnant] of God)” for the faithful (Ar. text, Afnán, 2000:107).

The Báb authored several *tafsír* works only a few aspects of which have been the subject of academic analysis (Lawson, 1986+ bib. -->). Aside from nine lost complete qur’án commentaries dating from the time of the Báb’s imprisionment in Mákú (1848, DB:31), the extant, major, all Arabic *tafsír* works of the Báb are, according to the súra numbers commented upon (cf. McEoin, Sources, index, tafsír) as follows:

1. [*Ḥurúf al-*] *Bismilláh* (*Bismilláh ar-raḥman ar-raḥím*)

2. *al-Há’* (the letter “H”) in two versions (I & II -->bib.)

3. *al-Ḥamd or al-Fátiḥa* (The Opening, Q. 1)

4. *al-Baqara* (‘The Cow’, Q. 2; incomplete) dating to early 1260/1844.

5. *al-Yúsuf* (Q. 12 Joseph), the *Qayyúm al-asmá’* (= QA). Mid 1844.

6. *áyat an-Núr* (Light Q. 24:35), (‘the light Verse’) and a few others verses of Q. 24.

7. On Q. 50:16 and Q. 112:4 (for Ḥasan Waqá’i’y-i-Nigár).

8. *Laylat al-Qadr* (Q.97 ‘The Night of Destiny’).

9. *al-‘Aṣr* (Q. 103 The Era [Afternoon])

10. *al-Kawthar* (Q. 107, ‘The [Eschatological] Abundance’).

Aside to some degree from the 1259–1260/1843–1844 *T. Baqara*, most of the *Tafsír* works of the Báb are not exactly comparable to classical Islamic *tafsír* compositions. In form and content they are often more neo-qur’anic than *tafsír* works. Exhibiting rewritten *tafsír* characteristics often in a revelation (*waḥy*) mode the Báb’s often eisegetical works challenge the inimitability (*I‘jáz*) of the Q. Innovative post-qur’anic dimensions and eschatologically suggestive levels of meaning are subtly or boldly in evidence in many of the *Tafsír* works of the Báb.

Several of the commentaries listed above interpret biblically rooted qur’anic narratives. The best example of this is the multi-faceted story of Joseph. In the *Qayyúm al-asmá’* (= QA), this *aḥsan al-qaṣaṣ* (‘best of stories’) is given a complex, multi-faceted imamological and gematric level of eschatologically suggestive senses. Other narratives directly or allusively interpreted by the Báb, include verses dealing with episodes in the lives of Abraham, Dhú’l-Qarnayn, Moses, David, Jesus and others (-->). Qur’anic prophetological motifs and narratives along with occasional Isrá’íliyyát traditions are given post-Islamic senses meaningful within the new Bábí theophany.

In line with numerous *ḥadíth* of the prophet and the Imams and like the Báb, both BA\* and ‘Abd al-Bahá’ (= AB\*) again accord multiple meanings to the sacred books of the past. BA\* often expressed this as the following extract from one of his earlier writings illustrates:

Know that the words of God (*kalimát Alláh*) and his scriptures (*sufará’*) have inner sense upon inner sense (*ma‘ání ba‘du ma‘ání*), allegorical meaning (*ta’wíl*) after allegorical meaning (*ta’wíl*), cryptic senses (*rumúzát*) and allusive significances (*isharát*) as well as evident proofs (*dalálát*). There are, furthermore, clear regulative meaning(s) (*ḥukm*/*ḥukum*) that are without end. No single person is aware of even a letter of the inner meanings [of scripture] save such as your Lord, the All-Merciful has willed (BA\*, Tablet for Jawád Tabrízí, INBMC 73:[179–186] 173).

BA\* as well as AB\* also wrote many often non-literal commentaries on select surahs and/or verses of the Q. (-->). Like the Báb they frequently utilized an allegorical hermeneutic. The orientation of these *tafsír* works is often eschatological fulfillment and doctrinal renewal through a new Bábí-Bahá’í universe of discourse. Though less well-known as a Q. commentator, BA\* expounded a very large number of qur’anic verses, though few complete qur’anic surahs. Like the Báb he occasionally gave a detailed atomistic exegesis-eisegesis to particular phrases, words and letters of the Q. A characteristically Báb-like qabbalistic, letter by letter, *‘ilm al-ḥurúf* exegesis seen in the Báb’s *T. Basmalah* [recte *T. Bismilláh*] and *T. ‘Aṣr* is evident in certain early works of BA\* (INBMC 56:24ff). Among the not yet fully collected and catalogued distinctly *tafsír* works of BA\* are,

1. *L. Kull aṭ-ṭa‘ám* (the Tablet of All Food) on Q. 3:87, c. 1853/1854?).

2. *T. Ḥurúfát al-muqaṭṭa‘a* (The Isolated Letters [of the Q.] c. 1858) also known as *T. áyát an-núr* (Commentary on the Light Verse).

3. *T. Basmala* [recte *T. Bismilláh*], on the *basmalah* [recte *Bismilláh*] and its component letters, etc.

4. *T. Yúsuf*, on passages, verses and motifs of Q. 12 or on the QA of the Báb.

5. *T. Q.* 68:1a including the letters of the *basmala* [recte *bismilláh*], the isolated letter ن (*nún*) and verse 1a, “By the Pen!”

6. *T. Q.* 13:17–18a & 18:60–90 contains a detailed exposition of the story of Moses and Khiḍr and of Dhú’l-Qarnayn and Yajúj and Májúj (Gog and Magog).

7. *T. Súrat wa’sh-shams* (Q. 91)

Certain of BA\*’s *tafsír* statements refine, supplement or develop those of the Báb. There thus exists in Bábí-Bahá’í scripture what might be called multiple, progressively expounded texts of the (Bible-) Q. This cumulative, multi-faceted *tafsír* of the Báb and BA\* is sometimes also further

interpreted by AB\*[[87]](#footnote-87) and less frequently by SE\* or members of the Bahá’í community. A *tafsír* notice of the Báb touching upon qur’anic *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’*, for example, is not infrequently given further levels of interpretation by BA\*, AB\* and others. Developed Bábí-Bahá’í Q. commentary expresses several dimensions of meaning evolving over a period of more than a century (1844–1957>). A few examples of this evolving *tafsír* are found in connection with the Bábi-Bahá’í exegesis of the Joseph story and that of Dhú’l-Qarnayn. It is often in *tafsír* contexts that Isrá’íliyyát traditions are interpreted or reinterpreted beyond their Judaeo-Christian, Abrahamic roots.

3.3 The Bible and Isrá’íliyyát in *aḥádíth*/*akhbár* (compendia of traditions)

In the first few Islamic centuries *tafsír* works and *ḥadíth* compilations were hardly differentiated. Ayoub has stated that it was from a very early period that the *ahl al-kitáb*

… played an important and controversial role in the development of *ḥadíth* and *tafsír* tradition. A need was felt from the beginning to know more about the prophets of old and their generations than the meagre information which the Qur’án provided (1984:30).

Both Sunní and Shí‘í Muslims give tremendous weight to *ḥadíth* (pl. *aḥadíth*), *khabar* (pl. *akhbár*) literatures though relative to the Bible and Isrá’íliyyát only select Shí‘í compilations can be considered here.[[88]](#footnote-88) For the *Ithná ‘Ashariyyah* (twelver) Shí‘ís authoritative prophetic traditions are supplemented by those deriving from the ‘Alid Imams, from ‘Alí up till Ḥasan al-‘Askárí and his allegedly occulted son Muḥammad (d.c. 260/874). These Twelver Shí‘a give especial weight to “the four books” three of which are predominantly legalistic.[[89]](#footnote-89) They are supplemented by three other

massive compendia one of which is again distinctively legalistic (Librande, ‘Ḥadíth’ Enc.Rel. 6:150–1). Out of these seven (4 + 3 supp.) compendia it is the following three large works which include some material relating to the Bible and Isrá’íliyyát:

1. [*K.*] *al-Káfí fí ‘ilm ad-dín* ([‘The Book of] What is Sufficient for the Knowledge of Religion’) of Abú Ja‘far Muḥammad b. Ya‘qúb al-Kulayní [Kulíní] (d.c. 329/941) (15,000 + aḥadíth);

2. The commentary on the *Káfí* of Kulíní (= Kulayní) by Ṣadrá ad-Dín Shírází (= Mullá Ṣadrá d. 1050/1640) and

3. The *al-Wáfí* (The Comprehensive) of Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Káshání (d. 1090/1679), a compilation with commentary on the “four books” (<--).

The early and lengthy *al-Káfí fí ‘ilm ad-dín* of Kulíní (d.c. 329/941) was written during the *ghaybat al-sughrá* (lesser occultation) and was specifically cited by both the Báb and BA\*[[90]](#footnote-90) as was certain of its six supplementary volumes, the compendium of miscellanea, entitled the *Rawḍat al-káfí* (The Garden of the Káfí). The eighth volume is of particular interest in that it contains a large collection of traditions touching upon prophetological, eschatological, imamological and other matters associated with pre-Islamic prophets. Sections within it record traditions of the Imams dealing with Adam and the Tree, the story of Cain and Abel as well as Shí‘í sayings of Jesus and other pre-Islamic prophets. There are also traditions dealing, for example, with the cosmological secrets of the celestial Domes (*ḥadíth al-qibáb*), Yájúj and Májúj (Gog and Magog) and much more besides (*Furú‘* 8:97ff).

Ayoub has translated some traditions reflecting the Shí‘í image of Jesus and his sayings in the *Rawḍat al-káfí* (Ayoub, 1976). An example of a Shí‘í Jesus logion reads, “Verily, I say to you, Moses commanded you not to swear by God, truthfully or falsely, rather to say, “Yea” or “Nay” (cf. Exod. 20:7; Matt. 5:34; Ayoub, 1976:184). Also recorded in the *Rawḍat al-káfí* is a series of beatitudes of Jesus (VIII 141f, Ayoub 1976:177).

Vajda has discussed aspects of the post-biblical, Talmudic-Midrashic Jewish substrate of several Shi‘ite Isrá’íliyyát informed traditions found in the *Uṣúl al-Káfí* of al-Kulíní. These traditions

uphold the authority of the twelver Imams or set out various other Shí‘í perspectives. Nine Isrá’íliyyát passages are identified by Vajda, including, [1] *Uṣúl al-Káfí* I:383, on the nature of the flowering rod of Solomon (see Num. 17:1ff [16–24]; 1 Sam. 16:1ff), [2] *Uṣúl al-Káfí* II:265, recording words of Imám ‘Alí related by Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣádiq, “Poverty (*al-faqr*) is a supreme ornament (*azyan*) for the believer (*mu’min*)” which has midrashic precedent (B. Ḥagíga 9b, cf. Lev. Rabba, 13, 4), [3] *Uṣúl al-Káfí* II:270 which records the following prophetic saying relayed by Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣádiq parallelled at Deut. 27:18–21, “Cursed! Cursed be whomsover is the servant of money (*ad-dínár wa’d-dirham*). Cursed! Cursed! Be whomsover leads the blind astray! Cursed! Cursed! Be he who copulates with a beast (*bahíma*)” (Vajda, 1981:46f).

Aside from the above-mentioned repositories of Shí‘í tradition, the encyclopaedic *Biḥár al-anwár* (Oceans of Lights; 2nd ed. 110 vols) of Muḥammad Báqir Majlisí (d. 1111/1699–1700) is a further very influential thematized collection of Shí‘í traditions. It is quite frequently cited in Bábí-Bahá’í primary scripture.[[91]](#footnote-91) In the new 110 volume edition it includes four volumes totalling over 1,500 (394 + 388 + 407 + 522) pages making up the *K. an-nubuwwa* (Book of Prophethood; 2nd ed. vols 11–14). Within it numerous qur’anic verses are expounded, Isrá’íliyyát influenced traditions cited, and other Islamicate materials related from a wide variety of sources. Much is said about prophets believed to have lived between Adam until Muḥammad. Rich in Isrá’íliyyát the *K. an-nubuwwa* cites, for example, Ṭabarí’s *Tafsír* and a lengthy extract from the *K. al-khará’ij* of Quṭb ad-Dín Ráwandí (d. Qumm 573/1177–1178) which includes several citations of Islamicate (pseudo-) Johannine paraclete sayings such as the following,

And he (Jesus) says in another narrative, ‘the *fáraqlíṭ* (> Gk παράκλητος the Paraclete), the Spirit of Truth *rúḥ al-ḥaqq*) whom he [God] will send in my [Jesus’] name shall teach you all things (*kulli shay’*) (Biḥár, 15:211; cf. Jn. 14:26; 16:13).

Aside from the *Biḥár* of Majlisí, the Báb and BA\* also quote a wide range of traditions from sometimes obscure Shí‘í compilations. In his *T. Kawthar*, for example, the Báb cites lengthy eschatological traditions including some ascribed to al-Mufaḍḍal ibn ‘Umar Ju‘fí (d.c. 762–763), a companion of Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣádiq from whom he is said to have relayed traditions and treatises (T. Kawthar, fols. 38b-39a; 55a; 57a, etc.). These include a work of al-Mufaḍḍal, the *K. at-tawḥíd al-Mufaḍḍál* (*Dharí‘a* IV:482 No. 2156; GAL 1:530 No. 9; *T. Kawthar*, fol. 108aff).[[92]](#footnote-92)

Many examples could be given of the considerable influence of specific *ḥadíth* upon the doctrines of the Báb and BA\* some of which are Isrá’íliyyát rooted traditions. The ‘Ḥadíth of the Cloud (*al-‘amá*) record’s Muḥammad’s response to a question posed by Abú Razín al-‘Aqílí[[93]](#footnote-93) about God’s location “before he created the creation”;

He [God] was in عماء (*‘amá’*, a “cloud”) with no air above it [Him] and no air below it [Him]. Then he created His Throne upon the [cosmic] Water (cited aṭ-Ṭabarí, *Táríkh*, 1:36).

Regarded as “especially sound” by aṭ-Ṭabarí this prophetic *ḥadíth* reflects passages in the Hebrew Bible where God is said to dwell in “thick darkness” (Heb. עַרְפֶּל araphel Exod. 20:21 b) and whose theophany was at times in a “pillar of cloud” (Exod. 33:9ff; cf. 1 Kings 8:12; Ps. 97:2; Jud. 13:22). It is also strongly reminiscent of the apophatic theological speculations of the Cappadocian Father Gregory of Nyssa (CE d.c. 395) some of whose works were early translated into Arabic. His *On the Life of Moses* states that the “divine cloud” which led the Israelites (Exod. 13:31–2) was “something beyond human comprehension” (Life of Moses, tr. 38; cf. Philo, Vit. Mos. 1.29.166).

Through the influence of the above Islamic tradition upon his cosmology, Ibn al-‘Arabí made considerable use of the term *‘amá’* (lit. “blindness”, “cloud”) and of genitive phrases containing it (*al-Futúḥát*, 1:148; 2:310; 3:430 etc.; al-Ḥakím, *al-Mu‘jam*, 820f). So likewise the Báb whose QA makes frequent use of *‘amá’* and related genitive expressions (100 + times). In this work the Báb included addresses to a mysterious *ahl al-‘amá’* (denizens of the Divine cloud) associated with the

celestial Sinaitic realm (Lambden 1984; 1988). A commentary on the ‘Tradition of *‘amá’*’ was specifically written by the Báb for Sayyid Yaḥyá Dárábí, Vaḥíd (d. CE 1850) (-->bib.). BA\* likewise utilized this terminology extensively. His first major poetical writing was entitled *Rashḥ-i ‘amá’* (‘The Sprinkling of the Divine Cloud’, late 1852) after its opening hemstitch.

While the Báb wrote commentaries upon the gnostically inclined *Ḥadíth Kumayl ibn Ziyád an-Nakhá’í* (-->bib.) and the tradition sometimes ascribed to Imám ‘Alí, *naḥnu wajh Alláh* (“We are the Face of God”; -->bib.), BA\* commented upon the widely attested, *man ‘arafa nafsahu faqad ‘arafa rabbubu* (Whoso knoweth himself shall surely know his Lord; -->bib.) and that which has it that ‘The [true] believer is alive in both the [two] worlds (*ad-dárayn*)’ (MAM:346–361).

At one point in his *K. íqán* BA\* cites a prophetic tradition from Ja‘far Ṣádiq contained in the *Yanbú* (Wellspring) of Ibn Junayd al-Iskáfí (? d. 381/991; QI. IV:1866–1867; KI:189/tr. [SE\*] 155). In the same source he also cites from the massive (100 + vols; larger than Majlisí’s *Biḥár*) *Awá’lim al-‘ulúm* of Shaykh ‘Abd-Alláh b. Núr Alláh al-Baḥrání [al-Iṣfahání] (? d. early 18th cent. CE) an important pupil of Majlisí (Dharí‘a 15:356–7, No. 2282).[[94]](#footnote-94) This work appears to have been a key source of messianic proof texts for the early Bábís, including Mullá Ḥasayn Bushrú’í (d. 1849; see INBMC 80:1ff). Twice cited as a source of eschatological traditions by BA\* in his *Kítáb-i íqán*, Baḥrání’s *Awálim* was referred to as among “the well-known and respected books”. (BA\*, KI:187).[[95]](#footnote-95)

The *Masháriq anwár al-yaqín* of Rajab al-Bursí

Among the numerous often *‘irfání* (esoteric-gnostic) collections of tradition significant in esoteric Shi‘ism and the Bábí-Bahá’í religions is that revolving around traditions ascribed to Imám ‘Alí in the *Masháriq anwár al-yaqín fí asrár Amír al-mu’minín* (‘The Dawning-Places of the Lights of Certitude in the mysteries of the Commander of the Faithful’) of Rajab al-Bursí (d.c. 814/1411; Lawson, 1992:261–276; Borsi [Lorey + Corbin], 1996). A number of arcane Shí‘í traditions cited by

the Báb and BA\* originate with this compilation. In his *Kitáb-i íqán*, for example, BA\* cites a tradition about Imám ‘Alí having been with one thousand Adams, each 50,000 years apart, and having repeatedly declared his *waláya* (“successorship”) before them (KI:130/tr. [SE\*] 107–8).

Bursí’s *Masháriq* contains important sermons and traditions which were very highly regarded by the first two Shaykhí leaders as well as by the Báb and BA\*. A considerable number of important Imámí traditions about *waláya*, the *‘ilm al-ḥurúf* (the science of letters) the *ism Alláh al-a‘ẓam* and other esoteric matters are scattered throughout the *Masháriq*. The influence of the Bible and Isrá’íliyyát is evident throughout this seminal esoteric tract.

Among the influential discourses ascribed to Imám ‘Alí contained in the *Masháriq* of Bursí is the arcane *Khuṭba aṭ-ṭutunjiyya*/*taṭanjiyya* (Sermon of the Gulf) allegedly delivered by the first Imám between Kúfa and Medina (*Masháriq* 166–170). This oration is a quasi-extremist (*ghuluww*) sermon which was partially commented upon by Sayyid Káẓim ar-Rashtí who regarded it very highly. So too the Báb and BA\* who quote and selectively comment upon it quite frequently. They were markedly influenced by its at times high imamology and abstruse yet suggestive apocalyptic. The *Kh. Ṭutunjiyya* incorporates Islamicate motifs deriving from Isrá’íliyyát including many Arabic “I am” sayings at times incorporating apparently pseudo-Hebrew/Aramaic names such as “I am B-A-R-H-I-U-N” (pointing uncertain) [Barhilion?].

In the *Kh. Ṭutunjiyya* many utterances of an all but deified ‘Alí echo the gnostic and predominantly Johannine NT “I am” logion of Jesus. Like Jesus, ‘Alí at one point, in a loose Arabic transliteration of the Greek, claims أنا عليو شوثا [?] (= Gk. ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ἀλήθεια, *ego eimi aletheia*, Jn. 14:6a), “I am the Truth” (Bursí, *Mashriq*, 169). Numerous other theophanic claims of the deified Imám ‘Alí cast in the form of “I am” sayings are present in this sermon (*Masháriq*, 166–170) as well as in other texts collected in Bursí’s *Masháriq*.[[96]](#footnote-96) Only a few of these sayings can be translated here:

I am the one who presideth over the two gulfs (*waqif ‘alá aṭ-ṭutunjayn*) …

I am the Lord of the first flood (*ṣáḥib aṭ-ṭúfán al-awwál*);

I am the Lord of the second flood [of Noah?];

I am the one who raised Idrís [Enoch] to a lofty place [cf. Q. 19:57]

I am the agent whereby the infant Jesus cried out from the cradle [Q. 19:29, etc.]

I am the Lord of the Mount [Sinai] (*ṣáḥib aṭ-ṭúr*) …

I am the one with whom are the keys of the unseen (*mafátíḥ al-ghayb*) …

I am Dhú’l-Qarnayn mentioned in the primordial scrolls (*ṣuḥuf al-awwálí*)

I am the bearer of the Seal of Solomon (*ṣáḥib khátam sulaymán*)

I am first First Adam; I am the First Noah … I am the Lord of Abraham, (*ṣáḥib Ibráhím*),

I am the inner depth of the Speaker [Moses] (*sirr al-kalím*) …

I am the Messiah [Jesus] = *ar-rúḥ*] (*al-masíḥ*) inasmuch as no soul *rúḥ*) moves nor spirit (*nafs*) breathes without my permission …

I am the Speaker who conversed (*mutakallim*) through the tongue of Jesus in the cradle …

I am the one with whom are one thousand volumes of the books of the prophets (*alf kutub min kitáb al-anbiyá’*) … (Bursí, *Masháriq*, 166ff).

From the very beginning of his messianic career the Báb quite frequently cited and creatively refashioned lines of the *Khuṭba al-ṭutunjiyya*, sometimes as interpreted by Sayyid Káẓim ar-Rashtí (-->3.3f). In expressing his own claims he often used “I am” proclamatory sentences and dual formations echoing the sayings ascribed to ‘Alí in the *ṭutunjiyya* and elsewhere (see QA). This especially in his claim, “I am one presiding over the *ṭutunjayn* … *al-khalíjayn* (“the two gulfs”) (QA, 93:374–5; 109:434–5).[[97]](#footnote-97)

The opening lines of the Báb’s early *Khuṭba al-Jidda* (Homily from Jeddah) are basically a rewrite of the opening words of the *al-Khuṭba al-ṭutunjiyya* (INBMC 91:60–61; cf. idem 50 [untitled]). Both the Báb and BA\* saw themselves as the eschatological theophany of the Sinaitic speaker (*mukallim aṭ-ṭúr*) whose future advent is predicted by ‘Alí in the Sermon of the Gulf (Bursí, *Masháriq*, 168; Lambden 1986). The distinctly esoteric influence of this sermon is obvious in the following lines from the Báb’s commentary upon the qur’anic phrase *al-lawḥ al-ḥafíẓ* (Q. 85:22), (The preserved Tablet):

… God assuredly made this [person the Báb] to be that Book, a supremely great Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-akbar*). And he foreordained therein whatsoever was called into being at the beginning and at the [eschatological] end (*abada‘ fí’l-bad‘ wa’l-khatm*). God destined for that Book two Gates (*bábayn*) unto the mystery of the two Gulfs (*li-sirr aṭ-ṭutunjayn*), through the water of the two channels [gulfs] (*má’ al-khalíjayn*). One of these two [streams] is the water of the Euphrates of the realities of the Elevated Beings (*má‘ al-firát ḥaqá’iq al-‘aliyyín*) [streaming] from the inmates of the two easts (*min ahl al-mashriqayn*) from the two [regions] most proximate [unto God] (*min al-aqrabayn*). The second of the two [streams] is the water of the fiery [hellish]

expanse of the saline bitterness (*má’ al-mulḥ al-ajjáj* [*ujáj*] ?) [streaming] from the inmates of the two wests (*min ahl al-maghribayn*), from the two [regions] most remote [from God] (*min al-ab‘adayn* [sic.]).[[98]](#footnote-98) And God fashioned above every entrance (*‘alá kull báb*) the triangular form (*ṣúrat at-tathlíth*), and within the threefold form is the Threefold Personage [= Jesus?] (*haykal at-tathlíth*) [which leads] unto the depth of the gates of Gehenna (*li-tamám abwáb al jaḥím*) … (Báb Q.Hafiz, 80)

Numerous Shí‘í traditions deriving from the Twelver Imams are reckoned to be inspired (*ilhám*) or divinely inspired (*waḥy*) in the writings of the Báb and BA\*. Summing up the developed Bahá’í perspective AB\* wrote in response to an enquiry about *waḥy* (divine revelation):

the sanctified pure [twelver] Imams were the dawning-places of *ilḥám* (divine inspiration). The manifestations of the bounty of the presence of the All-Merciful are the *rasúl* (sent messengers), who are singled out as recipient of *waḥy*. Consequently, we do not say that the word (*kalám*) of the sanctified [twelver] Imams is other than inspiration from the All-Merciful (*ilhá-i raḥmání*) (Ma’idih 9:122).

Prophetic and Imámí traditions are thus often cited as authoritative texts in Bábí-Bahá’í primary sources. This perhaps indicates Akhbárí influence which also seems reflected though transcended in the mystical imam-centred unveiling (*kashf*) of the first two Shaykhí leaders (3.4). The Báb and BA\* cited as authoritative many Shí‘í traditions though their non-literal hermeneutic meant that they bypassed any notion of Akhbárí literalism. Many *akhbár* are commented upon in considerable detail and many others are merely allusively drawn upon. Items of Shí‘í *ḥadíth* set out or inform many aspects of the hermeneutical orientation as well as the legal-doctrinal Bábí-Bahá’í universe of discourse.

The *ḥadíth qudsí* (lit. ‘Sacred Ḥadíth’, ‘Divine Saying’)

The *ḥadíth qudsí* are an important category of extra-qur’anic revelations found in canonical *ḥadíth* collections, in early *ṣuḥuf* collections and in many Sufi writings. They are very highly regarded in both Sunní and Shí‘í Islam. Numerous compilations and commentaries upon these *ḥadíth* were made from early times right up into the Safavid period (CE 1501–1722) and beyond (Graham, 1977 App. A). Among the influential Shí‘í collections is that written in 1056/1645 by al-Ḥurr al-‘Ámilí (1104/1693) entitled *al-Jawáhir as-saniyyah fí’l-aḥádíth al-qudsiyya* (The Essences of the Splendours in the Sacred Traditions) which sets down from a wide range of Sh‘í sources over one

hundred pages of sacred traditions communicated by God between the time of Adam and that of Jesus (*al-Jawáhir*, 9–117). Most compilations of *ḥadíth qudsí* include directives and statements which God allegedly communicated to pre-Islamic figures and sometimes also to Muḥammad and the Imams. The *ḥadíth qudsí* are closely related to and are often distillations of the Isrá’íliyyát or biblical tradition. Two examples from a Sunní and a Shí‘í sources are:

I heard the Apostle of God say, relating from his Lord: “‘Those who love one another in God (*mutaḥábbun fí Alláh*) shall be upon platforms of light (*manábir min núr*) in the shadow of the [Divine] Throne on a day in which there shall be no shade except His [its] shade’” (Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad* V:239; Ibn ‘Arabí, *Mishkat*, 22. Graham, 1977:144).

… O Jesus! Commemorate me within thy Self and I shall commemorate thee in Myself. And bring Me to remembrance in the gathering of thy devotees, in the meeting of the good among the concourse of the children of Adam (*al-ádamiyyín*) (al-Ḥurr al-Ámilí, *al-Jawáhir*, 108).

The *ḥadíth qudsí* were very influential upon the Báb and BA\*. In his early *K. ar-rúḥ* (Book of the Spirit, 1261/1845?) and *K. al-Fihrist* (1261/1845) the Báb explicitly cites as a sacred utterance of God (*al-ḥadíth al-qudsí*) the famous Sufi tradition known as the *ḥadíth an-nawáfil* (*ḥadíth* of supererogatory works) (*K. an-rúḥ* 64–5). In this *ḥadíth* the servant is represented as so assiduously engaging in devotions (*an-nawá’fil*) and drawing nigh unto God that God himself loves that servant to the degree that he becomes the “ear wherewith he hears”, etc. (*Fihrist*, 343, cf. Nasr, IS 1:108–9).

With respect to BA\* and *ḥadíth qudsí* it is clear that his *Kalimát-i maknúnih* (Hidden Words) is essentially a collection of Sufi-type, pre-Bábí divine wisdom. Over 150 brief Arabic and Persian divine sayings consist of utterances largely cast in the literary form evident in many key *ḥadíth qudsí* commencing *yá ibn al-Insán* (“O son of Man”) at root a Semitic-Aramaic phrase (cf. Jesus’ ‘Son of Man’ sayings) which introduces numerous Islamic *hadíth qudsí*. Initially from around CE 1858 entitled the *ṣaḥífa yi Fáṭimiyya* (The Scroll of Faṭima) then a decade or so later coming to be entitled the ‘Hidden Words’ by BA\* himself, this compilation is basically modelled upon collections of the *ḥadíth qudsí* so cherished and much cited by Sufis. Occasionally echoing Gospel sayings the Hidden Words are introduced by BA\* as a distillation of pre-Bábí divine inspiration:

This is that which was sent down [from God, *nuzzila*) from the omnipotent realm

(*jabarút al-‘izza*) through the Tongue of Power and Might unto the prophets of the past (*‘alá an-nabiyyún min qabl*) … (HW. Ar. 32).

These words seem to refer to Islamic *ḥadíth qudsí* traditions. As far as the form and content of BA\*’s Hidden Words goes, items within the Arabic of the *kalimát-i maknúna* can be profitably compared and contrasted with *ḥadíth qudsí* found [in] many Islamic sources including the section of Majlisí’s Persian *Ḥayát al-qulúb* (The Life of Hearts) where Islamicate versions of beatitudes, woes and other sayings ascribed to Jesus are recorded (Majlisí, *Ḥayát*, 2:1160–1175).

4.
The Bible and Isrá’íliyyát Pt. 2:
*Síra/Táríkh* (historical) and *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* (Stories of the Prophets) in Islamic and Bábí-Bahá’í primary sources

4.1 The Bible and Isrá’íliyyát in *síra*/*táríkh* historical works

Historical, or pseudo-historical, material centering around biblical events and personalities gained the right of entry into Islam through the Qur’án and its interpretation … the biblical tradition occupies a special place in the history of Muslim historiography. It provides Muslim historical writing with some of its most significant elements (Rosenthal, 1962:40, 43).

From the earliest Islamic centuries folkloristic and (quasi-) historical writing informed by Isrá’íliyyát were important factors in the emergence of Islamic piety and historiography. A need was felt to place the piecemeal qur’anic salvation history in a wider, more structured historical context. The meagre *qiṣaṣ an-anbiyá’* elements in the Q. were expounded, contextualized and supplemented. For apologetic purposes the advent of the prophet Muḥammad had to be shaped on biblical lines and be seen to fulfill Abrahamic religious expectations. The conviction that Muḥammad delivered the Q. at the apex of a predestined chain of prophets had to be inspiringly set forth (Rubin, 1995).

Early Islamic historical writing was fuelled by Arab genealogical, poetic and other interests. It was also a result of the Muslim interaction and dialogue with Jewish, Zoroastrian, Christian and other converts (the *ahl adh-dhimma*, Duri, 1984; Humphreys, 1989; Khalidi, 1994). Hagiographically oriented biography writing and associated literary activities were indulged in by converts from the Abrahamic religions traditions. They contributed significantly to emergent Muslim historiography. (Sezgen, GALS, 247ff; Donner, 1998, App. 297ff).

Among the earliest, now lost, examples of Islamic history writing are a number of works detailing the lives of pre-Islamic prophet figures. In various ways they were seen as typologically anticipating and predicting the advent of Muḥammad and Islam. Attributed to Ka‘b al-Ahbár (<--1.1), for example, are an early *Book of Adam and Eve*, a *Wafát Músá* (Passing of Moses) and a *Sírat al-Iskandar* (Life of Alexander). Wahb b. Munabbih and others produced similar works (<--1.1; Donner, 1998:299–306 [= App.]) Early sagas about the Ḥimyarí kings

mixed with tales of pre-Islamic biblical and other figures including Abraham, Noah, Luqmán son of ‘Ád, Khiḍr, and Bilqís (the Queen of Sheba) are apparent in Wahb’s *K. al-mulúk wa’l-akhbár al-máḍín* (Wahb, *K. Tíján*, 1347/1928) as extant in the recension of Ibn Hishám (d. 213/828) entitled *K. al-Tíján fí mulúk Ḥimyár* (The Book of the Crowned Kings of Ḥimyár). Norris has referred to this work as a “rich mine of Arabian fable, legend and garbled chronicles” in which can be seen “the influence of Rabbinical, Syriac and Persian lore in both poetry and prose” (CHAL 1:385).

Inspired by the person and times of Muḥammad, *Síra* (Biographical) literature quickly became popular from the 2nd century AH (Sezgin I:275–302; Donner 1998:297–306). It was influenced by Judaeo-Christian motifs and pre-Islamic prophetological materials. The impact of Isrá’íliyyát traditions is evident as are Islamicate apologetic and hagiographical concerns (Rubin, 1995). Wahb b. Munabbih wrote one of the earliest, largely lost *Síra* compilations. Kister has stated that his work “contains an unusual amount of miraculous stories as attested by the fragments of the papyri” (CHAL 1:357). These early biographies drew heavily and creatively on biblical legends and motifs and registered Islamised *qiṣaṣ an-anbiyá’* traditions which eventually formed bodies of Islamic literature in their own right (-->3.2).

The well-known *sírat an-nabí* (Biography of the Prophet [Muḥammad]) of Ibn Isḥáq (d. 150/767) as redacted in the epitome of Ibn Hishám (d. 828/233?)[[99]](#footnote-99) contains many points of interest (Montgomery Watt 1962:23–34) including an attempt to show how Muḥammad was predicted in the Bible by means of a very early (pre-151/767) citation rooted in Jn. 15:23–16:11. Muḥammad is the expected prophet as “the *Munaḥḥemana* (from Syriac, “Comforter”) which in Syriac is Muḥammad … in Greek *Baraqlíṭs* (Paraclete)” (Ibn Ishaq, tr. 03–4; Griffith, 1992 [I] 138–141). Probably originally known as *al-Mubtadá’* (The Beginning) the first part of this *Síra* of Ibn Isḥáq has recently been reconstructed by Newby (1989) from citations found in aṭ-Ṭabarí and

others. It contained ‘Stories of the Prophets’ ranging from the first couple (Adam and Eve) till the supposed martyr [St.] Geoge Megalomayrtos (d. early 5th cent. CE) pictured as a prophet of destruction sent to a disbelieving people (1989:231–241).[[100]](#footnote-100)

The earliest extant *táríkh* (Annalistic History), is the work of the chronicler, genealogist and *ḥadíth* specialist Khalífah Ibn Khayyát al-‘Uṣfurí (d. 241/855). He saw *táríkh* (history) as something ever before humankind from the time of “the fall of Adam from paradise” up to his own day around the middle of the 9th cent. CE. For him the pivot of pre-Islamic (biblical) and later history was the *ḥijra* (flight) of the Prophet (CE 622) which served as the fulcrum for his annalistic *Táríkh* (al-‘Uṣufí, *Táríkh*, 23–25; Zakkár, ‘Ibn Khayyát al-‘Uṣfurí’ EI2 III:838; cf. Rosenthal, 1968:71–2). Other Muslim historians set out pre-Islamic history dealing with the creation, biblical history, prophetology, Persian history and more besides.

The early biographical compilation of Ibn Sa‘d (d. Baghdad, 230/845) entitled *K. aṭ-ṭabaqát al-kabír* (Great book of the Classes) includes a biography of the Prophet with an almost fifty page account of the pre-Islamic era (Ṭabaqát 1:5–54). Like other early *Síra* works that of Ibn Sa‘d opens with genealogical data relating to Adam then traced through Abraham, Ishmael and others from whom Muḥammad was believed to have descended. The biblically rooted genealogical notices were supplemented by those configured according to Iranian, Zoroastrian and Shí‘í expectations aspects of which lie behind later Safavid and Bábí-Bahá’í genealogical notices and charts. The Báb as the Mahdí was linked to the family of Muḥammad (via Fáṭima and the Twelver Imams) and BA\* with Zoroaster and Yezdigird III as well as Abraham’s third wife Keturah.

An important historical manual and survey of world history by Abú Muḥammad Ibn Qutayba (276/889) entitled *Kitáb al-ma‘árif* (The Book of Knowledge) “enjoyed tremendous popularity” (Rosenthal, EIr. VIII:47). Like Ibn Qurayba’s *Ta’wíl mukhtalif al-ḥadíth and ‘Uyún*

*al-akhbár* it contains accurate bible quotations from the Torah as well as the Gospels. Passages cited include verses from several chapters of Genesis (1:2–8; 9–13, 14–19, 20–23, 26–31, etc.) and many from the Gospel of Matthew (Matt. 1:17–21; 2:22–3, etc.) (Lecomte, 1958; Vajda, 1935; Lazarus-Yafeh 1992:79f; Adang 1996:30–36).

The *K. al-akhbár aṭ-ṭiwál* (Book of the Long Narratives) of Abú Ḥanífa ad-Dínawarí (d.c. 281/894) is the oldest extant (Arabic) history written from a Persian point of view. Rosenthal, at the outset of his coverage of ‘World Histories’, aptly describes this work as “a synchronized presentation of Biblical, Persian and pre-Islamic Arab history, followed by an early Islamic history …” (1968:133). Its opening section, ‘From Adam until the Islamic conquests (*al-futúḥát al-islámiyya*)’ has nine subdivisions the first three of which are entitled ‘The rulers of the earth (*mulúk al-arḍ*) from Adam until the reign of Darius’ (7–27); ‘Narratives of the Reign of Darius and Alexander’ (28–39) and ‘Narratives of the Kings of Yemen and the commissioning of Jesus’ (40–46). Brief notices are included about many pre-Islamic prophets and Persian figures including Adam, Noah, Abraham, David, Solomon, ‘Aristotle and Alexander’, ‘Gog and Magog’, Zoroaster and Jesus (Dínawarí, *al-akhbár* 7ff; Bosworth, EIr. I:715–6; Pellet, EIr. VII:417).

Two Imámí Shí‘í historians, al-Ya‘qúbí and al-Mas‘údí

The Shi‘ite historian al-Ya‘qúbí (d.c. 292/905) has recently been called the “first historian of world culture in Islam” (Khalidi, 1994:2). In presenting a “culturally and intellectually oriented tableau of pre-Islamic nations” (Humphreys, ‘Ta’ríkh’ EI2 X:272) he drew on the Bible and other non-Islamic sources not holding to any theory of the wholescale *taḥríf* (corruption) of the biblical text. The first volume of Ya‘qúbí’s two volume *Ta’ríkh* (Chronicle) deals with the pre-Islamic era devoting over seventy pages to the period from the first couple till the time of Jesus (*Ta’ríkh* 1:5–80). In addition to the Bible, Ya‘qúbí was influenced by various extra-biblical sources such as the originally Syriac (+ Arabic) apocryphal and sometimes genealogical *Me’ârath Gazzê* (Book of the Cave of Treasures, 4th cent.? CE). This to some degree

bolstered Ya‘qúbí’s Shí‘í interest in issues of *waṣiyya* (successorship).[[101]](#footnote-101)

Ya‘qúbí evidently had a considerable regard for the integrity of biblical scripture. He taught that King Zerubbabel rescued the Hebrew bible from a well into which Nebuchadnezzar had cast it and considered the NT a trustworthy source (Adang, 1996:226–7). For him the Gospels have it that after travelling to Jerusalem, Jesus communicated to his disciples a distinctly messianic, Paraclete promise:

The hour has come at which the Son of Man (*ibn al-bashar* = Jesus) must withdraw unto his Father … [then] there will come unto you the Paraclete (*al-fáraqlíṭ*) who will be with you as a prophet (*nabí*) …” (*Tá’ríkh* 1:72)

A one time student of aṭ-Ṭabarí (-->) in Baghdad, the amazingly prolific al-Mas‘údí (d. 345/956) did not wholly share his teachers’ negative views regarding pre-Islamic scripture. He was much travelled and had frequent dialogue with Jews, Zoroastrians, Christians and the Sabeans of Harran. Most probably a Shí‘í Muslim like Ya‘qúbí he authored several highly influential historical works replete with detailed accounts of pre-Islamic history and rich by Isrá’íliyyát traditions (Shboul 1979 Ch. IV). Notable in this respect are his two digests of larger works, the *Murúj al-dhahab wa ma‘adín al jawhar* (Meadows of Gold and Mines of Jewels) and the *K. at-Tanbíh wa’l-ishráf* (The Book of Indication and the General View) which are “both part of a series of seven works in which al-Mas‘údí combined history, geography, astronomy, ethnography and religion” (Adang, 1993:46; Shboul, 1979:68ff).

The above-mentioned works of al-Mas‘údí both draw heavily on biblical history and several times give an account of the fate of the Torah, a book which al-Mas‘údí claimed to have directly consulted (Murúj I:45, Praries I:32, Adang 1996:124). Shboul thought that al-Mas‘údí was familiar with several Arabic translations of the Torah and aware of the Greek, Septuagint (LXX) version as well as the existence of the targumic tradition (Shboul, 1979:288). He certainly had an impressive knowledge of Christianity though he held back from giving NT citations. As he saw the matter, neither the Q. nor the Prophet had explicitly confirmed the Gospel

narratives (Shboul, 1979:290f; Adang, 1996:44–48, 122–126; Pulcini, 1998:32–35).

The *Táríkh* of aṭ-Ṭabarí and its Persian recreation by Bal‘amí

The massive *Ta’ríkh ar-rusúl wa’l-mulúk* (The history of prophets and kings) of the famous Q. commentator aṭ-Ṭabarí (d. 310/923) (<--2.1) is universally recognised as an extremely important Arabic historical source. Drawing on numerous earlier sources it covers Israelite and Persian pre-Islamic history in considerable detail (800 + Arabic pages).[[102]](#footnote-102) Though a certain amount of biblical data informs this seminal work, Ṭabarí “ostensibly relied on the traditional Muslim material” (Rosenthal, 1962:42). In both his *Ta’ríkh* and his *Tafsír Ṭabarí* was of the opinion that Jewish leaders willfully distorted the Hebrew Bible (tr. Cooper, 1987, 403ff; Adang, 1993:2983, 107; Pilcini, 1998:29–32). His and similar negative perspectives regarding the Bible were specifically challenged in two early works of BA\*.

aṭ-Ṭabarí’s Arabic history was early freely translated into new Persian (CE c. 963) by Abú ‘Alí Muḥammad Bal‘amí (d.c. 387/997) for the Samanid ruler Manṣúr b. Núh (d. 365/976). More a transformation of the Arabic than a translation, it amplifies, reworks and sometimes ‘corrects’ Ṭabarí’s original text at times in line with Samanid legitimacy and the incorporation of Judaeo-Christian material (Meisami, 1999:23ff). The Persian Ṭabarí is best viewed as an independent literary entity (Daniel, 1990). Following the Persian preface in the introductory section, Jewish, Christian and Muslim traditions about the age of the world are registered (*Táríkh* [Per.]).

The Persian Ṭabarí expands, alters and to some extent Persianizes aspects of the Arabic legend of the *Aṣḥáb al-kahf* (Companions of the Cave). In line with Islamic tradition aṭ-Ṭabarí held that the sleepers entered and left the “cave” at the time of Jesus (aṭ-Ṭabarí, *Táríkh*, tr. Perlman, IV:156–7). The Bal‘amí version holds that this happened after the time of Dhú’l-Qarnayn (= Alexander the Great) though prior to that of Ardishír [I] b. Bábak, the founder of the Sassanian dynasty (CE 242?; see Ṭabarí, *Táríkh* (Per.) I:179–80; cf. tr. Zotenburg, 11:39–40).

The aforementioned Shí‘í historian al-Maqdisí (fl. 10th cent. CE) authored his wide-ranging *K. al-bad‘ wa’t-táríkh* (<--1.2) for a Samanid prince around 355/966. Basically a universal history it incorporates much pre-Islamic data in its twenty-six sections (in the published edition). Subjects covered include God and the creation, prophecy, Adam, the prophets (II:74–132 + III:1ff), the Persian kings and the end of the world (Morony, EIr. III:352). The *Tá’íkh-i Maqdisí* is a richly detailed book widely read in eastern Islamic countries. It includes important information about Iranian religion and history and cites copiously from Jewish, Christian and other sources (Maqdisí, *K. al-Bad‘*; Goitein, 1968:142–3; Morony, ‘al-Bad‘ wa’l-Taríkh’, EIr. IV:352).

Bypassing the Persian general history entitled *Mujmal at-tavaríkh wa’l-qiṣaṣ* (Compendium of Histories and the Prophets; written around 520/1126) which sums up historical data from many previous Persian and Arabic sources and the historical works of the jurisconsult, historian and Ḥanbalí preacher of Baghdad Abu’l-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzí (d. 597/1200) it will be important to mention the Jewish convert to Islam and physician to certain Mongol Sultans, Rashíd ad-Dín Faḍl-Alláh (d. 718/1318). He composed an extensive Arabic and Persian *Jámi‘ at-tawáríkh* (Assembling of Histories) which is a wide ranging general history of the world from “the earliest beginnings” (Storey, 1/II:72ff). Schwartzbaum refers to it as a “turning point in Islamic presentation of Biblical history and Biblical heroes”. Its author was “reared in Jewish Orthodox tradition, and nurtured upon the vast Talmudic-Midrashic-Aggadah”. His history has a detailed section dealing with the history of the “Children of Israel” (*Banú Isrá’íl*) and covering both the Biblical and post-Biblical periods. He was “the first Islamic historian who draws on the Hebrew text of the Bible, being well-versed in the Hebrew language” (Schwartzbaum 1982:42–3, fn. 98, 141).

Several important histories written during the Ilkhánid (Mongol) period (CE 1256–1335)

commence with Adam and the pre-Islamic prophets[[103]](#footnote-103) cannot be summarized here though the contribution of ‘Izz ad-Dín Ibn al-Áthír (630/1233) should be noted. This writer viewed history as the “unfolding of God’s purposes” for humankind (Richards, EIr. VII:671–2) and authored an important universal history entitled *al-Kámil fí’t-táríkh* (The Complete History) ending at 628/1231. Much indebted to Ṭabarí, Rosenthal has pointed out that the pre-Islamic portion of this “well balanced” history “deals with the creation of the world, Biblical history (which is synchronized with that of the Persians), and the stories of Christians, saints, and pre-Islamic Arabs.” (Rosenthal 1968:146).

The Syrian, Ayyubid prince, historian and geographer Ismá‘íl b. ‘Alí Abúl-Fiḍá’ (d. 732/1331) has been well-known in the west as a result of the 17th century publication and Latin translation of his Universal history, the *Mukhtasar tá’ríkh al-bashar* (An Abridgement of the History of Humankind [until 729/1329]).[[104]](#footnote-104) Mainly based on Ibn al-Áthír’s history (<--), the sections on pre-Islamic history cover the period from Adam until Muḥammad. Cole has argued on the basis of paraphrastic citations in the *L. Ḥikma*, that BA\* was familiar with this work (Cole 1979).

The rather negative attitude towards Isrá’íliyyát evident in the writings of the conservative historian and exegete Ibn Kathír (d. 774/1373) has already been noted (<--1.1). Nonetheless, his *Tafsír al-qur’án al-‘aẓím* and weighty *al-Bidáya wa’l niháya* (The Beginning and the Culmination [of History]) contain numerous examples of Isrá’íliyyát traditions.[[105]](#footnote-105)

The farsighted Muslim historian Ibn Khaldún (d. 808/1406) pioneered the philosophy and sociology of history and is well-known for his rejection of trenchant views of biblical *taḥríf*

the like of which was advocated by Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064). In his *Kitáb al-‘ibar* (Book of Admonitions) Ibn Khaldún upholds the genuineness of the Bible in the light of the implications of Q. 5:43[7] (“… they have the *Tawrát* which contains the decree of God (*ḥukm Alláh*) …”) and in view of a tradition handed down from Ibn ‘Abbás to the effect that a religious community is unable to wholly, materially corrupt their sacred book (Fischel, 1958; Rosenthal, Ibn Khaldún). For Ibn Khaldún scriptural *taḥríf* indicates the inability of religionists to understand the meaning of their sacred book. In his *Muqaddima* (Prolegomenon to his above-mentioned multi-volume work) Ibn Khaldún wrote much that indicates his polymathic learning including the following defence of the alleged *taḥríf* of the Torah

… the statement concerning the alteration (of the Torah by the Jews) is unacceptable to thorough scholars and cannot be understood in its plain meaning, since custom prevents people who have a (revealed) religion from dealing with their divine scriptures in such a manner. This was mentioned by al-Bukhárí in the *Ṣaḥíḥ* …. Custom, in the proper meaning of the word, would prevent anything of the sort from happening to other peoples … (*Muqaddima*, tr. Rosenthal 1:20–21).

According to Rosenthal the 13th century saw a “steady flow of Arabic and Persian universal histories” (Rosenthal 1968:148). Despite their sometimes considerable use of Isrá’íliyyát they cannot be mentioned here. Notable, however, among the pre-Safavid chronicles is the *Rawḍat aṣ-ṣafá fí sírat al-anbiyá’ wa’l-mulúk wa’l-khulafá’* (Garden of Purity respecting the Lives of the Prophets, the Kings and the Caliphs; 7+1 vols) of the late Tímúrid writer Muḥammad b. Khwándsháh b. Maḥmúd, Mirkhwánd (d. 903/1498).[[106]](#footnote-106) This lengthy work has a long opening section ‘On the beginning of creation, the stories of the Prophets (*qiṣaṣ-i payámbarán*), the circumstances of the Iranian kings and of the sages of old (*ḥukamáy-i píshín*)’ (ed. ‘Abbás Zaryáb, 1:15–198).[[107]](#footnote-107) It cites around forty Arabic and Persian histories and exists in numerous often confused manuscripts. Apparently lacking an autograph ms. (?)

variant texts are represented by several 19th century lithograph editions (Bombay, 1845, 1848; Tehran, 1853–1856; Lucknow, 1874; 1883) some having been translated into Turkish, Latin and other European languages.[[108]](#footnote-108)

Mírkhwánd’s grandson the Persian historian Ghiyáth ad-Dín, [commonly known as] Khwándamír (d.c. 941/1534–1535) summed up and supplemented his grandfather’s *Rawḍat aṣ-ṣafá’* in his *Khuláṣat al-akhbár* (905/1499).[[109]](#footnote-109) He also authored another more extensive, multi-volume general history covering the period from the creation until just after the death of the Safavid Sháh Ismá‘íl (d. 930/CE 1524). This latter work is entitled *Táríkh ḥabíb as-siyar fí akhbár afrád bashar* (The Beloved of Histories regarding the traditions of the most singular of mortals; 930/1524). In an independent manner it draws on sources additional to the *Rawḍat* for the pre-Islamic era and other periods.[[110]](#footnote-110) (Storey, I:101ff; Beveridge & de Bruijn, EI2 V:1020–1022; Quinn, 1996:3–5).

Numerous Safavid historical chronicles, including the partially published *Takmilat al-akhbár* of Zayn al-‘Ábidín ‘Alí Abdí Beg Shírází (d. 988/1580) and the late Safavid *Táríkh-i sulṭání* composed in 1115/1703 during the reign of Sulṭán Ḥusayn by Ḥusayn b. Murtaḍá Ḥusayn Astarabádí (d. ??), contain large amounts of pre-Islamic history and *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* materials (cf. Storey 1/1:134). More recent among histories is the Persian general history entitled *Násikh at-tawáríkh* (Supplanter of Histories, around 14 vols) of Muḥammad Táqí Káshání, Sipihr (= ‘Celestial Sphere’; d. 1297/1880). Completed in the early 1850s[[111]](#footnote-111) this extensive work contains much about pre-Islamic prophets, sages and nations, spanning (in the Tehran [Amír Kabír 1958–?] edition) almost 1,000 large and dense pages (vol. 1 has 600+

pages and vol. 2 has 338 pp.).

The *Násikh at-tawáríkh* is a very wide ranging work. There are, for example, sections on America (cf. 1:27) and ancient Chinese figures (I:475f). It claims to have drawn on a huge array of over two hundred (listed) Arabic, Persian, European and other historical sources including a good many works dealing with pre-Islamic religion, scripture and Isrá’íliyyát-*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá*’ such as the *Táríkh-i tawrát va injíl* (‘The history [historical portions] of the Torah and the Gospels’), Tabarí’s *Táríkh*, a *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* work[s] (of Tha’labí?), a ‘History of’ (*Táríkh-i*) Wahb b. Munabbih (!), the (above-mentioned) *Rawḍat as-safá’*, Majlisí’s *Ḥayát al-qulúb*, a work entitled *Kamál-i aḥadíth-i qudsiyyahy-i al-Isrá’il* (The Perfection of the sacred traditions of the family of Israel) and the book of *Dhú’l-Qarnayn* ascribed to Mírzá Faḍl Alláh, a *Taríkh-i baní Isráíl* (History of the children of Israel) as well, among numerous other miscellaneous titles such as the *Mízán al-ḥaqq* (presumably of that of Pfander) (*Násikh at-tawáríkh* [195? ed.] I:29–32).

Throughout the *Násikh* there are very precise though idiosyncratic chronological datings “after the Fall [of Adam]” (*hubúṭ-i Ádam*; loosely *anno mundi*) for hundreds of pre-Islamic figures and events. Siphir has it, for example, that Jesus was born 5, 595 years after the fall (see 11:1) while Mání son of (the Parthian prince) Qátan (sic. Pátrik; founder of the Manichean movement) is described as “among the non-Arab sages” (*áz jumlihy-i ḥukamáy-i ‘ajam*) and dated to 5804 AM (Nasikh, II:112f).[[112]](#footnote-112) Like the updated *Rawḍat aṣ-ṣafá*, the *Násikh at-tawáríkh* was very probably known to Bábí-Bahá’í leaders and writers; in part because their updated supplements contain inaccurate and critical accounts of Bábí beginnings.[[113]](#footnote-113)

In conclusion to this section it might be pointed out that neither the Báb nor BA\* were historians in any modern sense nor did they themselves write histories. As far as I am aware,

the Báb and BA\* did not explicitly quote from any of the previously mentioned histories. It appears though that they were influenced by several of them. BA\* may have known Masúdí’s *K. Tanbíḥ* (<--or a related source?) and the history of Abú al-Fiḍá’ (<--) as well perhaps as the *Násikh at-tawáríkh*. While the Báb to some extent refashioned Islamic chronology BA\* at times followed Islamicate chronologies in such works as his *Lawḥ-i ḥikmat*. The founders of the Bábí and Bahá’í religions occasionally set down episodes of past sacred history. In this they mostly drew upon *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* materials in ways that communicated lessons for prospective converts and/or devotees. Their often neo-lslamic religious communications make quite frequent references to past prophets and messengers and aspects of their troubled history.

In his *L. Qabl-i ádam* (Tablet on the pre-Adamic era -->bib.), BA\* responded to a question about the apparent non-existence of historical records of pre-Adamic prophets and kings. In reply he pointed out that such an era existed as do records relating to it though they appear undecipherable, lost or destroyed on account of changes to humankind and the earthly terrain. Diverse estimates of human history he continues, have been made. Some reckon an 8,000 year pre-history, others a 12,000 year era (= Zoroastrians), not to mention such details as are given in the (Hindu) *Kitáb-i yúka* (جوك), (“Book of the Ages” = Sanskrit *yúga*).[[114]](#footnote-114) After mentioning such details BA\* directs his questioner, ‘Abd al-Razzáq, to disregard such conflicting details and focus instead upon the sublime panorama of his revelation (*manzar al-akbar*) (BA\* IQ:77).

In this Persian *L. Qabl-i Ádam* BA\* also appears to show direct (or indirect—via al-Ya‘qúbí?) familiarity with an Isrá’íliyyát tradition relating to Abraham and the origins of the

Hebrew language (-->), perhaps as it is registered in the aforementioned K*. Tanbíḥ* of al-Mas‘údí (<-):

Henceforth he [Abraham] spoke that [language] which is called Hebrew (*‘ibrání*) because it originated at the time of the crossing (*‘ubúr*): it is derived from the word *‘Ibr* … (*K. Tanbíḥ*, 1965:79, tr. Adang 1996:126 cf. Gen. 14:13).

In his the ‘Tablet about the Pre-Islamic Era’[[115]](#footnote-115) BA\* reflects this tradition when he states that Abraham spoke Hebrew (Ar. *‘Ibrání*) at the (Per.) *ḥin-i ‘ubúr az nahr-i urdún*, “the very moment of the crossing of (*‘ubúr az*) the river Jordan” (IQ:75; cf. GWB\* 115/173). He thus derives *‘Ibrání* (Hebrew) from *‘ubúr* (“crossing”). Though there are minor differences in Mas‘údí’s and BA\*’s statements, it seems clear that BA\* is restating this popular Jewish-Islamic etymology. It is also found, for example, in the *Táríkh aṭ-Ṭabarí* (<--) in detailing aspects of the life of Abraham. The following version of this etymological tradition is related from Ibn ‘Abbás:

When Abraham fled from Kúthá and came out of the fire, his language was Syriac, but when he crossed the Euphrates from Ḥarrán, God changed his language and it was called Hebrew (*‘lbrání*) because he had crossed (*‘abara*) the Euphrates. Nimrod sent men to look for him, telling them, “If you find anyone who speaks Syriac, do not leave him, but bring him to me. “They met Abraham, but left him because he spoke Hebrew and they did not understand his language. (aṭ-Ṭabarí, *Táríkh*:347, tr. Brinner, History II:128).

This popular etymology registered by al-Mas‘údí, aṭ-Ṭabarí, BA\* and others, has no explicit basis in either the Hebrew Bible or the Q. In Gen. 14:13, however, Abraham is referred to as “Abram the Hebrew”. An ancient, popular etymological understanding of עבְוִי (‘ivrí, “Hebrew”) here relates the word “Hebrew” to the verbal root ע-ב-ו (‘-b-r = ‘to pass, cross’ = Ar. cognate ر-ب-ع, *‘abara* = ‘to cross, traverse’) or to the preposition עבְוִ (“across”, “beyond”). This is evident in the Gk (LXX., 3rd cent.? BCE) rendering of the Hebrew (MT) where

“Abram the עִבְוִי (ibrí = “Hebrew)” is interpretively rendered Αβραμ τῷ περάτῃ, “Abram, the perátē, one from across …/the region beyond/the wanderer”. What exactly is meant by the “across” or the region beyond is not clear. It could indicate beyond the Jordan or the Euphrates (cf. Gen. 50:10; Num. 21:13, Josh. 24:2).

Almost a century ago the above etymology was registered in the (1st edition) of the *Jewish Encyclopaedia* (1907; JE VI:304–5). Today, however, the etymology of עִבְוִי (*‘ibrí*) has become something very complex, a linguistic puzzle having little or nothing to do with words indicating “to cross”. Abraham’s family “beyond the river” were not in fact Hebrew but Aramean (Gen. 25:10). “Hebrew”, עבְוִי (*‘ivrí*) remains of unknown, uncertain derivation though it is often thought to indicate ethnicity or be indicative of a period of marginalised “slavery” (cf. Exod. 21:2) as may be hinted at by the (pre-biblical, 2nd mill. BCE) cuneiform word *Hab*/*piru*/ *Habiru* (= ‘Apiru).

To conclude this section with a brief note relating to concrete history. It was in the late 1880s that BA\* commissioned his amanuensis Mírzá Áqá Ján, Khádim-Alláh (d. 1901) and subsequently Nabíl Zarandí (d. 1892) to write detailed Bábí-Bahá’í histories. Though BA\* himself never set out to accomplish this historical task, his numerous writings do contain interpretations of historically oriented *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* episodes (-->4.2) and hagiographically oriented historical materials. Additionally, there are numerous historically informed Arabic and Persian *Zíyárat-náma* (“Visiting tablets”), commemorative texts largely written for significant believers of the early years of the Bábí-Bahá’í era. These very extensive writings remain unassembled and largely unstudied.

It was ‘Abd al-Bahá’ and his successor Shoghi Effendi who consciously wrote theologically informed sacred history as well as numerous historically and hagiographically oriented texts and epistles. The best known examples are the originally anonymous *Maqálay-i shakhsí sayyáh* (*Traveller’s Narrative*, 1st ed. Bombay, 1875) of AB\*, and the centennial surveys of Bábí-Bahá’í history, the Persian *Lawḥ-i qarn* (Centennial Tablet) and English *God*

*Passes By* of SE\* (1st ed. CE 1944).

4.2 The Bible and Isrá’íliyyát in Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’ and in Islamic and Bábí-Bahá’í primary sources

Pre-Islamic accounts of the lives of prophet figures exist in the biblical books of Job and Jonah as well as in Ben Sirah (44–49 [50]) and the Pseudo-Pauline book of Hebrews (ch. 11:1ff) as well as in numerous extra-biblical sources. Examples are found within works representative of the Jewish/Judaeo-Christian Elijah and Daniel cycles as well as in the originally Jewish (1st. cent BCE/CE ?) (Pseudo-Epiphanius =) *Vitae Prophetarum* which contains core sketches of 23 Israelite prophets (OTP 2:385ff; Charlesworth, 1981:175f). Many pseudepigraphical works also present legendary accounts of the lives of primordial, patriarchal and later figures including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaiah and Daniel (Charlesworth Bib.; OTP, 2 vols). Legends and motifs contained in these sources contributed to the qur’anic and post-qur’anic *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* compilations (Wasserstrom, in Reeves ed. 1994, 87–114).

Qur’anic prophetology and *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’*

It would be difficult to imagine the Qur’án with all references to the Bible and biblical characters and events removed …. The biblical stories in the Qur’án are not as in the Bible simply, neither those of the Torah nor those from the Gospel. Both categories reflect later developments by Jews and Christians alike (Bowman, 1972:111).

*Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* (Stories of the prophets) legends are centrally important crystallizations of qur’anic salvation history. As Khalidí puts it, “the historical sections [of the Q.] … are largely devoted to the histories of the prophets, Biblical and non-biblical” (1994:68). Aspects of the lives of the traditional ‘twenty-eight’ prophets and others besides are registered in the Q. While one Meccan súra is named *al-anbiyá’* (the Prophets, Q. 21, cf. Q. 78 *an-nabá’*, ‘The Announcement’) nine other suras are named after specific prophets. Q. súra titles often derive from key terms associated with *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* episodes e.g. *baqara*, Cow (= Q. 2); *naml*, Ant (= Q. 27); *ṭúr* (=Mount [Sinai] Q. 52). The lengthy súra of Joseph is pictured as the

*aḥsan al-qaṣaṣ* (Q. 12:3a) “the most marvellous of narratives”. Such stories are partly typologically indicative of the veracity of the lifestyle and mission of Muḥammad. They foreshadow aspects of Islamic piety. Islamic sources often picture [or] see pre-Islamic prophets as proto-Muslims proclaiming Islamicate truths. According to a few NT texts the mighty deeds and words of Moses foreshadowed the mission of Jesus (Jn. 5:46, etc.). In similar fashion the Q. represents Moses and other prophets as major anti-types of Muḥammad. Object lessons are enshrined in qur’anic *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* stories. They tend to point to that piety which results in faith and good works.

Post-qur’anic *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá*’ works

*Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’*[[116]](#footnote-116) gradually came to indicate a literary genre (<--1.1) inclusive of materials and texts incorporating biblical citations and Isrá’íliyyát traditions. *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* works were to some extent compilations of materials utilized in Islamic moralistic preaching ultimately expressed in various of the Islamic languages, including Arabic, Persian and Turkish. They became important repositories of prophetological legend and myth. They placed prophets and others in a salvation, meta-historical context. Events surrounding biblical and qur’anic prophet figures were interpreted and contextualized. Scriptural lacunae were variously filled. Linguistic, geographical and other obscurities were piously clarified. Moral object lessons were underlined and miraculous deeds glorified to the possibly greater faith of the believers. Difficult contradictions were smoothed away in *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* works. So too the faults and limitations of God’s chosen ones. Figures of little or no importance in the Bible or the Q. were sometimes given a key role in Islamic salvation history. Numerous prophets unmentioned in the Q. are given detailed coverage in *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* literatures; including, for example, Balaam b. Beor, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Jeremiah, the *Aṣḥab al-Káf* (Companions of the Cave) and St. George.

It was pre-eminently Yemenite Jewish converts to Islam of the Umayyad and Abbasid periods who sifted and arranged epics, cycles and legendry chronicles (<--1.1). Their work became foundational for later Muslim storytellers, geographers, historians and others. Pre-Islamic Arabian lore, legend, and epic tales were merged with Jewish-Rabbinical, Christian-Syrian, Zoroastrian-Persian and other legendary streams of tradition (Norris, CHAL. ch. 19). This often in illustration and clarification of qur’anic rooted materials such as mentions of Bilqís, the traditional “Queen of Sheba” (1 Kings 10:1–13; II Chron. 9:1–12; Q. 27:15–44), the post-deluge King Nimrod (Gen. 10:8; Ar. Namrúd), the non-biblical sage Luqmán and the immortal ‘Green One’ al-Khaḍir (<--1f). Important in this respect is Wahb b. Munabbih’s aforementioned (<--1.2) record of the Ḥimyárí kings, Bilqís the Queen of Sheba and others in Ibn Ḥishám’s recension of his *Kitáb at-Tiján fí mulúk Ḥimyar* (‘The Book of the Crowned Kings of Ḥimyar’ [Markez al-Darását: Ṣan‘a’, 1347/1928]).

As early as the 2nd century AH Egypt had several historians who utilized and incorporated all manner of biblical and post-biblical materials into their works (Donner, 1998:224–5). Some idea of this can be gleaned from the text and citations incorporated into the *Futúḥ Miṣr* (Conquest of Egypt, ed. Torrey, 1922) of Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam (d. 257/871). This lengthy work incorporates legendary and biblically informed narratives about the association of prophet figures with Egypt, including Abraham’s entrance therein and Joseph’s association therewith (*Futúḥ Miṣr*, 10–19).

Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889) in his *K. al-ma‘árif* considered *Mubtada al-khalq wa-qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* (The Beginning of Creation and the Stories of the Prophets) literature “the first branch (*fann*) of the branches of knowledge” (cited Pauliny, 1999 [15]:313). Perhaps the earliest Islamicate example of the *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* literary genre is the 2nd cent. AH only fragmentarily extant *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá* work ascribed to Wahb b. Munabbih (<--1.1; Huart, 1904; Khoury, 1972; Donner 1998:301). Great quantities of early *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* materials exist in a wide range of early exegetical (*tafsír*), historical and other Islamic writings (<--1.1; Nagel 1967:10–25). Early *qiṣaṣ* traditions formed an integral part of emergent *tafsír*, *ḥadíth*, *síra-taríkh* and other bodies

of Islamic literature (<--2.1ff).

Abú Rifá‘a ‘Umára b. Wathímá[[117]](#footnote-117)

An important early compilation of the tales of pre-Islamic prophets is the (largely extant) *Kitáb al-bad‘ al-khalq wa qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* of the early historian ‘Umára b. Wathímá b. Músá al-Fárisí al-Fasawí (d. 289/902) (GALSup. 1:217; Khoury, 1978). Aside from creation legends and traditions this work contains instructive and entertaining versions of stories of the prophets. Sometimes unique details are given such as the supernatural power of Aaron’s garment (Schwarzbaum 1981:62). God is said to have revealed the following address to Jesus son of Mary:

O Son of the Virgin (*al-‘adhrá’*), the Virgin Mary (*al-batúl*)! I brought you forth and I begot you [through] your mother. So take hold of the Book! with power and expound it for the people in Syriac (*al-suryaniyya*).

Having related this Wahb b. Munabbih explained that, Syriac is the first of the languages spoken by humanity. The people [on] the Day of Resurrection (*yawn al-qiyáma*) shall be taken to account through it. But when they enter Paradise (*al-jannat*) they shall converse in Arabic … (Khoury 1978 [Arabic] 130).

The *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* of al-Kisá’í

The full identity and exact dating of the al-Kisá’í (d. 3rd-5th/9th–12th cent.? CE) who authored an important *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* work is uncertain.[[118]](#footnote-118) Thackston reckoned that it “must have been written not long before 1200” (1978:xix; xxxi n. 29). More recently Brinner (1998) has left the matter open (EAL 2:453).

Commencing with a notice about the primordial Tablet (*lawḥ*) and the Pen (*qalam*), the creation of the primordial “Water” upon which the divine Throne rests as well as an account of the creation of the earth and heaven, the *Qiṣaṣ* of Kisá’í contains much prophetological material that is of interest. The stories of Joseph and Job, for example, are narrated at length

as is that of the Queen of Sheba and of Jesus son of Mary. Included is an account of the child Jesus’ first day at school when he explains the significance of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This story of the wise child Jesus is widely replicated in variant Islamicate forms and is partly rooted in a Christian apocryphal tale of Jesus and his teacher Zacchaeus (cf. Lk. 19:12; the 3rd -->6th cent.? CE. *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, Ch. 6). An Islamicized form of it was applied to the all-knowing Shí‘í Imám al-Báqir and to an episode in the childhood of the Báb (Lambden, [1983] 1987).

The *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* of ath-Tha‘labí

The Qur’án commentator and historian Abú Isḥáq Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Nísábúrí, ash-Sháfi‘í, widely known as ath-Tha‘labí (d. 427/1036), wrote a massive, still unpublished *Tafsír* work very rich in Isrá’íliyyát and related *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* traditions. He may have written his more influential *Ará’is al-majális qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* (The Brides of the Sessions, Tales of the Prophets) to serve the needs of the early *quṣṣaṣ*, the Muslim preachers. Partly chronologically organized after the biblical scheme, it may have emerged from the mystically oriented circle surrounding Junayd of Baghdad (d. 297/910) (Thackston 1978:xvi; Nagel 1961:80–102). This *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* work has been taken to indicate that by the 5th/11th century the literary genre *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* had “reached maturity, both in content and in style” in the Arab speaking Islamic world (Milstein, et. al. 1999:8). More so than the popularist work of al-Kisá’í, ath-Tha‘labí’s *Qiṣaṣ* “utilizes the techniques of traditional Muslim scholarship” (Brinner, EAL 2:766).

Many prophet figures, worthies and demoniac entities are commented upon by ath-Tha‘labí. In addition to the usual twenty-eight prophets, for example, he includes sections dealing with the biblical figures Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel and has a ten page section on Jirjís (St. George). In the *Ará’is* Tha‘labí not only records the recently focussed upon story of Bulúqiyyá ascribed to ‘Abd Alláh ibn Salám, (<--1.2; Dalley 1994 239–269; Wasserstrom 1995:178–80) and the legend of Khiḍr but records an interesting tradition about a receptacle containing portraits of a succession of pre-islamic prophets from Adam until Muḥammad. Referred to as the *ṣandúk ash-shaháda* (Chest of Witnessing) it centres upon Adam as the first

calligrapher, Daniel as the originator of portraiture and portrays Alexander the Great as an artist. This tradition was later registered and developed in diverse ways including, for example, in the *Rawḍat as-safá* of Mírkhwánd (<--3.1; Roxburgh, 2001:183ff).

Tha‘labí’s *Ará’is* contains much that is supplementary to ‘tales of the prophets’. The beginning of creation as well as the eschatological era of the Mahdí are both touched upon. In the latter connection Tha‘labí includes a brief section entitled ‘The descent of Jesus from heaven a second time … at the end of the age’. Towards the end of this work Tha‘labí mentions Mary Magdalene, an “Israelite from one of the villages of Antioch”, a pious but unceasing menstruate cured by God through Jesus. A week after his ascension Jesus descended from heaven and Mary Magdalene (*maryam al-majdalániyya*) had a luminous experience of him upon a mountain. After this she summoned the disciples (*ḥawáriyún*) to evangelize the world (Qiṣaṣ, 401–2). It may have been the influence of this passage which directly or indirectly induced BA\* to beam with joy at the mention of Mary Magdalene and AB\* to frequently delight in picturing her as the first person to voice post-resurrection Christianity (*Diary*, Juliet Thompson, cited WO (Fall, 1971), 65, TAB 2:467; 3:601 SWAB:105, 123, etc.).

The two *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* works of Kisá’í and Tha‘labí were widely copied and read for entertainment purposes. Many others wrote similar works including, for example, the early *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* work ascribed to Abú ‘Abd-Alláh b. Muṭarrif al-Kinání and another by Ṭárafí of Cordoba (d. 453/1062) (Nagel, 1961:103–119; Thackston, 1978; xvi + xxxi fn. 22).

Shi‘ite *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* works

Only a few of the major Arabic Shi‘ite *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* works can be mentioned here before a few examples of those written in Persian. In volume 17 of the *Dharí‘á*, fifteen or so Arabic and Persian *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* texts are listed (*Dharí‘á*, XVII esp. Nos 560–576). There are of course very many other Shí‘í works which include stories of prophets and related hagiographical legends. Shaykh ‘Alí (a son of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsá’í, -->5.1), for example, wrote a treatise entitled *Risála fí qiṣṣat Músá wa’l-Khiḍr* (*Dharí‘á* XVII, No. 531, 98). As will be seen, his erudite father often responded to questions on *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* and related subjects.

Quṭb ad-Dín al-Ráwandí

The Shi‘ite legist Abú al-Ḥusayn Quṭb ad-Dín Sa‘íd b. Hibat-Alláh ar-Ráwandí (d. Qumm 573/1177) wrote a [K.] *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’ al-Ráwandiyya* (GALS I:624; *Dharí‘a* 17 No. 574, 105; Pampas, 1970:176; Kohlberg 1992:166).[[119]](#footnote-119) Like other Shí‘í *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* works it contains details of Israelite prophets and associated matters in treating of the era between Adam and Muḥammad. Following a section about ‘The prophethood of Jeremiah (*Irmiyá’*) and Daniel (*Dányál*)’ there are sections about various celestial signs, a twelve month solar eclipse (*khusúf ash-shams*) and a year long lunar eclipse (*khusúf al-qamar*) (Ráwandí, *Qiṣaṣ* 222f). There then follows a section about (St.) George (*Jirjís*), Ezra (*‘Uzayr*), Ezekiel (*Ḥizqíl*) and Elias (*Iliyá*) (ibid., 238ff) supplemented by another about ‘Isaiah (*sha‘ayá*), the ‘Companions of the Trench (*aṣḥab al-ukhúd*) (Q. 89:4), Elijah (*Ilyús*), and Elisha (*Ilyasa’*) as well, for example, as legends relating to Jonah (*Yúnus*) and the Companions of the Cave and their dog’ (*aṣáb al-kahf wa’l-raqím*) (ibid., 238–244).

A section in the Ráwandí *Qiṣaṣ* ‘On the proofs of the prophethood of Muḥammad, both miraculous and otherwise’ includes Islamicate prophecies rooted in pre-Islamic holy books (*Qiṣaṣ*, 271–315). Here, for example, it is noted that in his *Kamál ad-Dín* Ibn Bábúya records that the *injíl* contains the words “I, verily am God, no God is there except Me, the Eternal, the Everlasting” (cf. Jn. 1:1–2?) which is somehow unceasingly confirmatory of the *an-nabí al-ummí*, the foreign or unlettered prophet Muḥammad—whose nature is spelled out in highly majestic terms in this alleged NT prophecy. Jesus is also said to have asked God, ‘Oh! my Lord. What is *ṭubá*?’ He is told that it is a celestial Tree in paradise planted by God which provides shade for the righteous (*al-akhyár*). Its foundation in [the Paradise of] ar-Riḍwán and its water derived from the [celestial pool of nectar named] at-Tasním (cf. Q. 83:27f). Jesus is also told that the *an-nabí al-ummi*, Muḥammad and his community, are to be the first of those to partake of these paradisiarchal wonders (Ráwandí, *Qiṣaṣ*, 282–3).

Ni‘mat Alláh Jazá’irí

Majlisí’s pupil Ni‘mat-Alláh ibn ‘Abd Alláh Jazá’irí (d. 1113–1114/1701) authored *an-Núr al-mubín fí qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’ wa’l-mursilín* (The Perspicuous Light respecting Stories of the Prophets and Messengers) as well as an introduction to a Shi‘ite recension of the *Malḥamat Dániyál* also known to Majlisí (Dharí‘a 17 No. 576, 105; Bihar2 90:72) and Ibn Ṭáwús (Kohlberg, 1992:143; cf. Fodor 1971). In his lengthy *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* a wide range of Shí‘í sources and traditions are drawn upon. The work opens with a consideration of aspects of prophethood including the number of *nabí*/*rasúl*, which of them brought a new *sharí‘a* and were among the *ulú al-‘azm*. The number of revealed sacred books is reported as 124. Those in possession of portions of the multi-lettered *al-ism al-a‘ẓam* (the Mightiest Name of God) are also named and listed (-->7.1). An exposition of the *‘Iṣmat al-anbiyá’* (the immaculacy of the prophets) is followed by a 500 or so page synopsis of the circumstances of the major pre-Islamic prophets.

Jazá’irí’s *Qiṣaṣ* work includes an account of the creation and primordial events and has many interesting sections including material on Balaam b. Beor (Bal‘am ibn Bá‘úrá’), “the progeny of Lot”, details regarding another Ismá‘íl, what was uttered by the *an-náqús* (The clapperboard, “bell”), and an account of the ascension of Jesus to heaven.

Persian *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* works

From the time of the highly *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* oriented 10th cent. CE reworkings of the Ṭabarí *tafsír* and *táríkh* (<--2.1; 3.1), the eastern, Persianate Islamic lands showed a marked interest in *qíṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* traditions. Persian writers expanded, Persianized and paraphrased numerous aspects of the stories of the prophets. They introduced non-Abrahamic historical and prophetological materials such as traditions relating to Zoroaster. The scheme of pre-Islamic world history was broadened. This through three major Persian *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* works those of [1] Ibn Khalaf Naysábúrí, [2] Muḥammad Juwayrí and [3] Muḥammad ad-Daydúzamí (-->). These works are all closely related to the Arabic historical tradition of Ṭabarí and the above-mentioned *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* traditions of al-Kisá’í and ath-Tha‘labí. These three are all

closely related Persian *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* texts. In the later ms. tradition they show some overlapping and conflation (Milstein et. al. 1999:11).

Ibn Khalaf of Naysábúrí [Níshápúrí]

One of the oldest Persian works detailing the prophetic tales is that of Ibráhím Ibn Khalaf of Naysábúrí [Níshápúrí] (5th cent./11th cent.; ed. Yaghmá’í, 1961; Storey I/1 no. 197, 159–60; Milstein et. al. 1999:10–11). Interesting, sometimes unique details about prophet figures are found within this work. Moses and Khiḍr seem to be identified with *Yasa‘* (Elisha) and *Ilyás* (Elias). Both are pictured as immortals who had quaffed the water of eternal life (*áb-i zindagí* [“water of life”]). It is stated that they will remain engaged in their supervisionary, angelic tasks over land and sea until the Day of Resurrection (*Qiṣaṣ*, 338). The section of this work giving account of Mary and Jesus’ birth, life and ascension is quite lengthy (Naysábúrí, *Qiṣaṣ,* 364–389). Chronological details are occasionally given. It is related that some hold that when Jesus was one month old Mary took him to the land of Egypt (cf. Matt. 2:131) where he stayed for three years (ibid., 3669–70). When Jesus was considerably older Mary took him to an instructor (*mu‘allmí*) who came to ask the child Jesus to say *abjad*. This he largely explained as follows, the (letter) “A” (*alif*) signifies His (God’s) *Álá’* (= the Divine Blessings), the “B” His *Baqá* (“Eternity”) and the “J” His *Jalál* (“Grandeur”) (ibid., 371; the letter “D” is not explained). The teacher is astonished. This account stands among the important Islamicate versions of the story of Jesus’ first day at school existing in several languages (Arabic, Persian, etc.). Such stories have been influential in filling out hagiographical accounts of the early schooling of all-knowing, divinely inspired children including certain twelver Imams and the Báb himself (Lambden, [1983] 1987).

Muhammad Juwayrí [= Ḥuwayzí]

Possibly even earlier than the aforementioned work is the Persian *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’ wa siyar al-mulúk* of Muḥammad Juwayrí [= Ḥuwayzí?] (10th cent.? CE) which may have been reworked (?) by the Sufi, Abú Muḥammad Jurayrí. It contains some archaic elements such as the name Ijnúḥ rather than Idrís for Enoch though it is most likely later than the alleged 352/963 (*Dharí‘a* 17,

No. 576, 105; Thackston, 1978:xxxi; Milstein et. al. 1999:12–13). It was lithographed at least four times in 19th century Iran and India (Bombay) though after the lifetime of the Báb (d. 1850 CE).[[120]](#footnote-120)

Erroneously considered a translation of the Arabic *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* of al-Kisá’í by Storey, Thackston and others (1978:xix, xxxiii n. 30), a probably 7th/13th cent. *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* work, was composed in Persian by the little known Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan ad-Daydúzamí. In at least one ms. this *qiṣaṣ* goes under the title, *Nafá’is al-‘ará’is wa qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* (Gems of the Brides and Stories of the Prophets; Milstein 1999:12–13). According to Milstein this author stated that he “wrote a composition in the Persian language on the creation and the basic tenets of Muslim theology that would serve as a tool against the [Shí‘í?] heresy” (idem, 13). Here again lengthy sometimes novel chapters are devoted to the various prophets.[[121]](#footnote-121)

‘Abd-Alláh al-Ḥusayní

Among the early Qajar Shí‘í *qiṣaṣ* works is that of ‘Abd Alláh b. Muḥammad Riḍá’ [ash-Shubbar] al-Ḥusayní (d.c. 1243/1826) entitled *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’ ‘alá ra’y al-Imámiyya* (Dharí‘a 17, No. 566, 103; GALS II:580).[[122]](#footnote-122) This very large work on Shí‘í biblical legends is for the most part made up of traditions of the twelver Imams. The author derives much of his material from Majlisí’s *Biḥár al-anwár* (<--2.2) (Nagel, 1967:119–121). It was studied by Walther Aichele in a pioneering 1915 article about biblical legends in this work of al-Ḥusayní (-->bib).

Numerous *tafsír*, *ḥadíth*, history and other Islamic literatures contain *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* legends and motifs in various languages including Persian, Arabic, Turkish. They add very

significantly to the wealth of Islamic *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* sources.[[123]](#footnote-123) This is partially illustrated in the previous sections (2.1–3). Arabic and Persianate Ṣúfí influenced poetry is especially rich in this respect. Numerous *qiṣaṣ* and prophetological elements are contained within the poetry of Fárid ad-Dín ‘Aṭṭár (d. 618/1221), Ibn al-Fárid of Cairo (d. 632/1235), Jalál ad-Dín Rúmí (d. 672/1273; Renard, 1994), ‘Abd al-Raḥmán Jámí (d. 898/1492) and others some of whom have been cited or alluded to by BA\* (-->).

An example of a work rich in Shi‘ite *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* traditions is Majlisí’s massive Persian *Ḥayát al-qulúb* (The Life of Hearts). Accounts of the prophets from Adam to Muḥammad fill well in excess of one thousand pages (vols 1 & 2 of 5 vols -->bib). Here the influence of Isrá’íliyyát/*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* traditions is widespread. One can read on the authority of the twelver Imám Riḍá’, for example, that Noah, hopeful of protection and salvation when in the Ark, was moved (on God’s advice) to utter 1,000 repetitions of the *shahada*, (Ar. *lá iláha ilá Alláh* = there is no God but God). This he did in Syriac, loosely transliterated in Majlisí as هلوليا ا[\*]ا[\*] يامريا اتقن (= [?] Hallelujah × 1,000 [?], O Lord (*maryá*), Save!?).[[124]](#footnote-124) Noah ultimately wrote a version of the Arabic *shahada* on his finger for memorization purposes (Majlisí, Ḥayat, 1:246). Later in the *Ḥayát al-qulúb* there is a lengthy Persianized, Islamified translation of the beatitudes and various other woes and sayings of Jesus (Ḥayát, 2:1160–1175). As noted these sayings are sometimes reminiscent of the Persian *Hidden Words* of BA\* (2.2f).

In concluding this overview of Islamic ‘stories of the prophets’ it should be noted that they continue to be written in many parts of the Muslim world. According to Thackston Turkish *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* works did not exist “before the fourteenth century either in Central Asia or in Anatolia” (1978:xxxii). Important in this respect though is the central Asian, East Turkish *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá*’ of ar-Rabghúzí (710/1310), a rewritten compendium of earlier *qiṣaṣ* works including that of Tha‘labí (<--). It covers the period from the creation to the martyrdom of Ḥusayn b. ‘Alí

in Karbala (61/CE 680),[[125]](#footnote-125) from the creation of an Adam who was cognisant of all the names (Q. 2:31f) in all languages including “Arabic, Persian and Turkish” until the time of Muḥammad and beyond (ar-Rabghúzí, 2:14f). The early section of this *Qiṣaṣ* relating to Adam and other early figures is, like ad-Damírí’s *Ḥayat al-Ḥayawán* (The Life of the Animals), rich in animal lore (Somogyi, 1937:263ff). It has also been observed that nearly one fifth of al-Rabghúzí *Qiṣaṣ* is devoted to Joseph and his relationship to Zulaykha, its latter part focussing upon the relationship between Muḥammad and Khadija (Dankoff, 1997:118).

*Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* materials in Bábí-Bahá’í sources

While, as far as I am aware, neither the Báb nor BA\* name or explicitly cite Islamic *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* works it is obvious that they were much influenced by prophetological stories and motifs contained within these sources and within such closely related bodies of literature as Persianate Sufi poetry. Only a few examples of *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* influences upon them can be detailed here.

In the Persian *Dalá’il-i sab‘ih* of the Báb there is an apologetic defence of his being one imprisoned yet still the awaited messianic Qá’im. The Báb finds it necessarily to cite prophetological and associated precedents for this. He thus refers to Joseph among the *nabiyyín* [or *nabíyín*] (prophets) as one imprisoned (*masjún*) (in Egypt) and to the circumstance of the imprisoned seventh twelver Imám, Músá b. Ja‘far (aṣ-Ṣádiq) (d. 183/799) among the *waṣiyyín* (legatees). According to the Shí‘a the latter was arrested, imprisoned and poisoned by the Abbasids. In this connection a second pair of exemplars is also named by the Báb from among the *nabiyyún* and the *waṣiyyún*. They are the ultra pious prophet Zakariyyá (father of Yaḥyá, John the Baptist) who in Shí‘í and other *qiṣaṣ* works is pictured as a martyr prophet. He is said to have met a very grizzly end by being sliced up inside a tree.[[126]](#footnote-126) Then also the Sayyid ash-

Shuhadá’ (Prince of Martyrs), Imám Ḥusayn who suffered a tragic martyrdom near Karbala in 61/680 (P.Dalá’il:16–17).

In P.Bayan 7:15 (p. 262) obscure reference is made to a *khayyáṭ* (tailor) in an early religious theophany (*ẓuhúr*). This could be a reference to the first man, Adam or more likely to Idrís (Enoch). The Báb states that with every “theophanic era” (*ẓuhúr*) all previous theophanies (*ẓuhúrát*) are evident. In his own era Adam/Enoch the *khayyáṭ* was marvellously apparent (*jawhar mí-gardad*). The motif of Adam having been a tailor (*khayyáṭí*), could reflect the Muslim appropriation of Rabbinic traditions surrounding Gen. (2:25), 3:7 and 3:21 (Lambden, 1992; Ricks, 2000). Informed by these verses and related Rabbinic exegetical traditions aṭ-Ṭabarí states in his *Táríkh*, that it was with the wool of a slaughtered lamb that, like a good Muslim, Adam “made a coat for himself, and a shift and veil for Eve” (Táríkh, 123/ tr. Rosenthal, 294).

A tradition originating with Ibn ‘Abbás as cited in the *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* of Kisá’í details the trades or worldly occupations of nineteen prophets who lived between the times of Adam and Jesus. Here it is stated here that “Adam was a cultivator, Enoch [Idrís] a tailor (*khayyáṭ*) and Noah a carpenter” (Kisá’í, II: 61/ tr. Thackston, 67). The identification of Idrís (= Ikhnúkh = Enoch) with the work of tailoring is common in Islamic *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* works. Tha‘labí refers to Idrís as “the first to write with the pen and the first among such as tailor garments (*kháṭṭ ath-thiyáb*) and sew with the needle (*labas al-mukhyaṭ*) (Qiṣaṣ, 49). The wide-ranging didactic work *Laṭá’if al-ma‘árif* (The Subtleties of Knowledge) of Abú Manṣúr ath-Tha‘labí (d. 429/1038) contains some interesting passages about the pre-Islamic originators of things. Of Idrís (Enoch) it is stated, “… He was the first to use writing and to sew garments, whereas previously people had only skins and hides [cf. Gen. 3:21] (Bosworth, 1968:39).

The section on Idrís in the *Núr al-mubín* of the Shí‘í pupil of Majlisí al-Jazá’irí (<--) repeats with subtle changes parts of ath-Tha‘labí’s account of Idrís. He also records the tradition that Idrís-Enoch “was first among such as tailor garments (*kháṭ ath-thiyáb*)” specifically adding that he was a *khayyáṭ* (tailor) (al-Jazá’irí, *Qiṣaṣ* 71). The Persian *Qiṣaṣ* work ascribed to

Juwayrí (<--) also refers to Enoch as the first person to “sew the garment” (*jámihy-i dúkht*; Qiṣaṣ, 47).

In a number of illustrated Persian *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* texts including a ms. of the Juwayrí Qiṣaṣ dated CE 1572, Enoch is pictured as one associated with the craft of tailoring (Milstein et. al., 1999:204). Similarly, in an illustrated Istanbul located ms. of the *Qiṣaṣ* of Tha‘labí, Idrís-Enoch is pictured as “surrounded by angels” and “sewing a robe” (ibid., 213). That Adam more likely Idrís-Enoch were in some sense tailors may have been a tradition repeated by Jewish and/or Muslim tailors in the bazaars and Vakíl Mosque of Shíráz and hence known to the Báb from his early years.

Like many Persianate poets including Jalál ad-Dín Rúmí (d. 672/1273), BA\* very frequently, in several major works and hundreds of prose and poetical *alwáḥ* drew religio-ethical lessons from stories and motifs rooted in the *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* traditions. This for the edification of his predominantly Muslim and Bábí contemporaries. This is illustrated in several of BA\*’s works of the later Iraq period; most notably his *Súrat an-nuṣḥ* (Sura of the Counsel; c. 1859?), *K. Íqán* c. 1862), and *L. Ayyúb* (Tablet of Job -->). In such works BA\* succinctly details a succession of *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* stories illustrating how past prophets were rejected or badly treated by their contemporaries. His purpose is primarily to enable the rejection of the Báb to be understood and to pave the way for belief in his own theophanic message.

Job and his (unnamed) wife are greatly celebrated in the opening pages of the twenty-five page Arabic epistle of BA\* variously entitled the *L. Ayyúb* (Tablet of Job) and *Súrat aṣ-Ṣabr* (Surah of Patience, March 1863; Ar. text, Ayyámí: 282–313). Therein are registered Islamicate forms of originally Jewish-Hellenistic Job materials found, for example, in the *Testament of Job* (1st. cent. BCE/CE ?; Kohler, 1897; OTP 1:829–868). Job, though not the biblical book, also figures in a few other *alwáḥ* of BA\* (e.g. L. Sarráj, MA 7:65). AB\* occasionally interpreted verses of the biblical book of Job (SWAB: 171–2 on Job 19:25–27) and gave Q. 38:41 an allegorical interpretation. The “spring” (*mughtasal*) in this latter verse is interpreted as the “spring of divine prophethood” (*chashmihy-i nubuwwat-i iláhí*). On entering

it Job was cured of both spiritual infirmities (*amraḍ-i rúḥaní*) and physical strictures (*taqayyád-i nafsání*) (Ganj, 58–9).

Throughout BA\*’s writings including his Arabic *Qaṣiday-i warqá’iyya* (Ode of the Dove, c. 1856) and Persian *Mathnawí* c. 1860–1862?) major motifs within *qiṣaṣ* legends are given non-literal meanings. Allegorical meaning is commonly suggested by genitive constructions. Examples from a few lines in the *K. Íqán* are:

That holiness [Moses] appeared with the rod of the [divine] command [power] (*‘aṣay-i amr*) and the right-hand of gnosis (*bayḍá’y-i ma‘rifal*). He came from the Paran of divine love (*fárá-i muḥabbat-i iláhí*), with the serpent of power (*thubá-i qudrat*) and the all-enduring majesty (*shawkat-i ṣamádaniyya*) from the Sinai of light (*sínáy-i núr*) … (KI:8–9).

In some *alwáḥ* BA\*, it should also be noted here, refers to Shí‘í forms of the stories of Bal‘ám b. Beor (Balaam son of Beor), Ḥizqíl (Ezekiel) and others in making specific doctrinal and historical points (e.g. BA\* *L. Bahá’*).

The influence of *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* materials is obvious in several of BA\*’s major works. In the *K. Íqán*, for example, BA\* briefly recounts the story of Noah in distinctly Shí‘í terms (KI:5f/5f). While the name Noah in Hebrew (Heb. נֹ֫חַ = Nōah) most probably means ‘to rest or settle down’ (cf. Majlisí, Ḥayát 1:245) in Gen. 5:29 it is given a folk etymological explanation derived from the Hebrew root N-H-M, signifying ‘to comfort, console’. In his account of Noah in the *K. Íqán* BA\* immediately draws upon the Islamicate etymological explanation of Noah’s title or name presupposing that it signifies ‘to wail, grieve, lament’ (from the Ar. root N-W-H).[[127]](#footnote-127) This he links with the extended Shí‘í period of Noah’s pre-flood mission as set out, for example, in a tradition relayed (for apologetic reasons)[[128]](#footnote-128) from Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣádiq in the *Kamál ad-*

*dín* (Perfection of Religion) of Ibn Bábúya (d. 381/991): Noah lived 2,500 years = 850 pre-prophetic years + 950 years summoning his people + 700 post-flood years (cf. also Ibn Bábúya, ‘Ilal, 32; Majlisí, Ḥayát, 1:247–8). This Islamic tradition greatly extends the biblical-qur’anic period of Noah’s 950 year lifespan (950 years =1,000 minus 50; Gen. 9:29; Q. XX) (-->):

Among the prophets (*anbiyá’*) was Noah (نُوح). For 950 years he was stricken with grief (نَوْحَة نَمُود *nawḥa namúd*) and summoned the servants to the right-hand side of the [Sinaitic] vale of the Spirit (*vádíy-i ayman-i rúḥ*).

Following these words BA\* underlines Noah’s intense suffering and rejection and states that he repeatedly “promised victory to his companions”. Allusion is made here to a Shí‘í *Qiṣaṣ* tradition not found in either the Bible or the Q. BA\* has it that Noah had several times fixed an “hour of victory” (*naṣr*) which was deliberately unfulfilled by God (cf. Nu‘maní, K. Ghayba, 153–4; Majlisí, Bihar2 11:326–8; Ḥayát, 1:247ff; Kohlberg, 1991, XVI).

God, BA\* continues, operated according to the (proto-) Shí‘í principle of non-realization stemming from a change in salvific circumstances. A change in the divine plan resulted through *badá’* (loosely), the divine ‘change of mind’ which is an important Shí‘í theological principle well-known to the Báb. Shí‘í legends of the story of Noah sometimes make Noah a type of Imám ‘Alí (Kohlberg, 1991 XVI:50). It seems likely that Noah in the *K. Íqán* is a type of the rejected ‘Alí, the Sayyid of Shíráz, the Báb who also utilized a theology of *al-badá’* which may well have been an issue for the uncle of the Báb for whom the *K. Íqán* was written in 1862.[[129]](#footnote-129) BA\* references, in other words, to Noah and *badá’* in his *K. Íqán*, probably result from concerns of the Báb’s uncle relating to the issue of a cancelled *jihád* episode in early Bábí history and to the Báb’s being the successful, militaristic *Qá’im bi’l-sayf* (with the sword) (Fayḍí, Khandan, 40–41, insert, Q. 4).

The story of Noah, as told by BA\* in the *K. íqán*, continues by explaining that he was repeatedly abandoned until, as set down in well-known books and traditions (*kutub va akhbár*; KI:6/6), only 40 or 72 of his followers remained and survived the flood. As BA\* indicates these or similar figures are indeed found in most of the *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* legends of the story of Noah. Majlisí in the *Ḥayát al-qulúb*, for example, mentions a remnant of around 80 persons which is eight (= Noah, his 3 sons and their wives = 4 × 2 = 8; Gen. 6:18, 7:7, 13 cf. 1 Peter 3:20) above the standard ‘perfect number’ 72, representative of the saved remnant of followers (cf. Majlisí, Ḥayát 1:262). Forty as the number of the remnant differs from the biblical tradition (Majlisí, Bihar2 11:336ff; 13:285f; Mírkhwánd, Rawḍat, tr. Rehatsek, 89).

Aside from his use of *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* motifs in poetical writings of the Iraq and later periods, aspects of the Islamic and sometimes biblical stories of Jesus and John the Baptist were drawn upon in the period of his debate with Azalí Bábís. This is evident in BA\*’s Persian *Kitáb-i badí‘* (Wondrous Book), his Tablet of the Pope (*L.-i páp*) and other works of the Edirne and Acre or West Galilean periods. At times BA\* communicates a theological point using motifs which have both qur’anic and biblical roots. Chronological and other details in the lives of prophets, sages and philosophers are usually registered according to the Islamicate tradition.

*Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* rooted themes and motifs are common in the writings of the Báb and BA\* though they seldom refer to specific sources. Certain of the *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* legends and motifs registered or alluded to in the *alwáḥ* of BA\* can be source critically analysed though few are sufficiently lengthy to invite detailed source critical analysis. Narratives touched upon and motifs utilized are often too wide-rangingly paralleled in *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* and associated literatures to facilitate successful source critical identification. Comprehension of the meaning of prophetological motifs in the writings of the Báb and BA\* can, however, be greatly increased by an understanding of their Islamic literary trajectories and significances.

5.
The Bible and Isrá’íliyyát in Shí‘í Islam

5.1 Pre-Islamic revelations, the Bible and biblical *taḥríf*

Although the Bible in the form of biblical and post-biblical materials, permeates the Q. leaving an unmistakable influence, very little of this Judaeo-Christian scripture is directly cited or straightforwardly duplicated. The Q. remains aloof from biblical scripture in expressing its neo-Abrahamic, ‘pure’ Arabic religiosity. Many centrally important biblical teachings as expounded by Jews and Christians are not touched upon. If the canonical Bible were known to Muḥammad and his contemporaries, it was largely bypassed. The archetypal reality of the Q. was not concrete Judaeo-Christian scripture but the *umm al-kitáb* (Q. 13:39; 43:4, etc.), a heavenly archetypal reality. Its concrete text is represented as an Arabic revelation, new and pre-eminently ‘clear’ (*mubín*).

Little of the Bible was deemed suitable for qur’anic citation within the Arabic Q. There are only two reasonably exact quotations from the HB (-->). Relative to Judaism the Q. contains, ‘a large amount of repeated Biblical material together with Midrashic elaborations, and additions and adaptions based upon the laws and stories of the Pentateuch and the former Prophets of the Hebrew Bible’ (Lazarus-Yafeh, EI2 ‘Tawrát’). Though there is ‘much material’ in the Q. ‘which stands in some relation to the Old Testament’ it is ‘hardly ever exactly reproduced’ (Bell, 1945:1).

The Q. also registers very little of the NT *kerygma[[130]](#footnote-130)* though the influence of oriental Christian terminology and apocryphal stories is in evidence. Paul is not mentioned neither are (pseudo-) Pauline texts cited. The centrality of the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ resurrection go unmentioned as does the theology of the Pauline corpus and of the Church Fathers (cf. Q. 19:15, 34; 4:156, Parrinder, 1982:105ff). Though variously transformed, only a few of the miraculous works and parables of Jesus are reflected in the Q. (Parrinder, 1982, chs 9 & 10; Robinson, 1991, ch. 14). Many key Christian teachings have no place in the Q. Muḥammad largely bypassed the intricacies of the Rabbinic discussions and the potentially divisive

Christological and related speculations of the patristic era.[[131]](#footnote-131)

In representing itself as a Book of God, the Q. claims to legitimate, abrogate, confirm and clarify the three or four bodies of pre-Islamic revelation to which it refers (Q. 5:48); namely, (1) the ancient (pre-Mosaic) *ṣuḥuf* (scriptures), (2) the *tawrát* (Torah [HB]); (3) the *zabúr* (Psalter) and (4) the *injíl* (Evangel/Gospel) which are seen to be representative of the pristine, original Bible (-->). These scriptures are often contrasted by Muslims with extant, canonical and for them often *taḥrif* (“corrupted”) Judaeo-Christian scripture.

Little or no trace remains of a number of allegedly complete, very early pre-9th cent. CE Bible translations mentioned in Arabic sources (Polliack, 1997:3ff).[[132]](#footnote-132) The *Fihrist* of an-Nadím, for example, records that a protégée of Harún ar-Rashíd named Aḥmad b. ‘Abd-Alláh b. Salám (CE fl.c. 800?) asserted that he had

“… translated … the *Ṣuḥuf* (‘[primordial] Scriptures’), the *tawrát* (Torah), the *injíl* (Gospels), and the books of the prophets and disciples (*kutub al-anbiyá’ wa talámidha*) from Hebrew, Greek and Sabian (*aṣ-Ṣábiyya*) which are in the languages of the people of each book, into the Arabic language, letter by letter …” (Fihrist, 37, cf. Dodge 1:42, 2:945)

There likewise seems no remaining trace of Bible translations made during the Abbasid period, such as that allegedly made by the Nestorian Christian translator (from Syriac and Greek), Ḥunayn b. Isḥáq (d.c. 873) (Mas‘údí, Tanbih, 112). With a few exceptions, it was not until about the mid. 9th cent. CE that biblical quotations begin to appear in Islamic literatures. Among the earliest is the Johannine paraclete prophecy (Jn. 15:32f) cited by Ibn Isḥáq (<-3.2). Over the next millennium and more select learned Muslim apologists and scholars gradually and sporadically came to have a sometimes detailed knowledge of the Bible by direct

consultation of Arabic translations or mostly through oral means. The earliest extant, complete translation of the HB is the Judaeo-Arabic Tafsír of the Jew Saadya Gaon (d. 942). Arabic biblical citations proliferated from the 9th cent. CE though they are often inaccurate or highly Islamicate. Aside from a few converts who collected biblical testimonia (e.g. ‘Alí b. Rabbán aṭ-Ṭabarí -->), Muslims writers often relied upon the oral transmission of biblical texts through mediatory “people of the Book” (Adang, 1996).

Throughout Islamic history there was a widespread transmission of Islamicate (pseudo-) biblical citations. Many were loosely set down in early Islamic sources (<--1.2). They were cherished by Sufis, philosophers, mystics, theologians and other proponents of divine *ḥikmat* and *‘irfání*, “gnostic” philosophies. A small proportion of these numerous Islamified (pseudo-) biblical texts have been collected by Islamicists, most notably by Ignaz Goldziher (d. 1921), the Spanish Christian Arabist Miguel Asín Palacios (d. 1944 -->bib. 1919/26) and most recently by the Cambridge Islamicist Tarif Khalidi (-->bib. 2001).

Early Islamic Bible citations exhibit varying degrees of “accuracy” or levels of Islamic “rewriting” for apologetic, doctrinal or other reasons. Diverse levels of “Islamification” are evident. Very basically put, biblical citations in Islamic sources may be, (a) largely or completely literalistic (“accurate”) biblical citations (e.g. the Ibn Qutayba, Genesis texts -->); (b) partly “inaccurate” or showing a small amount of Islamicate rewriting (al-Ghazalí; al-Bírúní Deut. 33:2 -->); c) alleged biblical citations having a very tenuous relationship to one or more biblical texts (e.g. Ibn al-‘Arabí) and (d) pseudo-biblical citations which have no obvious relationship to any biblical text(s) as commonly transmitted (e.g. occasionally al-Ghazalí) and (e) pseudo-biblical citations which are so thoroughly Islamicate that they bear no relationship at all to biblical texts (ad-Damirí; Mullá Ṣadrá -->). Select examples of such biblical citations have been given below (chs 2 & 3), others will be set down in pages to follow.

The charge of *taḥríf* and Islamicate pseudo-biblical texts

Belief in the *taḥríf* (“falsification”) of the Bible became widespread in the post-qur’anic Muslim world. It outlawed or inhibited Muslim Bible study and quotation. The following qur’anic

verses most centrally bear upon the charge of the *taḥríf* (falsification) of pre-Islamic scripture;

… a section of them [the Jews] heard the word of God (*kalimat Alláh*) and then, having understood, they deliberately falsified it (*yuḥarrifúna*) … (Q. 2:75b) Some among the Jews distort the words out of their context [lit. ‘their place’] (*yuḥarrifúna’l-kalima ‘an mawáḍi‘hi*) saying [in place of the right words]: ‘We have heard and we disobey’ and ‘Hear, without hearing’ and ‘Listen to us’, twisting their tongues and reviling the faith … (Q. 4:46a).

Four qur’anic verses and a few supplementary texts refer to a Jewish falsification or alteration (*ḥarrafú*) of the text and/or meaning of the words of the Torah (Q. 2:75b; 4:46a; 5:13a; 5:41b). It is implied that Jews deliberately altered, corrupted, misread or somehow perverted scripture by subjecting texts to *taḥríf* (‘falsification’, Q. 4:46 5:13; 2:75; etc.) and/or *tabdíl* (“alteration”, Q. 4:48; 5:16ff). Having analysed the relevant verses Montgomery Watt, Mahmud Ayoub and others have convincingly argued that the qur’anic use of the imperfect active form *yuḥarrifúna* (‘falsification’, ‘corruption’) does not support the post-qur’anic theory of the corruption of the whole Bible (Montgomery Watt, 1978:24; Ayoub 1986:3).

To some degree following earlier religious accusations of scriptural misreading and corruption voiced by Jews against other Jewish factions (including Samaritans and Christians) and Christians against Jews and others, Muslims also came to accuse Jews and Christians of championing an outdated or “false” scripture. This was to some extent born out of their early difficulty in debate with Abrahamic *ahl al-kitáb*, e.g. proving the prophethood of Muḥammad from the Bible. For many centuries Sunní Muslims and a good many 19th century and earlier Shí‘í Muslims, upheld the dogma of biblical *taḥríf* on the basis of qur’anic verses and a critical examination of biblical texts. Details cannot be gone into here save for brief mention of a few vehement Muslim upholders of the textual corruption of the Bible and of a few Muslims who rejected any thoroughgoing doctrine of *taḥríf*.

The prolific Andalusian theologian, jurist and ultimately *ẓáhirí* (literalist) writer, ‘Alí ibn Aḥmad Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064) was perhaps the most virulent anti-Bible Muslim thinker. He authored his anti-biblical encyclopaedia, the *Fiṣál fí’l-milál* … (Differentiation of the Religious Communities) and several other works with a view to exposing the absurdity and falsity of

Jewish and Christian scripture and tradition. Ibn Ḥazm spelled out some of the many “errors” and “distortians” he felt underlined the to him obviously non-revealed nature of the Hebrew Bible and Christian Gospels/NT (Palacious, 1927; Arnaldez, EI2 III:795; Chejne, 1982; Pulcini, 1998, Adang, 1996:237–248).[[133]](#footnote-133)

In the 19th century Muslim world a recrudescence of polemical, anti-biblical writing was precipitated in response to evangelical orientalism in the form of anti-Islamic Christian missionary propaganda. Especially notable in this respect was the widely distributed *Mízán al-ḥaqq* (“The Balance of Truth”; Armenian, 1831; 1st Persian ed. Shushy 1835; 2nd ed., Calcutta, 1839; Urdu, 1840; Turkish, 1862; Arabic, 1865) of the German Protestant missionary Carl Gottleib Pfander (1803–1865). A notable response to his polemic focussed upon the issue of biblical *taḥríf* was publicly argued in Agra (India) in CE 1854 and subsequently written down by the learned, universally respected Indian Shí‘í Muslim writer Raḥmat-Alláh ibn Khalíl al-‘Uthmání al-Kairánawí [al-Hindí] (d. Mecca, 1308/1891). He sought to underline the magnitude of biblical *taḥríf* through his widely circulated *Iẓhár al-ḥaqq* (“The Appearance of the Truth”, Ar. 2 vols Istanbul 1284/1867; Turkish 1876–1877; Eng. tr. 4 vols 1410/1989) (Schirrmacher, 1999:270ff). His detailed critique of biblical texts took some account of the “folly” of the ancient and pre-modern ideas about the biblical text (Powell, 1976:53). It had a very wide sphere of influence (Powell, 1993:295–6) being known and responded to in the Shí‘í world. It was very probably known to AB\* as evident in certain of his statements about the biblical text and “higher criticism” (-->).[[134]](#footnote-134)

Like Sayyid Aḥmad ‘Alawí during the Safavid period (-->) Shí‘í Muslims of nineteenth century Iran came to respond to the missionary endeavours and the translation activity of

various western missionaries. Among them the English evangelical Henry Martyn (1781–1812) who spent eleven months in Shíráz and Bushire (1811–1812) a few years before the Báb who was 25+ years in these two cities (1819 -->1844+ esp. 1845–1846). Henry Martyn did much to prompt Persian mullas and mujtahids to adopt a Shí‘í, anti-Christian stance. Many came to condemn Christian missionary activity and some pointed out the *taḥríf* limitations and “corruption” of the Bible. Among these Shí‘í apologists was Mullá Muḥammad Riḍá’ Hamadání [Tabrízí] (d. 1830s?). In his *Miftáḥ an-nubuwwah* (The Keys of Prophethood) he raised *taḥríf* issues in great detail in the course of responding to the evangelical tracts of Henry Martyn (Lee 1824: 161–450; QU:129–30; Wolff: MJ 3:156 No. 1). Even the Oxford Semitic scholar Samuel Lee (1783–1852) was moved to write a defense of this Shí‘í charge of biblical *taḥríf* (“falsification”) in his *Controversial Tracts* (Lee, CT:451–584).

Muslim accusations centering upon allegations of biblical *taḥríf* to some extent made it irrelevant, unnecessary, even foolish for Muslims to become learned about and cite the Bible. Yet, when assembling prophecies anticipating the truth of Muḥammad and Islam this was often viewed as a necessary task. Apart, however, from those entering Islam from an Abrahamic religious background, relatively few Muslims acquired a detailed knowledge of the Bible. Many, if not most, remained ignorant of its contents. Muslim commentaries upon canonical biblical books were, until very recent times, unknown. The *Mohomedan Commentary on the Holy Bible* (2 pts, 1862, 65) by the Indo-Muslim “modernist” Sayyid Aḥmad Khán (d. 1898) remains more or less unique (Rippin, 1990).

For Muslims the miraculous, inimitable superiority (*I‘jáz*) and abbrogatory nature of the Q. along with the existence of “sound” supplementary *ḥadíth*/*akhbar*, all but rendered biblical learning alien and superfluous. Many Muslims understood *taḥríf* in ways which negated the veracity of existing Abrahamic scripture. It is ironic today that while a large number of Muslims view the bible as “corrupt” a very considerable number give fantastic importance to the obviously forged pseudo-Gospel of Barnabas, often regarding it as the only extant “true” *Injíl*/Gospel (Ragg, 1907; Sox. 1984).

For apologetic or polemical reasons biblical knowledge was distinctly advantageous. for Muslims. From the early Islamic centuries a number cited the bible (<--2.1ff) including, for example, Abú ar-Rabí‘ Muḥammad b. al-Layth (fl. late 8th cent. CE), ‘Alí b. Rabbán aṭ-Ṭabarí (d. 241/855), Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889), al-Birúní (d.c [after] 442/1050), al-Ghazálí (d. 505/1111)[[135]](#footnote-135) and the very linguistically equipped Safavid sage Aḥmad al-Alawí (d.c. 1060/1650). It was largely after the 15th century due to western printing and missionary activity, that the Bible became better known and more accurately cited by Muslim scholars (-->4.2ff).

In 19th century Persia and elsewhere relatively few Muslims adopted a positive attitude towards pre-Islamic scripture. In the course of attempting to prove truth of the mission of the Báb to Muslims in the early 1860s, BA\* found it necessary to cite the NT and reassert the occasional and largely forgotten earlier Islamic acceptance of the Bible. He radically modified the largely negative Islamic concept of biblical *taḥríf* (“falsification” -->).

Islamicate pseudo-biblical and pseudepigraphical texts

Despite the Muslim accusation of biblical *taḥríf* directed towards Jews and Christians some among them composed or cited what now seen [*recte* seem to be] obviously pseudo-biblical or pseudepigraphical Abrahamic texts. The Bible was not readily available in Arabic, Persian or Turkish translation throughout much of Islamic history especially during the early centuries AH (7th -->mid. 10th cent. CE). The circulation of Muslim generated pseudo-biblical and pseudo-pigraphical writings was thus quite common.

Early ascetics and Sufis such [as] Ibn al-Mubarak (d. 181/797), Abú Ṭálib al-Makkí (d. 386/996) and Abú Numayn al-Iṣfahání (d. 430/1039) cited texts representative of cherished Judaeo-Christian wisdom which they, to a greater or lesser degree, Islamified. It is often difficult to know which biblical text or texts (if any) inspired Islamicate, Muslim “Bible” citations. As Khalidi has recently put it, “Many Islamic texts prior to the ninth century A.D., texts of piety and asceticism in particular refer often to the ‘Torah’ or Hikmah in such terms as ‘It is said in

the Torah or Hikmah’ (*já’a fí’l-tawrát*; *já’a fí’l-ḥikmah*)[[136]](#footnote-136) followed by a moral maxim. Early Western scholarly attempts to locate the origins of these maxims concluded that very few of them were in fact traceable to the Bible” (Khalidi, 2001:21). That such early expressions of a Muslim “Bible” are seen in later writers will be evident [from the] pages below about citations in the *Mikhlát* (Nose-Bag) and *Kashkúl* (Begging Bowl) of Shaykh Bahá’í (-->).

Like other literary sources containing Isrá’íliyyát, biblical wisdom was often incorporated into *ḥadíth qudsí* (<--2.2). A good many early Shí‘í traditionalists, philosophers, mystics and theologians quoted quasi-biblical or pseudo-biblical texts in their writings which often had little or no biblical precedent. This seems true for many Muslim writers of the Safavid and Qajar periods (16th -->19th cent CE). The Muslim *Tawrát* is not exactly or always the Hebrew Bible; neither is the Muslim *Injíl* always the canonical NT. The Muslim “Bible” is often an Islamified or Islamicate phenomenon. Biblical texts are often recorded as voiced with a sometimes strong Islamic accent. From the time of the earliest Sufis (<--) right up until the time of the Báb authoritative biblical citations were frequently pseudo-biblical citations often exhibiting a tenuous relationship to the biblical text.

Some Muslims claimed access to lost portions of pre-Islamic scripture (the “genuine” *Tawrát*, the *Zabúr* etc.). Others ascribed their favourite biblical texts and logion, sometimes their own pseudo-biblical compositions, to Abrahamic figures or Islamic worthies. Dimensions of pseudepigraphy remained very much alive throughout the Islamic centuries. For over a millennium sayings have been cited in a variety Islamic sources as if from the Bible or genuine pre-Islamic scripture. This was often done as if the texts came directly from various biblical books. Many of these texts were pseudo-biblical or non-biblical. Some were only vaguely, if at all, biblically rooted although they acquired a great status within various Islamic literary sources.

In 1910 the Christian Arab writer Louis Cheikho wrote an article about “apocryphal legendary [biblical]” material and reproduced extracts from an Islamic *zabúr* (Psalter) version as well as a portion from an Islamic manuscript entitled “A copy of the *saḥífas* of Abraham and Moses”.

In an important 1986 article Joseph Sadan gave interesting details of various mss. locations of such Islamicate versions of pre-Islamic scripture including a *Munáját Músá* ms. incorporating features that might be called pre- or proto-qur’anic. He also referred to a several chapter *tawrát* (Torah) version contained in a Shí‘í-Ismá‘ílí anthology (Sadan, in Sharon ed. 1986:373ff).

Such Islamic pseudo-biblical pseudepigraphon had a role to play in the Islamic encounter with the Abrahamic religions. While the subject of the Abrahamic pseudepigrapha in Islam has been touched upon (Wasserstrom, 1994), little detailed research has been done in this area. Like Jews and Christians, Muslims also composed pseudepigraphical texts (Reeves, 1994). Attention has been payed [*recte* paid] in this connection to versions and recensions of a *K. al-maláḥim li Dániyál* (“The Book of the Apocalypse of Daniel” -->Fodor, 1974; Hoyland, 1997, index Daniel).[[137]](#footnote-137)

Islamic pseudepigraphal writings include versions and recensions of a *K. al-maláḥim li Dániyál*. A number of Shí‘í recensions are known one with an introduction by Majlisí’s pupil Ni‘mat-Alláh al-Jazá’irí (d. 1112/1701) and another by known to Ibn Ṭáwús. Certain Shí‘í versions of this work imply that it was knowledge of cryptic predictions in the *Maláḥam Dániyál* which enabled Abú Bakr and ‘Umar to bypass Imám ‘Alí and gain the successorship to Muḥammad (Fodor 1974:85ff; Kohlberg, 1992:143).

5.2 Isrá’íliyyát and the Bible in early Shi‘ism

Several important Imámí Shí‘í factions, including early Zaydis, Isma’ilis and Sufi sympathizers as well as later twelver thinkers and Safawid philosopher-theologians, had a significant influence within Islamic history in that they nurtured a tradition of biblical awareness, citation and dialogue. An openness was shown towards the *ahl al-kitáb* and towards messianic and allegedly proto-Shí‘í dimensions of their sacred writings and traditions.

Little academic work has been done on Isrá’íliyyát and the Bible in specifically Shí‘í

sources though some useful late 19th and 20th century articles exist including, for example, key articles by Friedlander, Vajda, Corbin, Kohlberg, Wasserstrom, Moreen and others (-->bib.). It seems that from the earliest period Shí‘í converts and writers were open to the appropriation of biblical data and Abrahamic Isrá’íliyyát. It has been observed that Ismá‘ílí and Imámí Shí‘ís were “Biblicizing” in their attitude towards the past” (Wasserstrom, 1994 [IOS]: 299). Neither Kulayní’s *Uṣúl al-kafí* nor Majlisí’s *Biḥár al-anwár* appear to contain especially negative forms of the *ḥaddíthú ‘an baní isrá’íla* or register trenchantly anti-Isrá’íliyyát traditions (<--1.2; 2.1; Majlisí, Bihar2 14:494f).

Neither Goldziher (d. 1921) nor Goitein (d. 1985), perhaps the two most learned representatives of earlier Judaeo-Arabic study, were sufficiently conscious of the magnitude of what has recently been called the “Judaeo-Shí‘í symbiosis” (Wasserstrom, 1994:297–324). Few took up Wellhausen’s (d. 1918) observation that “the dogma of Shi‘ism … seems to stem more from the Jews than from the Persians” (idem, 298). Recently, however, Wasserstrom has written a penetrating analysis of the Sunní dictum, “The Shí‘ís [*ráfiḍa*, “those who reject”] are the Jews of our Community [*umma*]” (idem, 1994). He has underlined the fact that Shí‘í and Jewish doctrine have a good deal in common.

There is no doubt that Islamified, biblical teachings played a significant role in the evolution and crystallization of Shí‘í doctrine. Judaeo-Christian traditions had a significant impact upon Shí‘í apologetics. This may be reflected in the following well-known saying of the prophet, “The *‘ulamá’* (learned) of our community are even as the *anbiyá’* (prophets) of the children of Israel” (al-Aḥsá’í, ‘Awálí, 4:77; cf. 1:357; 2:241+fns). Several other Shí‘í traditions compare and contrast aspects of Islamic and Judaic religiosity. Imám Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣádiq, for example, is reckoned to have stated,

The likeness of the weaponry (*as-siláḥ*) among us [Imámí Shí‘ís] is as the likeness of the Ark of the Covenant among the children of Israel (*at-tábút fí baní isrá’íl*) who were the progeny of Israel (*banú Isrá’íl*). In other words the [Shí‘í] people of the House (*ahl al-bayt*) who discovered the Ark of the Covenant (*at-tábút*) in their possession (? ‘upon their gate’, *báb*) attained prophethood (*an-nubuwwa*). Whoso among us attains this weaponry (*as-siláḥ*) has thereby attained the Imamate (*al-imáma*) (Bihar2 1:238)

The proto-Shi‘ism of the *ghulát* (“extremist”) factions

Numerous early Shí‘í Muslims belonged to groups which have been inadequately labelled *ghulát* (“exaggerators”). These highly diverse early Shí‘í factions greatly influenced evolving, and subsequent Imámí and twelver Shí‘í thought (Kohlberg 1973:320). While some controversial doctrines championed by the “exaggerators” came to be rejected (e.g. anthropomorphism and metempsychosis) others were accepted, including messianic beliefs and the concept of *raj‘a*, “return”. It was also among *ghuluww* thinkers that the Jewish rooted notion of an *al-ism al-a‘ẓam* (mightiest Name [of God]) held central importance and came to be conceptually transformed within an evolving Shí‘í theology. Bábí-Bahá’í doctrines of the *al-ism al-a‘ẓam* would appear to have their Islamic roots in the theological speculations of early *ghulát* groups (-->).

It has long been realized that mainstream, heterodox and heretical Abrahamic religious, groups including Jewish factions, Christian groups, Gnostics, Manicheans and Mandaeans as well perhaps as Qumran sectarians and Samaritan thinkers, influenced the development of Shí‘í doctrine and practise. Key Shí‘í messianic and imamological concepts including the Imámí *ma‘ṣúm* (infallibility) applied to the Imams, can be well accounted for as a result of influences from the above channels. The influence of gnostic and other cosmologies, prophetologies, messianisms and apocalyptic perspectives are often closely reflected in the thought of *ghuluww* (“extremist”) factions (Wasserstrom, 1985; 96f; Cranfield, 1991:132–160).[[138]](#footnote-138) Multiple forms of Islamic “gnosis” “remained very much alive and active in the early Islamicate period” (Wasserstrom, 1997 [IOS]:130–131). Similar *ghuluww* doctrinal tendencies, it should be remembered, had a significant impact upon the initially ‘heterodox Shi‘ism’ of the early Safavid period (Babayan, 1994; 1996).

From early times Sunní writers have held the view that a most probably fictitious Yemenite Jewish convert to Islam named ‘Abd-Alláh ibn Saba’ (or Ibn as-Sawdá’, ‘son of the black’) was the fountainhead of early Shi‘ism. Nascent Shi‘ism was early considered an aberrant Isrá’íliyyát informed offshoot of Judaism (Murtaḍá al-‘Askarí, *‘Abd-Alláh b. Sabá’* -->bib.). This Ibn Sabá’ is said to have deified Imám ‘Alí by teaching that God was incarnate in him. He apparently predicted his Christ-like *raj‘a* (“return”) in the clouds both before and after his death (by assassination in 40/661). Ibn Sabá’ is pictured as one who held to the basically Christian concept of “return” which he linked to Q. 28:5 and the person of Muḥammad (Ṭabarí, *Táríkh* [2942] tr. Humphreys, 15:146 + index).

Only the Manṣúriyya among numerous other *ghuluww* groups can be touched upon here. These are the “extremist” followers of Abú Manṣúr al-‘Iljlí (d.c. 121/738) who claimed to succeed Imám Muḥammad al-Báqir. Evidently again subject to Christian and other religious influences, al-‘Ijlí regarded Jesus as the first created being (cf. Jn. 1:1), Imám ‘Alí being the second. Like the qur’anic Jesus al-‘Ijlí claimed to have been raised up to heaven where an anthropomorphic God “wiped his head with his hand” (cf. Isa. 25:8b; Rev. 21:4). The Deity addressed him in Persian or Syriac saying, “My son, go and teach on my behalf” (Madelung, *Manṣúriyya*, EI2 VI:441). al-‘Ijlí considered the early Imams to be messenger-prophets and, like the Báb, claimed to have brought the *ta’wíl* (interpretation) of the Q.

al-Qásim b. Ibráhím (d. Medina 246/860) was among the important early followers of Zayd b. ‘Alí (d. 122/740) (Madelung, 1965; Abrahamov, 1988). He wrote a *K. ar-Radd ‘alá an-naṣara* (Refutations of the Christians) which included a few NT citations (Di Matteo, 1921–1923). It is also clear from his ‘The Tabaristánís Question’ that he convened gatherings in his Egyptian home where he discussed theological and other matters with Christians from several different backgrounds (Abrahamov, 1988). Such dialogue with various religionists is also reported of the Shí‘í Imams.

The Shi‘ite Imams, Isrá’íliyyát and the Bible

Many statements of the first, sixth, seventh and eighth Imams, indicate their impressive knowledge of the Bible and of the Jewish and Christian religions (Damad, *Thaqalayn*, 2/iii–iv, 99–100). This is especially clear from an examination of works of Ibn Bábúya al-Qummí (d. 280/901) such as his *K. Tawḥíd* (Book of the Divine Unity, c. 340/950), *Kamál ad-dín* (The Perfection of Religion -->), the *‘Ayún akhbár ar-Riḍá’* and various *iḥtijáj* (Religious Disputation) and related compilations. Important in this respect are the *iḥtijáj* works of aṭ-Ṭabarsí (d.c. 548/1153 <--2.1) and Majlisí (*Iḥtijáját* = Bihar2 vols. 9–10)[[139]](#footnote-139) some of whose Persian works are also significant in this respect, especially his Ḥayát al-qulúb (“The Enlivening of the Hearts”, see Ḥayát II:1071ff). Like the closely related and widely dispersed masá’il (Questions and Answers) traditions an example of which is found in the Persian Ṭabarí Táríkh (<--3.1), the rich in Isrá’íliyyát Shí‘í *iḥtijáj* sources include details of religious confrontations between the prophet, various (twelver) Imams and members of the ahl al-kitáb (Jews, Christian, etc).[[140]](#footnote-140) Isrá’íliyyát traditions and Islamicate biblical citations are often numerous in these sources.

Twice translated into Persian during the Safawid period *al-Iḥtijáj ‘alá ahl al-lajáj* (“The Disputation against the People of Obstinacy”) of aṭ-Ṭabarsí records a tradition relayed through Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣádiq and Imám ‘Alí detailing a debate of Muḥammad with a Jew, a Christian, an Atheist, a Dualist (Zoroastrian) and an Idolator (Iḥtijáj, 1:21ff). Muḥammad confounds Jewish and Christian assertions about the supposed Sonship (*ibn Alláh*) of Ezra and Jesus. Using his opponents logic he argues that if Ezra who revived the Torah is called *Ibn Alláh* (Son of God) why not Moses to whom this very book was revealed. Jesus could not be the *Ibn Alláh* because his own words contradict belief in his unique Sonship. Muḥammad, it was pointed out, recalled that Jesus had said “I am going to my Father and to your Father” (cf. Jn. 14:16; Iḥtijáj, 1:23–4).

The Christian Patriarch Báríha and the Shí‘í theologian Hishám b. al-Ḥakam

Among the *iḥtijáját* (religious disputations) recorded in the *K. Tawḥíd* (section 37) is the record of an early Shí‘í-Christian debate located in Baghdad (Karkh) which Thomas has dated to the 140s/c. 765 and described as a “carefully dramatized narrative” (Thomas, 1988:60; 1992:190 fn. 4). It took place between an otherwise unknown Christian Patriarch named Báríha and the Shí‘í merchant and theologian Hishám b. al-Ḥakam (d. 179/796). The debate is partly oriented around the Christian doctrine of the trinity and the error of “those who say that God is the ‘third of three’” (Q. 5:73; K. Tawhid, [sect. 37]: 270–275).

This early dialogue includes a brief account of the conversion to Shi‘ism of Báríha through Hishám b. al-Ḥakam through the seventh Imám Músá al-Káẓim (d. 183/799) then resident in Medina. Imám Músá allegedly questioned Báríha about his knowledge of *al-kitáb* (the Book, Bible, NT) and was told that Músá had an unsurpassed knowledge of its *ta’wíl* (exegesis, interpretation). The account highlights the miraculous biblical knowledge of Imám Músá. In Christ-like fashion he began to recite the Gospel (*qirá’at al-injíl*). An astounded Báríha asked Imam Músá where he had obtained such knowledge of biblical recitation. Imám Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣádiq explained,

‘We [the Imams] have the [Abrahamic] books as a legacy from them. We recite them as they did, and pronounce them as they did … (K. Tawḥíd, 275; tr. Thomas 1988:54ff, 60).[[141]](#footnote-141)

Báríha and his female attendant are said to have become devotees of Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣádiq (and Imám Músá) around 148/765. This apologetically oriented *iḥtijáj* is instructive and may say more about the concerns of Ibn Bábúya than be an accurate reflection of a mid. 8th century Shí‘í-Christian debate (Thomas 1988:62ff). Whatever the case, the importance and example

of the Imám being supernaturally biblically aware is evident.

A debate of ‘Alí b. Músá al-Riḍá’

It is the eighth Imám, al-Riḍá’ (d. 203/818) to whom biblical knowledge and skill in dialogue are especially attributed in the *Iḥtijáj* sources. The account of his debate of c. 202/817–818 set up and before the Abbasid Caliph al-Ma‘mún (189/813–210/817?) is noteworthy.[[142]](#footnote-142) This ecumenical debate was initiated when the Caliph ordered leading religious figures (*ahl al-adyán*) and upholders of diverse religious opinions (*aṣḥáb al-maqálát*) to take part in a debate. The (Armenian) Patriarch (*al-játhilíq*), the Jewish Exilarch *ṣá’is al-jálút*), leaders of the Sabians *ṣú’ásá aṣ-ṣábi’ún*), Zoroastrians and others were ordered to take part (Ibn Bábúya, Tawḥíd, 417). Imám al-Riḍá’ is said to have debated with these leaders as an expert in all past sacred scriptures in their original languages (Hebrew, Persian, Greek, etc.). He exhibited a perfect knowledge of biblical prophecies fulfilled in Islam. He stunned the Jewish Exilarch by reciting verses of the Torah and citing a conflation of Isa. 21:7 and parts of Ps. 149 (Tawḥíd, tr. Thomas, 1988:73 + fn. 53, 77).

During the debate al-Riḍá’ raised the question of the early loss of the true Gospel(s). He asked the Patriarch to explain how “the first Gospel” was lost, rediscovered and reached its present form. The Patriarch stated that the Gospel was lost for a day, then rediscovered when John and Matthew communicated it. Claiming greater knowledge of Gospel origins than the Patriarch, the Imám explained as follows,

I know that when the first Gospel was lost the Christians met together with their experts and said to them: ‘Jesus son of Mary has been killed and we have lost the Gospel. You are the experts, so what can you do?’ Luke and Mark said to them: ‘The Gospel is in our hearts and we will produce it for you book by book, every one. … we will recite it to you, each and every book, until we have brought it together for you completely’. So Luke, Mark, John and Matthew[[143]](#footnote-143) sat down and wrote for you this Gospel after you had lost the first Gospel. But these four

were disciples of the first disciples … (K. Tawḥíd, 425–6 tr. Thomas, 74 cf. Bihar2 10:306f).

That an original (single) *Injíl* was replaced by those of the four evangelists is echoed in other Islamic sources including al-Jáḥiz, (Radd, 24 II:8–20) and ‘Abd al-Jabbár (*al-Mughní* V:143; *Tathbít dalá’il* 152, 1:6–155; Thomas, 1988:74. fn. 61) as well as ash-Shahrastání (<--fn.) Some of these sources reckon that the original Gospel was written in Hebrew or Syriac [Aramaic] and replaced by an inadequate version in Greek or some other language. Writing on the *Injíl* in his *Insán al-kámil*, for example, the Shi‘ite Sufi of the school of Ibn al-‘Arabí, ‘Abd al-Karím al-Jílí (d. 832/1428) held that God sent down the *Zabúr* to David and the *Injíl* to Jesus in the Syriac language (*bi’l-lughat as-suryániyya*),

In the course of debating Jesus’ power of resurrection Imám Riḍá’ made the following Isrá’íliyyát informed statement:

Elisha (*Alyasa’*) performed similar acts to Jesus, walking on the water, reviving the dead, healing the blind and lepers, though his community never took him as Lord, and no one ever worshipped him in place of God, great and mighty [cf. 2 Kings 2:12f; 4:32f; 5:1ff]. The prophet Ezekiel (*Ḥizqíl*) performed similar acts to Jesus son of Mary, for he revived thirty-five thousand men sixty years after their deaths [cf. Ezek. 37:1ff] (K. Tawḥíd, 422; tr. Thomas 1988:70).

The Christian Patriarch also affirmed Imám Riḍá’s knowledge of Jesus’ (conflated Johannine) Paraclete promises,

I am going to my Lord and your Lord, [Jn. 20:17b, cf. Jn. 16:5a etc.] and the Paraclete will come [15:26a]. He it is who will witness to me [Jn. 15:26c] about the truth as I have witnessed to him, and he it is who will explain to you everything [Jn. 14:26b]; he it is who will expose the evil deeds of the peoples, and he it is who will shatter the designs of the unbelievers [cf. Jn. 16:8] (ibid., tr. Thomas ibid., 73+fns, 78).[[144]](#footnote-144)

This *iḥtijáj* episode detailed in his *K. Tawḥíd* and elsewhere has been reckoned by Thomas “the earliest surviving compendium of theological discussions from a Shi‘ite author” and seen as an “artificial”, creation designed to “secure the [Shí‘í] groups position within the Muslim

intellectual community” (Thomas, 1988:53, 80; cf. 65ff K. Tawḥíd, 417ff). Whatever their historical veracity such Shí‘í *iḥtijáját* accounts contain often conflated Islamicate Bible citations which certainly influenced post-10th century Shí‘í Bible awareness and attitudes towards the people of the Book.

Shí‘í data from various *iḥtijáj* episodes seems to be reflected in the writings of both BA\* and AB\*. In an epistle addressed to a Jewish covert named Ḥakim Ḥayyím in response to a question about the absence of a Gospel reference to the promised Aḥmad of Q. 61:6, BA\* stated that many of Jesus’ revelations were not included in the extant, post-apostolic Gospels assembled by the four evangelists. In saying this he may be influenced by the assertions of Imám Riḍá’ or by other similar Islamic statements (e.g. <--Shahrastání). AB\* not only drew upon *iḥtijáj* accounts involving Muḥammad’s debating with Christians but, in certain of his *alwáḥ*, held that the original *Injíl* Gospel(s) was in Hebrew being later rewritten in Greek (*bi-lisá-i ‘ibrání va yunání*) (Ma’idih 9:22, 27).

Some proto-Ismá‘ílí and later Ismá‘ílí sources

The originally Arabic perhaps proto-Ismá‘ílí Persian treatise *Umm al-kitáb* (The Archetype of the Book) may be representative of an early phase of “Central Asiatic Isma’ilism” (Filippani-Roncalli, 1977:105; Halm 1996:82). It takes the form of a discussion between Imám Muḥammad al-Báqir (d.c. 126/743) and three luminous initiates (*roshanian*) (ed. Ivanow, Der Islam XXIII). Apparently transmitted by the Ismá‘ílís of Badaskshán, it reflects late 2–3rd/7–8th century Shí‘í gnosis associated with Abú’l-Khaṭṭab (d.c. 138 or 147/755/764), a disciple of Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣádiq. Materials within the *Umm al-kitáb* express the Shí‘í appropriation and Islamization of Iranian, Abrahamic, Hellenistic and other streams of tradition. It reflects aspects of the gnosis of antiquity as crystalized within an early Iraqi Shí‘í faction (Filippani-Ronconi, 1964; Halm, 1996).

In the *Umm al-kitáb* creation is associated with the hubris of an exalted angel named ‘Azázi’íl who is familiar in Jewish, Shí‘í and Shaykhí angelology (-->5.1f). In this work a non-literal understanding of the ‘Fall of Adam’ (Per. *ádam-i mu‘tariḍ* [recte *ádam-i maṭrúd*]) and of his (humanity’s)

subsequent *qiyáma* (“resurrection”) as the *ádam-i qá’im* is registered (*umm al-kitáb*, 112, 350ff; 393ff; Filippani-Ronconi, 1977:108ff). Other biblical motifs such as the four rivers of Paradise (Gen. 2:10f) and the biblical-qur’anic Sinaitic theophany are also utilized (*Umm al-kitáb*, 112; Filippani-Ronconi, 1977:108ff). Christian influence is evident in the prologue of the *Umm al-kitáb* where a pericope highlights the superior knowledge of Imám Báqir in matters of *jafr*, gematric mysticism and prognosis (Corbin, 1983:154; Lambden, 1986:16f). Letter mysticism is also evident and is strongly reminiscent of data within the Jewish Sepher Yetsira and the anthropomorphic symbolism of the *Shi’ur Qomah* (“Dimensions of the Body”) traditions. The 19 letter *basmala* [recte *bismilláh*] is referred to as a sacred Arabic ejaculation representative of the 12 *ummahát* (“mothers”) and 7 “intelligences” which form the (Per.) *shakhṣ* (“Person”) of the Godhead (ibid., 22ff, 60ff; Filippani-Ronconi, 1977:115).

After the time of the sons of Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣádiq, Ismá‘ílí Muslims were such as gave centrality to the Imamite of this sixth Imám’s (younger) son Ismá‘íl (d. 145/762) from whom their name derives. By the 4th-5th/11th cent., the Ismá‘ílís adopted aspects of a Neoplatonic, apophatic theology and cosmology. An allegorical hermeneutic was much favoured amongst them. Ismá‘ílí hermeneutical *adwár* (cyclic; singular *dawr*), prophetological and other doctrines have a good deal in common with Bábí-Bahá’í perspectives. Their allegorical approach to pre-Islamic scripture is often similar to that of the Báb and BA\* as well as subsequent Bábí-Bahá’í writers.[[145]](#footnote-145)

As will be demonstrated, several early Ismá‘ílí thinkers show a good knowledge of the Bible. Ismá‘ílí non-literal biblical exegesis played a part in medieval and later apologetic writing. In his list of ‘Non-Ismá‘ílí works used by Ismá‘ílís’ under the heading ‘Admonitions and Exhortations’, Poonawalla includes the *Kitáb at-tawrát*, the *Kitáb al-zabúr* and *aḥadíth baní Isrá’íl* (= Isrá’íliyyát; Poonawalla, 1977:359f). Isrá’íliyyát traditions about the *al-ism al-a‘ẓam* (Mightiest Name of God) were registered and interpreted within Ismá‘ílí literatures. Interesting

commentary upon graphical forms of the mightiest Name of God are found in Ismá‘ílí literatures which are parallelled and developed in Shaykhí literatures and Bábí-Bahá’í scriptural writings. In his 1943 *Gnosis-Texte der Ismailiten*, for example, Strothmann published a *Risála al-ism al-a‘ẓam* (Treatise upon the Mightiest Name). This work expounds in detail a sevenfold graphic form of this incomparable Name incorporating forms of the Arabic letters ه (*há’)* and a distorted, inverted letter و (*wáw*) (Strothmann, 1943:171–180). Esoteric commentary upon such elements of the Mightiest Name is important in Shí‘í and Shaykhí texts and is fundamental to Bábí and Bahá’í religious identity (-->6.1).

The *Rasá’il Ikhwán aṣ-ṣafá’* (The Epistles of the Brethren of Purity)

The identity of the probably 4th/10th cent. *Ikhwán aṣ-Ṣafá’* (Brethren of Purity) is not known with any certainty. The fifty-two *Rasá’il* ascribed to them evidence a close relationship to Ismá‘ílí doctrines, they “rewrote Neoplatonic and Pythagorean natural philosophy and metaphysics in Islamic terms” (Murata, 1992:329). Their exposition of semi-esoteric “realities” sometimes goes beyond Islamic doctrinal norms. The authors of the *Rasá’il* were influenced by numerous streams of thought including Hermetic “wisdom” and the syncretistic “gnosis” of the Sabaeans [recte Sabians] of Ḥarrán. Yet these *rasá’il* “occupy a place in the first rank of Arabic literature”, having had an influence within both Sufism and Shi‘ism (Marquest EI2). The missionary Wolff, it is relevant to note here, reported that the *Rasá’il* were studied by the learned in early 19th century Shíráz (MJ III:53–4). This was doubtless also the case in other Iranian locations. The vocabulary of the Báb at times appears to reflect that of certain of the *Rasá’il*.[[146]](#footnote-146) Some of the *Rasá’il* are indebted to the Bible, Greek philosophy and aspects of Jewish and Christian doctrine (Netton, 1982:53ff; Marquet, EI2). The Ikhwán cited the HB and Rabbinic lore and had

some knowledge of the NT in several textual traditions. Moses and aspects of pentateuchal history and Islamo-biblical prophetology are occasionally present in the *Rasá’il* (R1:156–7; 186; 2:279ff; 4:16, 32). The reading of Abrahamic scripture and the *Injíl* (Gospel[s]) is recommended for these scriptures are said to result from angelic [divine] inspiration (*bi’l-waḥy min al-malá’ika*; cf. 4:42, 245; 1:363; 3:246; Netton 1983:54). The following citation allegedly mentioned in “certain of the books of the prophets of the children of Israel”, is given in the form of a double post-qur’anic revelation (*ḥadíth qudsí*),

“God, exalted be He said,

‘O son of Adam, I created thee for all eternity (*li-l-abd*), for I am the Living One (*al-ḥayy*) who dieth not. So be obedient unto whatsoever I command thee and turn aside from whatsoever I prohibit thee. Then shall I make thee to be one who liveth eternally and dieth not (*ḥayyan lá tamút abadan*)

O son of Adam! I am Powerful (*qádiran*) such that I need only say to a thing, ‘Be!’ and it is (*kún fa-yakún*). [= Q. 3:59, 6:72, etc.] Then obey Me regarding whatever I have commanded thee and turn aside from whatever I have forbidden thee. Then shall I make thee one powerful (*qádiran*) such that thou need only say to a thing, ‘Be! and it shall be’ (*kún fa-yakún*) (R1:298).

Rewritten Genesis texts are clearly in evidence here (e.g. Gen. 3:22a). This is a scriptural citation which is obviously Islamicate possibly also reflecting a gnostic exaltation of the primordial man.

The authors of the *Rasá’il* were aware of Jesus and of Christian doctrines and denominations (Monophysites, Jacobites [Ar. *Ya‘qúbí*] and Nestorians R2:283–4). Jesus is quite often mentioned in the *Rasá’il* (R4:19; 2:232, 280; 3:287; 4:19, 42, etc.). He is once designated by the Johannine, non-qur’anic epithet “Son of the Father” (*ibn al-áb*, 2 Jn. 1:3). His “humanity” and “divinity” are referred to by means of the Syriac Christological loan words *násút* (Syr. *‘nášúthá*) and *láhút* (Syr. *‘aláhathá*) respectively.[[147]](#footnote-147)

The reality of the bodily crucifixion of Jesus is accepted in the *Rasá’il*. Jesus was taken before the “king of the children of Israel [Jews]” who ordered his crucifixion (*bi-ṣalbihi*). When

carried out Jesus’ *násút* (humanity) was crucified (*fa-suliba násútihi*). It is explicitly stated that his two hands were driven with nails (*summarat*) upon two wooden pieces of the cross (*‘alá al-khashabatayi aṣ-ṣalíb*). Jesus remained hanging crucified (*maṣlúban*) from forenoon until the afternoon (cf. Jn. 19:31; R4:31). These teachings obviously differ from the mainstream Muslim denial of Jesus’ bodily crucifixion though they are echoed in a tradition highly regarded and much cited by the Báb (T.Baqara, 195; Q.Zavarih, 69:425, etc. -->).

Important references to the Paraclete styled the *baraqlíṭ al-akbar* (Greatest Paraclete) are found towards the beginning of the fifty-two *Rasá’il* (1:40) and twice in the related *Risálat al-Jámi‘a* (“Comprehensive Epistle”, 11:354, 365). This Islamic Paraclete is twice associated with the expected Mahdí in the *Rasá’il* (*al-mahdí al-muntazar*; R. 1:40; J. 2:365, Netton, 1982:68).

Ḥamíd ad-Dín al-Kirmání

The prolific, polymathic philosopher-theologian Ḥamíd ad-Dín al-Kirmání (d. after 411/1021) was an important Ismá‘ílí thinker well acquainted with pre-Islamic scripture. He cited the Hebrew Bible and the Syriac Gospels in Arabic transliteration (Kraus, 1931; Baumstark, 1932). This in at least four of his works perhaps implying that he had some knowledge of pre-Islamic scripture in their original languages (Kraus, 1931:244; Walker 1999:55). Written around 404/1013 for the Buyid Shí‘í vizier of Iraq, Fakhr al-Mulk, Kirmání’s *K. al-Maṣábíḥ fí ithbát al-imáma* (‘The Book of Lamps in the Establishment of the Imamate’) cites Deut. 33:2–3 and Isa. 21:7 (well-known Islamic testimonia) in proof of the mission of Muḥammad (ibid.; Cortesse, 2000:37–8).

In an article about Fatimid propaganda among Jews, Stern has pointed out the significance of certain of these biblical citations of al-Kirmání (Stern, 1983).[[148]](#footnote-148) In one of his works Kirmání relates Zech [not Isaiah] 9:9 to the Fatimid Caliph al-Ḥakim bi-Amr-Alláh (d.

996/1021). He is “Zion” in the phrase בַּת־צִיּוֹן (“daughter[s] of Zion”) and “Jerusalem” in בַּת־יְרוּשָׁלִַם (“daughter of Jerusalem”, Zech. 9:9a). In proof of this it is argued that the mighty al-Ḥákim and not Jesus of Nazareth is the one who appears as מַלְכֵּךְ (“thy king”), “riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass [*recte* horse]” (Zech. 9:9b).

The Bahá’í leader AB\* gave very similar interpretations to Isaiah 11:1ff when applying prophecies of the HB normally applied to Christ reckoning them more adequately fulfilled in BA\* and his age (SAQ, XIIff; cf SWAB 166–7). The 1,335 “days” of Daniel 12:12 as “years” of the Selucid era (commencing 311–312 BCE) were applied by al-Kirmání to the time of the messianic Caliph al-Ḥákim (Stern, 1983:93ff).[[149]](#footnote-149) This Ismá‘ílí use of *ta’wíl* applied to the Bible has a close hermeneutical parallel in Bahá’í (“spiritual”) Bible exegesis. AB\* interpreted the 1,335 “days” of Dan. 12:12 as solar “years” commencing at the Hijrah (CE 622) and thus yielding CE 1957. This date is further understood by Bahá’ís as marking the centennial commencement of BA\*’s mission in Tehran in CE 1853, which gives CE 1963 considered indicative of the Bahá’í establishment of the kingdom of God on earth (AB\* cited PAB:31).[[150]](#footnote-150)

Some early Imámí Shí‘í writers: Ibn Bábúya and others

The above-mentioned Shí‘í apologist Ibn Bábúya [= Bábwayhi] al-Qummí (d. 381/991) was an important pillar of Twelver Shi‘ism and an expert in Shi‘ite legalism and the Imámí traditions. Several of his thirty or more extant works contain Islamo-biblical citations often relayed by the Imams as well as Isrá’íliyyát traditions reworked in the service of Imámí Shi‘ism (<--2.2). His important *Ikmál* [= *Kamál*] *ad-dín fí ithbát al-ghayba* (“Perfection of Religion through the Establishment of the Occultation”) makes very considerable use of biblical and *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* materials surrounding the stories of Noah, Jonah and Idrís (Enoch) in upholding the Shí‘í

doctrine of the occultation of the hidden, twelfth Imam (Vajda, 1941–1945). No reluctance or hesitation seems to be associated with Bible citation from the Imams in the works of Ibn Bábúya. Among numerous further examples reference can be made to that section of his *Thawáb al-a‘mál* (“Rewards for Pious Deeds”) dealing with the arrival at mosques. In this context Imám Ṣádiq cites the *tawrát* (Torah) as follows,

It is written in the *tawrát*, ‘My houses on earth are the mosques (*al-masájid*). So blessed be that servant who diligently purifies himself in his own house then visits me [God] in my House [in Jerusalem]’ (Thawáb, 51).

The *tawrát* is also by the same Imám a little later in the same work in connection with ritual purity on visiting the mosque: ‘Blessed be whomsoever purifies himself in his own house then visits me. The True One (*al-ḥaqq*) shall indeed be associated with such a shrine (*al-mazmúr*) and shall honour the visitor’ (idem, 52).

Centrally important is the wide-ranging *Fihrist* (Bibliographical Compendium) of the probably Persian Shí‘í, Baghdádí book dealer, Abú’l-Faraj Isḥáq b. Warráq an-Nadím (d. 380/990). His *Fihrist* has been described as dealing “with almost every phase of medieval culture” (Dodge, 1970, 1:xi). Peters reckoned it “the single most important document on philosophy among the Arabs” (1968:277). This encyclopaedic, “unique specimen of literature”, (E.Ir. IX:465f) records a great deal relating to the Bible and Isrá’íliyyát. It is related from Theodore (Tiyádúrus, a commentator on Genesis), for example, that God addressed Adam in the Nabatean dialect because it was “purer (*afṣaḥ*) than Syriac (*as-suryání*)” being spoken by pre-Babel humanity (Fihrist, 23/Dodge 1:22). In the very detailed and interesting section on biblical scripture (= Fihrist 1.2) Ibn Nadím has it from a certain Aḥmad that the *alwáḥ* (tablets) revealed to Moses on Sinai were “green” in colour, with the writing on them “red like the rays of the sun” (idem, 38/Dodge, 43). Reeves has stated that “One of the most intriguing passages contained within Ibn an-Nadím’s entry is a Manichean exposition of Genesis 2–4 which exhibits numerous affinities with Jewish aggadic and gnostic exegetical traditions” (Reeves, 1999).

The polymathic Shi‘ite scholar and scientist Abú Rayḥán al-Bírúní (d.c. 442/1051) cited and was well aware of the text of the Bible. He evidently had “Arabic translations of the

Old and New Testaments, as well as of other Jewish and Christian writings, at his disposal” (De Blois, E.Ir. IV:284). Affirmative of the considerable knowledge of the Bible possessed by al-Birúrní is *al-Áthár al-báqiyya* tabulation of the divergent chronologies of the Hebrew, Greek (LXX) and Samaritan versions of the Pentateuch (Chron:XX). As pointed out below (<--4.1) it was probably his reference to Hindu chronological statements found in the “Record of Yúga[s]” (SE\* “Book of Júk” [recte *Jug-Basisht?*]) that led BA\* to refer to this matter in his *L. Qabl-i ádam* (<--3.2).

Shi‘ism, Ishráqí philosophy and mystical gnosis: Suhrawardí and Ibn al-‘Arabí (d. 638/1240).

The mystically oriented Ishráqí philosophy of illuminationism to some extent developed as a reaction to the philosophical thought of ‘Alí ibn Síná, Avicenna (d. 428/1037), who is also credited with a number of mystical texts including a Persian *Mi‘ráj náma*. The rich and influential thought of the Shaykh al-Ishráq, Shiháb ad-Dín Yaḥyá Suhrawardí (d. 587/1191), founder of the *Ishráqiyyún* (the ‘Illuminationist school’), at times combines elements of Shí‘í theology, Sufi gnosis, Islamic peripatetic philosophy, Zoroastrian thought and the Hellenistic-Hermetic tradition.

Suhrawardí’s philosophy of illumination is expounded in his *Ḥikmat al-Ishráq* (The Wisdom of Illumination). Therein the probably Jewish rooted term هورقليا (often pointed hurqalyá (هُورْقَلْيَا), but more likely hawaqalyá (هَوَرْقَلْيَا)) is associated with the “eighth clime” and with the cosmic, supernatural cites of Jábulqa[á] and Jábarsa[ṣá] (cf. Shaykh Aḥmad JK 1/ii, 103). Hurqalyá/hawaqalyá is referred to as something *dhát al-ajá‘ib* (“redolent of wonders”, Hikmat, 159–60). In his commentary upon Suhrawardí’s *Ḥikmat al-ishráq*, Shams ad-Dín Muḥammad Shahrazúrí (d. after 687/1288) again associates this term with Jábulqá and Jábarsá. Commenting upon the “eighth clime” he writes that “Jábulqá”, “Jábarṣá” [spellings vary] and “Hurqalyá” are “names of cities in the world of the *‘álam al-mithál* (“world of similitudes”) adding that Hurqalyá is differentiated by being the *‘alam al-alák al-muthul* (The world of the spheres of the [World of the] similitudes)” (Sh-Hikmat, xxxii; 574, 594–5).

Suhrawardí was apparently the first to use the mystical-cosmological term, hurqalyá [= hawaqalyá] as indicative of a luminous supernatural interworld. It may be a garbled (no letter

*lám* or *‘ayn* registered), Arabized transliteration of the biblical Hebrew הָרָקִיעַ (*há-ráqîa‘*, Gen. 1:6f; with the Heb. definite article) meaning “the expanse” or “the firmament”. In the Hebrew Bible הָרָקִיעַ denotes what lies between the cosmic “waters” and is the locality where God “set” the “sun” moon and stars (Gen. 1:6–8). Conceptually it is something of a cosmological “interworld” dividing the cosmic “waters” from the “waters” as well as a source of stunningly bright light. In Rabbinic texts and Jewish mystical traditions רָקִיעַ has a close association with the bright light and with the sun.[[151]](#footnote-151) The “firmament” is understood to signify a dazzlingly radiant light beaming cosmic phenomenon, a kind of luminous “interworld” betwixt earth and heaven. The *Sepher ha Zohar* of Moses de Leon (CE c. 1240–1305), several times identifies צָקִיעַ (ṣáqîa‘) as a reality of stunning brightness (Zohar 1:15aff). This important Jewish mystical text appropriately cites Dan. 12:3 in asserting that the מַשְׂכִּילִים (*maśkîlîm*, “the wise” or “those who have insight”) “shall shine (יַזְהִרוּ, *yazhirú*) like the brightness of the רָקִיעַ זֹהַר (*zohar há-raqîa*)” (*Berachoth*, 1.16aff). In view its cosmological and other senses רָקִיעַ would not have been inappropriately adopted in an Ishráqí cosmology of light.[[152]](#footnote-152) Húrqalyá became important in Shaykhí hermeneutics as the future sphere of the eschatological resurrection “body” though it does not appear to have been directly adopted in the Bábí-Bahá’í demythologization of latter day “resurrection” motifs (-->5.1fí).[[153]](#footnote-153)

Biblical and Isrá’íliyyat motifs and elements are found within Suhrawardí’s fifty or more

Arabic and Persian works. *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* imagery and motifs associated with love and beauty are creatively expounded with reference to Adam, Joseph the acme of *jamál* (Beauty), Zulaykha and others in Suhrawardí’s Persian *Treatise on the Reality of Enraptured Love* (*fí ḥaqíqat al-‘ishq*) (Suhrawardí, Ishq, [1999]: 58–76).

A Johannine Paraclete reference is present in the 7th section (*haykal*) of Suhrawardí’s (Arabic) *Hayákil an-núr* (Temples of Light). Having cited Q. 29:43 and alluded to Matt. 13:13, Suhrawardí refers to the *tá’wil* (inner sense) and *bayán* (exposition) of these texts extending beyond the prophets (*al-anbiyá’*) unto that *maẓhar al-a‘ẓam* (mightiest theophany) who is the *al-fáraqlítá*, the eschatological Paraclete and supreme expounder (Ar. Hayakil, 88). This paraclete reference was commented upon by Jalál ad-Dín Dawwání (d. 907/1501) (Dawwání, Shawakil, 215f). He saw the *maẓhar al-a‘ẓam* as the “supreme Light theophany” closely related to the Spirit-Paraclete which was also identified with the twelfth Imám or Mahdí (Qá’im) (Corbin, 1970:39–50; 1971–2b:257; Corbin/Suhrawardí, 1970:41f/ 84–108 [Per.]).

Prior to Dawwání, Sayyid Ḥaydar Ámulí (d. 787/1385) in his influential *Jámi‘ al-asrár manba‘ al-anwár* (Book of the Compendium of Mysteries and the Source of Lights), had cited and commented upon a Paraclete saying ascribed to Jesus,

We bring unto you outer revelation (*at-tanzíl*); but, as for the inner revelation (*at-ta’wíl*), this the Paraclete (*al-fáraqlít*) will bring in the latter days (*fí ákhir al-zamán*). The term Paraclete (*al-fáraqlít*) in their [the Christians’] language signifies the Mahdí [eschatological Messiah] … who will bring the inner exegesis (*at-ta’wíl*) of the Qur’án (Ámulí, Jami‘ §205, III:5, 103–4).

Ḥaydar Ámulí and others after him held that “the coming of the Imam-Paraclete will inaugurate the reign of the purely spiritual meaning of the divine Revelations—that is to say, the true religion which is the eternal *waláya*” (Corbin, 1993:73). The purely spiritual sense of religion will be brought by the messiah in the age of the eternal *waláya* (<--1.3 (Lambden, 1997:85f). A century or so after al-Ámúlí a similar view was expressed by Muḥammad b. Zayn ad-Dín better known as Ibn Abí Jumhúr al-Ishráqí al-Aḥsá’í (d. late 15th cent.). He was important for achieving a synthesis of Shí‘í scholastic theology, Avicennan philosophy, Ishráqí theosophy and the mysticism of Ibn al-‘Arabí (d. 638/1240). In his *K. al-Mujlí* the Christian *al-*

*fáraqlíṭ* (Paraclete) is identified with the hidden twelfth Imam, the *ṣáḥíb al-zamán* (Lord of the Age), who will bring the *ta’wíl* of sacred scripture (Mujli, 308 cited Corbin, 1970:55). This same writer’s annotated compendium of Shí‘í traditions, entitled *‘Awálí al-la’álí[[154]](#footnote-154)* quotes several Islamicate biblically rooted traditions. Among these texts are passages from the Islamicate (pseudo-HB) *tawrát* (Torah) which begins “O son of Adam!” and calls humankind to the fear of the Lord and the honouring of parents (‘Awali, 1:270, cf. 3:536; 4:78). Another quotation from the Muslim, Islamicate Bible is a version of the Johannine paraclete promise as relayed from Muḥammad alleging that “Jesus said, ‘We bring you the outer revelation (*at-tanzíl*) but as for *at-ta’wíl* (the inner revelation) it will come with *al-Fáraqlíṭ* (the Paraclete) at the end of the age (*ákhir al-zamán*)’ (‘Awali, 4:124).” Expectation of an eschatological Paraclete identified with the twelfth Imam, Mahdí-Qá’im became an integral part of Shí‘í messianism. It was also taken up and developed in Bahá’í biblical exegesis (Corbin 1970; Lambden 1997).

Muḥyí ad-Dín Ibn al-‘Arabí and his Shí‘í followers

Perhaps the greatest mystical philosopher of Islam, Ibn al-‘Arabí (d. 638/1240) wrote several hundred works many of which were deeply studied by influential Shí‘í mystics and philosophers. His role was especially great in the realm of Iranian Shí‘í spirituality, gnosis and mysticism. Despite concerns over the monistic underpinning of the *waḥdat al-wujúd* (“existential oneness”) inclined mysticism of some of his devotees, this did not repel those enchanted by the labyrinthine magnitude of his mystically and intellectually challenging thought (Knysh, 1999, Sells, 1994).

A number of the works of Ibn al-‘Arabí compile, draw upon or interpret Isrá’ílíyát rooted qur’anic verses, traditions and extra-qur’anic revelations (*ḥadíth qudsí*). His *Muḥaḍarát al-abrár* (Conference of the Pious and the Conversations of the Perfect) is largely made up of Isrá’ílíyát and related traditions, especially *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* episodes and “chronicles of times gone by, the lives of the Ancients and of the Prophets, the history of kings both Arab and non-Arab” (*Muḥáḍarát*, 1:2, tr. Addas, 1993:100). Within this text are found a number of Sufi type sayings of Jesus which have little gospel precedent (Muḥáḍarat, 2:2, 30, 253).

Ibn al-‘Arabí doubtless knew the Jewish/Christian Bible but avoided citing it as part of his Islamic mystical universe of discourse. Biblical quotations are absent in many (if not most/all?) of his key writings. It is likely that he saw the Q. as the locus of all past sacred books including the *tawrát* and *Injíl*. His mystic quest early on led him to encounter and claim direct advice from the celestial Jesus, with whom, as the “seal of the saints” (*khatm al-awliyá’*), he had a deep though Islamocentric relationship (Gryphon, 1999:593f). In his *Futúḥát al-makiyya* Ibn al-‘Arabí writes: “He [Jesus] is my first master on the Way; it is in his hands that I was converted. He [Jesus] watches over me [Ibn al-‘Arabí] at all hours, not leaving me for even a second. … I often met him in my visions” (Futuhat III:341; II:49 tr. Addas 2000:25–6).

Ibn al-‘Arabí’s mystical intercourse with the celestial Jesus perhaps made citation of the concrete pre-qur’anic Christian NT/Bible relatively meaningless. His mysticism of the sacred and archetypal *Kitáb* (Book) embraced many levels including that of the Perfect Man *al-insán al-kámil*. This all but made the citation of pre-Islamic scripture irrelevant (al-Ḥakím, Mu‘jam, 939ff). For the Great Shaykh words indicative of scripture can have meanings other than the obvious. *Al-kitáb al-jámi‘* (“the Comprehensive Book”) can mean Adam “who gathers into his essence all the differentiated realities of the world” (Futuhat, II:67). For Ibn al-‘Arabí the terms *tawráh* and *injíl* may indicate modes of *al-kitáb* (the Book) or other realities and conditions of being.

A mystic totally unlike the literalistic, anti-biblical Ibn Ḥazm, Ibn ‘Arabí’s need to cite or consult existing biblical texts was probably negated before the scintillating “Logos-Light” of the Prophet, the *an-núr al-muḥammadiyya* and the Q. not to mention his constant mystical nearness to Jesus, the fountainhead of the *injíl*. Ibn al-‘Arabí quite frequently cited divinely revealed verses from the heritage of Sufi generated Jesus sayings or from quasi-biblical *tawrát* and *injíl* versions though he appears to have completely (?) bypassed citation from existing Islamic Arabic, Jewish or Christian versions of the Bible.

An example of Ibn al-‘Arabí’s quotation of the non-canonical, conflated, rewritten, Islamized “biblical” text is the following *tawrát* citation found in his *K. al-jalál wa’l-jamál* (Book

of the Divine Majesty and Beauty). Commenting upon Q. 51:56, Ibn al-‘Arabí quotes this extra-qur’anic revelation (*ḥadíth qudsí*) allegedly contained in “His [God’s] Torah” (*tawrát*),”

Allusion (*al-Ishára*): If you desire to comprehend the parameters of gnosis (*ḥadd al-ma‘rifa*) … in this verse then gaze upon what He [God] has created for your sake … within yourself. … And if you are unable to accomplish this … then realize it by means of what God … revealed in His Torah” (*tawrát*), “O Son of Adam. I created everything (*al-ashyá’*) for thy sake and I created thee for my sake. So do not subjugate what I created for my sake to that which I created for thine own sake (Affifi, *Rasá’il*, 15).[[155]](#footnote-155)

Begun in Mecca in 598/1201 Ibn al-‘Arabí’s massive (560 chapter) theosophical compendium *al-Futaḥát al-makkiyya* (‘The Meccan Inspirations’, 2,500+ pp.) contains many mystical interpretations of both quranic and post-qur’anic prophetology and Isrá’íliyyát influenced traditions. Despite its vastness the *Futúḥát* does not include canonical biblical citations. The dozen occurrences of *tawrát* and the around half that number of *Injíl* do not introduce biblical or even pseudo-biblical quotations. As in the *Muḥaḍarát* (<--) there are quite a few Sufi type Jesus sayings, utterances of *al-masíḥ* (the messiah) in the *Futúḥát* (I:368–9; I:652; IV:633).

Among the most influential and important of Ibn ‘Arabí’s later works is his relatively brief (around 200 pp.) yet very influential *Fuṣúṣ al-ḥikam* (“Ringstones of Wisdom”, 627/1230). Its author claimed that each of its twenty-seven chapters were given to him in a vision of Muḥammad. Each “bezel” revolved around one of the aforementioned 27 prophets (cf. <--1.2) who enshrine a particular divine attribute, mode (*maqám*) or wisdom central to engagement with the divine (Chittick, EIr. VII:665; Izutsu, Enc.Rel. V:554). Relative to possible biblical influence section six, the Isaac bezel, *Ḥikmat ḥaqíqat fí kalimat ‘Isháqiyya* (The Wisdom of Reality in the Word of Isaac) may show biblical influence in that Isaac and not the (usual) Islamic Ishmael is the one made ready for sacrifice (*Fusus*, 84f/tr.98f).

In excess of one hundred Arabic and Persian commentaries have been written upon

the *Fuṣuṣ*. Especially influential were the commentaries of Mu’ayyad ad-Dín Jandí (d.c. 700/1300) and Muḥammad Dáwúd Qayṣarí (d. 672/1274). Qayṣarí cites John 14:28 as an utterance of Jesus, the “revealer of divine secrets, the seal of the universal sainthood” in his *Sharḥ fuṣúṣ al-ḥikam* (see Margoliouth ERE 9:482). Commenting upon *nubuwwiyya* (prophethood) in the *kalimat ‘ísáwiyya*, in the same work Qayṣarí expounds the various significances of *nubuwwa khaṣṣa* and *nubuwwa ‘amma* as used by Ibn al-‘Arabí (<--1.3 Qayṣarí, Sh.Fusus, 843).

Ibn al-‘Arabí himself wrote a summary exposition of the essential ideas of the *Fuṣuṣ* entitled *Naqsh al-fuṣúṣ* … (The Imprint of the Ringstones; HIP 1:516) which also came to be much commented upon in both Arabic and Persian. The Persian commentary of the poet and mystic ‘Abd al-Raḥman Jámí (d. 898/1492) was very influential. It was the Great Shaykh’s disciple and stepson Ṣadr ad-Dín al-Qúnawí (d. 673/1274–1275) through whom Ibn ‘Arabí’s teachings “reached the Persian speaking world” (Chittick, ibid., 666). He also commented upon the prophetogical-theosophical chapter headings of the *Fuṣúṣ* in his *K. Fakk al-fukúk* (“The Unsealing of the Constituents”).

Biblical-qur’anic prophet figures are given multi-faceted interpretations by Ibn al-‘Arabí and by many of the representatives of his “school”. They had a wide-ranging influence on ways of non-literally interpreting prophetological motifs. Joseph, son of Jacob, for example, is often associated with that bright luminosity which is the Logos of Light and Beauty (Ibn ‘Arabí, *Fuṣúṣ*, 99–106; *Naqsh* [tr. Chittick] 58). For al-Qúnawí the *Fuṣúṣ* brought the quintessence of the *dhawq* (mystical “tasting”) of the prophetological gnosis of God (*al-Fukúk*, 184 tr. Chittick in HIP 1:515). The influence of this mystical prophetology is evident in some of the *‘ifrání* (esoteric) prophetological statements found in Bábí-Bahá’í scripture (BA\*, INBA 56).

The Báb and the first two architects of Shaykhism (-->6.1f) occasionally cited Ibn al-

‘Arabí.[[156]](#footnote-156) The Báb held back though from affirming anything associated with pantheistic monism (*waḥdat al-wujúd*) or *ḥulúl* (“incarnation”), preferring and frequently underlining a strictly apophatic theology (Lambden, 1997:54ff). Critically commenting, for example, on the concepts of *basíṭ al-ḥaqíqa* (“undifferentiated reality”) and *waḥdat al-wujúd* in his *R. Dhahabiyya* the Báb wrote that, “All of this is unadulterated heresy (‘idolatry’; *shirk maḥad*) in the estimation of family of God” (INBMC 86:96–7).[[157]](#footnote-157) Despite this critique there is little doubt that the vocabulary and certain doctrinal dimensions of the Báb’s teachings echo the gnosis of Ibn al-‘Arabí. The *‘ilm al-ḥurúf* aspect of Ibn al-‘Arabí’s esoteric *jafr* (gematric prognosis and numerology) as set forth towards the beginning of his *al-Futúḥát* and in other writings, directly or indirectly influenced the Báb when he set down dimensions of his talismanic cosmology, prophetology and gnosis.[[158]](#footnote-158)

Though they differ in a good many doctrinal respects it is clearly the case that various writings of both the Báb and BA\* show the influence of the theosophical Sufism of Ibn al-‘Arabí and members of his “school” including, for example, Dáwúd Qayṣarí (<--), Sayyid Ḥaydar ‘Amulí (d. 787/1385) and ‘Abd al-Karím al-jílí (d. 832/1428). The style and vocabulary of the Báb’s *R. Dhahabiyya* and the *L-Ḥurafát al-muqaṭṭ‘a* of BA\* are at times affirmative of a very close direct and/or indirect relationship to the mystical gnosis of Ibn al-‘Arabí.

5.3 Bible and Isrá’íliyyát: ‘School of Iṣfahán’ and the Safavid period

A vast array of texts and literatures relating in one way or another to the Bible and

Isrá’íliyát traditions date to the Safavid and Qajar periods. This is particularly true of the ‘irfání literatures of the so-called ‘School of Iṣfahán’ which flourished during the earlier Safavid period. The later Shí‘í encounter with the Abrahamic and related religions in Iran, Iraq and elsewhere caused some Arab and Persian writers to examine the scriptures and traditions of Judaism and Christianity. In this section a few of the Shí‘í writers of these periods who cited the Bible and dwelt upon Isrá’íliyyát traditions will be mentioned.

Muḥammad Báqir Astarábádí, Mír Dámád

Mír Dámád (d. 1041/1641) styled himself “Ishráq” after Suhrawardí and was known as the “Third Master” succeeding Aristotle and al-Farábí. A central, foundational figure of the philosophical-theological ‘School of Iṣfahán’ his often complex, frequently gnostically oriented Persian and Arabic works include materials of central interest. His Persian treatise *al-Jadhawát* (“Particles of Fire”), for example, responds to an Indian scholars’ enquiry as to why Moses was not consumed by the Sinaitic fire attendant upon the divine theophany (*tajallí*). In addition to the cosmological-theophanological implications of Moses’ experience of the divine, this multi-faceted work also contains interpretations of the qur’anic *al-ḥurufát al-muqaṭṭa‘a* (isolated letters). Interesting reference is made in the sixth firebrand of *al-Jadhawát* to the sphere of هورقليا *Húrqalyá*/*Hawaqalyá* (<--loosely, “interworld”), a term which (5.2 <--as noted) probably has (Judaic-) Ishráqí roots and became important in Shaykhí cosmological gnosis (-->6.1f);

An established group among the Islamic Pythagoreans and Platonists and a body of the Islamic Ishráqís, have it that there exists a world centrally situated (*‘álam-i mutawassiṭ*) betwixt the hidden world (*‘álam-i ghayb*) which is the world of the Intellect (*‘álam-i ma‘qúl*), and the world of evident reality (*‘álam-i sháhadat*) which is the perceptible world (*‘álam-i maḥsús*). And such a world they have named *Hurqalyá* which is a perceptible world though a shadowy, spectral world, a realm disembodied which they have named the world of the isthmus (*‘álam al-barzakh*) and the eighth clime (*iqlíl thámin*), the earth of reality (*arḍ-i ḥaqíqa*), something disembodied, disengaged (*khiyál munfaṣíl*) (Jadhwat, 47).

This interworld named *Húrqalyá* (= *Hawaqalyá*) is important in connection with the Shaykhí view of the sphere of the hidden Imám and the “earth” of the realm of supra-bodily,

spiritual, resurrection. In all likelihood this is an item of Isrá’íliyyát in the sense of its being rooted in cosmologically suggestive biblical Hebrew terminology interpreted in Rabbinic and mystical Judaism as a scintillant realm of celestial light (-->6.1f).

Bahá’ ad-Dín al-‘Ámilí

A contemporary and friend of Mír Dámád, the erudite, polymathic and prolific (in both Arabic and Persian) Bahá’ ad-Dín al-‘Ámilí (= Shaykh Bahá’í;[[159]](#footnote-159) d. Iṣfahán c. 1031/1622) was by some considered the *mujaddid* (“Renewer”) of the 11th century (Qummí, *Kunyá*, 2:100). Widely travelled through Syria, Anatolia, Egypt and elsewhere, al-Ámilí must have interacted with middle-eastern Jewish and Christian communities in these places as well as within Lebanon where he was born and in Iran his adopted homeland.

Shaykh Bahá’í was revered and at home in both the Ottoman Sunní and Safavid Shí‘í worlds of his day. He had Sufi ascetical and mystical proclivities. There is little doubt that he had positive interactions with Jews and Christians and a considerable knowledge of their scriptures and traditions (Moreen, 1987:129f; Bosworth, 1989:52f). His short *Risála fí dhábá’iḥ ahl al-kitáb*, a treatise prohibiting the consumption of meat slaughtered by the *ahl al-kitáb*, does not refer to the Bible but illustrates Ámilí’s wide knowledge of Shí‘í traditions and of Jewish and Christian practises (cf. Baḥrání, *Lu’lu’at*, 21; Kohlberg, E.Ir. 3:429).

Shaykh Bahá’í is best known for his literary anthology *Kashkúl* (Begging Bowl). That this compilation includes Islamicate Bible citations had been noted long ago by Goldziher (1878:385–6). More than a century later in his *Bahá’ ad-Dín al-Ámilí* and his literary anthologies (1989), Bosworth observed that *al-Ámilí* shows a “good acquaintance with the Judaic background of Islamic civilization” as evidenced in his reasonably accurate listing of the books of the Hebrew Bible and occasional citations therefrom (Torah/Hebrew Bible, e.g. Prov. 14:11;

Bosworth 1989:32f). Like many other Safavid scholars Shaykh Bahá’í cited a number of Islamo-biblical passages. In his *Kashkúl* there exist passages allegedly rooted in the *tawrát* including around seven *ḥadíth qudsí* mostly addressed to humanity as the “Son of Adam [Man]” (*yá ibn ádam*). A few examples,

From the *Tawrát* (“Torah”):

Whoso is not content with My decree, is impatient over My [sending] calamity and lacking in thankfulness for My providence shall assuredly be taken away by a lord aside from Me (*rabban sawá’í*); from being one most radiant (*aṣbaḥ*) [that one shall be] one that weepeth over the world …

O Son of Man! There is never a new day save He [God] betoweth upon thee a measure of thy providence and there is never a new night save there is brought by the angels before me some [news of] thy repugnant action. My good unto thee descends while thy evil ascends unto Me.

O Moses! Whoso loveth me shall never forget me and whoso is hopeful of my knowledge shall urgently beseech in questioning me …
(Kashkul, 2:318; cf. Goldziher 1878:385–6).

Possibly reflecting Shaykh Bahá’í’s own smattering of Hebrew (?) there exists a passage in the *Kashkúl* cited as being *min at-tawráh* (“From the Torah”). It consists of an Arabic transliteration of the Hebrew letters of Gen. 17:20, a verse which mentions Ishmael’s begetting שְׁנֵים־עָשָׂר נְשִׂיאִם = (Per. [Ámílí]) *duvazdih-i surúr* (“twelve princes”) evidently understood by Shaykh Bahá’í (as by other twelver Shí‘ís) to be a prophecy of the twelver Imams in connection with (Heb.) לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל (= Per. [Ámílí]) *ummat-i ‘aẓímí*, the “to a great nation” of Islam (Ishmael being a prototype of Muḥammad) (Kashkul, 3:473; cf. Bosworth 1989:15, 52f). Statements of Jesus and Mary are also found in the *Kashkúl* with a discussion on the three *aqáním* (divine hypostases) and a list of the Christian sects, the Melkites (‘Orthodox’) Jacobites/Monophysites and Nestorians (Bosworth, 1989:53).

Another literary anthology of Shaykh Bahá’í earlier than the *Kashkúl* is entitled *Mikhlát* (Nose-Bag). Urwah b. al-Zubayr (d.c. 91/709) is therein cited as having said, “It is written in the Wisdom: ‘My son let thy word be good and thy face cheerful; thou shalt be beloved by men more than one who gives them a gift’”. This reflects Ecclesiasticus 18:16–17 and 35:9. In the *Mikḥlat* Malik b. Dinar (d.c. 125/742) is also cited as having stated “It is written in the

Wisdom: it is forbidden to every heart that loves money to speak the truth”. This again echoes Eccles. 26:29–27:1. (Margoliouth 1915:404–7)

Among Shaykh Bahá’í’s further works of interest is his *Mathnaví* poem, *Dar rumúz-i ism-i a‘ẓam* (“On the mysteries of the Mightiest Name”) which contains some interesting prophetological motifs. It is the *ism-i a‘ẓam* which is the Mightiest Name through a sunburst of which Moses experienced the luminous Sinaitic theophany. This theophanological concept is also found in the writings of the Báb and developed in the light of an esoteric interpretation of Exod. 3:13 and 6:3f by BA\* (Báb INBA 6003C:173–188; BA\* Má’idih 4:38–41, tr. Lambden 1986:37–40; idem, 1988:104ff + 169, fn. 115). It was by reciting this miraculous all-powerful Name that Jesus resurrected the dead and himself rose from the dead. For Shaykh Bahá’í the *ism-i a‘ẓam* enshrines the *kunúz-i asmá* (“treasures of the Divine Names”) (Rumúz, 94).

Isrá’íliyyát rooted motifs understood numerologically are registered in al-Ámilí’s *Khuláṣat al-ḥisáb* (“Summary of Arithmetics”). Rooted in neo-Pythagorean “gnosis” is the fact that the sum of the integers until 9 (1+2+3+4+5+6+7+8+9) is 45 which is also the *abjad* numerical value of the name Ádam (Á=1 + D=4 + M=40 = 45). It is also the case that the sum of the integers until 5 (1+2+3+4+5) yields 15, the abjad numerical value of the name Eve (Ar. Ḥawwá’ (حَوَّاء) = Eve = 8+6+1 = 15).[[160]](#footnote-160) The qur’anic detached letters Tá’ (= 9) and Há’ (= 5) prefixed to Q. 20 yield (*abjad*) 9 and 5 respectively which also multiply to give 45, the number of Ádam. The two numbers 9 and 5 are also the sides of the rectangle 45, Eve, being 5 as its left side, the “rib” of “Adam” (*Khuláṣat*, 171–4; Bausani, 1981:25).

To some degree indebted to Shaykh Bahá’í, Shaykh Aḥmad and the Báb, in a letter to a French (?) enquirer about the *ism-i a‘ẓam* (Mightiest Name of God) on the Bahá’í ringstone symbol, AB\* pointed out that the summation of the integers till 5 indicates the Báb who corresponds to Eve (= Báb = 2+1+2 = 5 = 15 = Eve) and until 9 indicates BA\*, the locus and personification of the *al-ism al-a‘ẓam* as *bahá’* (lit. “Splendour”; *abjad* = 2+5+1+1 = 9 = 45 = Ádam) which corresponds to Adam. For AB\* the Báb and BA\* were thus primogenitors

of a new humanity in the Bábí-Bahá’í era (AB\*, Má’idih, 2:101–3; Báb., R.Nub.K. 14:335f; -->7).

Ṣadrá ad-Dín Shírází, Mullá Ṣadrá

Within certain of his works the important Shi‘ite philosopher Mullá Ṣadrá (d. 1050/1640) commented upon Isrá’íliyyát materials and cited an Islamicate Bible. In his important *Sharḥ al-uṣul al-káfí*,[[161]](#footnote-161) for example, he quotes the whole range of pre-Islamic scripture in commenting upon the following saying of the fourth Imám, ‘Alí Zayn al-Ábidín (d.c. 96/713) in the form of a *ḥadíth qudsí* relayed from the prophet Daniel:

‘If the people knew what was involved in the search after knowledge (*al-‘ilm*) they would assuredly seek it even though it involved the shedding of one’s life-blood or plunging down into the abyss.’ Thus did God inspire Daniel with the words; ‘Abhor my servant the ignorance of such as look despairingly upon the truth of the custodians of knowledge (*bi-ḥaqq ahl al-‘ilm*); denounce mere imitation of others. The most beloved of my servants are such as incline towards the fear of God (*at-taqwá*), those who seek after an abundance of merit before the learned (*‘ulamá’*), subordinate to the wise (*al-ḥukamá’*) who speak out wisdom’ (*al-ḥukamá’*) (Sh-Kafi, 3:86).

After quoting a saying taught to Alexander the Great and some advice which Luqmán bequeathed to his son, Mullá Ṣadrá makes the following highly ecumenical statement, “Know that the rest of the books of God (*kutub Alláh*) are [also] articulate the grace of wisdom (*náṭiq bi-faḍl al-‘ilm*). He next cites a saying from the Islamicate (pseudo-) *tawrát*:

With respect to the Torah he [God] said to Moses, “Magnify wisdom (*al-ḥikmat*) for I shall not place wisdom in the heart of any servant unless he desire that I forgive him. So teach it and act in accordance therewith … (Sh-Kafi, 3:99).

Mullá Ṣadrá then cites the *Zabúr* (Psalter), introduced in the following way,

And as for the *Zabúr*, God (exalted be He), said [therein], ‘O David! Say unto the learned [Rabbis] (*aḥbár*) of the children of Israel and their monks (*ruhbán*): ‘Speak of such people as are God-fearing (*at-atqiyá*). And if you do not find among them the fear of God (*taqíyan*) then converse with the learned ones (*‘ulamá’*). And if you do not find it with them, converse with the wise (*al-‘uqalá’*). The fear of God (*at-taqá*), knowledge (*al-‘ilm*) and wisdom (*al-‘aql*) are three realities which exhibit a degree of oneness such that if but one of them is not

found in any one of My creatures I have desired his destruction (Sh-Kafi, 3:99–100).

After commenting upon this *Zabúr* citation Mullá Ṣadrá writes, “As for the *Injíl* (Gospel[s]), He—exalted be He [God]—says in the seventh *súra* [of?]:

Woe unto whomsoever heard knowledge (*al-‘Ilm*) yet failed to seek after it! Such are fit to be gathered up with the ignorant for [casting into] hellfire (*an-nár*). So seek ye knowledge and instruct therein! Knowledge, if it does not delight you it will not oppress you. And if it does not elevate you it will not put you down. If it does not make you independent it will not impoverish you. If it does not benefit you it will not injure you. God will say on the Day of Resurrection, ‘O concourse of the learned (*‘ulamá’*)! What is your opinion regarding your Lord?’ And they will reply, ‘We suppose that Thou art merciful towards us and forgiving towards us’. Then he [God] will say, ‘I have assuredly taken such action. I have indeed entrusted you with My wisdom (*ḥikmatí*). This I did not do to accomplish some evil. Nay rather, I desired it for good to be established among you. So enter then into peace, into My Paradise through My Mercy’ (Sh-Kafi, 3:100).

After this Islamicate *Injíl* citation Mullá Ṣadrá quotes another pasage from the *Tafsír* of Muqátil b. Sulaymán (<--2.1);

Muqátil said, “I found in the *Injíl* that God—exalted be He—said to Jesus, ‘Magnify the learned (*‘ulamá’*) and be aware of their bounty (*faḍl*). I have bestowed grace upon them above all my creatures except the prophets (*an-nabiyyín*) and the messengers (*mursalín*). This even as the bounty of the sun above the stars, the bounty of the hereafter above this mortal world and even as My Bounty above everything else’” (Sh-Kafi, 3:100).

Finally, Mullá Ṣadrá cites a highly Shí‘í statement from Jesus:

Out of the community of Muḥammad—upon him and his family be peace—are the *‘ulamá’* (the learned), *ḥukamá’* (the wise, philosophers). In view of (their) [legal] comprehension (*al-fiqh*) they are even as prophets (*anbiyá’*). They will be made content by God with but little providence (*ar-rizq*) and God will be satisfied with them through a mere token of [their] action. They will assuredly enter Paradise (*jannat*) through ‘There is no God but God’ (*bi-lá iláha illá Alláh*) (Sh-Kafi, 3:100).

This citation from Mullá Ṣadra from Muqátil is a good example of how a much older pseudo-biblical citation can appear in a highly respected source of the mid 17th cent. CE. It is followed by Islamicate pseudo-biblical texts which obviously says more about Mullá Ṣadrá than anything Jesus might have uttered.

Sayyid Aḥmad b. Zayn al-Ábidín al-Alawí

An Iṣfáhání first cousin, son-in-law and student of Mír Dámád, Sayyid Aḥmad (d.c. 1050/1650) was a major philosopher, theologian and polemicist. Equally an Avicennan peripatetic (*mashshá’ún*) and an Ishráqí Platonist (*Ishráqíyán*), Sayyid Aḥmad was also especially expert in the Abrahamic religions having made a detailed study of the scriptures of the pre-Islamic *ahl al-kitáb*. According to Corbin, Sayyid Aḥmad had a “perfect knowledge of Hebrew”, frequently cited the HB in Arabic characters and was able to translate the text word for word into Persian (Corbin, 1985/E.Ir. 1:645). Giving precedence to qur’anic scripture in the light of Shí‘í hermeneutical and doctrinal norms, Sayyid Aḥmad wrote four Persian volumes in dialogue with Jews, Christians and their sacred scriptures:

• *Laṭá’if-i ghaybí* (Subtleties of the Unseen realm), some hermeneutical preliminaries.

• *Ṣawá‘iq-i raḥmán* (The Thunderbolts of the All-Merciful). A disputation with Judaism and the Torah (HB).

• *K. Lawámi‘-i rabbání fí radd ash-shubba an-naṣrániyya* (The Lordly Brilliancies in refutation of Christian misconceptions; 1031/1622). A confrontation with Christianity, an affirmation of biblical *taḥríf* and an attempt to prove the superiority of Islam.

• *Miṣqal-i ṣafá dar tajliya wa taṣfiyay-i á’ínay-i ḥaqq-namá dar radd-i madhab-i naṣárá* (The Polisher of purity to burnish and make clear the mirror showing the truth in refutation of the Christian faction; 1032/1622).

The fourth work was a response to the *Áyínay-i ḥaqq namá* (“The Mirror showing the Truth”, 1609) by the Portugese Jesuit missionary Girolamo (Jerome) Xavier (d. 1617).[[162]](#footnote-162) Not the only Safavid ‘Álim to respond to Xavier (Lee, 1824:cxiiiff; Hairi, 1993:155), Sayyid Aḥmad apparently wrote this work after a “dream-vision” of the twelfth Imám as a supplement to the *Lawámi‘* (<--). Therein he referred to Xavier’s volume as *kalám bí-farjam* (“useless discourse”) (Hairi, 1993:156). Responses to Sayyid Aḥmad’s polemic were written by Phillipus

Guadagnolus and the Italian Pietro Della Valle (d. 1652) who had met Mír Dámád (<--) in Iṣfahán and presented him with his own Persian *Risála* (Ellis, BMCat. 1:col. 592; Rossi, 1948:32ff; Gurney, 1986)

Within the works listed above ‘Alawí makes considerable use of the messianic, Islamo-biblical Paraclete (*fáraqlit*) motif as found in various Johannine texts. Like others before him he related this figure to the messianic twelfth Imám and knew a “twofold manifestation of the Paraclete” in the persons of Muḥammad and the eschatological Twelfth Imám (Corbin, 1976:232f; 1985 [EIr.] 1:644f).[[163]](#footnote-163) On the basis of his direct reading of John 14:26 towards the beginning of the *Lawámi‘y-i rabbání* he identified the *Fáraqlít* (Paraclete) with the *rúḥ al-quds* (“Holy Spirit”) who will come *bi-nám-i man* (“in My name”) and teach *jami‘ chiz-há* (“all things” Jn. 14:26a) (Lawámi‘, 3–4; 15a-b, 102; cf. Lee, 1824:xliff).

The *Lawámi‘* includes some details regarding biblical predictions of [the] name Muḥammad. Sayyid Aḥmad cites an Arabic phrase from one of the Psalms (*mazmúr az mazámír*) which is actually a loose, rewritten Arabic version of Psalm 50:1b (Heb.) מִצִּיּוֹן מִכְלַל־יֹפִי אֱלֹהִים הוֹפִיעַ, which (in the literalistic RSV translation reads) “Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth”. The Arabic version cited by ‘Alawí (identical with that cited in the *K. Dín wa’d-dawla* of aṭ-Ṭabarí) reads (translated in the light of the intended meaning),

God manifested from Zion (*min ṣihyún*) a praiseworthy (*maḥmúdan*) crown (*iklílan* (cf. the root of the Heb. מִכְלַל).[[164]](#footnote-164)

The interpretation of Sayyid Aḥmad reads, “It is evident that Zion indicates the name Mecca and *maḥmúd* (“praiseworthy”) the patronymic (*kunyá*) of Muḥammad as one crowned (*iklíl*).

Here is struck a similitude of “rulership and imamate” (Lawami‘ 14b). Other titles of Muḥammad in biblical prophecy are elsewhere set down by Sayyid Aḥmad including his *Tawrát* (Torah) “name” *me’od me’od* (actually the adverbial phrase “exceedingly” in Gen. 17:20b AV & RSV) interpreted in Persian as meaning “Great, Great” (Per. buzurg, buzurg).[[165]](#footnote-165) Despite, or in view of his linguistic awareness, Sayyid Aḥmad upheld a form of biblical *taḥríf* (“corruption”) (Lawami‘-i Lee 1824:IXvff).

Muḥammad Sa‘íd Sarmad and the *Dábistán*

The person and poetry of Muḥammad Sa‘íd Sarmad (executed Moghul India, 1072/1661), a Persian (Káshání) Jewish convert to Sufism who went around naked after the example of the prophet Isaiah (*Dábistán*, 1:215–6; cf. Gen. 2:25 [3:7, 21]) are highly regarded examples of Persian poetry. Sarmad is an interesting link between Safavid-Moghul mystico-religions culture, Shí‘í Islám, Hinduism and Rabbinic Judaism. In the *Dábistán-i madháhib* (The School of Religious Doctrines) it is said that on converting from Judaism to Islám he acquainted himself with the thought of Mullá Ṣadrá and Mír ‘Abú’l-Qásim Findiriskí (d. 1050/1641). He subsequently became “one of the outstanding masters of the Persian quatrain” (Schimmel, 1978:362) and “for the sake of commerce” (*ayyí-i tujjára*) took a sea voyage to India. Whilst at Thatta he became enraptured with a Hindu boy named Abhai Chand (*‘áshiq-i abhai* [= Abí] *chand hindú-i pisarí*) who became his ardent disciple. With Sarmad’s assistance Abhai Chand fairly literally translated Genesis 1–6 from Hebrew into Persian. Headed by the *basmalah* [recte *bismi’lláh*] and referred to as the ‘Book of Adam’ in the *Dábistán*, it concludes the section about the ‘Doctrines of the Jews’ (Per. vol. 1:218–233, tr. Shea and Troyer 1901:303).[[166]](#footnote-166)

An important text of the Ádhar Kayvání pseudo-Zoroastrian faction, the *Dábistán-i madháhib* (“The School of Religious Doctrines”) may have been authored during the decade prior to 1068/1658 by Mír Dhu’l-Fiqár Árdistání (E.Ir. VI:532–4). Published in Calcutta (1224/1809) Tehran (1260/1844) and Bombay 1264/1848 (also 1267/1851) in the 19th century, this work became an important source of information about world religions in Persia, the Middle East and elsewhere (Rieu, Cat. I:141–2). Whilst in Shíráz in 1825 Wolff listed the *Dábistán* among twenty-two Persian and seven Arabic “authors” most read by the learned Muslims of Shíráz (MJ III:53–4). The *Dábistán* contains, twelve main sections (ta‘lím, lit. ‘teachings’) dealing with Pársís (Zoroastrians), Hindus, Tibetans, Jews, Christians, Muslims, Ṣádiqiyya, Wáḥidiyya, Roshaniyyan, Iláhiyya, Philosophers and Sufis. Numerous other religious and philosophical subgroups are also mentioned. By modern standards the *Dábistán* contains, numerous “errors”. There are a few hints of its influence upon Bábí-Bahá’í primary sources though this possible source of influence is minimal and outside the scope of this thesis. The Báb, BA\* and AB\* probably knew and occasionally drew upon this unusual Persian work.[[167]](#footnote-167)

Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdí Ṭabáṭa’bá’í, Baḥr al-‘ulúm

Brief mention of a cordial *munáẓara* (debate) between the influential Shí‘í mujtahid Baḥr al-‘ulúm (d. 1212/1797; “The Ocean of the Sciences”) and representatives of a small Jewish group of Dhu’l-Kifl (20 miles south of Hilla, Iraq) must conclude this highly selective overview of aspects of the Bible and Isrá’íliyyát on the eve of the Qajar period. In was in 1796 that the aforementioned Shí‘í mujtahid, famous for his great polemical skills and ability in converting Jews (Algar, E.Ir. III:504), held debate with a few Jews or Jewish leaders named Dá’úd (David) and ‘Azrá (Ezra). This possibly historical debate (?) is recorded on the basis of original documents (?) in introductory sections of various editions of the *Rijál al-Sayyid Baḥr al-‘ulúm* (Rijal:[49] 50–66; Moreen 1999).

It appears that Baḥr al-‘ulúm had a very considerable knowledge of Muslim polemical

and *Iḥtijáj* literatures touching upon the Bible and Judaism although he appears to have lacked any direct knowledge of either the HB or the (to him) “reprehensible” Rabbinic literatures (Moreen 1999:575–6). His quoting paraphrases of biblical texts such as 1 Kings 11–12 and Exodus 32:1f most likely derived from his mastery of such Islamic sources as Ibn Bábúya (4.2 <--*Kamál ad-dín*, cf. Vajda, 1941–1945:131f) and earlier Sunní and Shí‘í polemicists. Like Sayyid Aḥmad he upheld biblical *taḥríf* (“corruption”) at one point in this debate refers to *at-taḥríf wa’l-ziyáda* (“corruption and addition”) (Bible) (Rijal: tr. Moreen 1999:583). His influence can be seen by the fact that several of his pupils engaged in the debate with Henry Martyn (-->).

5.4 Bible translation and dialogue up to the early Qajar period

The following notes must suffice to illustrate the availability of Persian and Arabic Bible translations up until the early Qajar period along with a few details of those who were involved in the early 19th century Shí‘í dialogue with western missionaries. It was during the Safavid era (1501–1722) that biblical translation and knowledge of the Abrahamic religions became better established, at least among certain of the learned and literate ruling class. The 19th century missionary engagement with Islam and the distribution of many Persian and Arabic Bible translations increased biblical awareness among Shí‘í Muslims.[[168]](#footnote-168)

According to Patristic testimony partial or complete (Middle) Persian Bible translation was accomplished in pre-Islamic times (Chrysostom *Homily on John* PG LIX col. 32). Very much later, from the 11th cent. CE, partial, then complete biblical translations into New Persian from the original Hebrew and Greek or indirectly from Syriac or other languages, began to appear (EIr IV:199–214; esp. 203–4). During the 14th-16th centuries CE important New Persian and Judaeo-Persian translations of biblical books were made.

A Persian translation of the Pentateuch was made by Joseph b. Moses in 719/1319, then another Judaeo-Persian Pentateuch translation dating to 952–953/1546 by Jacob ben

Joseph Táwús, a Persian professor at the Jewish Academy at Constantinople. This version was published in Constantinople in 1546 within a Jewish (Soncino) Polyglot Bible (EIr. IV:203–4). Just over a century later in 1657 this version (of the Pentateuch) was transliterated into Persian characters by Thomas Hyde and published within the London Polyglot Bible (D&M 2:1202; Fischel 1952:5–7; EIr. IV:204). In 742/1341 the Gospels were translated into Persian from Syriac by Yúhanná b. al-Kháṣṣ Yúsuf al-Ya’qúbí.[[169]](#footnote-169) It came to be the NT text within the London Polyglot Bible (1657) of Brian Walton (EIr. IV:203). Persian or Judaeo-Persian biblical books thus circulated through being published in European and other Polyglot Bibles (Darlow and Moule 2:1201–1211).

Both Sháh ‘Abbás I (r. 995–1038/1587–1629) and Sháh Sulṭán Ḥusayn I (r. 1105–1135/1694–1722) had a role in the appearance of Persian translations of the Gospels (EIr. IV:204). For the latter Sháh it was the outstanding translator Mír Muḥammad Báqir ibn-i Ismá‘íl Ḥusayní Khátúnábádí (d. 1127/1715) who made a Persian translation, expository sketch and paraphrase of every chapter of all four Gospels entitled *Tarjumay-i anájíl-i arba‘a* (Translation of the Four Gospels). In collaboration with Christian priests of Iṣfahán he apparently checked his rendering against several Arabic versions as well as Latin and Hebrew texts (Khátúnábádí, 1996; Arjomand, 1984:154–5).[[170]](#footnote-170)

Nadír Sháh Afshár (r. 1148–1160/1736–1747) was generally well disposed towards Christians (Jesuits, Carmelites or others) and Christian missionaries resident at Iṣfahán, Gilan and elsewhere. Apparently roused by the reference to the Bible (as *tawrát* and *Injíl*) in Q. 48:29 and informed that these scriptures were extant during his Indian expedition, Nadír Sháh ordered his then secretary and court historian Mírzá Muḥammad Mahdí Khán Astarábádí to arrange for a Persian translation. This task took just over a year being completed in 1154/June

1741. It involved the translation of both the Gospels and the Q. which was accomplished by eight Muslim clerics, three Europeans and five Armenian priests (Netzer, EIr. III:298). Rabbi Bábá’í ben Núrí’el of Iṣfahán and three other Rabbis translated the Pentateuch and Psalms and Mír Muḥammad Ma‘ṣúm Ḥusayni Khátúnábádi and his son ‘Abd-al-Ghání had a role in the translation of the NT (Netzer, EIr. IV:298). Lockhart has noted that on becoming aware of the translations Nadír Sháh came to ridicule Judaism, Christianity and Islam (Lockhart 1938:278, EIr. IV:204).[[171]](#footnote-171)

While portions of the Gospels were translated into Persian in the 18th century (1744 and 1793 <--) and earlier centuries, it was the 19th century which witnessed a much greater volume of Persian Bible translation largely accomplished by western Protestant Christian missionaries. The stream of such translations was headed in 1804–1805 by the translation into Persian (+ English) of John 1–3 (D&M 2:1202) and the Gospel of Matthew by Mírzá Muḥammad Fiṭrat (under the supervision of R. H. Colebrook).[[172]](#footnote-172) Five years later in 1809 under the direction of Henry Martyn (then chaplain of the East India Company), an Arab from Baghdad named Nathaniel Sabat translated Matthew’s Gospel into Persian (pub. Serampore: BFBS, 1809) (EIr. IV:205; D&M 2:1202). Also translated by Sabat was an inadequate complete Persian translation of the NT which also appeared under the direction of Henry Martyn in 1810 (EIr. IV:204–5).

The years 1227–1228/1812–1813 saw the completion and subsequent publication of several partial or complete Persian translations of the NT/Gospels (BFBS: Calcutta, 1813) including the Pauline Epistles by the Catholic missionary Leopoldo Sebastiani (D&M 2:1203). More importantly 1812 saw the completion of what is perhaps the most famous of all 19th century Persian NT translations, that of Henry Martyn (with the assistance of Mírzá Sayyid ‘Alí Khán

Shírází) who died in 1812 soon after its completion (D&M 2:1203). Made directly from the Greek it was initially published in 1814 (and 1815) by the Russian Bible Society of St. Petersburg. Thereafter it was frequently republished: in Calcutta by the BFBS (+ the Psalms) 1816 and in London from 1837. A Judaeo-Persian NT version transliterated by Lugín at Herat was also published by the BFBS in London in 1847 (D&M 2:1203; EIr. IV:205).

Subsequent to the publication of Henry Martyn’s NT translation, parts of the Hebrew Bible began to be published in Persian and Judaeo-Persian.[[173]](#footnote-173) A number of revisions of his NT translation and further Persian NT versions came to be made.[[174]](#footnote-174) The Persian translation work of Thomas Robinson (d. 1869, chaplain at Poona then Archdeacon at Madras) and William Glen (d. Tehran, 1849) of the Scottish mission at Astrakhan is important in that it led in 1846 to the first complete 19th century Persian Bible publication (D&M 2:1203ff; Thomas EIr. IV:203ff).

Robinson completed his translation (from the Hebrew) of the Pentateuch, the *Kutub-i khams-i Músáy-i náb*i, in Madras in 1836 (pub. Calcutta: BFBS, 1828). Following other partial translations (1835-->1838) a complete Persian translation of the HB appeared in 2 vols. in 1838 (D&M 2:1204–5; Cat. Ind. Off. Vol. II-Pt. VI, Persian Books; EIr. IV:205). William Glen (& Ḥájí Mírzá Ṭálib) translated the book of Psalms (rev. by W. Greenfield, London: BFBS, 1830; London, 1834; D&M 2:1205). In 1845 he translated the Hebrew Bible with Mírzá Muḥammad Ja‘far (historical books) a revised version of which was published in Edinburgh in 1846 by the BFBS (United Associate Synod) along with the Henry Martyn Persian translation of the NT. D&M 2:1206). Resident in Iran for six years (1868–1875) the British missionary Robert Bruce (d. 1912) with various assistants also revised Henry Martyn’s 1812 NT translation (D&M 2:1207). The complete Bible translation of Glen and Martyn was also revised by Bruce (and

others) between 1893 and 1895 (D&M 2:1209–1211).

The Arabic Bible in Qajar Iran

A number of Arabic Bibles were available to the Shí‘í ‘ulamá’ and others in Qajar Iran and 19th century Ottoman Iraq, Turkey and Palestine. Arabic printed editions of the NT (16th century CE onwards) were for the most part varieties of a 13th century Arabic recension known as the “Alexandrian Vulgate”. This lies behind the Arabic version in the ten volume Paris Polyglott (1625–1645). Many pre-19th century partial or complete Arabic printed Bibles are adaptions or revised reprints of this Paris Polyglott including the Arabic texts printed in the *Biblica Sacra Polyglotta* (1653–1657) of Bishop Brian Walton (d. 1661) known as the ‘London Polyglot’ (<--). Widely distributed in numerous reprints, the 1671 Rome published Arabic Bible was also printed and distributed by Protestants in Europe. In part hoping to supercede the weaknesses of earlier versions a printed Protestant Arabic NT appeared in 1727 through Sulaymán ibn Ya‘qúb as-Salbání (of Damascus = Solomon Negri). These, and a few other Arabic Bibles/NT’s, such as that of Nathanial Sabat (<--early 19th cent.) were circulating and distributed by missionaries in Iran in the first half of the 19th century. Later many printings came to be superceded, for example, by the complete Arabic Bible translation of Eli Smith (d. 1857) and Cornelius Van Dyck (d. 1895) which became partially then wholly available in print from the early 1860s (-->7.2).

Missionary activity in early Qajar Iran

Henry Martyn (<--) arrived in Shíráz in June 1811 where he hoped to produce a lucid Persian NT translation, revise Sabat’s unsatisfactory Arabic version, and engage in evangelical activities amongst the Shí‘í ‘ulamá’, resident Sufis and other inhabitants of Shíráz and elsewhere. His missionising and polemical writing of several Persian tracts, attracted the critical interest of a number of leading mullas, mujtahids and Sufis. They led Mírzá Ibráhím (Fasá’í?), “the preceptor of all the moolas” in 1226/late July 1811 to compose a treatise calling him to Islam (Wolff MJ III:67; tr. Lee, 1824:1–39; Algar 100–1). The exchange led a considerable number (25+?) of further written responses to Martyn from sometimes prominent

Shí‘í ‘ulamá’ some apparently written at the prompting of Fatḥ ‘Alí Sháh (r. 1797–1835 CE).[[175]](#footnote-175) In his letter of 1229/1814 this Sháh expressed delight on receipt of the Martyn translation (via Gore Ousley, the then British Ambassador at Tehran) though he evidently hoped for learned responses to western anti-Islamic missionary polemic (Smith 1892:486–7). Aside from Mullá [Mírzá] Ibráhím (<--) the following are a few notes about the Shí‘í learned who wrote responses to the Christian “Padre”, Henry Martyn.

Important among these written responses to Martyn was that of Mírzá Abú’l-Qásim, Qá’im Maqám (d. 1237/1822), the prime minister to ‘Abbás Mírzá and a friend of BA\*’s father Mírzá ‘Abbás Núrí (d. 1839). His *Miftáḥ an-nubuwwa* (Key to the Prophethood) in refutation of Martyn’s missionary work was probably among those commissioned by Fatḥ ‘Alí Sháh (Algar, 1967:101 fn. 123).[[176]](#footnote-176) The response of Ḥajjí Mullá Muḥammad Riḍá’ b. Muḥammad Amín Hamadání (d. 1247/1831) was also entitled *Miftáḥ an-nubuwwah* (The Keys of Prophethood) of which a full English translation is found in Lee’s 1824 *Controversial Tracts* (1824:164–450). Therein much space is devoted to biblical prophecies allegedly fulfilled by Muḥammad, including some Hebrew passages identified as the “Revelation of the Hebrew Child” (Lee 1824:cxviiiff, 302–26; QU:129–30; Wolff: MJ III:127; 156 cf. 111; Algar 1967:101).

A fourth person to engage in this debate was Mullá ‘Alí Núrí Iṣfahání (d. 1242/1826–1827) whose response to Martyn was entitled *K. Ḥujjat al-islám* (Book of the Proof of Islám) incorrectly listed in the *Dharí‘a* as a work in “refutation of the *Mízán al-ḥaqq* by Henry Martyn” (VI:207 No. 1408). Tunukábání reckoned that this work established the reality of the *khátam al-anbiyá’* (= Muḥammad as ‘seal of the prophets’) (QU:130; Wolff, MJ III:67, 121, 156; Algar 1978:101). Fifthly, there was the response of Mullá Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Mahdí

Naráqí Kashání (d.c. 1245/1829), a pupil of Baḥr al-‘Ulúm (<--) entitled *Sayf al-ummá wa burḥán al-umma* (Sword of the Community and Vindication of the [Muslim] Community) which was twice printed in Iran (in 1267/1851 and 1331/1913). Dedicated to Fatḥ ‘Alí Sháh this author in preparing it “called together ten of the rabbis of Káshán, and with their help translated into Persian a number of passages from the Old Testament and Jewish theological works which he included in his tract refuting Henry Martyn”.[[177]](#footnote-177)

A sixth person to engage in this debate was Mullá ‘Alí Akbar b. Muḥammad Báqir Iṣfahání (RawdatJ: 416; Algar, 1967:101) and a seventh Ḥájjí Mullá Muḥammad Taqí Burghání Qazvíní, the *Shahíd Thálith* (‘Third Martyr’) (d. 1263/1847). The Bábí heroine Fáṭima Baraghání, Ṭáhirih, was his niece, the daughter of (his brother) Ḥájjí Mullá Muḥammad Ṣáliḥ Baraghání (Tunukábuní, QU:19–66; MacEoin, E.Ir. III:740 + bib.). It is particularly interesting that this man was among those who responded to Henry Martyn in that it might hint at a possible source of Ṭáhira’s alleged biblical learning mentioned in a few Bahá’í sources (Ávarih, Kawákib 1:118; Mázandarání, KZH IV:703–4).

An eighth person mentioned by Wolff to have taken part in this debate was Sayyid Muḥammad Karbalá’í, “son of the late Sayyid ‘Alí”, apparently the “grand Mujtahid of Karbala” who thought it worth “writing an answer to a book composed by a *káfir* [unbeliever ] like Martyn” (Wolff MJ III:156). A ninth figure was Ḥájjí Mullá Ibráhím Kalbásí (d. 1262/1845), (MJ III:156), another pupil of Baḥr al-‘Ulúm who apparently followed the example of his teacher in engaging in religious debate. A few more figures are also known to have taken part in this debate, including a certain Ḥájj Mullá Músá Najafí (MJ III:156, Shaykh Músá b. Shaykh Ja‘far Naráqí (= No. 6?) and Mírzá Muḥammad Akhbárí another pupil of Baḥr al-‘Ulúm (d. 1233/1818?; Wolff, MJ III:1561; Algar 1967:101).

In addition to Arabic and Persian Bibles, the 19th century also witnessed an increasing

flood of Arabic and Persian evangelical tracts. Aside from the several works of Pfander[[178]](#footnote-178) (<--5.1) there appeared, for example, a Persian version of the *Evidences of Prophecy* of Alexander Keith (d. 1880) entitled *Risála kashf al-athár fí qiṣaṣ-i anbiyá’y-i baní isrá’íl*, translated at Urumiyya by J. L. Merrick (1803–1866) and published in Edinburgh in 1846 (Graf, GCAL. 4:237ff). A range of Arabic Christian polemical works and translations were also available in 19th century Iran, including E. Pocock’s translation of book six of Hugo Grotius’ *De Veritate religionis Christianae* with the acerbic title *al-Muqalát fí ibṭál al-Islám* (Discourses on the Futility of Islam, 1731) (in the 1820s Wolff distributed a version of part of this book in Iran). In 1824 Shaykh Ḥasan, a leading mujtahid of Shíráz, distributed copies of Grotius’ polemic among his students inviting them to write refutations. Aware of biblical *taḥríf* he also commissioned these students to search the Bible for Muḥammad’s “name” “Mad-mad” (<--) (MJ III:59–60; cf. 53).

In his *Religion and State in Iran* Alger observes that during the reign of Fatḥ ‘Alí Sháh “the dual role of the ‘ulama … of opposing the state, and that of countering the impact of foreign powers” was already evident and was “to become more explicit and active as the century progressed”. (Algar, 1969:102). Having briefly surveyed the role of the ‘ulamá’ in response to the missionary polemic of Henry Martyn, Algar also writes, “It was an age of intense theological activity, and powerful tracts against Sufism and Akhbarism, as well as Christianity were commonplace” (Algar, 1969:102)

That many among the early-mid. 19th cent. Shí‘í ‘ulamá’ responded to Christian missionary activity and polemic is confirmed by the fact that both leading Shaykhis Sayyid Káẓim ar-Rashtí (d. 1843) and Karím Khán Kirmání (d. 1871) wrote works on these lines (-->5.2). Though the Báb did not write istidláliyya tracts like the aforementioned and above listed writers, he quite frequently took Sufis and Christians to task for their heretical theological beliefs, making a direct *rabṭ* (“link”, “connection”) between God and humanity and believing in forms

of the Trinity and (literal) Sonship of Jesus. It should be clear from the above that the Báb had relatively easy access to the Bible in either Persian or Arabic translation. During his early years Bible translation and distribution by Christian missionaries in and around Shíráz was quite common. Wolff and others constantly distributed Bibles in Shíráz and other Iranian localities. In 1824 Wolff was told that the Gospel was “much read” in Shíráz especially among the Sufis (MJ III:35). It will be argued below that the lack of biblical citation by the Báb was not due to ignorance or inaccessibility but to a deliberate choice, most probably dictated by his very elevated view of the Q. and his own revelations.

6
The Bible and Isrá’íliyyát in early Shaykhism

6.1 Bible and Isrá’íliyyát in works of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsá’í

The Shi‘ite faction known as Shaykhism derives from the polymathic, theosophically oriented philosopher-theologian Shaykh Aḥmad b. Zayn ad-Dín al-Aḥsá’í (d. 1241/1826). Born in the eastern Arabian province of al-Aḥsá (= Ḥasá), he lived most of his life in the Shi‘ite shrine cities of Iraq (1790s–early 1800s) and in Iran (from 1806) where for several decades he was favoured as a leading authority. Through correspondence the then Qajar ruler Fatḥ ‘Alí Sháh (r. 1797–1834) induced Shaykh Aḥmad to write a number of treatises. A prolific and influential author, he wrote in excess of 150 mostly Arabic works. At times the Shaykh claimed direct knowledge through supernatural communication with various occulted (twelver) Imams seen as eternal loci of reality. He championed high imamological perspectives. Though he seems not to have sought to bypass acceptable (Akhbárí-) Uṣúlí positions he was accused of going beyond Shi‘ite hermeneutical and doctrinal norms.[[179]](#footnote-179)

Shaykh Aḥmad reduced to three the normative five pillars (pl. *arkán*) or bases (*uṣúl*) of Shi‘ism; namely, [1] *tawḥíd* (The Divine unity), [2] *nubuwwa* (prophethood), [3] *ma‘ád* (lit. ‘return’= resurrection, eschatology), [4] *imáma* (the Imamate) and [5] *‘adl* (Divine justice). He thought that pillar [1] presupposed pillar [5] while pillar [2] incorporated pillar [3]. The importance of living centre[s] of Shi‘ite guidance indicated by the phrase *ar-rukn ar-rábi‘* (the Fourth Support), was furthermore, related to learned mujtahids and/or the ‘Perfect Shí‘í [Shí‘a] (MacEoin, 1982:35f + sources).

In Shí‘í-Shaykhí theosophy the locus of the Fourth Support was to some extent the microcosmic exemplar of *al-insan al-kámil* (‘The Perfect Human’, Lawson, 1998:148–9). This Fourth Support was regarded as an individual figure by Sayyid Káẓim and could thus be understood messianically by the Báb. Conceived as a single individual superior to any exalted *marja at-taqlíd* (source of emulation), the Fourth Support became evocative for the Báb’s self-

understanding. He represented himself as the “Hidden [Fourth] Support” in his *T. Kawthar* (1846) from whom all should seek guidance (T.Kawthar, fol. 36aff; McEoin, ibid., 36–7).

Like others before him, Shaykh Aḥmad held to a complex non-gross bodily *mi‘ráj* of Muḥammad and had a spiritualistic understanding of the eschatological resurrection body (al-Aḥsá’í, Sh. Ziyara, tr. Corbin, 1990:180f). At times influenced by Sufi, Ishráqí and various philosopher-theologians of the ‘School of Iṣfahán’, the multi-faceted range of Shaykh Aḥmad’s learning was very wide ranging. He was especially learned in the doctrinal traditions of the twelver Imams as well as all imamological and philosophical learning, including *ḥikmat-i iláhi* (“theosophical Shi‘ism”) and the esoteric or occult sciences. Testifying to the immensity and universality of Shaykh Aḥmad’s learning, Sayyid Káẓim in his *Dalíl al-mutaḥayyirín* (The Stunning Evidence) listed around thirty branches of knowledge in which he believed him adept including “the main occult sciences of astrology, alchemy [*kimiya*], numerology, gematria, *jafr*, and the four disciplines known as *limiya*, *himiya*, *simiya* and *rimiya*” (MacEoin 1985:78–79 + fn. 13).

Evidence of this polymathic, often arcane learning, is evidenced throughout the *Jawámi‘ al-killam*. It is also evident, for example, in Shaykh Aḥmad’s *Risála ar-Rashtiyya* (1226/1811), a reply to Mullá ‘Alí ibn Mírzá Ján Rashtí dating to 1226/1811. Therein Shaykh Aḥmad responds in detail to several complex issues and statements made by al-Búní (<--) and Ibn al-‘Arabí about *‘ilm al-ḥurúf* (letter mysticism). He dealt with a saying asserting that *al-Jafr* (<--letter divination) will appear in eschatological times with the Imám Mahdí who alone is cognisant of its truth. Several complex angeological questions in relationship to letter mysticism are also dealt with, including the association of the letter “Á” (*alif*) with Isráfíl and “B” (al-Bá’) with Gabriel, etc., as well as the derivation of the names of various angels.

About four years before his passing Shaykh Aḥmad was accused of heresy by a number of contemporary Shí‘í authorities including the Qazvíní cleric and uncle of the Bábí poetess Ṭáhira, Mullá Muḥammad Taqí Baraghání (d. 1263/1847) (Tunikábuní, Qiṣaṣ, 19ff). Following this *takfír* (excommunication) the Shaykh migrated to Iraq apparently intending to settle in Mecca though he passed away in Medina before this was possible. The charge of

heresy levelled against him included the accusation that he went beyond the bounds of Shí‘í orthodoxy in teaching such doctrines as the non-physical nature of the *isrá’-mí‘ráj* (“night ascent-journey”) of the Prophet Muḥammad and of the resurrection body of the faithful.

The lengthy (often 4 volume, 34,000 verse) *Sharḥ al-ziyára al-jámi‘a al-kabíra* (Commentary upon the Greater General Prayer of Visitation) is a phrase by phrase Arabic commentary on a prayer of visitation for the tenth Imám ‘Alí al-Hádí (d.c. 254/868). It is widely acknowledged as Shaykh Aḥmad’s most significant work[[180]](#footnote-180) and was completed in 1230/1815 for Sayyid Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad Qásim Ḥusayní Ushkurí Jílání.

The *Sharḥ al-ziyára* of Shaykh Aḥmad contains a few Islamicate biblical citations and other points of exegetical interest. Moses-Sinai motifs receive interesting non-literal interpretations as do the major pre-Islamic prophet figures Israel and Moses. At one point Shaykh Aḥmad sanctions allegorical interpretations of certain qur’anic verses mentioning Moses and the *ummat Músá* (community of Moses). They can signify Muḥammad and the Islamic “community of Muḥammad”. Moses is seen as a prototype of Muḥammad and the *banú Isrá’íl* (“children of Israel”) of the Shí‘í “family of Muḥammad” (*ál Muḥammad*). A confirmatory tradition from Ja‘far Ṣádiq is cited as recorded in the *Tafsír of ‘Ayyashí* (<--2.1) about the qur’anic address, “O children of Israel” (*yá baní Isrá’íl*). This address is specifically said to refer to the “Us” of the Shí‘í community,

Now as for the fact that “Israel” has the sense of the servant of God (*‘abd-Alláh*) [then know] that Muḥammad is the servant of God (*‘abd-Alláh*). … And as for the fact that “Israel” (*Isrá’íl*) is a similitude (*mathal*) of him [Muḥammad] … [know that] it has been related from the prophet [Muḥammad] that he was heard saying, “I indeed am Thy servant, my name is Aḥmad, I am the servant of God (*‘abd-Alláh*), my name is Israel (*Isrá’íl*) for He [God] did not command him [Israel] [in the Q.] but had [actually] commanded me [Muḥammad] … (*Sh-Zíyára*, III:278).

Other important works of Shaykh Aḥmad include the *al-Fawá’id* (“Lessons”) dating prior to 1216/1801 in which twelve lessons are presented, including one on the creation of all

things in six days as recorded in the Q. (cf. Genesis 1 etc.). Shaykh Aḥmad himself and certain of his disciples wrote commentaries or *ḥáshiya* (marginal glosses) upon this work. The Shaykh also wrote a lengthy *Sharḥ al-fawá’id* (Commentary upon the *Fawá’id*) which was completed in 1233/1818 (Fih. 20). Shaykh Aḥmad’s commentaries upon the *Mashá‘ir* and *‘Arshiyya* of Mullá Ṣadrá are also among his best known writings. His multi-volume *Sharḥ al-ḥikma al-‘arshiyya* (Commentary upon the Wisdom of the Throne) is a commentary on the *al-Ḥikma al-‘Arshiyya* of Mullá Ṣadrá, was completed in Kirmánsháh in 1236/1820–1821 (Pub. Tabriz, 1271 [+ 78–9]/1854/61–2; Fihrist 53; cf. Morris, 1981). Passages from certain of these works will be cited below.

Interesting often non-literal interpretations of Islamic scriptural materials occasionally centering upon *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* and associated matters are found within the large, 19th century, two volume lithographed compendium of Shaykh Aḥmad’s writings entitled *Jawámi‘ al-kilám* (Comprehensive Utterance). This compendium contains over ninety sometimes lengthy *rasá’il* (treatises) detailing Shaykh Aḥmad’s responses to a very wide range of doctrinal and other enquiries largely posed by Shí‘í individuals (Momen, BSBM1:12–13). The richness of this source will be evident in the following pages.

A *Risála* of Shaykh Aḥmad contained in the *Jawámí‘ al-kilám* responds to questions about the significance of a tradition stating that prophets are made from the supernal clay of *‘aliyyín* (exaltedness) as opposed to the base clay of *sijjín* (cf. Q. 83:7f). Other traditions commented upon by Shaykh Aḥmad have it that in creating Adam God sent Gabriel out on the first hour of Friday (cf. aṭ-Ṭabarí, 111f; Rosenthal, tr. 282f) and that the clay from which the first man was made was kneaded with both Divine “hands for forty days” (cf. Q. 38:76) (JK, 2:104–110; Majmú‘a, 34:194–215; cf. also JK 2:69–75).

In another *Risála* probably written in reply to a group of religious students Shaykh Aḥmad was asked to reconcile two traditions; one stating that Moses transported the body of Joseph to Jerusalem and another indicating that Noah transferred the bones of Adam to Najaf. He was also asked to explain how they relate to traditions recorded in the *Tahdhíb* of aṭ-Ṭúsí[[181]](#footnote-181)

(<--2.2) about the bodies of the prophets and the Imams remaining either 3, 30 or 40 days in the grave. This in the light also of Shaykh Aḥmad’s own assertion that people cannot see the Imams in their graves (JK 2:131–134).

A *Risála* written in reply to Maḥmúd Mírzá takes up the significance of the well-known *ḥadíth* stating that ‘God created Adam according to His form’ as well as another mentioning the *ra’s al-jálút* (‘head of Goliath’) and dating before 1227/1812 (JK, 1276:276–279). A further *Risála* of 1223/1808 addressed to various brethren discusses whether the punishment of the inmates of Hell is everlasting or not. The issue of whether or not Pharaoh had become a believer was a question most likely dictated by statements made on this subject by Ibn al-‘Arabí (JK1:110–115; Majmú‘a, 30:218–235). An interesting *Risála* dating to 1231/1815–1816 replies to the significance of the *ḥadíth*, ‘Three winds came to Solomon, he chose two of them and left the third for the Qá’im’ (JK: 1276:32–7). The *Risála aṭ-Ṭáhiriyya* (1236/1821) responds to sixteen questions of Mullá Muḥammad Ṭáhir Qazvíní including two about what within Islám can be seen to parallel the miracle of the fatherless, virgin birth of Jesus and the story of Jonah (BSBM1:110).

A *Risála* in response to Mullá Ḥusayn Wá‘iz Kirmání includes Shaykh Aḥmad’s response to questions relating to the manner of Eve’s being created from the left rib of Adam (Fihrist No. 103; BSBM1:116; JK 2:116–125). That addressed to Mullá Ḥusayn Báfqí (of Yazd?) responds to the significance posed by a *ḥadíth* about God instructing Moses to bring the bones of Joseph out from Egypt (BSBM, No. 117). A brief *Risála* responding to questions of Sayyid Ḥusayn ibn ‘Abd al-Qahir al-Baḥraní (written in 1214/1799–1800) expounds aspects of the story of Moses and Khiḍr as well, among other things, as the eschatological return (Fihrist, No. 102; text, JK 2:46–8).

Shaykh Aḥmad and the Bible

None of the sources I have examined indicate that Shaykh Aḥmad had a detailed or direct knowledge of the canonical Bible. As with other learned Shí‘í Muslims of his day he knew various Islamicate Bible citations from various sources including *ḥadíth qudsí* such as are

found in the *Rawḍat al-káfí of Kulayní* (<--3.2; Ayoub, 1976). Islamicate biblical citations of Shaykh Aḥmad exist in his published and unpublished writings. In his *Kashkúl* (Begging Bowl),[[182]](#footnote-182) for example, the Shaykh cites a lengthy passage from Muḥammad Báqir Majlisí’s *Ḥaqq al-yaqín* (‘The Reality of Certainty’, c. 1110/1629). This citation in the *Kashkúl* includes several passages from the HB in Arabic transliteration and translation along with brief exegetical comments. Several well-known Islamicate testimonia are evidenced in this way. Deut. 18:15, 18, for example, is said to relate to Muḥammad, the Seal of the prophets (*khátam al-anbiyá’*) and not, as some Jews maintain, the biblical Joshua. Gen 17:20b is also cited and the (Heb.) מְאֹד בְּמֹאֹד (*bi-me’od me’od*) is fairly accurately transliterated ماد but understood as ماد بماد (Ar. *bi-mád mád*). Masjlisí holds that some Jewish exegetes maintain that the proper name Aḥmad as the Arabic word ‘aẓím, meaning “Mighty” (a loose rendering of Aḥmad = “most praised”) is twice indicated. A little later in his *Kashkúl* a few other books of the HB are referred to including five or six Islamicate, quasi-Johannine paraclete passages (*Kashkúl*, II:538ff; cf. Lambden 1997:115, fn. 68). Finally it should be noted in this connection that the *Kashkúl* of Shaykh Aḥmad also cites a saying of Jesus beginning “O children of Israel! Do not say that knowledge (*al-‘ilm*) is [lodged] in heaven for whoso ascends unto heaven shall [indeed] produce it! It is not found in the garbage heap of the earth (*kawm al-arḍ*)”. This saying has no exact NT source though it perhaps calls John 3:13ff to mind (*Kashkúl*, II:103).

Islamicate, expanded forms of Q. 5:116b are cited from Jesus in many Islamic sources. Since the time of aṭ-Ṭustayrí (d. 283/896), Rúzbihán Baqlí Shírází (d. 606/1209) and beyond, variant forms of this qur’anic verse have been put into the mouth of Jesus. They have been important in moulding Muslim thought about the mystery of the divine colloquy (Bowering, 1980:188–190). Such a passage is cited from Jesus by Shaykh Aḥmad in his 1226/1811 epistle in reply to questions posed by Sayyid Abí al-Ḥasan al-Jilání (JK 1:141–5).

Discoursing upon the mysteries of the level of *an-nafs al-láhútiyya al-malakútiyya* (the divine angelic Self) the following saying of “Jesus the Messiah” (*‘ísá al-masíḥ*) is quoted,

I know not what is in Thy Self for Thou indeed art the Knower of things unseen (*‘allám al-ghayb*). (Q. 6:116b) For it [the *nafs*, Self of God] is the transcendent essence of God (*dhát Alláh*), the “Blessed Tree” (*shajarat aṭ-ṭúbá*), the “Lote-Tree of the Extremity” (*sidrat al-muntahá*) …’ (Majmú‘a 30:97).[[183]](#footnote-183)

An example of an alleged passage *fí’l-injíl* (“from the Gospel[s]”) is found in Shaykh Aḥmad’s *Sharḥ al-Ziyára*. Commenting upon the phrase “And thy selves (*anfus*) are in the selves” (*wa anfusikum fí’n-nufús*) the following Islamicate Gospel text is set down, “I created you for My sake and I created things (*al-ashyá’*) for your own sake.” (*Sharḥ al-ziyára* IV:26) At another point in the same work Shaykh Aḥmad cites the following *ḥadíth qudsí*—subsequently said to be contained in the *injíl*

“I [God] created existing things (*al-ashyá’*) for thy sake and I created thee for My sake for while your inner reality (*báṭin*) is I Myself (*aná*) thine outer self (*ẓáhir*) is for destruction (*li’l-faná’*)” (Sh. Ziyara III:352–3).

After citing this saying the Shaykh goes immediately on to quote *al-Injíl* (The Gospel) exactly as it is found in Bursí’s *Masháriq*,

Know thyself, O mankind! then thou shalt know thy Lord for thine outer self (*ẓáhir*) is for destruction (*li’l-faná’*) while thine inner reality (*báṭin*) is I Myself (*aná*) (idem, III: 353).

Elsewhere in the *Sharḥ al-ziyára* the words “I created thee for My sake and I created existing things (*al-ashyá’*) for thy sake” (IV:26) are specifically cited from the *injíl* though the word order is slightly different to that given above.

Shaykh Aḥmad on Isrá’íliyyát motifs and prophetological mysteries

The sometimes abstruse Arabic writings of Shaykh Aḥmad contain interesting non-literal interpretations of Isrá’íliyyát motifs, *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* narratives and associated materials

especially as they are found in the Shí‘í traditions of the Imams. His knowledge of such matters is illustrated in his major works and in his responses to the often detailed questions put to him during the course of his residence in Iran and Iraq (Ibráhímí, Fihrist; Momen, BSBM1).

Scattered throughout the writings of Shaykh Aḥmad are statements about the first Adam and the first couple or about there being a myriad Adams. Responding to a question of Mullá Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Anárí, al-Aḥsá’í makes a variety of cosmological statements and continues,

God, exalted be he, created a thousand, thousand worlds and a thousand, thousand Adams. You are in the last of the worlds and of these Adams. And in all of these worlds there exists the likeness (similitude, *mathal*) of what is in our world respecting the heavens and the earth, the mountains, the oceans and the fishes, the trees and the fruits, and the deserts. So too what is in it of wild beasts and birds and other assembled things. And these worlds are all within this world (*ad-dunyá*) and in the hereater (‘world to come’, *al-ákhira*). On the Day of Resurrection the people shall multiply in both earth and heaven … (*Majmú‘a* 30:312–3; cf. al-Aḥsá’í, Sh. Ziyara 3:301f; 361f).

At one point in his *Sharḥ al-ḥikma al-‘arshiyya* Shaykh Aḥmad comments upon a statement about the relationship between the Q., and a “Book” (*kitáb*) in the light of an Adam and Jesus analogy. He refers to Adam as “the Hidden Book of God” (*ádam kitáb Alláh al-maknún*) on one level inferior to Jesus who found existence through the command of God (*min amr Alláh*). Jesus is presented as the cosmic “Pen” with which God wrote the secrets of destiny on the primordial “Tablet” (*al-lawḥ*) as well as God’s “Intellect” (*‘aql*) identified with the Q. and a “Light” bestowing guidance unto the “straight Path” (*Sh-‘Arshiyya*, 206ff).

Commenting a little later upon a statement about the origin of speech Shaykh Aḥmad disassociates the transcendent God and His Speech (*al-kalám*). When God conversed with Moses it was indirectly, through the instrumentality of the Sinaitic “Tree” (*shajara*) or bush:

God, praised be He, actualized speech (*al-kalám*) through the (Sinaitic) Tree (*bi’sh-shajarat*) before Moses for the “Tree” was a book (*kitában*) and his speech (*kalám*) rose up from within it. Thus, the agent of speech (*al-mukallim*) is Moses through the “tree” (*shajara*) [indirectly] from Him [God]. The speaker was he through whom speech rose up [= Moses]. So the “Tree” is the speaker although the speaker was [also] he who originated the speech [i.e. God through Moses]. The speaker [in reality is thus] God, praised be he, for he created that one through which the “Tree” became articulate … (Sh-‘Arshiyya, 210–211).

Quite a number of other writings of Shaykh Aḥmad comment upon Moses’ Sinaitic encounter with God and associated motifs. In an epistle to a certain Mullá ‘Alí Tawbalí (written in AH 1211/1797) he responded to a number of questions which required that he explain Moses/Sinai motifs. Asked about the significance of various trees mentioned in the Q. he wrote:

And the Tree (*shajara*) which is in the “Holy Vale” (*al-wád al-muqaddas*) and the “Tree issuing from the Mount of Sinai (*ṭúr síná’*)” [Q. 25:20] is the Primordial Reality (*al-awwalí*) through which the [divine] Word (*al-kalám*) had precedence. The “Holy Vale” is the “Tranquil Soul” (*an-nafs al-muta’inna*) and the “Mount” (*aṭ-ṭúr*) is the obedient, patient body (*al-jasad al-muṭí‘ aṣ-ṣábir*). And the “Holy Vale” is [also] the secure heart (*al-qalb as-salím*) and the “Mount” the upright intellect (*al-‘aql al-mustaqím*) (JK 1:25).

After making detailed comments on the “trees” mentioned in Q. 14:24ff., Shaykh Aḥmad explains the significance of the Siniatic “Holy Vale” and the “Holy Land”:

… the “Holy Vale” (*al-wád al-muqaddas*) is the “secure heart” (*al-qalb as-salím*) which is filled with contentment (*ar-riḍá’*) and submission (*at-taslím*). The “Holy Land” (*al-arḍ al-muqaddas*) is the “tranquil, satisfied, contented soul”. The “Holy Vale” the “house of procreation and marriage” (*bayt at-tawlíd wa’t-tanákuḥ*) and the “Purple Lights” (*al-anwár al-firfíriyya*). The “Holy Land” is the “New Body” (*al jasad al-jadíd*). (JK 1:26)

Having thus indicated the mystical import of the Sinaitic “Tree”, “Holy Vale”, and “Mount”, the Shaykh quotes a saying to the effect that the “Tree” planted on Mount Sinai is possessed of the power of articulate, rational speech (*al-ḥayawání an-náṭiq*). It is, he states, a “Tree” symbolic of the “substance of Noble Man” (*hayúlá al-insán al-karím*). Drawing on some rather arcane traditions, the Shaykh also comments on the “Tree” of Q. 25:20, in the light of its having been set in the zodiac by Balṣiyál [?] ibn Ḥúr,[[184]](#footnote-184) the bearer of the “Dome of Time” (*qubbat al-zamán*). An herbal substance (*al-ḥashísha*) associated with this cosmic “Tree” (*shajara*) is represented by an obscure cryptogram. When treated alchemically it leads to the production of pure gold (Lambden, 1988:87).

In his *Sharḥ al-zíyára* and other treatises, Shaykh Aḥmad comments on Q. 7:143 in the light of the tradition that it was a proto-Shi‘ite cherub (*al-karúb*) that was manifested before Moses and shattered the mountain. According to tradition the sixth Imám Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣádiq said of the cherubim:

… The Cherubim (*al-karúbiyyún*), are a people of our [Shí‘í] party among the primordial creation things (*al-khalq al-awwál*). God established them beyond the divine Throne (*al-‘arsh*). If but a portion of the light (*núr*) of one of them should reach the people of the earth it would surely suffice them. When he [Moses] asked his Lord what he asked [to see him, Q. 7:143] God commanded one of their men (*rijálan*) and he divulged his transfigured glory (*tajallí*) before him [Moses] only to the extent of the eye of a needle. And thus was the mountain (*al-jabal*) crushed and Moses fell into a swoon (cited the Báb, T. al-há’ (I):245).

This motif of the cherub (Ar. *karúb*; pl. *karúbiyyún*) in Shí‘í tradition is rooted in (post-) biblically informed Shí‘í Isrá’íliyyát. Perhaps one time sphinx-type guardians of the sacred, the כְּרוּבִים (Heb. pl. kərúvím, cherubím), (Ar) الکروبیان (*al-karúbiyyún*) are Judaeo-Christian angelic figures mentioned 91 times in the HB. They guard the sacred (e.g. “tree of Life”, Gen. 3:24) and perform various functions as bearers of the Divine Throne (Ezek. 1, 10:20, etc.; Mellinger, DDD[2]:189–92). These beings became angelic figures of great significance in post-biblical angelology, *merkabah* mysticism and other forms of Jewish esotericism not to mention their occasional role in Shí‘í gnosis and Ismá‘ílí cosmology (Gruenwald 1980; Halperin 1988; Stern, 1983:3ff). The cherubim seem only obliquely mentioned in the Q. as the *muqarrabún* (‘those nigh unto God’, Q. 4:70; 21:20; cf. 3:40). At one point in his *Futúḥát* Ibn al-‘Arabí mentions the elevated *al-karúbiyyún* as the first angels to appear from that “Light” which was named the primordial “Intellect” (*‘aql*) (Futúḥát 1:148).

It was an infinitesimal portion of the “light of the [divine] Veil” (*núr as-siṭr*) or the “light of [God’s] Grandeur” (*núr al-‘azímat*) obscured by God’s seventy thousand “veils of Light” and related to the primordial, divine “Light” of the Imams, that beamed forth before Moses from the mysterious cherubic “Speaker” on the Sinaitic Mount. It was also in view of Imám Ṣádiq’s having stated that “God manifested himself (*tajallá*) unto his servants through his Speech [or Word] (*al-kalám*) but they did not see Him [God]” that Shaykh Aḥmad also taught that God’s theophany before the “mountain” was the theophany of “the Speaker” (*al-mutakallim*) through His “Speech” (*al-kalám*) and not God’s a personalistic theophany of God’s Essence.

In was in the form of “Light”, that the divine “Speech” was revealed upon the sacred

“mountain”, which for Shaykh Aḥmad can (among other things) be symbolic of the “heart” of Moses. While, however, Moses’ Sinaitic experience of God was a mystical experience of a mere glimmer of the Divine Light, Imám Ja‘far is said to have had an experience of its fullness whilst wrapt in prayer. Both literalistic and mystical interpretations of Q. 7:143 are found in the vastly erudite writings of Shaykh Aḥmad. This Sinaitic aspect of the Shaykh’s writings had a tremendous impact upon the Báb and probably contributed to his own self-understanding and experience of God. In line with Shaykhí perspectives in various of his writings, the Báb understood the Sinaitic theophany to be a cherubic Shi‘ite angelophany (T. Há’ (1) 14:245).

The *Jawámi‘ al-kalim* (= JK) contains six important treatises resolving questions posed by Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Ṣálíḥ ibn Túq al-Qaṭifí (d. after 1246/1830). Several of them are centered upon matters associated with pre-Islamic prophets (BSBM1 Nos 8, 87, 102, 109, 128, 129). Among the lengthiest is the *ar-Risála al-Qaṭifiyya* in which the Shaykh responds to 71 questions. Among the *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* matters touched upon are: the nature of Adam’s creation and the birth of Eve from his left rib; the houris, the jinn and of the birth of Adam from dust; the reality of paradise, the tree, the serpent, Iblís, heaven, the angels and the story of Adam and his eating from the tree; the story of Job and how Satan overcame a messenger of God; Moses as intercessor for the *umma* of Muḥammad and the obligatory prayers being five; the all-encompassing nature of the storm of Noah relative to later lesser punishments associated with other prophets; aspects of Abraham’s aborted sacrifice of his son (Q. 56) (Fihrist No. 114; BSBM1:129f; JK, 1/ii:114–147).

At one point within the *R. al-Qaṭifiyya* Shaykh Aḥmad makes the following statement pertinent to satanic activity and the effect of the Prophet Muḥammad upon it,

I say that the satans (*ash-shayáṭín*) are the manifestations of primal ignorance (*maẓáhir al-jahl al-awwal*) just as the angels (*al-malá’ikat*) are the manifestations of the First Intellect (*al-‘aql al-awwál*). They were assuredly born of Iblís whose pre-fall [‘archangelic’] name was ‘Azázíl (= “Empowered of God”). When he was expelled his name became Iblís (JK 1/ii:126).

Here satanic beings become symbols of ignorance while angelic figures are indicative

of the (Neoplatonic) First Intellect (*al-‘aql al-awwál*). Most likely derived from the Greek diabolos (διάβολος = ‘the slanderer’) the demoniac adversary Iblís is one of the qur’anic names of the mythic being who, after refusing to bow down before Adam, became the source of evil (Q. 2:34, 7:11; 15:31–2, etc.).[[185]](#footnote-185) Jewish traditions associate Azazel with the Levitical scapegoat (Lev. 16:8, 10; Azazel = Heb. עזאזל, “Fierce of God”, Wright, AB 1:536). Originally among the archangelic watchers ‘Azázíl ultimately became a demoniac figure associated with the primordial [Arch] angelic fall.[[186]](#footnote-186) Black associates Azazel with Leviticus 16 and notes that he “appears in fact as the forerunner or prototype in Hebrew demonology of Satan or Belial in later traditions.” (Black, 1985:121).

It is likely that Shaykh Aḥmad derived his information about Azazel from Isrá’íliyyát informed *tafsír* works. His comments are echoed, for example, by aṭ-Ṭabarí (<--3.1) in his massive *Jámi‘ al-bayán* (1:100) and by aṭ-Ṭabarsí in his *Majma‘ al-bayán* where the following prophetic tradition is recorded:

Before he comitted rebellion Iblís was one of the angels whose name was Azazel (*‘Azázíl*) He was reckoned among the watchers [inhabitants] of the earth (*sákin al-arḍ*); such watchers of the earth (*sákin al-arḍ*) were among the angels designated as jinn. When he waxed proud before God and refused to prostrate before Adam, he renounced him, cursed him, made him [a] Satan and named him Iblís.” (*Majma‘* 1:83 on Q. 2:34)

A *Risálá al-Ja‘fariyya* was written by Shaykh Aḥmad for Mírzá Ja‘far ibn Aḥmad Nawwáb Yazdí in Yazd in 1222/1807 (JK 1:130–5 = *Majmú‘* 30:13–28). It contains replies to a question about God blessing Muḥammad and his family as he had previously blessed Abraham and his family as well as about the purpose of God in sending Messengers and Holy Books to mankind. The significance of the eschatological prophet’s possessing a “crimson [red], she-camel” (*an-náqa al-ḥamrá*) is also expounded. Shaykh Aḥmad reckons the “crimson she-camel” as the most beautiful of she-camels (*aḥsan an-núq*). Among other things this red,

crimson colour is related to one of the “lights of the Divine Throne” which causes the redness of all things red.

Another *Risála* writen in reply to inhabitants of Iṣfahán in 1223/1808 dwells upon the significance of the tradition of Imám ‘Alí about the Divine Throne (*al-‘arsh*) and its tetradic constituent lights. Allegedly dialoguing with a primate of an oriental (Armenian) Christian Church (*al-Játhilíq*) about the manner of God’s being the bearer of the Throne (*ḥámil al-‘arsh*) (Q. 35:41) and Q. 69:17b where eight angels are said to perform this task, ‘Alí stated,

The [divine] Throne (*al-‘arsh*) was created by God … from four Lights (*anwár*): a Crimson Light (*núr aḥmar*) by means of which redness (*al-ḥumra*) was reddened; the Green Light (*núr al-akhḍar*) by means of which greenness (*al-khuḍra*) was made green; the Yellow Light (*an-núr al-aṣfar*) by means of which yellowness (*al-ṣufra*) was yellowed and the white Light (*an-núr al-abyaḍ*) through which whiteness (*al-bayḍ*) was [whitened] realized. This [Light of the Throne] is the knowledge (*huwa al-‘ilm*) which God, the Bearer (*al-ḥamla*) has borne aloft [between] that Light (*an-núr*) which is of the Light of His Grandeur and of His Power. It is thus through His Grandeur and His Light that the hearts of the believers are made perceptive. … So all that has been born aloft (*maḥmúl*) has been born aloft by God by virtue of His Light, His Grandeur and His Power … (al-Kulayní, *al-Káfí* 1:129–130; Majlisi, Bihar2 58:9–10).

This tradition is commented upon several times in Shaykhí literature. In one work Shaykh Aḥmad interpreted the four Lights as the four laudatory exclamations (1) *subḥán Alláh* (Glorified be God) being the white [Light-Pillar] (*al-abyáḍ*) (2) *al-ḥamdu liláh* (Praised be God), being the Yellow [Light-Pillar] (*al-aṣfar*); (3) *lá iláha ilá Alláh* (There is none other God but God), being the Green [Light-Pillar] (*al-akhḍar*) and (4) *Alláh al-akbar* (God is Greatest) being the crimson [Light-Pillar] (*al-aḥmar*). These four Pillars (*al-arkán*) constitute the totality of established existence (*jamí‘ al-wujúd al-muqayyad*) whose beginning is the First Intellect (*al-‘aql al-awwal*) and whose end is the dusty earth (*ath-thurá*). God established an [Arch-] Angel (*malak*) “for every Pillar so as to bear it”; namely [1] Gabriel [2] Michael [3] Seraphiel [Isrá’fíl] and [4] Azazel (‘Azrá’íl).

Additionally, Shaykh Aḥmad reckoned that “The meaning of [‘Alí’s saying] “He [God] bore it aloft” is that His gravitas was focused into the archangelic beings each having subsidiary hosts of angels (*junúd min malá’ika*) “the number of which none can estimate except

God …’ (al-Aḥsá’í, *Majmú‘a* 30:193–215). These colour speculations were very influential upon the Báb as is evident from the earliest period reflected in the opening paragraphs of his *T. Baqara*. Many of the subsequent writings of the Báb develop these colour correspondences and aspects of the tetradic Bábí-Bahá’í mystico-cosmological colour schemata. It probably lies at the root of the frequency and symbolism of *aḥmar*/*ḥamra* (= ‘red’ or ‘crimson’ as SE\* frequently translated it) in Bábí-Bahá’í texts. This latter word was certainly important for the Báb and BA\*. The former, for example, even used the four isolated letters (*ḥurúfát al-muqaṭṭá‘át*) Ḥ-M-R-A (= ‘red’ when conjoined and vowelled) before three suras of his first major book the *Qayyúm al-asmá’* (-->QA suras 34, 56, 57, 76) and reckoned the *ahl al-bahá’* (‘people of beauty-glory’) to be inmates of an eschatological ‘Crimson Ark’ (*safínat al-ḥamrá’*). The latter ark dwellers were regarded by BA\* as alluding to his followers (Bahá’ís) who subscribed to a covenant known as the *Kitáb-i-‘Ahd* (‘Crimson Book’).

Shaykh Aḥmad made considerable use of the obscure Ishráqí rooted term (<--5.2) هورقليا, *Húrqalyá*/*Hawaqalya* (loosely, ‘interworld’), the origin and etymology of which remains uncertain. Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic, Mandaean, Syriac and Arabic-Persian etymologies have all been proposed (Dehkhoda *Lughat-námih*, *Húrqalyá*; Muhammad Mo’in, 1955). Recently Rudolf Macúch (1919–1993) has suggested that Húrqalyá may be a garbled form of the Mandaic \**anhúr qalyá* (= ‘the burning light’, 1982:19f). Alternatively, as argued below and despite the absent Arabic ل (‘l’, *lám*) and the Hebrew ע, هورقليا could be a slightly garbled transliteration of the biblical Hebrew הָרָקִיעַ (*há-ráqiya’*, with the definite article), traditionally translated ‘the firmament’ (AV). Echoing Mír Dámád, Shaykh Aḥmad has explained the significance and linguistic derivation of húrqalyá in the following manner:

As for the expression هورقليا (*húrqalyá*) and its meaning. It is another dominion since what is indicated thereby is the world of the isthmus (*‘álam al-barzakh*) and this mundane world (*‘álam ad-dunyá*). It is indicative of the world of bodies (*‘álam al-ajsám*), that is to say, the mundane world (*‘álam ad-dunyá*) and the world of souls (*‘álam an-nufús*); the world of the kingdom (*‘álam al-malakút*) and the world of the ithmus (*‘álam al-barzakh*) which is the

intermediary [sphere] between the mundane world (*‘álam ad-dunyá*) and the world of the kingdom (*‘álam al-malakút*) which is another dominion … it is in the eighth clime (*al-iqlím ath-thámin*).

As for what language this term is in. It [هورقليا] is derived from the Syriac language (*al-lughat as-suryániyya*) and is a Sabian term (*lughat as-ṣábi’a*) and they [the Sabians = Mandaeans] are now living in Baṣra. … Know also that the world of the isthmus (*‘álam al-barzakh*) is intermediary between this mundane world and the world of the hereafter (*ad-dunyá wa’l-ákhira*). It is the imaginal world [world of similitudes] (*‘álam al-mithál*) [existing] between the world of the kingdom (*‘álam al-malakút*) and this mundane world (*ad-dunyá*) .. (al-Aḥsá’í, *Majmú‘a*, 30:308–9; cf. Corbin, 1990:103).

As far as I am aware Bábí and Bahá’í primary sources do not use the term هورقليا. They do, however, mention multi-worlds and take eschatological events like individual bodily resurrection non-literally relative to a spiritualistic cosmology rooted in Shaykhí-Bábí writings. Bahá’í texts express belief in subtle bodies and a spiritual understanding of individual and collective resurrection as well as of the *mi‘raj* (Night Journey) of Muḥammad. BA\* affirmed the reality of the concept of *‘álam al-mithál* explaining like Shaykh Aḥmad that the (Per.) *‘álam-i mithál* exists between the exalted world of *jabarút* (the ‘empyrean’) and this mortal realm of *násút* (Ma’idih 1:18–19). The Báb, BA\* and his son AB\* all in various ways commented upon the significance of the qur’anic cosmological term *barzakh* (isthmus, Q. 23:100; 25:53; 55:20; AB\* Tablet to Mírzá Qabil of Abadih in StarW 5/7: 7ff; BSB 6:2–3 (Feb. 1992).

6.2 The Bible and Isrá’íliyyát in works of Sayyid Káẓim ar-Rashtí

With the passing of Shaykh Aḥmad in 1241/1826, his charismatic disciple and appointed successor Sayyid Káẓim ar-Rashtí (d. 1260/1844) defended his master against charges of heresy and wrote over 100 works in continuation and development of Shaykh Aḥmad’s perspectives. Preference for the deep, sometimes arcane dimensions of gnostic Shi‘ism are evident in his Arabic and Persian writings, the bulk of which remain unpublished (Fihrist, Pt. 2: 288–359; Nicholas, 1914 [Pt. II] 32–36; MacEoin, ar-Rashtí, EI2). Among his most important works is the bulky *Sharḥ al-qaṣída al-lámiyya* (‘Commentary on an Ode rhyming in the letter L’). Written in 1258/1842 it is a commentary upon a *qaṣída* of ‘Abd al-Báqí Afandí al-Mawṣulí (d. 1278/1861). The often abstruse *Sharḥ al-khuṭba aṭ-ṭutunjiyya* comments on about half of the Sermon of the Gulf

(2.2<--; lithographed, 1270/1853–1854) ascribed to Imám ‘Alí. Sayyid Káẓim’s commentaries on qur’anic texts and Shí‘í traditions include his *tafsírs* on the *basmala* and upon the Shí‘í graphic form of *al-ism al-a‘ẓam* (the Mightiest Name of God) as well as the *Tafsír áyát al-kursí* (Commentary on the Throne Verse, Q. 2:255) and the *Sharḥ du‘á’ as-simát* (Commentary on the Prayer of the Signs). As with the writings of Shaykh Aḥmad those of Sayyid Káẓim contain novel interpretations of prophetological, angelological, eschatological and other facets of Islamic learning.

Non-literal, spiritualistic interpretations of Isrá’íliyyát motifs and *an-anbiyá’* episodes are quite common in the writings of Sayyid Káẓim. Allegorical, typological and imamological interpretations of interest are found scattered throughout his writings. The nature of his possible knowledge of the Bible is currently unknown, partly due to the scarcity of available writings. It seems likely that it was subsumed by a Shi‘ite qur’anocentric and imamocentric stance that rendered knowledge of the canonical Judaeo-Christian Bible irrelevant. I have not been able to find any definite evidence of his explicit knowledge of the Bible.

Important in this respect would be an examination of Sayyid Káẓim’s *Risála ḥujjat al-báligha* (Compelling Demonstrative Treatise) completed on the 25th Rabí‘ 1, 1257/17 May 1841. Ibráhímí in his *Fihrist* describes it as written ‘In reply to Sayyid Aḥmad, in refutation of the Jews and Christians and the establishment of the prophethood and *wiláya* of the [twelver] Imams … and on the baseless nature of their divisive factions and the inconsistency of their party’ (*Fihrist*, 310 No. 193). The Sayyid Aḥmad addressed here cannot be Sayyid Aḥmad Khán (1817–1898) but might be the Shí‘í mujtahid and Amír Sayyid Aḥmad of Lucknow (India [Pakistan] d. ??) who was involved in dialogue with Jews and Christians.[[187]](#footnote-187)

At one point in his *Sharḥ al-qaṣída* Sayyid Káẓim dwells at some length upon several

qur’anic terms representative of pre-Islamic scripture mentioned in the *qaṣída* of ‘Abd al-Báqí (d. 1278/1861):

This *Zabúr* (Psalter) and that Torah (*at-tawrát*) and the Evangel (*Injíl*). Nay! indeed! such is the Qur’án revealed.

Making no reference at all to the Bible, ar-Rashtí comments that revealed scripture, is given to all prophets and sent messengers who deliver it according the languages and the capacity of their peoples. Viewed spiritually, with the “eye of God”, there would be evident “the mystery of the testimony of wisdom and the unveiling the divine secrets (*asrár al-iláhiyya*)”. This such that all revelation could be seen as the expression of a single “point”, a singularity realizable by the seeker of the type referred to in the *ḥadíth an-nawáfil* who is especially beloved of God (<--3.2). Bypassing many esoteric details about various worlds, their locations and an account of the fall of Adam and the subsequent decadence of humanity after Cain’s murder of Abel, ar-Rashtí comes to underline the myriad, the “seventy and seven” exterior and interior levels of meaning which aspects of reality may have. He then returns to the numerous significances of the archetypal term “Book” (*kitáb*) which can indicate a generative reality (*takwíní*) as well as something integrative and holistic (*tadwíní*) like the Q. (Sh-Qasida, 167–71).

The single, yet holistic, all encompassing Q. is viewed as the locus of reality. It retains its uniqueness despite its having been outwardly written in various languages (Kufic, Syriac and Greek, etc.) and in diverse handwriting styles or scripts (Arabic, Turkish, Persian, Indian scripts, Ethiopic, etc.). Though there may be myriad expressions of the Q. as the “Speaking Q.” (*an-náṭiq*) it remains a single reality, as the “Silent Q.” (*as-sámit*). This holistic (*tadwíní*) unitative, singular qur’anic reality may also be expressed by the terms Torah (*tawrat*), Evangel (Gospel/*Injíl*) and *Zabúr* (Scripture/Psalter) (Sh-Qasida, 170-f).

On the *Zabúr* (Psalter) Sayyid Káẓim comments that it is a book sent down unto David though not one establishing a religious law (*sharí‘a*) thereby abrogating what proceeded it, a *qanúnan* law’ cf. Gk. *námús*) supplementing it. Books

establishing a *sharí‘a* law are listed as *tawriyya* (Torah, HB), *Injíl* (Gospel[s]), *Ṣúḥúf* (Scrolls) of Abraham, *Ṣúḥúf* (Scrolls) of Noah and *Ṣúḥúf* (Scrolls) of Adam as well as the Q. of Muḥammad. Other prophets communicated non-legalistic books of various kinds (Sh-Qasida, 171). The basis of all these books is said to be the Q. which is an all-encompassing book according to its own testimony. A tradition from Imám ‘Alí begins, “All that is in the world (*al-‘álam*) is in the Qur’án” (Sh-Qasida, 172–3).

This holistic view of the Q. and pre-Islamic scripture asserted by Sayyid Káẓim in his *Sharḥ al-Qaṣída* is very similar in focus to that articulated by the poet and mystical theosopher ‘Abd ar-Raḥmán Jámí when commenting upon as aspect of one of the “ringstones” of the *Fusús al-ḥikam* of Ibn al-‘Arabí. It will be argued below that this integrative, holistic view of divine revelation is also the Báb’s view of pre-Islamic sacred scripture (-->7.1f)

Islamicate, often Sufi oriented citations from the Bible/*Injíl*, are also found in Sayyid Káẓim’s writings. They often appear to have no straightforward relationship to NT texts. Like those of Shaykh Aḥmad they originate in earlier, often esoteric Islamic literatures. In the course of commenting on the controversial words (toned down in a recent printing -->bib.) of ‘Alí, “I saw God and Paradise …” in his *Sh. ṭutunjiyya*, for example, Sayyid Káẓim quotes a saying of the *Injíl* exactly as it is found in Bursí’s *Masháriq* but with the following addition,

I am the theophany of the [divine] Essence (*ẓuhúr adh-dhát*) through the unique Word (*bi’l-kalám al-mutafarrid*).” (Sh.Ttnj, 299, cf., Bursí, *Masháriq*, 188).

This alleged quotation from the *injíl* seems a distinctly Islamicate corrective to John 1:1. Jesus is not God but a divine theophany through the “Word”.

Shaykhi allegorism and Moses-Sinai motifs

The founding fathers of the Shaykhí movement were criticized by their more rigidly orthodox Shí‘í contemporaries for their allegedly unwarranted allegorism. In, for example, the *Tiryáq-i fánúq* (Discriminating antidote [for poisons]) of ‘Abd al-Ṣamad b. ‘Abdalláh al-Ḥusayní al-Mázandarání (written 1301/1883), the mystically-oriented Shaykhí interpretation of Q. 7:143 is singled out for critical comment. (Rafati, n. 6)[[188]](#footnote-188) The Báb and BA\*, as indicated however, both

drew on and creatively expounded early Shaykhí non-literal interpretations of this and other texts and traditions relating to Moses’ Sinaitic experiences (-->). The importance the Báb and BA\* gave to Moses-Sinai episodes and motifs is closely related to the importance these matters were given by the architects of Shaykhism.

At various points in his frequently abstruse *Sh. ṭutunjiyya*, ar-Rashtí touches upon Moses/Sinai motifs. Commenting on Imám ‘Alí’s words, “He [God] created the oceans (*al-biḥár*) and the mountains (*al-jabal*, pl. *al-Jibál*)”, he has much to say about the “mountains”, mentioning all kinds of supernatural peaks including a “mountain of red ruby” (*jabal al-yáqút al-aḥmar*) and a “mountain of the mine of gold” *(jabal ma‘din adh-dhahab*) which is the “seat of the beams of the sun” (*maṭraḥ ashi‘‘at ash-shams*) related to the “Mount of Moses” (*ṭúr músá*), the “Locale of Jesus” (*manzil ‘ísá*), the “Ark of Aaron” (*tábút harún*), the “Well of Daniel” (*bi’r danyál*) and the “Station of Assent” (*maqám al-iqbál*). Also mentioned is a “mountain of lead” (*jabal al-usrub*) with an exterior of iron and an interior of gold, Mount Qáf; the “Mountain of Light” (*jabal an-núr*); the “Mountain of the One [God]” (*jabal al-aḥad*) and the “Mountain of Najáf” (*jabal an-najáf*, in Iraq) which is associated with Mt. Sinai, Mt. Seir and Mt. Paran (cf. Deut. 33:2; *Du‘á’ as-simát*; Lambden, 1988:87f)

What Sayyid Káẓim has to say about “Mount Sinai” (*jabal*/*ṭúr síná’*) is expressive of the importance of Najáf as the place of the shrine of Imám ‘Alí and the locale of the translocation of Sinai: “As regards Mount Sinai, outwardly and inwardly it is the ‘hill of Najáf (*rubwa an-Najáf*)”. Though he acknowledged that this mountain was traditionally located in Syria or the “Holy Land” he explained this in terms of a part of the “mountain of Najáf” (*jabal an-Najáf*) having become detached and reconstituted piecemeal in the “land of Syria” (*arḍ ash-shám*). The “mountain of Najáf” is a part of the “mountain” on which God held converse with Moses, sanctified Jesus, took Abraham for a “Friend” and reckoned Muḥammad as one “Beloved”. It is the “greatest of the mountains of the world” closely related to Mt. Sinai, Mt. Seir, and Mt. Paran.

Following Shaykh Aḥmad, the Sayyid considered “Mount Seir” (*jabal sa‘ír*) to be the

scene of Jesus’ “sanctification” and intimate converse with God (he located it in the Hijaz, Western Arabia) and an “edifice” (or dome, *qubba*) which was “with Moses and like a throne”. The mountain on which God took Abraham for a Friend was either a hill on the slope of Mt. Miná (near Mecca) where a mosque is built or another mountain in Jerusalem, (*Ilya*) the Holy City, in Palestine (Israel). Allegedly a mountain near Mecca, Mount Paran (*jabal al-fárán*) was the place where “sanctified myriads” (*ribwát al-muqaddasín*) of angels beyond the ken of the Cherubim appeared to Muḥammad. A scene of the divine theophany, “Mount Paran” is also further mystically interpreted and translocated in Bábi-Bahá’í texts (Lambden, 1983b, Appen.).

In the course of expounding phrases within the Sermon of Gulf, Sayyid Káẓim also makes occasional reference to Q. 7:143 and to the Shí‘í tradition about the proto-Shí‘í-Cherub being the agent of the Sinaitic theophany (<--). He largely follows what Shaykh Aḥmad had stated about this, namely that God created his prophets in the image of a specific Cherub and gave them corresponding names:

Thus Noah … bore the image and name of one of them [the Cherubim], that is to say, Noah was named with his name. And Abraham bore the image and name of one of them. Moses also bore the image and name of one of them and it was the one which “revealed its glory before the mountain” (*tajallá li’l-jabal*, Q. 7:143b) at the time when Moses asked his Lord that which he asked [to see Him]. He reduced it to dust. Jesus likewise bore the image and name of one of them [the cherubim]. It was by virtue of that [specific] cherub that Jesus was able to cure the blind and the leprous and revive the dead” (al-Aḥsá’í, Sh. Ziyara, 3:361; cf. Majmú‘a 30:64f).

Commenting on God’s having singled out the Prophet Muḥammad from the “Supreme Centre” (*al-buḥbúḥa al-‘ulyá*) in the light of Q. 3:33 and other traditions, Sayyid Káẓim speaks of the “heart” (*al-qalb*) and the “self” (*an-nafs*) as pivotal realities. The core of the being of the Prophet Muḥammad is his transcendent *an-nafs* (Self) which is the locus of the divine theophany (*al-mutajallí bi’l-aḥadiyya*) as the *nafs-Alláh* (Self of God). When God created Imám ‘Alí this elevated “Self” was further manifested in him. Both ‘Alí and Muḥammad are associated with the same created, though divine, “Self” (*nafs*) and “Essence” (*dhát*). On one level it was thus Imám ‘Alí who conversed with Moses from the Sinaitic Tree (*ash-shajarat*) and uttered the words

“I, verily am God.” He was the one who appeared “before and to Moses through his Light” as one of the “men of the Cherubim”. The theophany (*tajallí*) of Imám ‘Alí before Moses from the “Tree” was “the essence of the theophany of God” (‘*ayn tajallí Alláh*) within the Israelite Prophet (Sh.Ttnj, 92).

In further explaining the significance of the theophany unto Moses, Sayyid Káẓim states that the proto-Shí‘í Cherub mentioned by Imam Ja‘far (<--) is symbolic of the *nafs músá* (“Self of Moses”). He has disclosed this “mystery” in view of the fact that a theophany (*at-tajallí*) unto something is only possible through the “self” (*nafs*) of that thing (Sh.Ttnj, 94). On similar lines is the Sayyid’s teaching that the number and names of the angelic host of the Cherubim are the same as those of the prophets (*al-anbiyá*): “That man [Cherub] who revealed himself unto Moses (*tajallí li-músá*) such that Moses fell down in a swoon [-->Q. 7:143] was named Moses”. On another level however, the cherubic being who appeared to Moses was the reality of such Prophets as the “First and Last Adam” (*ádam al-awwal wa’l-ákhir*) (Sh.Ttnj, 94). The Cherubim are the archetypal realities of the prophets possessed of an essential oneness. Moses thus experienced the theophany (*tajallí*) of his celestial “Self” (*nafs*) as a cherub who may be thought of as Imám ‘Alí or one of the prophets who partake of the same pleroma of reality. In reality the theophany (*tajallí*) was the disclosure of an infinitesimal glimmer of the radiance that emanated from the angelic body of a cherub numbered among the messengers “possessors of steadfastness” (*ulú al-‘azm*) (ibid., 264). Alternatively, the theophanic radiance which shone forth before Moses on Sinai may be thought of as the “Light” (*núr*) of Muḥammad and his family (Sh.Ttnj, 316; cf. 102–116; 143, 161, 168, 186f, etc.).

In the light of the above, it will be evident that both Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Káẓim gave detailed symbolic and mystical interpretations to Moses/Sinai motifs, sometimes in line with those set forth by Ibn al-‘Arabí and frequently informed by imamological speculations. On one level Mount Sinai all but becomes the interior reality of Moses or the inmost heart of the believer, and the theophany on the Mount the shining forth of the Divine Light upon it.

Other writings of Sayyid Káẓim

The *Sharḥ al-qáṣida* of ar-Rashtí is well-known for its abstruse, highly theosophical depiction of the levels (*maḥalla*), regions and inhabitants of a spiritual universe, pictured as a celestial city (*al-madína*). The primary locale (*al-maḥalla al-‘ulá*) of this “City” is the level of the divine Unity” (*maḥalla at-tawḥíd*) with its category of uniqueness and singularity. The second level is that of the locus of the Greatest Name (*al-maḥalla al-ism al-a‘ẓam*) also named that of the most ancient Light (*an-núr al-aqdam*), the halting point of the world (*waqf al-‘álam*), the Interiority of the Mystic Meaning (*as-sirr al-ma‘aní*), and “the embellished cipher” or “the ornate code” (*ar-ramz al-munannam*) (Sh-Qasida, 119–120). This illustrates the elevated status that the “mightiest Name of God” had for Sayyid Káẓim (-->).

Different regions of this multi-faceted celestial, cosmic “City” according to the *Sharḥ al-qáṣida* are overseen by various named human or superhuman creatures who often have complicated Arabic names. The *Sharḥ al-qáṣida* appears to incorporate Islamicate motifs rooted in Isrá’íliyyát traditions. The angelological names allotted certain of the masters of the “City” are often similar to those found in al-Búní’s *Shams al-ma‘árif* (<--). They sometimes terminate with the Arabic transliteration of the suffix אד (‘el = Ar. ال) indicative of the Hebrew name of God (cf. the biblical and qur’anic Jibrá’il = Gabriel, the ‘Might of God’). Other “lords” of the celestial city have names that are both abstruse and appear to be esoteric neologisms. Level 119 has as its nexus (‘knot’, *‘aqd*) the “lord of the verdant land (*ṣáḥibihi arḍ khuḍrá*) in the ultimacy of beauty (*niháyat al-bahá’*) whose name consists of the two words H-A-Ṭ-L-H-D and H-M-A Ḥ-Ḥ [-H]. Celestial level 144 is described as a nexus, the overseer of which is “a man possessed of a mighty key (*miftáḥ al-‘aẓím*), his name being Shama‘shá’il (? pointing uncertain). Finally, celestial level 170 is governed by a humanoid being (“man”, *insán*) who sculpts iron and whose name is a conjunction of the three words كراس (*Karásiyy*, lit. = ‘chairs, seats’) ثوطا, Thúṭá (?) and ذححح (Ḍ-Ḥ-Ḥ-Ḥ).

Aside from these highly imaginative angelic and associated name ciphers in the *Sharḥ al-qaṣída*, ar-Rashtí several times refers to the *al-ism al-a‘ẓam*, the mightiest Name of God. There are occurrences of this Name modified by several of the superlatives *a‘ẓam* as it is in certain supplications of the (Twelver) Imams recorded in Majlisí’s Persian *Zád al-ma‘ád* (Knapsack for the Eschaton). In one instance Sayyid Káẓim makes reference to “the Point of Origination” (*an-nuqṭat al-intidá’iyya*) which God summoned through his Greatest, Mightiest, Greatest Name (*bi-ismihi al-a‘ẓam al-a‘ẓam al-a‘ẓam*). Later in the *Sharḥ al-qáṣida* ar-Rashtí again refers to this thrice supremely Great Name of God (ar-Rashtí, Sh. Qasida, 34, 90). In both his *Sharḥ al-Khuṭba al-ṭutunjiyya* and in a specific treatise he comments upon one of the graphical forms of the Mightiest Name of God.

Sayyid Káẓim on Shí‘í graphical forms of the Mightiest Name of God[[189]](#footnote-189)

Like Shaykh Aḥmad and other Shí‘í writers, Sayyid Káẓim commented upon one of the poetical and graphical representations of the *al-ism al-a‘ẓam* (“Mightiest Name of God”) of the kind illustrated below (Fig. 1). It sometimes refers to the graphic form of the mightiest Name the components of which are also given detailed explanations. Such is the case in Sayyid Káẓim’s *Sharḥ al-ism al-a‘ẓam* (Commentary on the [Graphical form of the] Mightiest Name [of God] -->bib.)

Both Sunní and Shí‘í sources and esoterica contain traditions which purport to set forth graphic, sometimes talismanic forms of the *ism Alláh al-a‘ẓam* (Mightiest Name of God). A dozen or more variant alphabetic, qabbalistic, cryptographic representations of this all-highest Name are found in the aforementioned Islamic literatures (Winckler, 1930; Anawati, 1967). Shí‘í representations of this mightiest Name are often based upon directives spelled out in a tradition relayed by Ibn ‘Abbás (<--3.1) from the first Imám ‘Alí. It is cited among others by Muḥyí ad-Dín al-Búní the occult initiate of arcane computations surrounding the Names and Attributes of the

Godhead, in his *Shams al-ma‘árif*:[[190]](#footnote-190)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Three rods (*‘uṣiyy*) in a row [lll] after2. a seal [*khátam* = ]; above them (rods) the likeness of a straightened lance [].3. A blind [Arabic letter] M [mím, م] without a tail [];4. then a ladder unto all that is hoped for, but which is not a ladder [].5. Four things like fingers in a row, pointing to good deeds, but without a wrist [llll];6. And a [letter] “H” (*há’*) which is cleft (*shaqíq*) [هـ];7. then an inverted [letter] wáw و = like the syphon of a phlebotomist (*ka-anbúb ḥajjám*, “tube of the cupper”) though not a cupping glass (*miḥjam*) | هذا صورة للاسم الأعظم(“This is an image of the Greatest Name”)Fig. 1The image is placed on objects by Muslims as an amulet (*ḥirz*) that they call *sharaf ash-shams* (“The nobility of the Sun”). |

This is [representative] of the Mighty Name (*al-ism al-mu‘aẓẓim*)

If you knew it not aforetime, then know it now!

O bearer of the Mighty Name (*ṣáḥib al-ism al-‘aẓím*), take sufficiency in it for you shall be preserved from misfortunes and kept safe thereby.

It is the Name of God (*ism Alláh*)—exalted be His glory—unto all humankind whether pure Arab (*faṣíḥ*) or non-Arab (*a‘jam*).[[191]](#footnote-191)

The graphic insert (= Figure 1) to the right of the poem translated above is an example of the diagrammatic working out of this tradition from Imám ‘Alí describing seven though incorporating thirteen graphical elements making up the representation of God’s Mightiest or Greatest Name. This *al-ism al-a‘ẓam* has been the subject of complicated exegesis-eisegesis by Muslims, Shaykhís, Bábís and Bahá’ís.[[192]](#footnote-192) Details cannot be registered here though it will be relevant to mention a few statements made in the Isrá’íliyyát influenced *Shams al-ma‘árif* of

al-Búní (<--) and in select Bábí-Bahá’í primary texts before turning briefly to the commentary of Sayyid Káẓim.

In his *Shams al-ma‘árif* al-Búní associates portions of the poetical-graphical representation of the Mightiest Name of God with the Bible seen as Judaeo-Christian scripture, the *Tawrát* (Torah, Hebrew Bible) and the *Injíl* (“Gospel[s]”). He states that six portions (letters, *aḥruf*) of the Mightiest Name (*al-ism al-a‘ẓam*) are found in the Torah: namely (1) the deformed letter “há’” هـ [= 6 above], (2) the inverted “wáw” و [= 7 above] and (3) the four finger-like lines llll [ = 5 above] (total = 6 elements). Two portions (*aḥruf*) of the Mightiest Name allegedly derive from in the *Injíl* (“Gospel”), (1) the “blind *mím*”[[193]](#footnote-193) (م) without a tail [= 3 above] and the “ladder” sign [= 4 above]. The five qur’anic parts of the mightiest Name are (1) the initial pentacle  or “seal” and (2) the “three sticks” (*‘aṣá*, pl. *‘iṣiyy*) lll with a line above like a “straightened lance” [= 1 and 2 above = 5 elements).

Both the Bảb and BA\* were influenced by traditions to the effect that elements or portions of the *al-ism al-a‘ẓam* go back to the Hebrew Bible and the *Injíl* (Gospel) or derive from pre-Islamic Isrá’íliyyát traditions. In his *Tafsír laylat al-qadr* (Q. 97) the Báb refers to 3, 4, and 5 portions of the “Mightiest Name”, existing in the Hebrew Bible [Torah] (*tawrát*), Gospel[s] (*injíl*) and Q. respectively (INBMC 69:17). Similarly, in a Tablet commenting on the *bismi’lláh[[194]](#footnote-194)* and first verse of the Súrah of the Pen (Q.68), BA\* mentions that God divulged something (a “letter” *ḥarfan*) of the “Mightiest Name” understood as *bahá’* (“splendour”) in every religious dispensation. In the Islamic era it is alluded to through the letter ب (“Bá’”) which is the first letter of both the *bismi’lláh* and of the word *bahá’*. In the *injíl* it is through the word اب = *áb*) meaning “Father” in Arabic translations of the Gospels, that two of the

letters of the word *bahá’* are located. BA\* also states *bahá’* is the *al-ism al-a‘ẓam* as is clearly intimated in the Bábí scripture (= “the Bayán”, lit. “Exposition”). The Arabic verbal-noun *Bahá’* as the Mightiest Name, it is added, is representative of the *nafs* (“Logos-Self”) of God in the Bahá’í dispensation (INBMC 56:25).

Sayyid Káẓim’s imamologically oriented commentary on the poetical and graphic Isrá’íliyyát rooted traditions regarding the symbol of the Mightiest Name[[195]](#footnote-195) cannot be discussed in detail here save to note that he also draws upon allegedly pre-Islamic dimensions of traditions about the Mightiest Name of God. ar-Rashtí commences his commentary by acknowledging his indebtedness to the upright, pious and sagacious master named Shaykh Muḥammad Aḥmad (= Shaykh Aḥmad?/al-Búní?). Through him he was informed that “certain of the religious communities (*al-millí*, pl. *al-millíyún*) are aware of portions of the words (*al-kalimát*) constituting the Mightiest Name (*al-ism al-a‘ẓam*)”. It is stated that they are evident in “fourteen temples” (*hayákil*), apparently indicating the Shi‘ite pleroma of Muḥammad, Fáṭima and the 12 Imams. Differentiated or subdivided into thirteen “letters” after the thirteen individual elements constituting the seven graphic *sigla* [Latin] (<--) which make up the mightiest Name of God (counting from the initial pentacle () to the inverted *wáw*) eight portions out of the 13 were known to the pre-Islamic communities. Four elements (“letters”) derive from the *Tawrát*, (the Torah, Hebrew Bible) and four from the *Injíl* (“Gospel”), the other five derive from the Q. (4+4+5 = 13). Sayyid Káẓim’s explanations of these components of the *al-ism al-a‘ẓam* are distinctly imamological. (ar-Rashtí, Sh. Ism, 271 aff).

The Sayyid further explains how it is that the Torah has four “letters” of the Mightiest Name. He explains that this is so in the light of the following well-known prophetic *ḥadíth*, “O ‘Alí you are to me after the manner of Aaron to Moses”. A typological relationship is thus set up between Moses and Muḥammad. Moses [= Muḥammad], it is explained, is foundational (*aṣlan*),

the Reality (*al-ḥaqíqa*), while the Torah (*at-tawrát*) before him is his essential persona (*aṣála dhátan*). Moses the prophet (*an-nabí*) is essentially the Moses of the gate of reality upon reality (*ḥaqíqa*). In a metaphorical sense the reality of the Torah which was revealed before him consists of four letters which are the four lettered personal name Muḥammad (= M-Ḥ-M-D). The manifestation of the name Muḥammad before Moses took place at the Sinaitic theophany (*tajallí*) of the Lord (= Q. 7:143). The agent of this theophany is again said to have been an individual from among the cherubim (*rajal min al-karubiyyín*) (<--) evidently one associated with the name Muḥammad (ar-Rashtí, Sh. Ism, 273b).

That four letters of the *al-ism al-a‘ẓam* are found in “the *Injíl* of Jesus son of Mary” is also commented upon by Sayyid Káẓim. He states, “And he [Jesus] is the likeness (*mithál*) of [Imám] ‘Alí.” This typological equation also has to do with the letters of the mightiest Name being imamologically realized. That Imám ‘Alí is equated with Jesus finds echoes in the writings of the Báb (-->P.Bayan VIII:2). Five “letter” components of Mightiest Name are also allotted to the Q. They are imamologically understood as representing four twelver Imams, Ḥasan, Ḥusayn, Ja‘far Ṣádiq, Músá and the prophet’s daughter Fáṭima. At one point in his commentary on the *Khuṭba aṭ-ṭutunjiyya* Sayyid Káẓim also interprets the seven graphic *sigla* (Latin sing. *siglum*) of the Mightiest Name imamologically, as [1] Muḥamad, and six of the Imams, [2] ‘Alí, [3] Fáṭima [4] Ḥasan, [5] Ḥusayn, [6] Ja‘far and [7] Músá. These seven are indicative of the fullness, the pleroma of the fourteen immaculate ones (Sh.Ttnj: 53).

It is also interesting to note that Sayyid Káẓim gives the seventh item, the inverted letter *wáw* (و) a messianic significance stating that it “alludes to the [messianic] Proof (*al-ḥujjat*), the son of Ḥasan [al-‘Askarí, the 11th Imám, d.c. 260/874]”. The central (hidden) letter “Á” (*alif*) of the three letters of *wáw* when spelled out in full (= واو) represents the Qá’im (Ariser) as one “stationed between the two gulfs (*ṭutunjayn*), the isthmus (*barzakh*) between the two worlds”. This mode of exegesis is also taken up in Bábí-Bahá’í scripture, most notably in the *Qayyúm al-asmá’* of the Báb and (<--2.2) and, for example, the *al-Kitáb al-aqdas* (“Most Holy Book”

c. 1873) and Lawḥ-i Hirtik of BA\* (-->bib.).

6.3 The Báb and the Bábí-Bahá’í exaltation of the first two Shaykhs

From the foregoing it should be evident that Bábí doctrine has its immediate and most central roots in Shaykhism. The Báb sparked off an initially neo-Shaykhí millenarian faction. By the mid. 19th century this had evolved into a neo-Shí‘í but post-Shaykhí socially and doctrinally radical religious movement.

Siyyid ‘Alí Muḥammad the founder of the Bábí movement was born in Shíráz (southeast Iran) on 20 October 1819/1st Muḥarram AH 1235. He was the only son of Fáṭima Bagum and Siyyid Muḥammad Riḍá (c. 1778?–c. 1820/1826/1827?), a descendant of Imám Ḥusayn and a merchant in the Shíráz bazaar (Báb, K.Fihrist: 339–40). When his father passed away the youthful Báb (then perhaps 5–6 years old?) was supervised by his maternal uncle Ḥájjí Mírzá Siyyid ‘Alí (d. 1850). The elementary schooling of the Báb began around 1826 under the tutelage of a Shaykhí teacher known as Shaykh ‘Ábid (d.c. 1846–1847) in Shíráz. The Báb would doubtless have been instructed in rudimentary basics; special attention being paid to calligraphic excellence and the rote recitation of the Arabic Q. Like Muḥammad, the Báb in various later writings claimed to be *al-ummí* (“unlettered”, Q. 7:157f) though one possessed of innate divine knowledge and subject to *waḥy* (“divine inspiration”).

The Báb’s deep religiosity, visionary experiences and Shaykhí associations moved him, on the evening of 22 May 1844 (AH 1260) to confide in the leading Shaykhí Mullá Ḥusayn Bushrú’í that he was the “gate” (*báb*, hence his title) through whom communication with the hidden, messianic twelfth Imám, the *Dhikr*, (‘Remembrance’), was possible. He claimed to be his earthly representative (*ná’ib*) and the successor to Siyyid Káẓim who had passed away in January 1844 without clearly nominating a successor. Though hesitant Mullá Ḥusayn accepted the Báb’s claims. So too several other of his Shaykhí associates and companions who constituted the bulk of the earliest disciples of the Báb variously designated *sábiqún* (“forerunners”, Q. 56:10–11) and *ḥurúf-i ḥayy* (*ḥayy* = abjad 18 hence the 18 “letters of the living”).

Though not merely neo-Shaykhí, Bábí-Bahá’í origins, hermeneutics and doctrine were markedly influenced by the teachings of the first two Shaykhs, Shaykjh Aḥmad and Sayyid Káẓim.[[196]](#footnote-196) Details of the extent of this doctrinal influence upon the Báb and BA\* in their writings has yet to be adequately and systematically studied. The alleged messianically and eschatologically immanent stance of these first two Shaykhs along with their theosophical-imamological, Shí‘í hermeneutical perspectives underpin key aspects of Bábí and Bahá’í doctrine. In particular their non-literal interpretations of qur’anic texts and Shí‘í doctrines and practices foreshadow and echo subsequent Bábí-Bahá’í demythologizations of Islamic and other teachings. As will be seen, certain of the first Shaykhs’ citations from Islamicized Judaeo-Christian scripture, especially the *anájíl* (Gospels) are repeated in Bábí-Bahá’í scripture. Their interpretations of Moses-Sinai motifs and concepts surrounding the *ism Alláh al-a‘ẓam* inform or are found in new forms in Bábí-Bahá’í primary sources.

The Báb attended Sayyid Káẓim’s classes in Karbala for between 6 and 9 months. He came to refer to him just prior to his 1260/1844 declaration in his *R. fí’s-sulúk* (Treatise on the Path) as “my lord, support and teacher” (*sayyidí wa mu‘tammadí wa mu‘allimí*) (R.Suluk, 74). A while later in an early prayer in response to eschatological and other questions he referred to himself as a *ḥámil al-‘ilm* (bearer of knowledge) like Sayyid Káẓim (TBA 6003C:188–9). Later in the course, however, of establishing his own theophanic claims and independent religion he distanced himself doctrinally from the Shaykhí leaders. He also invited his Shaykhí rival and first major opponent Karím Khán-i Kirmání (d. 1870) to embrace his path in a number of important letters (MacEoin, 1982:16ff).

As a Bábí (= follower of the Báb) BA\*[[197]](#footnote-197) referred to the architects of what became the Shaykhí school of Shí‘í Islam in very elevated terms. In his *Kitáb-Íqán* (c. 1861) they are the *núrán-i nayyírayn* (“twin luminous lights”, KI:51/65). Using Sufi terminology in the same treatise BA\* also applied to Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Káẓim (as well as other harbingers of new religions) the epithet (Per.) *insán-i kámil* (= Ar. *al-insán al-kámil*, ‘The Perfect Human’), a term of central importance in the cosmology and theophanology of the school of Ibn al-‘Arabí

indicative of the advanced gnostic (KI 51/tr. 42 [66]). The first two Shaykhs of Shaykhism are the *shams-i huviyya* (The Sun of the Ipseity) and *qamr-i aḥadiyya* (Moon of the Divine Oneness) (KI 151/tr. 65). In a much later Persian passage addressed to a certain Aḥmad BA\* wrote:

Out of the bosom of Islam many were submerged in the ocean of idle fancies of vain imaginings. Subsequent to [the era] of the seal of the prophets (*khátam-i anbiyá’* = Muḥammad) and to the purified [twelver] Imams two souls attained unto the real truth (*bi-ḥaqq*) and were embellished with the ornament of awareness (*bi-ṭaráz-i agáhí*), [namely] the late Shaykh [Aḥmad al-Aḥsá’í] and the Sayyid [Káẓim ar-Rashtí]. … We [BA\*] were [mystically] with these two and heard from them both what cannot have resulted from aught save God. … They attained unto the dawning-point of grace and the dawning-place of knowledge. (Má’idih 4:134–5)

Numerous Bábí and Bahá’í sources picture the twin founders of the Shaykhí school as being especially conscious of an imminent eschaton, the near advent of the messianic Qá’im or Mahdí whose nature and activities they variously predicted. Zarandí, for example, has Shaykh Aḥmad quit Arabia and Iraq as a result of the mysterious call of Iran, the birthplace of the Báb, Shíráz being especially redolent of the aura of the coming one (DB: 4f; cf. the (Shaykhí?) *Risala* of Qátil b. al-Karbalá’í). The cryptic eschatology of early Shaykhism has yet to be systematically studied (-->). It is hard to back up many aspects of these alleged eschatologically charged dimensions to the teachings of the first two Shaykhs since no detailed study of their eschatology has been attempted. A recently published two hundred or so page *K. al-raj‘at* (Book of the Return) of Shaykh Aḥmad does not differ markedly if at all from mainstream twelver Shi‘ite eschatological-apocalyptic norms.

The third Kirmání Shaykhí leader Ḥájí Mírzá Muḥammad Karím Khán Kirmání (1232/1816–1288/1871) was a long-standing opponent of the Báb and BA\* against whom he wrote something like 15 books and treatises from 1845 until his death. A polymathic individual he also wrote a good deal on numerous subjects as well as on prophetological matters and on certain Isrá’íliyyát traditions and the Bible. Aside from his fifteen or more anti-Bábí-Bahá’í works he authored, for example, a tract on Yájúj and Májúj (Gog and Magog) as well as a response to questions about biblical interpretation raised by the Bábí Mullá Jamál in BA\*’s *K.-i Íqán.*

(MRF 2:207–59). Here he shows a remarkable and direct knowledge of the Bible and of certain 19th century Shí‘í polemical exchanges with missionaries.

Karím Khán Kirmání was also able to directly quote numerous passages from the canonical bible in his 1266/1849 Persian *Kitáb-i nuṣrat ad-dín* (Book of the Victory of Religion) which appears to have been written in response to the *Taríq al-ḥayát* (printed in Persian at Agra in 1847) of the Christian missionary, Carl Gottlieb Pfander (<--5.1), a work which is largely concerned with the evangelical exposition of sin and salvation.[[198]](#footnote-198) At several points in his reply Karím Khán applies biblical prophecies to Muḥammad and the rise of Islam (K. Nuṣrat: 293–328 is wholly devoted to this subject). This, as will be seen, contrasts markedly with the Báb who, as will be argued, appears to have chosen not to cite the Bible at all.

7.
The Báb, pre-Islamic scripture and the Bible

7.1 Pre-Islamic scripture in the writings of the Báb

That the Báb had contact with Jews and Christians of Shíráz and had been influenced by the NT in Persian translation has been asserted by some early European writers upon Babism. Many were under the influence of statements made by the French diplomat and amateur orientalist J. A. Comte de Gobineau (d. 1882). He underscored the derivative nature of the teachings of the Báb in chapter six of his *Les Religiones et les Philosophies* (1st ed. Paris 1865 [19281:133–4). Gobineau could not imagine, despite his very limited knowledge of the Báb’s writings, Babism originating outside of a western, Judaeo-Christian sphere of influence. This is clear from one of his letters to Prokesch-Osten (d. 1876) (Momen, 1981:23–4).

Few, apart from the Turkologist Armin Vambery (d. 1914), were aware of the meagre knowledge of Gobineau in matters philological, religious and “orientalist”.[[199]](#footnote-199) Persons influenced by him include, for example, the Italian physician Michele Lessona (d. 1894) who states in his *I Bábí* (written 1870’s? pub. Turin 1881) that the Báb had contact with the Jews and Zoroastrians of Shíráz and had read the NT in Persian missionary translation (Lessona [1881] 1981:11, 36–37, 46f).[[200]](#footnote-200) Persian writers were also directly or indirectly influenced by Gobineau whose *Les Religiones* … was translated into Persian. The sentences alleging the Báb’s doctrinal indebtedness to Jews and to the NT are also reproduced by the Jewish writer Ḥabíb Lavi (d. 1984) in his multi-volume *Táríkh i yahúd-i írán* (“History of the Jews of Iran”, 3 vols) (Tarikh III:604–5).[[201]](#footnote-201)

The supposition of Jewish and NT influence has been repeated in various ways throughout the late 19th and 20th centuries. Even Edward G. Browne (d. 1926), the renowned Cambridge orientalist and one-time expert on the Bábí religion, inaccurately furthered alleged NT links to the doctrinal teachings of the Báb as will be seen in detail below (-->). The origins and doctrinal bases of the Bábí religion are rather more complicated than the often simplistic theories of the 19th century orientalists with their limited access to primary sources. The doctrines of the Báb cannot be wholly or adequately accounted for on the basis of Jewish associations, Western influences, Gospel study or even an alleged link with Zoroastrians or with such Russians as the diplomat Dmitrii I. Dolgorukov (d. Moscow 1867). It will be argued here that there is very little if anything in the Báb’s own writings that confirms NT influence, though high *‘irfání* (“gnostic”) theosophical streams of influence are much in evidence in his numerous, very largely Arabic, and Persian writings.

Concrete evidence in the primary sources for the Báb’s knowledge of the Bible/NT is wholly lacking. There is not a great deal that presupposes either Jewish or Zoroastrian influence either.[[202]](#footnote-202) He never directly cites the HB in Arabic, Persian or any Jewish writers or literatures of any period. It was the Báb’s mercantile associations with Jews or simply unfounded Muslim attitudes that in large measure account for these early European statements about the sources of the Báb’s inspiration and Bábí doctrine. Muslims generally, it should be borne in mind, viewed Jews with suspicion or contempt and regarded them as unclean (*najis*). Having Babism derive therefrom was tantamount to dismissing it as unfounded nonsense of dubious origin.

Evidence is lacking in both the primary and secondary historical sources for sustained and direct contact between the Báb and Jews. Jewish converts to Babism during the Báb’s lifetime appear to have been non-existent. Though Babism from the beginning presented itself as a neo-Shí‘í phenomenon with a message for all humankind (QA 1, etc.) only a handful of six Khurásání Jewish converts of the early 1850s (?) are known (Bushrú’í, T.-Khurasan: 86ff; cf.

Pata’í, 1997:76f).

In this chapter the opinions of the Báb about pre-Islamic scripture will be surveyed. In this light some idea of the nature of the Báb’s alleged knowledge of the Bible/Gospels/NT will be gleaned. After analysing the Báb’s own statements, the positive perspectives about his knowledge of the Bible/NT put forward by the Cambridge orientalist E. G. Browne (1864–1926) and the contemporary Yale historian Abbas Amanat will be shown to be without sound historical or textual foundation.

Islamic messianism has it that an expected Mahdí-Qá’im would be fully aware of the location of the lost, genuine pre-Islamic scripture and come to rule non-Muslims in accordance with its dictates. Both Sunní and Shí‘í traditions state that he would be guided to this pristine, uncorrupted Judaeo-Christian scripture. Maṭár b. Muḥammad Ṭahmán al-Warráq (d. 125/743?) transmitted traditions from Ka‘b al-Aḥbár to the effect that the Mahdí was so named because he would be guided (*yuhdá*) to find copies of the original texts of the Torah and the Gospel concealed in a cave in Antioch (Madelung EI2 V:1232b). A parallel Shí‘í tradition from the 5th Imám, Muḥammad al-Báqir, as recorded by an-Nu’mání (d. 360/970–971) in his *Kitáb al-ghayba* (Book of the Occultation), reads as follows:

When al-Qa’im from the family of the Prophet will rise he will distribute equally among the people and will establish justice among his subjects … he will be called al-Mahdi, the one who will guide, since he will guide to the secret matters (*amr al-khafí*) and will bring out the Torah and other books of God from a cave in Antioch and will rule the people of the Torah according to the Torah, and the people of the Gospel according to the Gospel, and the people of the Qur’an according to the Qur’an (K. Ghayba, 164; cited Sachedina, 61).[[203]](#footnote-203)

Other Shí‘í traditions associate the Qá’im with varieties of the *jafr* about which there are numerous traditions.[[204]](#footnote-204) It is sometimes portrayed as a divinatory, “unwritten” sacred scroll

inscribed upon cow hide containing the knowledge of the pre-Islamic prophets, learned Israelites [= Isrá’íliyyát materials] and the secrets of future events (Bihar2 1:238f; cf. 47:270ff). The messianic Qá’im was expected to appear in possession of varieties of this *jafr* described in Shí‘í traditions from Imám Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣádiq and others as;

1) *al-jafr al-abyaḍ* (the white jafr), pure recensions of (Abrahamic scripture): the *ṣuḥuf* of Abraham, the *tawrát* (Torah) of Moses, the *zabúr* (“Psalter”) of David and the *Injíl* (Gospel) of Jesus as well as the *ṣáḥifa* (Scroll) of Fáṭima;

2) *al-jafr al-aḥmar* (the red *jafr*) a bag containing the weaponry (*as-saláḥ*) of the prophet Muḥammad or the messianic Qá’im as the *ṣáḥib al-sayf* (bearer of the sword).

Responding to a question about *jafr,* al-Aḥsá’í (<--4.4) had it that this would be the exclusive inheritance of the messianic Qá’im. Imám ‘Alí had inherited the recognized *jafr* as the *‘ilm al-ḥurúf* (science of letters) from Muḥammad via Gabriel when upon Mt. Paran (*jabal fárán*) (JK. 1/ii:87–8). The Báb claimed knowledge of the secrets of this *jafr* in the sense of numerical, talismanic or gematric insight (cf. K. Panj:310, 429ff).[[205]](#footnote-205) He did not, as far as I am aware, refer to any cave in Antioch or to the concrete discovery of lost pre-Islamic scripture. In certain of his writings, however, he does claim that God taught him the knowledge of pre-Islamic scripture. Probably pre-supposing this we read in his *Súrat al-‘amá’* (Súrah of the Divine Cloud”= QA 10): “We, verily, sent down [for the Báb] the verses which are in the *ṣuḥuf* (ancient scrolls)” (10:32). In this same súrah the QA is also represented as a “Book” confirming and summing up “all that God sent down upon the prophets and the righteous ones in all the [previous] *alwáḥ*” (‘revealed tablets’) (10:32). In an exegetical rewrite of Q. 3:48 in QA 3 the Báb states,

God hath assuredly taught you [the Báb] the knowledge of the Book (*‘ilm al-kitáb*) from the *Furqán* [= Q.] the *Injíl*, the *Tawrát*, the *Zabúr* and what preceded them of the *ṣuḥuf* (pre-Mosaic scripture) and with your Lord were you concealed and suspended above the Gate of the Point (*báb an-nuqṭa*) of

the letter “B” (*al-bá’*) (QA 3:11).[[206]](#footnote-206)

In Islamo-Bábí and Bahá’í belief all revealed scripture is an expression of the will and Word of God. The knowledge of one sacred book, especially if it is the most recent, is tantamount to knowledge of all revealed scripture. A new sacred book is another expression of the essences of all past revelations. Bábí-Bahá’í scripture presupposes that a true understanding of the Bayán and Q. is tantamount to a full awareness of pre-Islamic scripture. Worth noting in this connection is that during the Bábí period BA\* referred to his 1857–1858 *Ṣáḥifay-i Fáṭimiyya* (Scroll of Fatima) or *K. maknúnih* (Hidden Words) as the “inner essence” (*jawáhir*) of all pre-Bábí scripture sent down unto past prophets (*an-nabiyyún*) and clothed by him in the “garment of brevity” (<--2.2).

The Báb not only mentions that Adam had a revealed *kitáb* (“Book”) but, following mainstream Islamic tradition, affirmed the existence and inspired nature of the whole range of scripture originating in primordial and post-Abrahamic times. He refers to the *ṣuḥuf* of Abraham, the *Tawrát* (Torah) of Moses, the *Zabúr* (Psalms) of David and the *Injíl* (Gospel) of Jesus. In some of his later writings, including the P. Bayán, the Báb refers to these sacred books after their initial Arabic letters: *Tawrát* = “book of T” (*tá’*), *Zabúr* = “book of Z” (*zá’*) and *Injíl* = “book of “Á” (*alíf*)” (P.Bayan, 3:13, etc.).

Pre-Islamic scripture in the Qayyúm al-asmá’ (mid. 1844)

References to pre-Islamic scripture in the QA of the Báb (<--2.1) are largely rooted in the Q. as exegetically rewritten so as to express a neo-Islamic and post-qur’anic Shí‘í *ta‘wíl* (non-literal dimension). In the QA *Súrat ar-rukn* (Sura of the Pillar) the Báb states that Moses received the *Tawrát* on Sinai and Jesus personally received the divinely revealed *Injíl* direct “from heaven” (*min al-samá’*). These works are said to contain eschatologically suggestive references to the *Dhikr* and to concealed Tablets:

We, verily, gave Moses the Book and We preserved him in his youth until the time set in the book transpired. … And We, indeed, gave Jesus, son of Mary the exposition (*al-bayán*) and aided him with a Spirit from Our Dhikr (*bi-rúḥ min dhikriná*). We, indeed, sent down a Book (*kitában*) upon the prophets (*an-nabiyyín*) consisting of concealed tablets (*al-alwáḥ al-masṭúran*) (QA 55:217; cf. Q. 2:87).

Probably addressing Sufis and speaking with the voice of God in the *Súrat al-kitáb* (Sura of the Book = QA 41) the pre-existent Báb affirms the revealed status of Abrahamic scripture. He associates his pre-existent Logos-Self with the quasi-messianic *Dhikr* (Remembrance) and the divine being who conversed with Moses on Sinai. He revealed the *Injíl* to Jesus who was subsequently taken up to the heaven of *baqá’* (permanent abiding in God). This until the *ḥujjat Alláh* (Messianic Qá’im) appears at the time of second advent of Jesus and discloses the sealed mystery of the identity and purpose of the messianic *Dhikr* (= Báb):

O People of effacement (*maḥw*)! Hearken unto my call, from the Point of Brightness (*nuqṭat aṣ-ṣaḥw*), from this Arabian Youth who, with the permission of God, cried out unto Moses on Mount Sinai (*aṭ-ṭúr aṣ-siná*). The Torah, in very truth, was assuredly sent down unto him on the part of God. … With our hands did We beckon unto Jesus. The *Injíl* was indeed sent down from heaven unto his person in his allotted time. Then God lifted him [Jesus] up to heaven for eternal abiding [with Him] (*li’l-baqá’*), until, that is, the promised Day when the mystery will be disclosed from the sealed scroll (*aṣ-ṣaḥífa al-makhtúma*) in the platform of the courtyard (*dakkat al-qaṣá’*) of the great Mosque of Mecca (*al-masjid al-ḥarám*), by the tongue of the *Ḥujjat-Alláh* (Proof of God, the Qá’im), the truth that is, regarding the mystery of the *Dhikr* who represents Muḥammad, the Arabian Prophet (QA 41:153).

In the *Súrat al-ghulám* (Surah of the Youth, QA 54) the Báb refers to himself as the *al-báb al-akbar* (Greatest Gate) and *al-ghulám al-‘arabí* the Arabian Youth to whom reference is made in the *Tawrát*, the *Injíl*, the *Zabúr* and the Q. as well as in the *umm al-kitáb*, the Archetypal Book (QA 54:214). This is in line with the Shí‘í notion that pre-Islamic prophets (*anbiyá’*) predicted the identity of the future advent of Muḥammad before his being born in this world. The same is said of the Báb as the eschatological Joseph-like “youth”. Both the Báb and BA\* believed their advent was specifically predicted in all past sacred books (Ibn Bábúya, *Risala fí’l-ghayba*, IV [CD]).

There are several passages in the QA and other writings in which the Báb refers to pre-

Islamic scripture as alluding to himself or to the awaited messiah. In the highly esoteric *Súrat at-tarbí‘* (Súra of the Quadratic Talisman) of the QA, the Báb, most likely referring to himself states

You on the Mount (*aṭ-ṭúr*) are in the Point of the Gate (*nuqṭat al-báb*) in the vicinity of the [Sinaitic] Fire planted by the hand of God, the pre-existent in the earth of the divine Cloud (*arḍ al-‘amá’*). You are the shape of the talismans (*shakl aṭ-ṭalismiyyún*) in the Sinaitic Mount above the Light (*aṭ-ṭúr ‘alá an-núr*). You are as the Jesus-like Word (*al-kalimat al-‘Isá’wiyyún*) in the *Injíl* (Gospel) and the *Zabúr* (Psalter), most assuredly inscribed in the form of the *taṣbíḥ* (= *subḥán Alláh* = ‘Praised be God!’). Say: I, verily, am the triangular [talismanic] Form (*shakl ath-thuth* = ‘Alí?) written quadratic [fourfold = Muḥammad?] (*marbi‘an*) in the sanctum of the divine Cloud (*al-quds al-‘amá’*) (QA 91:364).

In this passage the Báb probably indicates his parentally bestowed name ‘Alí Muḥammad (3 letters+4 letters [consonants]). This was mystically registered in talismanic forms in Sinaitic pre-eternity. He was the locus of a Name (*ism*) written afore time by the hands of the eschatological *Dhikr* in the *Tawrá*t (Torah), the *Injíl* (Gospel) and the Q. (QA 50:195).[[207]](#footnote-207)

Pre-Islamic scripture in some later writings of the Báb

Commenting on the letter “k” (*káf*) of *li-rabbika* (Q. 108:2) in his T.Kawthar the Báb relates *kalám Alláh* (the Word of God) to various past sacred books including the *tawrát* and *injíl*;

Now concerning the letter “k” (*al-káf*). It signifies the *kalám Alláh* (Word of God) in the Q. … it signifies the Word of God (*kalám Alláh*) in the *Injíl* (Gospel) which God sent down through a letter of the exteriority of the Q. (*bi-ḥarf min ‘alániyyat al-qur’án*) unto whomsoever desired that he might believe in the All-Merciful in the realm of existence (*arḍ al-imkán*). It [ the letter “k”] also signifies the Word of God (*kalám Alláh*) in the *tawrát* (Torah) as accords with what God sent down unto Moses, son of ‘Imrán, from every direction … (T.Kawthar, f. 21a–b.)

This passage makes it clear that the “Word of God” in the *Injíl* is subordinated to the Q. originating from a mere *ḥarf* (“letter”) of the Islamic sacred book as is later echoed several times in the P.Bayan. (-->). The Báb may here presuppose the *Injíl* being relayed to post-Jesus’ disciples and others (?). This subordinate position of the *Injíl* (Gospel[s]) was doubtless

a factor in the Báb’s non-citation of 19th century canonical Gospel texts. He never refers to the *anájíl* (four Gospels) but, like the Q., invariably uses the singular *Injíl* which does not appear to have plural implications or be indicative of the NT Gospels. Among other things this tends to put the Báb outside of the category of those Shí‘í *‘ulamá’* who debated with Christian missionaries (<--4.3).

None of the later writings of the Báb,[[208]](#footnote-208) including the P. Bayán contain NT or biblical quotations. There are though, several interesting references to the *Injíl* in its ideal, pristine essence. In this condition the *Injíl* is identical with the Q. and the Bayán (P.Bayan 2:15). It revolved around the word of Muḥammad for whose sake it was written (P.Bayan 2:19; 3:3). Muḥammad fulfilled and perfected the *Injíl* (P.Bayan 4:13). The *Injíl* was superceded or abrogated by the Q. and the Bayán which are more excellent and complete divine revelations (P.Bayan 3:4). This makes the copying and study of the *Injíl* of no avail after the messianic advent of Muḥammad (P.Bayan 7:1). It is no wonder that the Báb chose not to cite the NT.

Despite this subordinate position the *Injíl* is quite definitely assumed to be the “Book of God” *(kitáb-i khúdávand*) and the *kalám Alláh* (Word of God <--). The Báb, however, reckoned that the spiritual essence of the pristine *Injíl* mystically coalesced with the Q. (when it was revealed to Muḥammad) and became something “mundane”. The true spirit and sanctity of the Gospel became dependent on the more elevated Q.;

There is no doubt that the *Injíl* was the *kitáb-i khudávand* (Book of God). But after the descent of the *Furqán* [Criterion = the Q.] its real spirits (*arváḥ-i ḥuqqihy-i án*) were elevated through the instrumentality of the Qur’án. What remained was other than the *aliyyín*, the sublimely elevated spirits [of the divinely revealed verses of the Q.] (P.Bayan 7:7, 289).

None of the passages cited above should be taken to be indicative of the Báb’s direct knowledge of Abrahamic sacred writ or biblical texts. Rather, they point to his being the mouthpiece of God in receipt of divine revelation, inspired with the knowledge of all past sacred

books. As the spiritual “return” of all past messengers of God, the Báb explicitly claimed to be the author of all past religions and the revealer of *al-Kitáb*, the archetypal repository of all sacred scripture (A.Bay. 1:82, 2:15, etc.).

The Báb’s view of pre-qur’anic sacred scripture is very much in line with that of ‘Abd al-Raḥmán Jámí (d. 898/1492) and other Sufis of the school of Ibn ‘Arabí including ‘Abd al-Karím al-Jílí (d.c. 832/1428; al-Insán, 1:111–4). The 28th section of al-Jámí’s composite Arabic-Persian *Naqd an-nuṣúṣ* (The Deliverance of the Texts), which comments upon aspects of Ibn al-‘Arabí’s *Naqsh al-fuṣúṣ* (The Imprint of the Bezels) focuses upon the mysteries of the bezel relative to “the peerless wisdom in the Muhammadan word”. Here the Q. is equated with the Logos-like *nafs* (“Self”) and *ḥaqíqa* (Reality) of Muḥammad. It is seen as “a singular expression (*aḥadiyya*) of the combination of the entirety of the divine books (*jam‘ al-jamí‘ al-kutub al-iláhiyya*).” The Q. Jámí continues,

came about through the Prophet [Muḥammad]. … He said, “God revealed one hundred and four books from heaven”. Wherefore did he deposit the knowledge of these one hundred in these four; that is, [1] *Tawrát*, (Torah), the [2] *Injíl* (Gospel[s]), [3] the *Zabúr* (Psalter) and the [4] *Furqán* (“Criterion” = the Q.). Then he deposited the knowledge of these four in the Q. He then deposited the knowledge of the Q. in the substance (*mufaḍḍal*) of its [114] súrahs. Then he deposited the substance of its surahs into a*l-Fátiḥa*, (= Q. 1). Whoso has a knowledge of the commentary on the [súrah of the] Opening (*tafsír al-fátiḥa*) has a knowledge of the commentary (*tafsír*) upon all the revealed books of God. Whomsoever recited it [Q.1 the *Fátiḥa*] it is as if he had recited the *Tawrát*, the *Injíl*, the *Zabúr* and the *Furqán* [= Q.] (Jámi‘, Naqd, 275).

This conflation of the substance of the revealed books into the first súra of the Q. is probably inspired by the tradition that the whole of the Q. is in the point (.) of the letter “bá’” (ب) of the *bismi’lláh* of the first súrah, *al-Fátiḥa* (Q. 1), a tradition well-known to the Báb. Jámí’s mystical conflation of all previous revealed books into the first súrah of the Q. reflects exactly the way that the Báb viewed pre-Islamic revelations. The reality of the Bible as the *Tawrát*, *Zabúr* and *Injíl* were spiritually subsumed within the essence of the Q. Its mysteries were implicit within the Islamic sacred book, more or less rendering the citation, direct knowledge (of translations) of the HB (Psalms) and Gospel/NT unnecessary. It has likewise been noted how

Sayyid Káẓim ar-Rashtí expressed a similar opinion in his *Sharḥ al-Qáṣida al-Lámiyya* (<--4.3f).

The Báb on *taḥríf* (“falsification”) and *tabdíl* (“scriptural alteration”)

At several points in his writings, including the Per. and Ar. *Seven Proofs*, the Báb presupposes that Jews possess the *tawrát* (Torah) and Christians the *Injíl* and the followers of David the *Zabúr* (“Psalter”). He had an accepting, positive view of these past sacred scriptures although their importance is abrogated, virtually negated relative to the subsequent divine revelations of the Q. and the Bayán (= the Báb’s own revelations). The Báb does not appear to directly refer to the (canonical) *Tawrát* and *Injíl* as having been subject to *taḥríf* in the usual Islamic (post-qur’anic) sense, though he does indicate their loss of “elevated spirits” (<--in P.Bay 7:7). In the *Súrat al-kitáb* (Súrah of the Book, QA 41) he warns readers not to subject the QA to *tabdíl* (alteration)[[209]](#footnote-209) or *taḥríf* (“corruption”) even though revelation is essentially something beyond the letter:

O servants of the All-Merciful! Fear God regarding the *taḥríf* (textual corruption) of the Book even to the extent of a single letter (*ḥarfan*) of what God has, in truth, sent down therein which goes beyond the [concrete] letter (*‘alá ghayr al-ḥarf*). (QA 41:151; cf. QA 53:209).

This passage may imply that the Báb considered divine revelation more than something written in concrete letters which can be easily corrupted. Divine revelation for him appears something more elevated than what might be subject to concrete *taḥríf* (corruption). This viewpoint also seems to be reflected in the P.Bayán 7:7 (<--). For the Báb neither the *Tawrát* nor *Injíl* have been subject to *taḥríf* (“corruption”) in the standard Islamic sense. It is the loss of their “spirit” and “life” relative to their power to inspire religious truth that fades away before later expressions of divine revelation. The attempt to divine theological truth after another divine revelation is assumed to be futile. When a new *maẓhar-i iláhí* (divine manifestation) appears with a new book which encapsulates the *‘aliyyín* (“elevated spirits”) which impart *haqíqa*, hermeneutical reality to the pure in heart. For the Báb sacred books have a spiritual dimension which derives from the latest *maẓhar-i iláhí* and promotes insight and spirituality.

The *Injíl* referred to in most if not all of the writings of the Báb cannot be straight-

forwardly equated with existing Christian Gospels, with the canonical Christian NT. *Injíl* primarily indicates the revelation of God to Jesus. It seems to be presupposed that this revelation is extant though its usefulness is eclipsed and superseded by subsequent revelations in the form of the Q. and the Bayán of the Báb. These latter revealed texts encapsulate the new spiritual intention of the *Injíl*.

The Báb’s position relating to the *Tawrát* and *Injíl* is sufficiently open or ambiguous to suggest and prepare the way for BA\*’s rejection of any thoroughgoing Islamic expression the doctrine of biblical *taḥríf*. It was only a decade or so after the Báb’s execution in 1850 that BA\* (then a leading Bábí [supporter]) began (from the early 1860s) to make frequent citations of biblical scripture in attempting to prove the truth of Islam from the NT as well as the veracity of the religion of the Báb (-->7.1).

7.2 The Delphic maxim and an Islamicate citation from the *Injíl*

In several of his major and certain of his minor works, including his T.Baqara (52a-b), T.LaylatQ. (69:17), T.Man. (14:472), T. Ḥaqíqa (14:465), R.Nub.K (4:385) and P.Dalá’il (P.Dal:39) the Báb quotes and sometimes comments on a maxim which he often identifies as a saying from the *Injíl*—though it only vaguely reflects (?) Matt. 10:28 (= Luke 12:4–5?):[[210]](#footnote-210)

*اعرف نفسك تعرف ربك ظاهرك للفناء و باطنك انا*

Know thyself and thou shalt know thy Lord;
Thine outer self (*ẓáhir*) is for [mystical] annihilation (*faná’*)
while thine inner self (*báṭin*) is I myself (*aná*).

The first hemistich of this saying is rooted in the Delphic maxim, “Know thyself!” which was known from antiquity, prior to the time of Philo of Alexandria (CE d.c. 50?) who commented upon it in a manner reminiscent of later Muslim philosophers and gnostics (Philo, Spec. Leg. 1.43ff; Mut. 7.10; Westra, 1992:89–102). In his T.Baqara the Báb understands the *naf*s (“Logos-Self”) to be the “Reality” which provides a sure Path unto God: “Whoso hath

known God through the Path of this Logos-Self (*nafs*) which is in him hath assuredly known God. There is no Path for the servants other than this” (T.Baqara 52a). Like BA\*, Philo held that the Delphic maxim implied the unknowability of God (Louth, 1981:20f; BA\* Lawḥ-i Ḥajjí Mullá Ḥádí Qazvíní, MAM:346–62). Just as one cannot know the depths of one’s own “self” so is it reckoned impossible to know the reality of God.

Variously expanded Islamicate versions of the Delphic maxim are attributed in Islamic literatures to a variety of philosophers and sages as well as to Imám ‘Alí and Muḥammad:

man ‘arafa nafsahu faqad ‘arafa rabbahu,
Whoso knoweth himself knoweth his Lord.[[211]](#footnote-211)

Apparently first introduced as a *ḥadíth* by Yaḥyá b. Mu‘ádh (d. 871), it was quoted and commented upon by many medieval and later Muslim writers some of whom were aware of its Greek origin (Altmann, 1963[9]). In the *Rasá’il ikhwán aṣ-ṣafá’* (<--4.2) versions of the Delphic maxim are attributed to both Muḥammad and ‘Alí as they are in the writings of the Báb (*Rasá’il* 1:76; III:351; Altmann 1963[9]:1). At one point in these encyclopaedic *Rasá’il* it is said to be incumbent upon every intellectual (*‘áqilin*) to seek “the knowledge of the self” (“soul”) as well as the gnosis of its essence and its refinement” (*‘ilm an-nafs wa ma‘rifatihi jawharihá wa tadhíbihá*, R1:76). Ibn Síná reckoned that the version “Whoso knoweth himself knoweth his Lord” as a *kalima* (statement, saying) about which the *ḥukamá’* (philosophers) and *awliyá’* (‘saintly ones’) are in agreement (ibid., 1969:1). In his opinion it calls for a “profound self-scrutiny” (Goodman, 1992:164).

Rewritten or expanded forms of the Delphic maxim were highly regarded by Sufi writers and mystics. Ibn al-‘Arabí frequently commented upon it as is evident in his weighty *Futúḥát* (II:308, 500; III:101; 314, 404, 552 etc.; [ed Yaḥyá] 14:480, etc.; Houédard, 1992:1–10) and in his influential *Fuṣúṣ* (*Fuṣúṣ* 69; tr.74). His *Risála al-wujúdiyya* (Treatise on Existence) is largely devoted to the mysteries of the Islamicate Delphic maxim cited as a prophetic *ḥadíth*.

It has, furthermore, been observed that the *al-Ḥikma al-‘arshiyya* (Wisdom of the Throne) of Mullá Ṣadrá (<--2.1; 4.1) is essentially an “extended commentary on the famous saying of Imám ‘Alí: ‘He who truly knows (*‘arafa*) his soul/Self (*nafsahu*), knows his Lord” (Morris, 1981:62 fn. 69; 78 fn. 88). Bursí also cited and commented upon versions of the Delphic maxim in his *Masháriq* (Lawson, 1992:271). Like numerous other Shí‘í writers both Shaykh Aḥmad[[212]](#footnote-212) and Sayyid Káẓim as well as the Báb and BA\* commented upon versions of this tradition (Báb T.Man, 14:468f). BA\* commented upon an Islamicate Delphic maxim (*man ‘arafa nafsahu faqad ‘arafa rabbahu*) in his *L. H-Qazvini* (MAM:346–62) and his *K. íqán* (BA\* KI:76/66) and other writings.

The first clause of the Báb’s above cited quotation from the *Injíl* corresponds with one of the Arabic forms of the Delphic maxim. Its second hemistitch is perhaps best regarded as a Sufi gloss indicative of its meaning. It may indicate that human beings by interior realization of their divine nature and the transitoriness of their *ẓáhir* (outer physical form), come to a knowledge of God. Though not contained in the canonical NT the Báb sometimes introduces this expanded version of the Delphic maxim as that which God said in the *Injíl* (*qála Alláh fí’l-injíl*). Elsewhere in his writings he follows Islamic sources in attributing it to Muḥammad or Imám ‘Alí.

The presence of this pseudo-Gospel divine utterance in the Báb’s writings is obviously not indicative of his direct knowledge of the NT.[[213]](#footnote-213) Its source in his writings is most probably the writings of the first two Shaykhí leaders who also occasionally quoted forms of it as deriving

from the *Injíl*. The first two Shaykhs most probably quote it from the *Masháriq al-anwár* of al-Bursí (<--2.2). There, in a slightly longer version, it is reckoned to be that which the “Glorious Lord” (*ar-rabb al-jalíl*) uttered in the *Injíl*. The text, as cited by al-Bursí along with another two versions ascribed to Muḥammad, the “Master of the [Islamic] Law” (*ṣáḥib ash-sharí‘a*), and the rightly guided Imám reads;

يقول الرب الجليل في الإنجيل: اعرف نفسك أيها الإنسان تعرف ربك، ظاهرك للفناء وباطنك أنا. وقال صاحب الشريعة: اعرفكم ربكم اعرفكم بنفسه. وقال إمام الهداية: من عرف نفسه فقد عرف ربه.

The Glorious Lord says in the *Injíl*:

Know thyself, O thou humankind (*al-insán*)! then thou shalt know thy Lord.

Thine outer being (*ẓáhir*) is for mystical annihilation (*li-l-faná’*) while your interior reality (*báṭin*) is I Myself (*aná*)

The master of the Law [= Muḥammad] said: ‘Know thyself through thy Lord and thou shalt know thine own self.’

And the rightly guided Imám [‘Alí] said: ‘Whoso knoweth himself assuredly knoweth his Lord’ (Bursí, *Masháriq*, 188).[[214]](#footnote-214)

As noted, Ibn al-‘Arabí is another important source for Islamicate Bible citations. In his *K. al-jalál wa’l-jamál* (Book of the Divine Majesty and Beauty) he quotes the following Islamicate version of what God allegedly revealed (w-ḥ-y) in His *tawrát* (Torah, Hebrew Bible):

O son of Adam! I created all things for thy sake and created thee for My sake. Then do not disgrace what I created for Myself through what I created for thy sake (Ar. text *Rasá’il ibn ‘Arabí*, I:15).

In similar fashion al-Aḥsá’í in his *Sharḥ al-ziyára* cites the following *ḥadíth* *qudsí* said to be contained in the *Injíl* but which is again related to the Islamicate ‘biblical’ citations already given:

I [God] created existing things (*al-ashyá’*) for thy sake and I created thee for My sake for while thine inner reality (*báṭinuka*) is I Myself (*aná*), thine outer self (*ẓáhiruka*) is for annihilation (*li’l-faná’*) (al-Aḥsá’í, Sh. Ziyara 3:352–3; cf. ibid., 4:26).

After this quotation the Shaykh goes immediately on to quote *al-Injíl* (The Gospel) exactly as in Bursí’s *Masháriq* (Sh. Ziyara, 3:363). Finally, it should also be noted that in the course of commenting on the words “I saw God and Paradise” in his *Sh. Ṭutunjiyya*, Sayyid Káẓim also quotes the saying of the *Injíl* exactly as registered in Bursí’s *Masháriq* but with the following addition, “I am the theophany of the divine Essence (*ẓuhúr adh-dhát*) through the unique Word (*bi’l-kalám al-mutafarrid*)” (ar-Rashtí, Sh.Ttnj, 299, cf.185).

In the light of the above, it is evident that the Báb’s quotation of the typically Sufi, Islamicate “Gospel” citation, is his registering something derived from his Shaykhí teachers who were dependent upon al-Bursí or other mystically inclined philosopher-theologians. None of this has anything to do with the Báb’s knowledge of the NT.

7.3 The Báb and alleged biblical citations in primary and secondary sources

Gobineau (<--) in *Religions et Philosophies* … (Paris, 1865), the Italian physician Lessona in his *I-Babi* (Turin, 1881), several Christian missionary writers (Miller, Shedd, St. Clair-Tisdall) and a number of western academics (Browne, Amanat) have, to a greater or lesser extent, accepted the largely unfounded tradition that the Báb had been influenced by Christianity through reading Bible translation(s). From 1910 this position was championed by E. G. Browne as allegedly backed up by somewhat dubious external evidence in support of the Báb’s biblical awareness in the form of a notice based upon a memorandum found among the papers of the (ABCFM) Presbyterian missionary John Haskell Shedd (d. 1895) of the “Nestorian Mission” at Urumiyya (from 1870 -->).

Shedd reported an account of an alleged interview between the Báb and the British physician resident at Tabriz, William Cormick (d. 1294/1877).[[215]](#footnote-215) Cormick allegedly told John Shedd that the Báb “was seen by some Armenian Carpenters, who were sent to make some

repairs in his prison [presumably at Chihríq], reading the Bible”. The Báb, it was apparently said, “took no pains” to conceal his reading the Bible but allegedly informed the Armenian carpenters accordingly (Shedd, ‘Memorandum’, 12).

Though it is not impossible that the Báb had read the Bible during his imprisonment in Ádhirbayján (or indeed prior to this time) there is nothing in his writings that supports the theory that he had studied and based his religious ideas upon a biblical/NT precedent. There is really no internal evidence supportive of the theory that the Báb had read the NT in either the Persian translation of Martyn or any other Persian or Arabic NT version. As will be argued here, the Báb never cited any of the books or testaments of the canonical Bible. Browne was too ready to accept the aforementioned missionary ascribed to Shedd which may have been motivated by a desire to account for the Báb’s “enlightened” teachings by way of Christian influence. The passages from the *injíl*, which the Báb does several times explicitly cite, are non-canonical, entirely Islamicate or Islamo-biblical sayings deriving from earlier Muslim sources (<--). If Armenian carpenters saw the Báb reading or chanting sacred verses they might simply, in view of his widely recognised piety, have assumed that he was reading the NT. Even if he was doing so there is no clear internal evidence of this reading in any of the Báb’s writings I have seen. Having thus argued it is necessary to examine other supposed indications of the Báb’s knowledge of the Bible/NT. It can be assumed that the above missionary evidence is at best uncertain and very probably unreliable.

E. G. Browne and Gospel influence within the Persian Bayán

While no convincing traces of the Báb’s direct knowledge of the Hebrew Bible have been found (<--4.1f) certain alleged signs of his knowledge of the NT have been set down by the aforementioned Cambridge orientalist Edward. G. Browne. This in his ‘Index of Chief Contents of the Persian Bayan’, contained in his English introduction to his 1910 edition of the *K. Nuqaṭat al-káf*. Here Browne listed seven alleged ‘signs of the influence of the Gospel on the Persian Bayán.’ As Browne succinctly registered them they are;

1. “The first shall be last and the last first” (11.16, 17; VIII.4.);

2. The Hour shall come suddenly (“like a thief in the night”) (11.18);

3. A cup of water given by a believer (IV.8.);

4. Believers are to love one another (V.16);

5. Believers are to do as they would be done by (VI.15);

6. Selling in the Temple (IV.17);

7. Dying to God (11.8; 111.13; V.3).” (Refer Browne (ed.) K.N.Káf: lxviii).

At first sight this list appears to be a fairly impressive indication of Gospel influence upon the Báb/P.Bayan by a very highly respected Cambridge academic. Most, however, if not all of the alleged influences listed by Browne find clear parallels in Islamic literatures. None of these seven are direct or indirect signs of NT influence upon the Báb. Browne’s seven examples to some degree actually serve to illustrate the pre-19th century Judaeo-Christian/biblical influence upon Islam. Exact Islamic sources for most of these alleged signs of Gospel influence, can be found in either the Q., the Islamic tradition literatures, in Sufi texts or other miscellaneous Islamic literatures. It will be argued here that such parallels make it very unlikely that Browne’s ‘Signs of Gospel Influence’ are proofs of the Báb’s familiarity with the NT. Each of these seven alleged signs of Gospel influence will now be briefly examined in the order given by Browne. Possible textual parallels in the Henry Martyn Persian NT will be borne in mind as will the Báb’s doctrines set out in the Persian and Arabic Bayáns and other writings.

(1) Eschatological reversal: ‘The first shall be last and the last shall be first’

P.Bayán (= P.Bayan) 8:4 has to do with the hierarchical appropriation of all existence, “things”, *kullu shay’* (“everything”). The Báb opens P.Bayan 8:4 by stating that the most elevated portion of “everything” belongs to himself as the “Point” (*kullu shay’ a‘láhú li-l-nuqṭa*). Its intermediate component exists for the *ḥurúf al-ḥayy* (“Letters of the Living” <--), while its most lowly (*andá*) aspect is assigned to humankind (*al-khalq*). Having used two Arabic superlatives expressive of the most elevated (*‘alá*) and the most lowly (*andá*) the Báb is inspired to incorporate the religious principle of bi-polar reversal, even combining Arabic and Persian superlative forms:

… In each religious theophany (*har ẓuhúrí*) it is evident that the most elevated of creatures (*a‘láy-i khalq*) become the most abased [of creatures] (*andá*). And

[furthermore that] the most lowly of creatures (*andáy-i khalq*) become [especially] elevated (*a‘lá*). Additionally, the most elevated (*a‘lá-tar*) become yet more elevated (*a‘lá*) [through faith] while the most lowly (*andá*) become even lowlier (*andá-tar*) [through denial] … (P.Bayan 8:4, 283, cf. 2:16, 17).

That there will be a (bi-polar) eschatological reversal of (faith) status (First/Last: Last/First or Exalted/Humbled: Humbled/Exalted) is certainly indicated in Judaeo-Christian biblical and extra-biblical tradition (Ezek. 2:31 (LXX); Ps. 74:8 (LXX) Ep. Arist. 363; Erub. 13b, etc.).[[216]](#footnote-216) NT evidence indicates that this was central to the parables and teachings of Jesus (Mk. 10:31; Matt. 19:30; 20:16; Lk. 13:30; 14:11; 18:14, Barnabas 6:13 etc.).[[217]](#footnote-217) The coming of the Kingdom of God involved a (pre-) eschatological reversal demanding judgement in the present (Perrin, 1974:52; York, 1991:9ff).

In various forms this teaching is reflected in the Q. and in Islamic tradition. In the P.Bayan and other writings, the Báb concretizes this perspective by teaching that with the advent of each religious theophany or dispensation elevated souls become abased and abased souls are elevated. This by virtue of their acceptance or rejection of expected *maẓhar-i iláhí* (Divine Manifestations). Lofty inmates of the garden (*jannat*, of true faith), if they fail to accept the claims of subsequent Divine Manifestations, become abased inhabitants of the Fire (*nár*, of unbelief). During his own era lofty souls (learned Muslims) became abased through rejecting him while humble souls were elevated by a positive response to his call (P.Bayan 8:4). Warning his followers the Báb predicts that the same may happen at the future Day of Resurrection when *man yuẓhiruh-u Alláh* appears (P.Bayan 7:9).

Though ultimately rooted in NT texts it is upon Islamic sources that the Báb draws in order to indicate an eschatological reversal of faith status. Passages in both Bayáns (Per. + Ar.) and related writings expressive of a bi-polar faith reversal do not reflect the terminology of the Persian NT translation of Henry Martyn or any other Persian or Arabic NT versions known to the present writer. In P.Bayan 8:4 the Báb refers to the fact that learned scholars in the “land

of Ṣad” (= Iṣfahán) failed to recognise him while a humble wheat-sifter named (Mullá) Ja‘far Gandum Pákkún was invested with the *qamíṣ-i niqabat* (the garb of primacy).[[218]](#footnote-218) This, the Báb then notes, is the “mystery of the utterance (*sirr-i kalám*) of the Shí‘í holy family, the *ahl-i bayt* (people of the House)”. In saying this it is obvious that the Báb himself regards the tradition of the bi-polar reversal of faith status as a Shí‘í tradition and not anything NT based. During the Báb’s own theophany the following Islamic tradition found fulfilment as is clearly stated in P.Bayan 8:14, a passage which Browne appears to have overlooked;

The lowest of the creatures (*asfal-i khalq*) [shall become] the most exalted of the creatures (*a‘láy-i khalq*) and the most exalted of the creatures (*a‘láy-i khalq*) [shall become] the lowest of the creatures (*asfal-i khalq*)” (cited P.Bayan 8:14, 296–7).

The Báb also quotes a similar version of an Islamic (not NT!) tradition indicative of a reversal of faith status in his late *Shu’únát al-fársí* (Persian Grades).

It will come to pass that your lowly ones [shall become] your most exalted ones and your most exalted ones [shall become] your lowly ones” (Shu’unK. 82:94).

In his *K. íqán* and other writings BA\* also cites Arabic, Islamic and other versions of this tradition (KI:113/94). In the course of citing the Báb in his Edirne dated *Lawḥ-i Sarráj* (c. 1867) another version expressive of bi-polar reversal is given (Má’idih 7:34). This tradition is also commented upon in other *alwáḥ* of BA\*; in connection, for example, with the exegesis of the phrase of Shaykh Aḥmad, *sirr at-tankís li-ramz al-ra’ís* (“The Mystery of Reversal before the Sign of the Sovereign”) (K.Aqdas1 ¶ 157/tr. 75–6; cf. L. Hirtík, LH 3:218) which is understood to allude to an eschatological, bi-polar reversal of faith status graphically indicated by an upturned inverted Arabic letter *wáw* (= و <--6.2) in Shí‘í representations of the *ism Alláh al-a‘ẓam* (Mightiest Name of God) as well as in the NT and Islamic traditions (Mázandarání, AA 5:237–245; Má’idih 1:12f). AB\* likewise quoted, cited and commented on the biblical as well as the Islamic tradition relating to the eschatological reversal of faith status (Ishráq Khávarí, *Raḥiq* 1:685ff; *Má’idih* 2:19, 34).

Browne’s reckoning the reversal of faith status in P.Bayan 8:4 a sign of Gospel influence is wholly unconvincing in the light of the Báb’s own drawing on Islamic traditions to this effect as well as the numerous Islamic predictions of an eschatological reversal of faith status.

(2) The suddenness of the eschatological “hour”, “like a thief in the night”

The fairly brief and succinct Persian Bayán 2:18 is in “exposition of the fact that there is absolutely no doubt about the advent of the [eschatological] Hour (*as-sá‘ah*).” The note of suddenness occurs towards the very end of this section of the P.Bayan and reads,

Anticipate then the theophany of God (*ẓuhúr Alláh*) for undoubtedly the “Hour” (*as-sá‘a*) shall come upon you suddenly (*baghtatan*). (P.Bayan 2:18, 72).

Browne focuses upon the fact that the Báb states that “The Hour shall assuredly come upon you *baghtatan* (‘suddenly’)”. In the Arabic verse cited above which concludes P.Bayan 2:18 the Báb does not, however, state that the eschatological “hour” will come “like a thief in the night” or repeat NT expressions of eschatological immanence.[[219]](#footnote-219) In the complex partly realized, partly futurist eschatology of the Báb, there are quite a number of varied and diverse expressions of the imminence of the eschatological “Hour”. None of them seem to have any connection with NT verses expressive of the last “Hour” or the parousia coming like a “thief in the night”.

In the eschatologically charged first *Súrat al-mulk* of the QA the Báb exhorts the kings of the world to purify the earth of such as refute the Book on the “Day” when the *Dhikr* (messianic Remembrance), will come *baghtatan* (“suddenly”, QA 1:3). Such references are not inspired by NT texts but by the Q. where the adverbial use of *baghtatan* occurs thirteen times and mostly of the “suddenness” of the eschatological “Hour” (Kassis, 313). Notes of eschatological suddenness in the Báb’s writings are fully in line with Islamic eschatological expectations themselves rooted in NT eschatology. Note, for example, the following texts:

Lost indeed are those who regard the meeting with God as falsehood—until such time as the Hour (*as-sá‘a*) is suddenly (*baghtatan*) upon them … (Q. 6:31).

It [the “Hour”] shall not come upon you except suddenly (*baghtatan*).” (Q. 7:187)

… Or the sudden (*baghtatan*) coming of the Hour (*as-sá‘a*) while they perceive not.” (Q. 12:107)

… Until the Hour (*as-sá‘a*) come suddenly (*baghtatan*) upon them …” (Q. 22:55).[[220]](#footnote-220)

It is not necessary to invoke direct NT influence in accounting for the Báb’s own note of the suddenness of the last “Hour”. The Báb’s use of the motif of eschatological “suddenness” and unexpectedness clearly echos qur’anic verses and related Shí‘í traditions. Islamic sources themselves quote Jesus using *baghtatan*, the note of suddenness in an Islamicate NT expression of the suddenness of the advent of the “Hour”. In the Shí‘í *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* of Ibn ar-Rawandí (<--3.2), for example, Imám Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣádiq clearly echoes Mk. 13:32 (+ parallels) in reporting that,

… Jesus son of Mary asked Gabriel, ‘When shall be the emergence of the (eschatological) Hour (*as-sá‘at*)?’ At this Gabriel trembled and shuddered all but losing consciousness. When he composed himself he replied, ‘O Spirit of God! Over this most perplexing issue the one questioned (= Gabriel) is no more knowledgeable (*a‘lam*) than the questioner (= Jesus) or anyone else be they in the heavens or upon the earth. It [the “Hour”] will not come upon you but *baghtatan* (suddenly)’ (Rawandí, Qisas, 271–2; cf. BA\* ESW:143).

(3) A cup of water given by a believer (P.Bayan. IV:8)

And whoever shall give one of these little ones only a cup of cold water to drink in the name of a disciple, truly I say to you that he shall in no wise have lost his reward (Matt. 10:47)

The Báb sums up P.Bayan 4:8 in the following way;

The essence of this gate is this, that through his verses he [God] creates the essential reality of all things (*kaynúniyyat-i kull shay’*) and thereby gives sustenance, causes to die, and makes to come alive (P.Bayan 4:8, 127).

Later in the same section of the P.Bayan the Báb states:

Thus, if today but one cup of water (*finján-i áb*) be given by a believer in the Bayán it would seem sweeter (*aḥlá*) to the mystic knower (*‘árif*) than all the benefits of this world (*kull-i álá’ al-arḍ*) proffered by one not believing in the Bayán (ibid., 128).

This section of the Bayán basically revolves around the belief that a pure action such as the giving of a rose-leaf (*waraq-í gul*) by a believer to another of the *ahl-i bayán* (Bábís), is fundamentally a divine action. It is tantamount to being a divine action as the action of the “Letters of the One” (*wáḥid*), the nineteen strong Bábi pleroma of first disciples (P.Bayan 4:8, 127).

In P.Bayan 4:8 Browne found a sign of Gospel influence in that the Báb refers to “a cup given by a believer” (Matt. 10:42; Mk. 9:41; cf. Matt. 25:35ff). The alleged parallel is not, for a number of reasons, an exact parallel. In P.Bayan 4:8 it is simply a “cup of water” that is given to another not a “cup of cold water” (Martyn = *ká’s-i áb-i sardí*) (Matt. 20:42b). Quite different is the P.Bayan where it is a mature or learned Bábí, an *‘árif* (one of mystical perception) who receives the cup of water not, as in Matt. 10:42b *yek áz aṭfal* (so H. Martyn), “one of these children” or “one of these little ones”.

As translated above, the Báb in P.Bayan 4:8 writes that if in his day a believer in the Bayán should give but a cup of water (*finján-i áb*) to another it would prove sweeter than all the benefits of the earth given by a non-Bábí. Though there is something of a parallel with Matt. 10:24 (= Mk. 9:41) it is not explicit enough to indicate the Báb’s direct knowledge of the NT. The reference summed up above to the efficacy of a rose-leaf given by one of the people of the Bayán (Bábís) likewise has no explicit NT parallel. The “cup of water” (*finjan-i áb*) motif of itself is not a strong enough parallel to categorically uphold Gospel influence upon the Báb.

(4) The love ethic, that “believers should love one another” (V:16)

In his summary of P. Bayán 5:16 Browne expresses his aforementioned sign of Gospel influence as follows (I have added some points of Persian transliteration):

What God loves most in the people of the Bayán (*ahl al-bayán*) is their love one for another [*ḥubb-i ishán ba‘ḍi ba‘ḍi-rá … namáyand*]. They should not then dispute with each other, or rebut one another’s speeches in religious

matters. And if anyone in the Bayán rejects another he must give 95 (19×5) *mithqáls* of gold to [the Bábí messiah] Him whom God shall manifest, and to none other, who will if He please remit it, or take it (SWEGB: 372–3; P.Bayan 5:16, 177f).

Here, it is with the Persian phrase *ḥubb-i íshán ba‘ḍí ba‘ḍí-rá … namáyand* like several Arabic phrases incorporating one or more uses of *ba‘ḍ*,[[221]](#footnote-221) that the Báb expresses a reciprocity or mutuality of love among the *ahl al-bayán* (Bábís) (cf. Wehr, *Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 4th edn., 67). God’s greatest (*a‘ẓam*) love (*dúst mídárad*) he states, is that the Bábís express this reciprocity of love for one another. This Browne finds a sign of NT influence. A “love ethic” is indeed mentioned a few times in the Johannine literature and is hinted at elsewhere in the NT (e.g. Matt. 5:43–4; Jn. 15:12, 17; 1 Jn. 2:10, 3:10, 4:7ff; Rom. 13:8). This ethical teaching though is something fundamental to many Persian Sufi mystics and a part of the spiritual discipline of numerous Sufi orders. The Báb’s statements in P.Bayan 5:16 could be equally and more satisfactorily accounted for through the influence of the Sufi love ethic.

Various mystical doctrines associated with *ḥubb* (love) are also clearly in evidence in the Bayáns of the Báb as well as in several of his other writings; most notably his Sufi influenced QA and Sufi addressed *R. Dhahabiyya*. In the QA 88 the “love” motif is introduced into the Q. based account of the primordial angelic prostration (Q.Kassis, 1067–8). Heavenly angels arrayed about the *Dhikr* were commanded to fall prostrate before the Báb in the “path of Love” (*sabíl al-ḥubb*). This is stipulated in the celestial *umm al-kitáb* (Archetyal Book) (QA 88:355). Then, speaking of primordial and celestial affairs in QA 109, the Báb states:

We, in very truth, affixed to the mightiest Throne (*al-‘arsh al-a‘ẓam*) before Our servant [the Báb] the *kalimat al-ḥubb* (Word of Love) such that God, His angels and his chosen ones (*awliyá’*) in every respect witnessed his [the Báb’s] truth … (QA 109:436).

QA 91 contains an address of the Báb to the *ahl al-ḥubb* (community of love), possibly

members of the Dhahabiyya Sufi order of Shiraz[[222]](#footnote-222) or other Shirazi Sufis known to the Báb as persons who fostered a condition of spiritual *ḥubb* (love);

O community of love (*ahl al-ḥubb*)! Hearken unto my call from the Light of mine inmost heart (*núrí al-fú’ád*) nigh the celestial *masjid al-aqṣá* (furthermost Mosque cf. Q. 17:1), in very truth, about the elevated Throne of God (*‘arsh Alláh*) … (QA 91:364).

Here, as elsewhere, there are signs of the Báb’s association with Sufis from whom he was probably influenced in the direction of a mystically oriented love ethic (T.Basmala, 361; cf. T.‘Asr, f. 96ff). At various points in his P.Bayan the Báb reflects and develops themes ascribed to the female love mystic Rábi‘a al-‘Adawiyya al-Qaysiyya of Baṣra (d.c. 185/801) who is especially famous for her poetical celebrations of spiritual love (*maḥabba*) and intimacy (*uns*). Her somewhat detached love mysticism is echoed and made communal in the writings of the Báb.

In P.Bayan 7:19 (on *Ṣalát*) the Báb defines true *‘ibádat* (worship) in a distinct Rábi‘a-like fashion when he directs that God should be worshipped intensely, outside of a fear of Hell-fire (*nár*) or the hope of Paradise (*jannat*):

So worship God in such [manner] that if your worship of him lead you to Hell-Fire (*nár*), no alteration in your worship (*parastish*)[[223]](#footnote-223) would be produced; and similarly, if it should lead you to Paradise (*jannat*). This alone should characterize the worship which befitteth the One God. If you worship out of fear (*khawf*), this was and has ever been unseemly relative to the expanse of the Divine sanctity (*bisáṭ-i quds-i iláhí*) and in view also of the stipulation of the Divine Oneness (*ḥukm-i tawḥíd*). Likewise, if your gaze is upon the attainment of Paradise (*jannat*) you would be adding gods to God (*mushrik*) [in your worship] even though created humanity desires Paradise (*jannat*) thereby. Both Hell-Fire (*nár*) and Paradise (*jannat*) serve and fall prostrate before God. That [worship] which is worthy of his Essence (*dhát-i ú*) is to worship him for his own sake. This without fear of Hell-Fire (*nár*) or hope of Paradise (*jannat*). When true worship (*taḥaqquq-i ‘ibádat*) is offered, the worshipper is preserved from the Hell-Fire (*maḥfúẓ az nár*) and enters the paradise of God’s good-pleasure *(jannat-i riḍáy-i ú*), though this should not be the motive of one’s action (P.Bayan 7:19, 271–2).

Such passages appear to be inspired by the well-known and much cited devotional saying of Rábi‘a quoted towards the beginning of Faríd ad-Dín ‘Aṭṭár’s *Tadhkirat al-awliyá’* (Memorials

of the Saints):

O God, if I worship Thee for fear of Hell, then burn me in Hell, and if I worship Thee in hope of Paradise, exclude me from Paradise; but if I worship Thee for Thy own sake, grudge me not Thy everlasting beauty (tr. Arberry, Tadhkirat: 51).

Apparently addressed to a certain Mírzá Abú’l-Qásim, a *Dhahabí murshíd* known as Mírzá Bábá (also Jawád?) the love ethic is in evidence in the Báb’s *R. Dhahabiyya* (1262/1845–1846). Its lengthy opening prayer includes the words of the Báb, “Thou assuredly know, O my God, that I do not love that I should love Thee save by virtue of what Thou do love” (Dhah. 86:75). Later the Báb appears to refer to himself as being upon the *ṣirát al-ḥubb* (Path of love) which is the basis of faith (*aṣl al-aymán*) and the Tree of certitude (*shajarat al-íqán*). Probably attempting to break down the looseness of Sufi non-exclusivism, he addresses his questioner saying,

O thou who gazes out with equity and love (*bi’l-inṣáf wa’l-ḥubb*)! Such is the decree of every religion (*kull ad-dín*), so do not make the issue difficult for yourself. Ponder then upon the station of the Balance (*maqám al-mízán*) (R.Dhah. 86:86).

In Shí‘í Islam love for God, Muḥammad, the Imams and fellow Shí‘í Muslims is a central ethical teaching. Important to the Báb and BA\*, the *Khuṭba aṭ-ṭutunjiyya*, (<--2.1), for example, has it that ‘Alí uttered the following almost Christian soteriological message expressed therein, “then hold to the *waṣí* (legatee) of your Prophet (= Imám ‘Alí) through whom is your salvation (*naját*), for, through love for him (*bi-ḥubbihi*) on the [eschatological] Day of Gathering is your abode of salvation” (Bursí, *Masháriq*, 66). At one point in his *Sharḥ al-ziyára* al-Aḥsá’í teaches that it is love for ‘Alí which is the foundation of Paradise (al-Aḥsá’í, Sh. Ziyara IV:167).

A multi-faceted love ethic is foundational in many branches of Sufism and Islamic mysticism. It has its foundation in numerous Islamic traditions and *ḥadíth qudsí* (Nasr IS 1:108–9, Graham, 1978 <--3.1). It is expressed in a multitude of Sufi poetical and theosophical writings (Giffin, 1971; Bell, 1979; Khairallah, 1980; Schimmel, 1978: 130ff). While

al-Jaḥiz (d. 255/868–869) wrote two treatises on *‘ishq* (passionate love) Avicenna penned another. Scores of statements about divine and human *ḥubb* and *‘ishq* (love and spiritual yearning) were made by later Muslim writers. Throughout the poetry of Jalál ad-Dín Rúmí (d. 627/1273), for example, there are numerous musings upon the intricacies of divine and human love (Chittick, 1983:194–231). ‘Ayn al-Quḍát Hamadání (d. 525/1131)[[224]](#footnote-224) as evidenced in his *Tamhídát* and other works, considered theo-erotic love as “The very constitutional foundation of creation, of being, of living, and of dying.” (Dabashi, ‘Ayn al-Quḍát, 420). Many other Persian Sufis thought similarly.

It is not at all necessary to seek NT influence to account for the place the Báb gave to the love for God and for fellow believers. It is astonishing that Browne should have bothered to list such a loose alleged signs of Gospel influence. Spiritual and mystical concepts of *ḥubb* are an important aspect of the thought of the Báb as they are in both Sufism and Shi‘ism. The Báb’s use of *ḥubb* is more likely rooted in Sufism and Shi‘ism than the result of any familiarity with the Gospels. The Q. as expounded within Persianate Islam has much to say in this respect.

(5) The Golden Rule in the Gospels and the Persian Bayán

O People of the Bayán! Whatsoever you do not desire [approve] for anyone do not approve for your own self (P. Bay. 6:15, 231)

This negative form of the ‘golden rule’ is rooted in Greek popular morality as formulated by Sophists. This golden rule is the maxim enjoining one to treat others as one would wish to be treated oneself (Hamerton-Kelly, IDB(S): 369–70). In either a positive or negative form it is registered in a multitude of Jewish (Aristeas, 207; Tobit, 4:15 Sab. 31a, cf. Deut. 15:13; Lev. 19:18), Christian (Matt. 7:12, cf. 5:33f; Lk. 6:31, cf. Jn. 15:7; Didache 12, Barnabas XIX.5), Islamic and other (i.e. Hindu and Buddhist) literatures. It will be seen here that the Báb was most directly influenced by Islamic forms of the golden rule not though NT references as Browne supposed.

A Shí‘í Islamicate conflation of a negative form of Matt. 7:12/Lk. 6:31 and Matt. 5:39b/

Lk 6:29 is reported by Imám Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣádiq as the words of Jesus son of Mary to some of his disciples. It reads,

Whatever you do not wish to be done to yourself, do not do the same to anyone else. And should anyone strike your right cheek then let him strike the left also (Majlisí, Bihar2 14:287).

The line of the P.Bayan 6:15 cited above could be viewed as a fairly precise Persian version of the first part of this Arabic conflation of Jesus’ words. In this light direct appeal to NT influence is again unnecessary. Forms of the golden rule attributed to Muḥammad and others are common in Islamic ethical literatures. In the Sunní *Kitáb al-Arba‘ín an-Nawawiyyah* (“The book of the Forty [aḥádíth] of an-Nawawí”) compiled by an-Nawawí (d. 676/1277), for example, the following tradition, found in both *Ṣaḥíḥ al-Bukhárí* and *Ṣaḥíḥ al-Muslim* [collections of aḥádíth], is recorded on the authority of Abú Ḥamza Anas ibn Málik, (Muḥammad said): “None of you [truly] believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself” (K. Arba‘ín/Forty Hadith, 56–7, Ḥadíth, 13).

(6) The sanction on buying and selling in the mosque (IV.17)

It is not lawful to transact business (*bay‘a*) in the precincts of the House (*ḥál al-bayt*). Whomsover desires to elevate this sanctum (*ḥál*) above [all such matters] should feel free to appropriate whatever is in the sanctum (*ḥál*) even though its owner is not at all satisfied therewith. God is the more rightful owner of (*Alláh aḥaqq*) this property (*milk*) than that servant who has simply possessed it for a few years (PB 4:17, 145–6 [Arabic synopsis] cf. SWEGB:359).

You shall not transact business with what [*recte* that] which belongs to God in the precincts of the House (*al-bayt*) or the Mosque (*al-masjid*). You all should submit as much of your possessions (property, *al-milk*) as you are in a position to, within the [sacred] boundary (*ḥadd*) [of the Mosque?] …

The Sanctified Mosque (*masjid al-ḥaram*) indicates the birthplace of man *yuẓhiruhu Alláh* and that is also where I was born. … Say: the Seat of Aḥmad [Muḥammad] [is there and is the object of] My Remembrance (*maq‘ad aḥmad dhikrí*) (? cf. Q. 54:55). He enters therein and it is there that you should perform your devotions. You should not turn towards my house (*baytí*) neither towards the [other] seats [shrines of the ‘Letters of the Living’?] unless you have sufficient means on the path and will not be saddened [on account of travelling difficulties] … (Ar. Bay. 4:17a, Ḥasaní, 88).

In his Bayáns (Per. & Ar.) 4:17 the Báb forbids buying and selling, the conducting of business affairs, around the sacred *bayt* (House), apparently relative to his own house in Shíráz which also appears to be that of *man yuẓhiruhu Alláh* and hence described as the

*masjid Alláh* (Mosque of God) and the *masjid al-ḥaram* (Sanctified Mosque, a qur’anic term normally descriptive of the Ka‘ba at Mecca, Q. 2:144 etc., Kassis, 888–9).

Bayán 4:17 is an example of the Báb’s appropriating, and to some degree upgrading, Islamic piety by giving it something of a messianic application. Bearing in mind that certain laws of the Báb reflect his attempts at establishing a perfect earthly paradise reflecting heavenly archetypes and opulent alchemical substances, it is worth noting that an Islamic tradition cited by Báyazíd al-Basṭámí (d.c. 261/874) and others has it that “In *jannat* (Paradise) there is a market where there is no buying and selling” (cited Chittick IS 1:405, cf. Ibn ‘Arabí, *al-Futúḥát*, 11:682)

The Q. and numerous Sunní and Shí‘í sources have it that the *masjid* (mosque, lit. ‘place for prostration’) is primarily a sacred location for community worship (Q. 2:144; 9:17–18; 7:32 etc.). It is secondarily a place of assembly thought fitting for various public affairs, having “political, social and cultural functions” (Salam-Liebich, ‘Mosque—History and Tradition’, Enc.Rel. 10:121). Often used as a centre of legal, adminisrative and educational activity, the mosque was thought fitting for the “transacting of matters of public finance and the existence of a community treasury (*bayt al-mál*). (ibid., 123) In early Islamic times the transacting of business in the mosques was not entirely forbidden (EI2 VI:654–5) though there are some early traditions that seem to regulate or overule this.

The Báb’s directive against buying and selling in P.Bayan IV:17 corresponds with those Islamic traditions that consider buying and selling in mosques as something undesirable or forbidden. A tradition relayed through the forbears of Ibn Shuayb recorded in the (*Sunní*) *Kitáb al-masájid* (Book of Mosques) within the *Sunan* of Abú ‘Abd ar-Raḥmán an-Nasá’í (d. 303/915) reads, “The prophet [Muḥammad] forbade group meetings before *ṣalát* (prayer) on the day of gathering (Friday), as well as the buying (*ash-shirá’*) and selling (*al-bay‘*) [of goods in the mosque]” (Sunan, 2:47–8). Similar traditions are also recorded by Abú Dáwúd and Tirmidhí (Numayní, 1978 II: LIV. No. 116, p. 123). There may well be Shí‘í traditions to this effect though they do not seem to be common.

That the Báb apparently reacts against commercial activity in mosques may reflect those Shí‘í traditions which highlight their supreme sanctity, especially that of the *masjid al-ḥaram*. Ja‘far Ṣádiq transmitted the prophetic tradition “When you arrive at the gate of the mosque know that you have approached the gate of the house of a mighty King” (Bihar2 83:373–4 [339ff]; Jílání, *Miṣbáḥ*, 1:86–90; Tibrízí, Fará’id).

Despite the considerable differences in location, detail and purpose, Browne found something of a parallel between P.Bayan 4:17 and the Gospel story of Jesus’ cleansing the Temple, the Jerusalem House of God. While Jesus threw out the moneychangers from the Temple the Báb would have all goods in the sanctum of the Mosque belong to God by virtue of their being placed in this sacred region. Again, rather than invoking Gospel influence, Bayáns 4:17 reflect the Báb’s mercantile and Islamic background as opposed to the Gospel account of the cleansing of the Temple. For the Báb the eschatological call for a higher degree of piety relative to new sacred regions and centres of pilgrimage is what is focussed upon. There are no obvious textual or other relationships between Bayáns 4:17 and the Persian Gospel versions of Jesus’ ‘cleansing of the Temple’ (Matt. 21:12–13; Mk. 11:15–18; Lk. 19:45–8; Jn. 2:13–17).

(7) Dying to God (P.Bayan II.8; III.13; V.3).

The following are some of the passages which Browne most probably thought reflected Gospel [NT] influence upon the Báb’s understanding of ‘dying to God’;

On the exposition of the reality of death (*ḥaqíqat al-mawt*); an ultimate reality (*al-ḥaqq*). … Whoso inwardly knows “death” is eternally dying before God (*lam yazal mayyitan ‘ind Alláh*) for such an one has no will other than God’s will and such is his “death” (*al-mawt*) before the Point of the Bayán (*nuqṭat al-bayán* = the Báb) (P.Bayan 2:8, 33, 36).

All the [Divine] Names and similitudes (*asmá’ va amthál*) of the Ultimate Reality (*ḥaqq*) are within the Ultimate Reality (*dar-i ḥaqq*) and all such as are outside the Ultimate Reality (*dú-i ḥaqq*) are outside the Ultimate Reality (*al-ḥaqq*) … Should any person truly be an *‘Ārif* (mystic knower) he would assuredly die in Him (*bi-ú mayyit mígardad*) and before His Divine Will (*nazd-i mashiyyat-i ú*) (P.Bayan 3:13, 93).

The Báb’s complex ideas about dying (death, *al-mawt*) are registered in the lengthy eighth gate of his P. Bayán (23–31; cf. A.Bay. 2:8, 84) and elsewhere (P.Bayan 3:3, 84) though

hardly, it appears, in P. Bayán (5:3, 157–9). It must suffice here to note that P. Bayán 2:8 is a lengthy consideration of what constitutes the reality of death (*ḥaqíqat al-mawt*). Physical and other modes of “death” (*al-mawt*) have limitless meanings for the Báb. “Death” takes on further senses when associated with a new theophany or manifestation of the *shajarat al-tawḥíd* (Tree of the Divine Oneness). Several non-literal senses of “death” are expressive of a collective, universal “death” implicit in five partial *shaháda* like testimonies commencing with the particle of negation, لا (*lá* = “no”). For the Báb they are suggestive of mystical “death” and an expression of inappropriate faith affirmations (P.Bayan 2:8, 33–34, cf. A.Bay. 2:8).

Browne did not specify precisely which Gospel (NT) texts he thought influenced the Báb’s ideas about “death”. He most probably gave weight to the *mayyit bi-ú*, “dying in Him” (loosely “dying to God”) in P.Bayan 2:8. Browne evidently found these references evocative of NT texts, most probably those commencing with the Greek spatial εν (= “in ----”) though the notion of ‘dying to God’ is not a commonplace in the Gospels (or the rest of the NT). It was perhaps the case that the Persian *mayyit bi-ú* reminded Browne of such Johannine phrases as εν Χριστώ (in Christ), εν Ιησού Χριστώ (in Jesus Christ), εν Κύριο (in the Lord) (Jn. 14:20; 15:4–10; 1 Jn. 3:24; 4:13–16). Other predominantly Pauline (and pseudo-Pauline), occurrences of εν Χριστώ (in Christ) and εν Κύριο (in the Lord) occur twenty times each in Romans and I Corinthians and a few times elsewhere (Phil. 1:1, 14, 4:7; II Cor. 5:17 etc.; TDNT X:537ff; EDNT 1:448; 2:459).

The phrase ‘dying to God’ (see Browne) as “dead in Christ” occurs only a few times in the NT. 1 Thess. 4:16 has it that those “dead” (Gk. *nekros*) “in Christ” (νεκρός εν Χριστώ = Christians) shall “rise first” at the parousia, the second coming of Christ (cf. Jn. 5:25, 280. Christian martyrs would seen to be those referred to in the beatitude of Rev. 4:13 as “the dead” (οι νεκροί) who from henceforth die “in [the] Lord” (εν Χριστώ) (cf. also Rom. 6:8; Col. 2:20 and 2 Tim. 2:11). Henry’s Martyn’s Persian translation of the aforementioned NT passages does not suggest any close textual parallelism with the relevant passages in the P. Bayán of

the Báb.

Browne’s proposal of direct NT influence upon the Báb is unnecessary and unconvincing. This in view of the varied and common Islamic concept of doing things *fí Alláh* (lit. ‘in God’) evident in the Q. 22:78 and Q. 29:69 (Nöldeke on—*fí Alláh* “in God” in Nöldeke-Schwally, 1909, 1:257 cited Graham, 1977:143). It is a common phrase in Sufi literature. Most importantly the Persian *bi-ú mayyit mígardad* is basically equivalent to the Arabic *faná’ fí Alláh*, “dying to God” and the virtually synonymous phrase *baqá’ fí Alláh* (abiding permanency, subsistence) (lit.) “in God” (cf. Q. 55:26–7).

In tracing the roots of the concept of persons dying “in Him” or *fí Alláh* (“in God”) in the Báb’s writings one must again bear in mind the widespread use of these phrases in Sufi literatures where —*fí Alláh* (‘—in God’) and related terminology is very common. The Báb is again much more likely to have been influenced by the Sufi background than by the few NT phrases mentioned above. NT influence upon *fí Alláh* (= Per. *bí-ú mayyit* …) is assured though it predates by hundreds of years the time of the Báb and the 19th century Persian Gospel translations (<--4.2).

From early Islamic times Muslims appropriated Christian terminology associated with doing something *fí Alláh* (lit. ‘in God’) including ‘dying to God’ (“in God”). Goldziher, as long ago as 1888 had ably demonstrated that Muslim expressions of doing something *fí Alláh* were the result of NT-Christian influence upon early *ḥadíth* [*aḥádíth*?] and other Muslim literatures.[[225]](#footnote-225) He stated, for example, that,

A specifically Christian expression which has penetrated deeply into Islamic literature is to do anything ‘in God’, *fi’lláh* or *bi’lláh*. The Muslim interpreters of the traditions in which this expression occurs explain it generally in the sense of *fí sabíl Alláh*, i.e. in God’s way or to the glory of God … (Goldziher, Muh. Studien II:392–3 [tr. Stern, II:355).

Goldziher gives several examples of the above from Sunní *ḥadíth* collections as well as the following statement from the 4th Shí‘í Imám, ‘Alí Zayn al-‘Ābidín (d. 95/713) regarding “the *jírán Alláh* (protected of God) who “sit together in God, practise common devotional exercises in God, and together go on pilgrimage in God (*nataj alas fí’lláh wa natadhákar fí’lláh wa-natazáwar fí’lláh*) (al-Yaqúbí II:264–5 cited Goldziher, ed. Stern, II:356 underlining added).[[226]](#footnote-226)

Though the Báb strongly criticized anything suggestive of a pantheistic *waḥdat al-wujúd* which compromised God’s being ‘wholly other’, his writings do suggest a deep mysticism surrounding the believers’ self-effacement in the *mashiyyat Alláh* (The divine Will) centred in the *maẓhar-i iláhí* (divine manifestation) through a “death” of self (*mayyit*) in its ultimate reality (*al-ḥaqq*). This has no close NT parallel but many Sufi parallels. In fact the Báb is not so far removed from the Great Shaykh (Ibn al-‘Arabí) who championed a *via negativa* as well as a mediatory *al-Insán al-Kámil* and various kinds of unitative spiritual conditions expressive of dying to God (<--P.Bayan 11:9).

It is also pertinent to note that within the writings of the mystically oriented philosophers of the Safavid period such as Fayḍ al-Káshání (d. 1099/1679), there are discussions of these matters. In Kashání’s *Kalimát-i maknúnih* (Hidden Words) there is a section entitled “The discourse [word] (*kalimat*) in which is an indication of the significance of *al-faná’ fí Alláh* ([mystical] dying in God) and *al-baqá’ bi Alláh* (eternal abiding in God)”. Without going into details, it is explained that gnostic initiates (*ahl-ma‘rifa*) teach that the intention of “the death” (*faná’*) of the servant (*‘abd*) in the ultimately Real (God, *ḥaqq*) is not *faná’-i dhát*, (the extinction of his personal essence [in God]) but rather the (mystical) death of self (*faná’*) before the dictates of His law (*faná’ jaht-i bi-sharí‘at-i ú*) in the direction of that “Lordship” which results from complete servitude before the *al-ḥaqq*, the Real-God *ṣúbubiyyat-i ḥaqq*) (Káshání, *Kalimat*, 116).

The foregoing seven ‘signs’ of Gospel influence suggested by Browne in the Báb’s P. Bayán provide little or no solid evidence of the Shírází Sayyid’s direct knowledge of the Gospels (NT). As far of I am aware there is nothing in the Báb’s other writings which clearly indicate his direct knowledge of the Bible. Unless better evidence is forthcoming it can be assumed that the Báb never cited the canonical NT nor any other biblical texts. It is likely that he bypassed existing Persian and Arabic translations because of his extreme veneration of the Q. The pristine Bible had its spiritual essence assimilated into the Arabic Qur’án (<--). For the Báb the *tawrát* and *injíl* were expressions of the sublime word of God but scriptures appropriate to a previous religious theophany (<--).

7.4 The Bible in the address of the Báb to the Letters of the Living

Attention will now be focussed upon a Gospel informed speech of the Báb which he allegedly delivered to his first disciples, the ‘Letters of the Living’. Some statements of Amanat about the Báb’s knowledge of the NT in his 1989 *Resurrection and Renewal* will also be critically surveyed.

In 1888 a leading Bahá’í poet and teacher then resident in ‘Akká named Mullá Muḥammad and known as Nabíl-i Zarandí (1247/1831–1310/1892) was commissioned by BA\* to write a history of the Bábí-Bahá’í religions. This, it seems, in order to supercede an inadequate history “from the year 60” (1260 = CE 1844) written by BA\*’s long-time amanuenses Mírzá Áqá-Ján Khadím-Alláh (d. 1319/1901). Subsequently, from Dhú’l-Qa‘da 1305/July-August 1888, Zarandí began to compile a lengthy collection of historical sketches and associated notes, an initial draft of which was completed on 19th Jumádí 1 1307 (= 12 January 1890). After taking account of BA\* and AB\*s suggestions the revised 1,014 page (each page being 250×210 mm. and having 22–24 lines) manuscript was completed on 26th Rabí‘ 1 1308 (10 November 1890). Among other things this work included coverage of the pre-Bábí Shaykhism of the first two Shaykhs continuing up till the time of completion (1890) and dominated by the person of BA\*, his writings and his major disciples. This work came to be

known as the *Táríkh-i* [*Nabíl-i*] *Zarandí*.[[227]](#footnote-227)

Zarandí’s apologetically and hagiographically oriented salvation history begins with a citation from a fasting Tablet of BA\* and a poem revolving around his theophany. There follow three pages of gematric and theological considerations of BA\*’s name Ḥusayn and the mysteries of *al-ism al-a‘ẓam* (“The ‘Mightiest Name of God”) as *bahá’*, (“splendour” -->7.2f) in the light of Islamic *ḥadíth*, the *ḥurúf muqaṭṭa‘át* (the isolated letters of the Q.) and aspects of ‘*ilm-i ḥurúf* (the science of letters) (Zarandí, mss. 1–4 in Rafati, 1996:87, cf. 76).[[228]](#footnote-228) A few pages later (page 6ff) Zarandí explains how he came to write his history which he prefaced (page 8f) with a list of topics covered and details regarding key Bábí-Bahá’í informants. Then begins the work proper. It is impossible to adequately assess its style and contents without full access to the original text which has not been available for scholarly examination for many years. Only a few isolated pages of the original Persian have found their way into print.[[229]](#footnote-229)

The *Táríkh-i Zarandí* has never been wholly published in the original or in translation. What is now known is (largely) the result of SE\*’s 1932 publication of his selective English translation and thorough reworking of parts of the first portion of Zarandí’s history of the Báb and Babism. This he titled *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabíl’s Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá’í Revelation* (1st ed. 1932. 685pp). It appears to be selective ‘recreation’ of narratives contained in the (largely) initially Shaykhí prolegomenon and Bábí portion of the *Táríkh-i*

*Zarandí*. The Shaykhí period presents Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Káẓim as harbingers of the Bábí (-Bahá’í) religion. Then, after detailing aspects of the life and writings of the Báb, it continues up until the time of the Mázandarán upheaval (1852).[[230]](#footnote-230)

For the 20th century Bahá’í international community, SE\*’s English language *Dawn-Breakers* occupied a central place in Bábí-Bahá’í salvation history. SE\* lavishly praised Zarandí’s history and directed western Bahá’ís to study it. Bahá’í teachers and missionaries should evangelize after the sacrificial example of the Bábís of the *Dawn-Breakers*. From the time of its translation it became a kind of touchstone for assaying the value of other Bábí (-Bahá’í) historical works. In the late 1950s, for example, zealous Iranian Bahá’ís in the light of a letter of SE\* dated 15 September 1932, tried to suppress other histories thought to contradict the *Dawn-Breakers* which they viewed as a virtually infallible work.

The NT in the Báb’s alleged address to select ‘Letters of the Living’ (mid. 1844)

Reckoned the twelfth of the nineteen apostles of BA\*, the above-mentioned Muḥammad ‘Alí Nabíl-i Zarandí was a zealous Bahá’í propagandist and a poet of considerable talent (Browne, LHP IV:151, 187 fn.). He was also an insightful apologetic historian of four decades Bábí-Bahá’í experience (Zarandí, 1923 [95]; *Khúsh-i há*, no. 7). Involved in Bábí activities since the Ṭabarsí episode, Zarandí had many key first-hand informants for his detailed and highly significant though not infallible, hagiographically oriented, *istidláliyya* informed history.

Of the various addresses included in the English *Dawn-Breakers* of Zarandí [SE\*] (completed c. 1308/1890–1891, 1st pub. USA 1932) there exists an address of the Báb (without any *iṣnád*/chain of authorities) allegedly delivered to most of his first disciples, the *ḥurúf-i ḥayy* (Letters of the Living) before sending them out to proclaim his mission in the summer of 1260/1844 (DB [SE\*]:63–5). As translated and doubtless to some extent “recreated” by SE\*

(Rabbani, PP, 215) this address incorporates phrases and citations which echoing ascribed to Jesus in the Authorized (‘King James’, 1611) NT version. The ‘Sermon of the Mount’ (Matt. 5:1ff and Lk. 6:17ff) and words attributed to Jesus as he addressed his own disciples as they embarked on their missions (Mk. 6:7f; Matt. 9:35f; 10:1f; Lk. 9:1f; 10:1f) account for many of these allusions. SE\*s translation of the bulk of this speech is as follows (with select NT references and key NT phrases in capitals):

O my beloved friends! You the bearers of the name of God in this Day. You have been chosen as the repositories of His mystery. … Ponder the words of Jesus addressed to His disciples, as He sent them forth to propagate the Cause of God. In words such as these, He bade them arise and fulfil their mission: ‘Ye are even as the fire which in the darkness of the night has been kindled upon the mountain top. LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE BEFORE THE EYES OF MEN [Matt. 5:16]. Such must be the purity of your character and the degree of your renunciation, that the people of the earth may through you recognise and be drawn closer to the HEAVENLY FATHER who is the Source of purity and grace. FOR NONE HAS SEEN THE FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN [Jn. 6:46; cf. Jn. 1:18; Matt. 6:9; 11:27; Lk. 10:22]. You who are His spiritual children must by your deeds exemplify His virtues, and WITNESS TO HIS GLORY. YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH, BUT IF THE SALT HAVE LOST ITS SAVOUR, WHEREWITH SHALL IT BE SALTED? [Matt. 5:13a] Such must he the degree of your detachment, that INTO WHATEVER CITY YOU ENTER [Matt. 10:11, cf. Mk. 610; Lk. 9:4] to proclaim and teach the Cause of God, YOU SHOULD IN NO WISE EXPECT EITHER MEAT OR REWARD FROM ITS PEOPLE [cf. Matt. 7:2b+ Lk. 6:38b]. Nay, WHEN YOU DEPART OUT OF THAT CITY YOU SHOULD SHAKE THE DUST FROM OFF YOUR FEET [Lk. 9:5, cf. Matt. 10:14; Mk. 6:11]. As you have entered it pure and undefiled, so must you depart from that city. For verily I say, THE HEAVENLY FATHER IS ever with you and keeps watch over you. If you be faithful to Him, He will assuredly deliver into your hands all the treasures of the earth, and will exalt you above all the rulers and kings of the world.’ O My Letters! Verily I say, immensely exalted is this Day above the days of the Apostles of old. … Scatter throughout the length and breadth of this land. I am preparing you for the advent of a mighty Day. Exert your utmost endeavour that, in the world to come, I who am now instructing you, may, before the MERCY-SEAT OF GOD, rejoice in your deeds and glory in your achievements” (Zarandí/SE\* DB:63–64, 65).[[231]](#footnote-231)

The miscellaneous quotations and allusions to the NT record of Jesus’ words in his ‘Sermon on the Mount’, ‘Mission of the Apostles’ and elsewhere have been thought to underline the Báb’s familiarity with the NT. After selectively citing passages and references from this address of the Báb Amanat comments, “These and other remarks appear to be free references

to the Gospel” (R&R:198). This is largely correct[[232]](#footnote-232) but these citations and allusions are not the Báb’s own “free references”. It is methodologically very suspect to make this assertion on the basis of the English of the Zarandí/SE\* recension of an address only indirectly attributed to the Báb. Neither the Báb’s early writings nor his later works contain anything comparable to this speech. Even the English introduction to this speech has it that these words are only the like of what the Báb might have said to his first disciples: “With such words the Báb quickened the faith of His disciples and launched them upon their mission” (DB:65).

Zarandí/SE\* also have the Báb himself say, “In words such as these He [Jesus] bade them arise and fulfil their mission” (DB:63). In the light of these points it is not surprising that SE\* who himself framed the address in AV/King James’ English), in a 1934 letter advised Bahá’í readers not to take the speeches attributed to the Báb and BA\* in the English *Dawn-Breakers* as their “exact words” but, rather, as “the substance of their message” (SE\*, UD:433). It is surprising that this address of the Báb has been taken by Amanat to highlight the Báb’s personal knowledge of the NT and of Christianity.

In taking the Zarandí/SE\* DB address to be a testimony to the biblical knowledge of the Báb it would also be necessary to assert that he knew the Hebrew Bible in the AV. This in that the last sentence from this address (DB:65 cited above but not by Amanat) contains AV biblical English terminology rooted in the Hebrew Bible by making reference to the “mercy-seat of God”. This phrase is biblical English deriving from the Tyndale (1526) Bible version subsequently taken up in the 1611 AV. The AV’s “mercy-seat” has no obvious Arabic-Persian or Islamic equivalent. It translates the Hebrew *kapporet* (ḵap-pō-reṯ; כַפֹּ֖רֶת; Exod. 25:17ff, etc.) which designates the place of expiation (Lat. Vulgate = *propitiatia*) which is the golden lid covering the Ark of the Covenant containing the two stone tablets of the law. This golden lid is the “mercy-seat”, so-called because it was sprinkled with sacrificial animal blood to atone for the sins of the

Israelites (Lev. 16:14–15).

In the Greek Septuagint (LXX) the Heb. *kapporet* is often translated by the Gk. *hilasterion* (τὸ ἱλαστήριον) which influenced the English rendering “mercy-seat” in the Greek (Pseudo-Pauline) book of Hebrews at 9:5 (cf. Rom. 3:25) which is the only NT use of this English phrase. This takes us far from language and concepts the Báb might have used in an 1844 address. Amanat makes no reference to this Zarandí/SE\* AV biblical phrase in the Báb’s address. It doubtless originated with SE\* who used “mercy-seat” ten or more times in translating from the writings of the Bab and BA\*.[[233]](#footnote-233) The original behind “mercy-seat” in DB:65 may well also be (Ar.) *al-‘arsh* though this tells us nothing at all of the Báb’s knowledge of the intricacies of the HB. It testifies to SE\*’s delight in the beauty of the biblical English of the AV. He used it freely in beautifying and “westernizing” the words of the Báb and BA\*.

In the light of the above it can hardly have been the case that the Báb “took his references direct from the Gospels” (see Amanat R&R:198) and allegedly had, as Amanat puts it, an “above average” knowledge of the NT (R&R:00). This “above average” knowledge of the NT is that of Zarandí as put into AV English by SE\*. It can be confidently asserted that the Báb himself never uttered the Zarandí/SE\* *Dawn-Breakers* address as cited above (<--DB:63–5). The address to the Letters of the Living appears to have been primarily authored by Zarandí and subsequently brought into line with biblical AV English by the Bahá’í Guardian. There is nothing comparable to this *Dawn-Breakers* address in any of the authentic Persian and Arabic writings of the Báb known to the present writer.

The widely travelled Zarandí most likely authored words used by SE\* as a basis of the Báb’s address to his disciples. Prior to writing his history (in 1888) Zarandí doubtless had considerable dialogue with Christians in the Ottoman empire and in the ‘Akká-Haifa region

where there were several churches and numerous Christians. He could easily have gained a knowledge of Arabic and/or Persian translations of the NT as did many other Bahá’ís of his generation, including Mírzá Abú’l-Faḍl Gulpaygání (d. 1914) and Ḥajji Mírzá Ḥaydar ‘Alí Iṣfahání (d. 1921). It could well have been his knowledge of the Bible that enabled him, at Alexandria in August 1868, to convert a Protestant physician named Fáris Afandí (d. 18?? unknown?) whom BA\* subsequently addressed as (a probably honorary?) *usqúf an-naṣárí* (“one of the bishops of the Christians”) and to whom he wrote at least two weighty Arabic Tablets (Zarandí, *Táríkh* tr. in Balyuzi, BKG:265ff; Lambden, 1993).

Zarandí had ample opportunity to learn about the Bible/NT. He would very likely have familiarized himself with, if not memorized such central Gospel passages as the ‘Sermon on the Mount’. Then, in writing his history, he might have gained inspiration from the NT record of Jesus’ address to his disciples before sending them out on their evangelical mission (<--). This line of approach may best account for his drawing on NT passages to fill in *lacunae* in Bábí history. *The Dawn-Breakers* address of the Báb cited above is best viewed as a piece of Christian-Bahá’í inspired salvation history of the late 1880’s and early 1890s updated in highly biblicized form in the early 1930’s by SE\*. The Báb’s words were created in order to provide a befitting and wonderful address for the new messiah who was seen to take on a Christ-like prophetological persona. In similar fashion Zarandí/SE\* had also used and adapted a version of the Islamic account of Jesus’ first day at school to provide hagiographical inspiration and precedent for the account of the Báb’s first day at the school of Shaykh ‘Ábid (Lambden, BSB 1/4 [1983], 22–32 = 1986:1–31).

The Báb’s 1260/1844 speech to the bulk of his Letters was greatly favoured by SE\*. It was highly inspirational for many of its Bahá’í readers of western Christian background. This is evidenced by the fact that the address was several times separately printed in addition to

numerous printings of the English *Dawn-Breakers*.[[234]](#footnote-234) It served to inspire western Bahá’ís in the propagation of their religion (Rabbaní, PP:217f; SE\* MIS:299). As a piece of salvation history it was very effective though it can hardly be deemed historical or to be what the Báb might himself have uttered. It has no bearing at all upon the Báb’s alleged knowledge of the Bible or his self-understanding.

Unfounded assertions of Amanat in his Resurrection and Renewal

Amanat’s understanding of the Báb’s address to the ‘Letters of the Living’ and of wider issues relating to the Báb’s knowledge of the NT and of Christianity are set out in his 1982 Oxford University doctoral thesis, a revised version of which was published in 1989 by Cornell University Press with the title *Resurrection and Renewal, The Making of the Bábí Movement in Iran, 1844–1850*, (= R&R). Both the thesis and the book contain a number of statements about the Báb and the influence of the NT upon him. Almost everything said in this area is either demonstrably false or based on very scant evidence indeed.

In R&R:142 Amanat asserts that “There is enough evidence that even in the early stages, prior to his proclamation [May CE 1844], the Báb had access to recent translations of the New Testament, though probably not the Old Testament”. The evidence for this is spelled out in a footnote (no. 174). Therein Amanat sketches the availability of Persian translations of the NT/Bible. First, the availability of these translations has nothing whatsoever to so with the Báb’s actual possession or use of them. For this there would seem to be no reliable primary evidence at all. Amanat then asserts that, “Constant references in the *Bayán*, and in his earlier works to Jesus and to ‘the letters of the Gospel’ (i.e. Christians) and their faith, leave little doubt as to his direct knowledge of the Gospel” (R&R:142). This is entirely misleading. While there are a fair number of references to Christians in the *P. Bayán* and a few other late works, detail is

lacking as it is in the Báb’s “earlier works”. In fact references to the “letters of the Gospel” (= Jesus’ disciples, Christians) are not particularly numerous and show no indication at all of NT influence. There is nothing which leads the reader of the Báb’s early works to substantiate Amanat’s over confident and misleading assertion that there is “Little doubt as to his direct knowledge of the Gospels” (R&R:142).

The Báb’s references to Christians are more likely accounted for as born out of his admiration for Christians and Europeans gained during his time at Bushire or merchant years in Shiraz and Bushire. Amanat’s footnote to the above cited assertion (fn. 75 p. 142) refers the reader to his Ch. 4 and to the (Persian) *Dalá’il-i Sab‘ih* 52–3 for “references to the Gospel”. While the information in Ch. 4 will be dealt with below, the passage in the Persian *Dalá’il-i Sab‘ih* allegedly containing “references to the Gospel” reads as follow:

And now that the bearer of the divine ordinance (*ṣáḥib-i ḥukm* = the Báb) is manifest with evident proof and certain testimony, they (Christians, etc.) have remained wrapt up in veils. Like the Christian community (*ummat-i ‘ísá*) whose priest-monks (*ruhbán*) indulged in austerities (*riyáḍat míkashídand*) in order to [befittingly comprehend] a single ordinance (*ḥukm*) in conformity with the divine good-pleasure [as stipulated] in the Gospels (*anájíl*). And [then] the messenger of God (*rasúl Alláh*= Muḥammad) was made manifest as the fountainhead of the divine ordinances (*maṣdar-i aḥkám-i iláhí*) and they remained wrapt up in veils. Still they indulged in austerities (*riyáḍat míkashand*) in order to comprehend the divine good-pleasure [regarding messianic expectation] in the Gospels (*anájíl*). Now bear witness how the well-being (*rizq*) of the veiled ones [Christians] ended up such that they were in a state of error (*maḥall-i idní*?). Not a single one [Christian] is looked upon favourably, for he only operates according to the parameters of his own destiny. And one and all [of the Christians) act bereft of understanding save, that is, such as God has accorded [true] salvation (*najat*).

This passage contains no Gospel references at all and shows no special knowledge of Christians. In Islamicate fashion it simply states that the most pious Christians failed to comprehend the advent of Muḥammad as the one promised in the Gospels. They largely remained veiled to both the messianic advent of Muḥammad and that of the Báb.

It is in Ch. 4 of R&R that Amanat refers to the speech attributed in Zarandí/SE\*, to the Báb (<--). After correctly reckoning Shi‘ite traditions “the main impetus for the Báb and his followers”, he states that these were “not the only sources of inspiration” (R&R:196) and

continues,

The speech the Báb delivered to his disciples in the summer of 1260/1844, just before departure to their assigned missions, also shows traces of Christian influence. He even drew a direct comparison with Christ and his disciples. After expressing his hopes for the progress of the movement and emphasising the moral strength and sacrifice needed for fulfilling their mission, the Báb cautions his followers to shun any hesitation or weakness that might lead them to retreat and silence. He then directly refers to the words of Jesus (R&R:197)

It is evident that Amanat takes the NT allusions in Zarandí/DB\* speech of the Báb to his Letters (which he cites) as evidence of the Báb’s making direct reference to the “words of Jesus” (Amanat, ibid.). The following Gospel references are given in R&R:198 (fn. 239), “Compare to Matthew 5:14–16 (cf. 10:27), 11:27; 5:13; 10:11–14, 20 (also Luke 9:5) respectively.” They are followed by a sentence asserting that “Nabíl makes no specific reference to any of the Gospels” which is evidently intended to affirm their going back to the Báb himself. Amanat thus implies that though the Báb knew the Gospels, Zarandí did not! In the light of what has already been argued it will be evident that the opposite is far more likely to be the case. *The Dawn-Breakers* Gospel allusions only inform us about the knowledge of Zarandí/SE\*. Having largely correctly identified though wrongly attributed certain of these NT allusions Amanat also makes the following bold yet mistaken assertions,

This preoccupation with Christ was beyond the common Muslim knowledge of the time, which was mainly confined to the Qur’án and other Islamic sources. He must have taken his references directly from the Gospel, the study of which had given him an understanding of revelation and divinity somewhat different from that of the Qur’án. No doubt the Báb found the personality of Christ appealing and his message of affection and self-sacrifice in conformity with his own. Traces of Christian doctrines of Trinity and Atonement is apparent even in his earliest works. (R&R:198)

The Báb did not exactly have a “preoccupation with Christ”. His knowledge was not exactly “beyond the common Muslim knowledge of the time” because his attitude towards the Bible was something wholly different to that of most of the Shí‘í apologists of his day (<--4.4) A careful examination of the Báb’s references to Christians indicates that he was not at all preoccupied with Christ but deeply concerned over heretical Christian Trinitarian concepts and

the related Christian rejection of Muḥammad.

Most of the Báb’s major works contain not “traces” of Christian Trinitarianism but Q.-like refutations of “trinitarianism” and other forms of heretical *shirk* (associationalism).[[235]](#footnote-235) Commenting on Q. 2:111 in his early *T. Baqara* the Báb denies both Jews and Christians a place in Paradise on account of their various forms of *shirk* (associating gods with God). Christians will not enter paradise who associate (1) themselves, (2) Jesus and (3) God in *haykal at-tathlíth*, in a “tritheistic configuration”. For the Báb God is not “a fourth among four” or the “third of three” (cf. Q. 5:77, etc.). His Oneness precludes any direct link between his Essence and his creation. (T. Baqara, f. 254f).

A cross is basically the intersection of two lines transverse to each other which became a widespread symbol of life in pre-Christian antiquity. From the 2nd cent. CE the cruciform became an important symbol of the Christian religion on account of Jesus’ death by crucifixion (Grossi, ‘Cross’ EEC 1:209). As far as I am aware, the Báb does not refer to the atonement or to Jesus’ crucifixion but repeats a tradition about the origin of the Christian symbol of the cross as associated with a concept of the incarnation seen as something heretical not soteriological. The Báb refers to the *shakl aṣ-ṣalíb* (form, shape, symbol of the cross), to the origin of the form or symbol of the cross. The following tradition (*ḥadíth*) usually attributed to the Muḥammad, is quoted many times in the major and minor writings of the Báb. Though his quotations sometimes vary slightly an example is shown below along with the translation:

حديث النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم حيث قال غزوه رد للنصارى ومن هذا أخذ النصارى شكل الصليب وحلول اللاهوت في الناسوت فقال تعالى عما يقول الظالمون علواً كبيراً

The *ḥadíth* of the Prophet [Muḥammad] … in refutation of the Christians: ‘And from this [shape] the Christians took the form of the cross (*shakl aṣ-ṣalíb*) and the descent (*ḥall*) of the Divinity (*al-láhūt*) into the human sphere (*an-násūt*). But exalted be God, Lofty and Mighty, above that which these transgressors assert.[[236]](#footnote-236)

This tradition has no relationship to Christian atonement but is critical of the Christian incarnation as symbolized in the “cross” seen as a talismanic sign of the heretical conjunction of *láhút* (divinity) and *násút* (humanity). The *shakl at-tathlíth* (“threefold form”) has multiple senses in the Báb’s writings though whenever it indicates the Christian trinity it is always something categorically rejected. According to tradition, the Mahdí, if not the Qá’im, is to destroy the “cross”. He is not, as Amanat implies, to embrace or repeat a Christian doctrine of atonement. The number of times the Báb cites the above prophetic tradition about the folly of Christians at having adopted the *shakl aṣ-ṣalíb* (form/symbol of the cross), might lead one to think the Báb was inspired by the tradition of the eschatological destruction of things cruciform.

Amanat’s second sentence cited above (R&R:198) again presumes the Báb’s direct reference to the NT for which there is no evidence. His fn. 243 has it that such is evidenced “in his commentary on Súrat al-Baqara, INBA no. 64, 298” though there is no such page reference in this INBA volume neither does the *T. Baqara* contain any non-Islamicate or canonical NT citations. This same footnote also refers to the Báb’s “letter in reply to questions by Mírzá Muḥammad Sa‘íd Ardistání” though this reference is also incorrect containing nothing supportive of the Báb’s direct knowledge of the NT or his understanding of Christian doctrines.

INBMC 69:424 has no reference to anything appropriate to Amanat’s argument. On the following page of this source, however (= INBMC 69:425), there begins the “Reply to three

questions of Mírzá Muḥammad Sa‘íd Zavárih (= Mírzá Muḥammad Sa‘íd Ardistání?) about the *Basíṭ al-ḥaqíqa* and other matters”. In the course of commenting on the *Basíṭ al-ḥaqíqa* the Báb does assert the transcendence of the divine Essence and make some anti-Trinitarian statements. The single divine Reality cannot be either a “third between two” (*lá thálith bayn-humá*) or the “third aside from two” (*thálith ghayr-humá*) (69:423). After citing the *al-Káfí* of Kulíní and further underlining the divine transcendence with reference to the qur’anic, anti-Christian Trinitarian phrase *thálith ath-thalátha* (“third of three”, Q. 5:73), the erroneous nature of proponents of *basíṭ al-ḥaqíqa* (the singleness of the Real) which presuppose a multiplicity of the divine Reality is clear. In this connection the Báb also cites the prophetic *ḥadíth* about the heretical Christians derivation of the *shakl al-ṣalíb* (“form of the cross”) through belief in incarnation, that there was a “descent of divinity (*láhút*) into the human realm (*násút*). (JNBMC 69:425)

There is no evidence in the sources cited to substantiate Amanat’s proposal of the Báb’s knowledge of the Gospels or of the intricacies of Christian theology. Neither is there any trace of his affirming the Christian “doctrines of Trinity and Atonement”. NT reading did not give the Báb a concept of “revelation and divinity somewhat different from that of the Qur’án”. His statements in this respect are not NT or Christian rooted but perspectives based upon his championing of an apophatic theology and a Shí‘í, Q. rooted anti-*waḥdat al-wujúd* (existential oneness) and anti-Trinitarianism.

When, furthermore, Amanat asserts that there is “No doubt” that “the Báb found the personality of Christ appealing and his message of affection and self-sacrifice in conformity with his own” one might ask where he finds evidence of the Báb’s knowledge of the “personality of Christ” or the Christian message of “self-sacrifice” to assume such an influence. One would be better advised to look towards the centrality of the Shí‘í notion of the sacrifice of Ḥusayn at Karbala rather than to NT teachings.

Finally in connection with Amanat’s statements regarding the Báb, the NT and Christianity, it may be noted that the Báb’s “ideas of the Second Coming” were not a blending

of the “apocalyptic role assigned to Jesus in Shi‘ism” with the apocalyptic eschatology of the NT but an expression of Shí‘í ideas of the “return” of the Qá’im without any significant NT input. It is not so much that the Báb as the Qá’im is a suffering, sacrificial messiah like Jesus but that he is a Qá’im whose universal and successful *jihad* was thwarted and one who expected martyrdom like many of the twelver Imams without reference to the sacrifice of Jesus. Neither mainstream twelver Shi‘ism nor Babism have any real place for a parousia (“second coming”) of Jesus to enact another sacrificial death or martyrdom. The Báb’s rare references to his own martyrdom have no connection with those of the NT Jesus. It was not, as Amanat asserts, that “The Christ-like Mahdi of the Bab saw salvation in suffering rather than in violent revanchism.” (R&R:198) His “preoccupation with theophany” might have led some of his opponents to accuse him “of believing in Christianity and preaching the Trinity” though this is merely the repeating of some uninformed remarks of such as would make his teaching dependent upon unorthodox Christian heresies. These, in fact, the Báb did much to dispel.

Concluding note

To sum up, while the Báb was subject to some general western and Christian influence his direct familiarity with the Bible is very unlikely. E. G. Browne’s arguments for his being influenced by the NT are very flimsy. Amanat’s statements are largely unfounded. The evidence of the *Táríkh-i Zarandí* in the form of the *Dawn-Breakers* saying anything historical about an alleged speech of the Báb to most of the Letters is very weak. It may be that a thorough examination of more of the Báb’s extensive Persian and Arabic writings (not all are available) will expose elements more suggestive of his having read the NT but any marked biblical influence can safely be ruled out. The Báb’s own writings contain no biblical citations and no definite indications of biblical or Christian theological influence. The Báb yet had a very high Islamic type estimation of Jesus (cf. Ibn al-‘Arabí), referring to him in his *Tafsír man ‘arafa nafsahu* as the *ashraf al-anbiyá’* (“noblest of the prophets”) (T.Man, 74). Christian influence upon the Báb was minimal. As Amanat rightly states “Whatever the effect of Christianity on his ideas, the Báb was still firmly tied to Shi‘ism” (R&R:198).

8
Bahá’-Alláh, the Mightiest Name of God
and the emergence of the Bábí-Bahá’í
interpretation of the Bible

8.1 Isrá’íliyyát and Bahá’-Alláh as the personification of the *ism Alláh al-a‘ẓam*

This final chapter will contain a brief introduction to BA\* (1817–1892) and his writings and examine how and why he came to adopt the divine attribute *bahá’* (Ar. radiant “Splendour”) as the Isrá’íliyyát rooted locus of his identity regarded as the quintessence of the *ism Alláh al-a‘ẓam* (the Mightiest Name of God) personified in him. BA\*’s early attitude towards the Bible and biblical *taḥríf* will then be surveyed (= 8.2). This will be followed by some conclusions to the thesis along with a few remarks about how a neo-Shí‘í Bábí faction (= Babism) evolved into the global Bahá’í ‘religion of the Book’ (= 8.3).

Bahá’-Alláh the follower of the Báb (1844/1845–1863 [66])[[237]](#footnote-237)

On the orders of Náṣir ad-Dín Sháh’s new grand vizier, Mírzá Taqí Khán, Amír Kabír (d. 1852), the Báb was publicly executed as a dangerous religious heretic in the public square in Tabríz on 9 July 1850. Some time prior to this he had communicated an undoubtedly authentic five page Arabic *waṣiyyat-náma* (Will and Testament) to the Name of God *al-Azal* (Eternity) indicative of BA\*’s half-brother Mírzá Yaḥyá Núrí (d. CE 1914) whom he accorded a key position pending the future theophany of “Him Whom God shall make manifest” (INBMC 64:95–102; Haifa mss; cf. Nicholas, 1905 [BéyanA], 52f). Towards the beginning of this *Waṣiyyat-náma* the Báb made cryptic reference to himself or, for Bahá’ís, to BA\* (cf. GWB CXIII:207)[[238]](#footnote-238) as one *ḥayy fí ufuq al-abhá* (“living in the Abhá Horizon”, INBMC 64:96; BWC. Ms. [unpaginated] 2). The word *abhá* here is the superlative form of the verbal noun *bahá’* (splendour, beauty). It is this word which, along with derivates from the same Arabic root and

phrases containing the word *bahá’* which BA\* identified as the *ism Alláh al-a‘ẓam*, the greatest or mightiest Name of God.[[239]](#footnote-239)

Babism only just survived the Báb’s execution. In surviving it most significantly gave birth to the conservative Azalí Bábí faction led by Mírzá Yaḥyá, (assumed title) Ṣubḥ-i Azal (The Morn of Eternity) and the globally-minded, progressive Bahá’í religion semi-publicly initiated by BA\* in May 1863. These two neo-Bábí factions both stem from these two Núrí half-brothers. From the early 1860s BA\* claimed to be the Bábí messiah *man yuẓhiruhu Alláh* and ultimately the promised messiah expected in past major religions.

Mírzá Ḥusayn ‘Alí Núrí, Bahá’-Alláh and his writings

Allegedly a descendent of Keturah, wife of Abraham, and the last Sassanid king Yazdigird III (d. CE 651), BA\* was born in Tehran on 2nd Muḥarram AH 1233 (12 November CE 1817), being two lunar years older than the Báb. His father, Mírzá ‘Abbás b. Riḍá-Kulí Khán Núrí (d. 1255/1839), a notable calligrapher entitled Mírzá Buzurg by Fatḥ ‘Alí Sháh, was a native of Tákur in the district of Núr in the province of Mázandarán (Iran). A one time vizier to the twelfth son of Fatḥ ‘Alí Sháh, Mírzá Buzurg was a close friend of Mírzá Abú’l-Qásim Khán Qá’im Maqám (d. 1835) the previously mentioned author of a response to the missionary Henry Martyn (<--4.4). A man of some wealth and influence during the reign of Fatḥ ‘Alí Sháh, he married seven wives and fathered at least fifteen children. Mírzá Ḥusayn ‘Alí, BA\*, was the third child of his second wife Khadija Khánum.

BA\*’s childhood and youth were spent in Tehran and Mázandarán. In the former city he had personal tutors engaged by his parents from whom he acquired, among other things, a knowledge of Persian literature, the rudiments of Arabic grammar and the Q. He did not receive any systematic or extensive theological training and, like the Báb, drew on Q. 7:156, in referring to himself as *al-ummí* (“unlettered”),

The learning amongst men I studied not; I did not enter the theological colleges (*al-madáris*). Enquire of the city wherein I dwelt, that you may be assured that I am not of those who speak falsely (*Lawḥ-i Sulṭán* 148).

We did not enter the theological colleges (*al-madáris*) or study learned themes (*al-mabáḥith*). Hearken unto that through which this *al-ummí* (unlettered one) summoneth you unto God, the Ever-Abiding (*Aqdas*:121).

BA\* later frequently claimed receipt of divinely inspired knowledge. In his *L. Ḥikma* (187?/188?) he intimates how he received such inspiration independent of actually acquiring it through reading and study,

Thou knowest full well that We (= BA\*) perused not the books which men possess and We acquired not the learning (*al-‘ulúm*) currently amongst them, and yet whenever We desire to quote the sayings of the learned (*bayánát al-‘ulamá’*) and of the wise (*al-ḥulamá’*), presently there will appear before the face of thy Lord [= BA\*] in the form of [revealed] tablets (*alwáḥ*) all that which hath appeared in the world and in the Holy Books (*al-kutub*) and Scriptures (*al-zubúr*). (*L. al-ḥikma*, 127–8/ tr. TBAA., 148–9; see also, *L. Bismillah* [sic] MAM:281; L.Shaykh, 13/ tr. 11; Faydí, *Bahá’u’lláh* 18ff)

While Bahá’í writers tend to minimize the nature of BA\*’s early education such Azalí writers as ‘Izziyya Khánum (an Azalí half-sister of BA\*) reckon that he acquired knowledge by intensive study and by associating with Sufis and sages (*ḥukamá’*).[[240]](#footnote-240) On his father’s death BA\* refused to follow in his footsteps. Then twenty two years old his religious interests and pietistic inclinations made him reluctant to embark on a worldly career.[[241]](#footnote-241) Bahá’í sources have it that Mullá Ḥusayn Bushrú’í (the first believer in the Báb) indirectly informed BA\* of the rise of the Bábí cause (late 1844, early 1845?) through Mullá Muḥammad-i Mu‘allim (-i Núrí). He straightaway became a staunch believer [*recte* supporter] (Zarandí/SE\*, DB:71f). Soon after his conversion he dedicated himself to the success of the Bábí religion and its evolution.[[242]](#footnote-242)

According to Zarandí, BA\* was a key participant in the Bábí conference of Badasht (in

western Khurásán) held in the summer CE 1848. There the fullness of the Báb’s messianic claims were openly discussed and made known. A representative of the progressive, ‘radical Bábí faction’, BA\* is said to have conferred new names on each of the 81 (= 9×9) or so Bábís present. He came to be known as *Jináb-i Bahá’* (lit. ‘His eminence the Splendour’), hence his later [questionable!???] title Bahá’-Alláh (‘the splendour [glory] of God’) (DB:211 [???]).

Following a 10 month stay in Karbala (Iraq; September 1851 -->July 1852?), BA\* returned to Tehran (15 August 1852) shortly before an abortive attempt on the life of Náṣir ad-Dín Sháh (r. 1848–1896) by a small group of militant Bábí activists. Though unconnected with this activity, BA\* was imprisoned with other Bábís in the Síyáh-Chál (“Black Pit”) dungeon in Tehran for four months (September -->December 1852?). There he had mystical experiences which led him to claim to be a *maẓhar-i iláhí* (Divine Manifestation) chosen by God to regenerate the then fragmented, persecuted and demoralized Bábí community. In his Persian *Rashḥ-i ‘amá’* (The Sprinkling of the Cloud of Divinity, early AH 1269/late CE 1852?) and later writings BA\*, dwelt on this call. In the late *L. Shaykh* (Ibn-i Dhi’b = ESW c. 1891), for example, he explains how he meditated “day and night” on the conduct of the Bábís and decided that on his release from the Síyáh-Chál dungeon he would attempt to regenerate them. He has thus explained his dream;

During the days I lay in the prison of Tehran … I felt as if something flowed from the crown of my head over My breast, even as a mighty torrent that precipitateth itself upon the earth from the summit of a lofty mountain. Every limb of my body would, as a result, be set afire. At such moments my tongue recited what no man could bear to hear (BA\*, L. Shaykh 25/tr. SE\* ESW:22).[[243]](#footnote-243)

On the basis of such passages Bahá’ís view the Síyáh-Chál imprisonment in the year nine (= AH 1269)[[244]](#footnote-244) as the year of BA\*’s call to *maẓhariyya*, though he claimed pre-existent subordinate divinity. His mystical experiences in that place and the appearance to him of a *ḥúrí* (“celestial Maiden”) have been likened to Moses’ Sinaitic call, Jesus’ baptismal commission and

Muḥammad’s confrontation with Gabriel on Mt. Hira (SE\*, GPB:101). His forty year prophetic ministry (1852–1892) is believed to have begun at this time.

Despite BA\*’s early identification of himself as the returned Imám Ḥusayn and his mystical experiences in the Síyáh-Chál in Tehran, the majority of Bábís continued, right up until the mid. 1860’s, to regard Mírzá Yaḥyá as the head of the Bábí community. BA\*, the founder of the Bahá’í religion, was exiled from Iran to Iraq (1852) then to Istanbul and Edirne in Ottoman Turkey (1863–1868) where he broke with Mírzá Yaḥyá (mid. 1866) after a failed *mubáhala* confrontation. In 1868 he was again exiled to Acre coming to live in its Palestinian vicinity (Mazra‘ih, Bahjí) within the Ottoman Empire for the remainder of his life (1868–1892).

The writings of Bahá’-Alláh

From being a leading Iranian and Iraqi Bábí (1260/1844 -->1863) until the time of his passing in Acre Palestine in 1308/1892, BA\* wrote in excess of 15,000 religious communications in Persian and Arabic largely in the form of *alwáḥ* (“scriptural tablets”). They vary in length from a few words to several hundred pages and date from the last 40 years of his life (CE 1852–1892). For the most part they are letters written in honour of, or in reply to questions posed by Bábís and Bahá’ís. Though largely untitled, a proportion of the more weighty, doctrinally significant writings have specific designations (perhaps 300–500 of them?). It is in line with the conviction that they were expressions of *waḥy* (divine revelation) or *kalimat Alláh* (Word of God) like the (original) *Tawrát*, *Injíl* and Q., that they were often designated *alwáḥ* (‘tablets’, sing. *lawḥ*) following the use of this term in the HB and the Q.

The titles BA\* himself gave several hundred of his works often relate to major themes within them or the identity of the recipient(s). Some major revelations are designated surahs (sing., *súrah*, pl. *suwar*) like ‘sections’ or “chapters” of the Q., others, for example, are considered *kitáb* ( = ‘writing, letter, books’; pl. *kutub*), *ṣaḥífa* (“scrolls”), *risála* (= ‘epistle, tract …,’) and *tafsír* (<--3.1 commentaries). By the time of his residence in Edirne BA\* claimed to have revealed the equivalent of all pre-Bábí divine revelations. Then, towards the end of his life he estimated that his collected writings would fill 100 volumes (*Lawḥ-i Shaykh*, 134–5, 195

/115, 165). Apart from thousands of letters to communities, groups and individual Bábís and Bahá’ís, Bahá’í scripture includes epistles addressed to Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians; Sunní, Shí‘í and Shaykhí Muslims; Azalís, diverse oriental rulers, diplomats and freethinkers and a number of Western monarchs.[[245]](#footnote-245) Between 35 and 40 major titled writings date from the Iraq years (1853–1863), perhaps 50 from the Istanbul-Edirne period (1863–1868) and perhaps 200 or more from the West Galilean (‘Akká’) period (1868–1892).[[246]](#footnote-246) Many of these texts contain interpretations of biblical and qur’ánic rooted Isrá’íliyyát motifs and episodes and hundreds expound a range of biblical texts.

The Judaeo-Islamic Mightiest Name of God, the word *bahá’* and Bahá’-Alláh

As a leading Bábí, BA\* identified himself through the word *bahá’* (“radiant splendour”) as the personification of the *ism al-a‘ẓam*, the Mightiest or Greatest Name of God. His earthly theophany came to be theologically represented as an eschatological doxophany, a radiant parousia of personified, supernatural divine radiance. BA\* frequently articulated his claims in the light of Jewish, Christian, Islamic and Bábí texts. He pictured himself as the radiant manifestation of the long secreted (Ar.) *bahá’* (splendour-beauty) of God (= *Bahá’-Alláh*). In the paragraphs to follow it will be seen how the basically Isrá’íliyyát motif of the Mightiest Name came to be chosen by BA\* as the locus of his person and theological identity. A trajectory of a few aspects of its Jewish, Islamic-Shaykhí and Bábí-Bahá’í history will be outlined in illustration of how this Judaic-rooted motif, ultimately became the touchstone of later Bahá’í identity, graphically portrayed on the Baha’i ringstone and elsewhere.

The supreme or Mightiest Name of God (Heb. *ha-shem ha-gadol*) concept has largely Jewish origins though Hellenistic magic, esotericism and related theurgic ideas doubtless

shaped some aspects of the background(s) of Islamic and Bábí-Bahá'í developments. In the HB the personal though supernatural Deity has ten or more principal names, including the common Semitic name ‘Êl (אֵל, “God”) and related theophoric designations such as ‘Êl-Elyōn (“God-Most High”), ‘Êl-Shaddai (“God All-Powerful”?) and ‘Êlōah (“God”, cf. Alláh), ‘Êlōhîm (“God” = Heb. אֱלֹהִים). Centrally important Names of the God of Israel are the tetragrammaton (Heb. = יְהֹוָה, YHWH) and Adonai or “Lord” (‘ādōnaī, אֲדֹנָי) the vowelling of which enables it to be (un) pronounced as יְהֹוָה (“Jehovah”), although it should properly (?) be Yahweh (cf. ,יה Yāh; YHWH, Ṣebā’ôt = “Lord of Hosts”).

From several centuries BCE the traditional pronunciation of YHWH was only uttered annually by the high priest in the Jerusalem “Holy of Holies”. This, among other factors, encouraged numerous speculations as to the nature, identity, power and sanctity of this transcendent divine Name within the Abrahamic religions. Its power was such that according to many Jewish and Islamic texts it gave the prophets and others favoured souls the power to perform miracles. In the Gk. LXX (2nd–3rd cent.? BCE) YHWH is translated *theos* (“God”) or Κύριος (= Kyrios, [lit. “Strong”?] “Lord”). It often appeared in magical amulets of the first few centuries CE as the all-powerful name (Gk.) *ioā*. Magically inscribed or conjured along with the names Adonai and (the angelic Deity) Abraxas (both related to YHWH), it was such that it could be said, “When this name is but spoken, the earth moves from its foundation” (cited Ringgren TDOT V:509).

Post-biblical Judaisms, especially varieties of Jewish mysticism and esotericism, added many sometimes novel, hypostatic, occasionally magical, theurgically meaningful, qabbalistic and talismanic Names of God. Certain of the Qumran texts (“Dead Sea Scrolls”), include passages referring to God by means of the “great Name” or reflecting a ‘Mightiest Name’ theology. In, for example, col. IV of 4Q504 [4QDib.Hama], ‘The Words of the Luminaries’, a petitioner refers to Jerusalem as the place which God chose, “for your Name to be there for

ever”. Apparently in eschatological times God—the Name—is to sit there for ever enthroned. This such that all countries could vision His “glory” and bring offerings of gold, silver, precious stones, “all the treasures of their country” to his “great Name” to the honour of Israel and Zion “your holy city and your wonderful house” (cf. Haggai 2:7) (tr. Martinez, 415). Many Rabbinic and later Jewish mystical texts celebrate God’s Mightiest Name.

In the *Hekhalot Zuṭarti* (The Lesser Palaces) and other Merkabah texts (2nd–6th cent.? CE) the power of the Name is greatly lauded and celebrated (*Hekhalot Zuṭarti*, 337/347 tr. Schaefer 1992:56). This text also mentions the great “Name” of God as being of cosmic potency. Through its instrumentality Moses “was able to part the sea and pile the waters up into high mountains”. The divine essence is made up of powerful, sacred Names forms of which were handed down throughout history by Balaam, Moses, the Angel of Death, David and Solomon (ibid., 357ff). Some of these Names are preserved in a long unintelligible chain incorporating angelic names and such names of God as Shaddai (“All-Powerful”), Qadosh (“Sanctified”) and the biblical (folk etymology) אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה (*‘ehyeh ‘āsher ‘ehyeh’* tr. [AV] “I AM THAT I AM” Exod 3:14 <--2.1).

Some permutations of the “Name” of God given in Rabbinic, Jewish mystical and qabbalistic texts, are complex many letter “Names” or secreted formulations. Some are said to consist of 12 letters, others 42 letters while some “Names” are “unintelligible *nomina barbara* incorporating Greek words. Islamic and Bábí-Bahá’í sources likewise speak of God’s “Greatest Name” as something supremely powerful, incomprehensible or secret. This has something of a precedent in Rabbinic concepts of God’s *shem ha-meforash*, his “Ineffable” or “Inexplicable” Name (Marmortstein, 1968).

In Islamic tradition God’s Names are variously listed, most famously in prophetic *ḥadíth* listing his much commented upon 99 *al-asmá’ al-ḥusná* (The most beautiful Names) (Bihar2 4:184ff). A prophetic tradition cited by al-Fayḍ al-Kashání in his *Nawádir al-akhbár* has it that God has 4,000 Names some of which are known only to himself. 1,000, furthermore, are known to God and the angels, another 1,000 to God, the angels and the prophets and the fourth 1,000

are known to the believers, 300 being in the *Tawrát*, 300 in the *Injíl*, 300 in the *Zabúr* and 100 in the Q., 99 of these are evident (*ẓáhir*) and one of is “concealed” (*makhtúm*). Whosoever knows this latter hidden Name, the tradition continues, “will enter Paradise (*al-jannat*)” (cited Kashání, Nawadir 110). The same source cites a tradition from Imám Ja‘far Ṣádiq about his Mightiest Name (*ismihi al-a‘ẓam*) which partly reflects Jewish traditions:

His Mightiest Name consist of 73 letters, 25 letters of which he gave to Adam, and 25 of which he gave to Noah. Abraham was given 8 letters and Moses four letters while Jesus was given two letters through which he revived the dead and cured the blind and the lame. Muḥammad was given 72 letters. And he concealed one letter perchance he might know what is within himself and know what is in the selves of his servants (cited idem, Nawadir, 110 from a 3rd cent. AH source).

This and similar Shí‘í traditions about the 72 or 73 letters of the *al-ism al-a‘ẓam* and their gradual disclosure to a succession of Abrahamic prophets in succeeding religious eras sometimes reckoning one of the “letters” hidden (73 - 1 = 72), have influenced the Bábí-Bahá’í theology of the Greatest Name (Bihar2 11:68f). Both the Báb and BA\* at times identified various of these letters contained in pre-Bábí sacred books.

Drawing on Qur’án 21:78f and these traditions, the Báb, in QA 59 states that David and Solomon were inspired with two letters of the “greatest Word” (*kalimat al-akbar*)—possibly “B” and “A” the two letters of báb (?)—adding that Dhu’n-Nún (= Jonah?), Idris (= Enoch?), Ishmael and Dhu’l-Kifl (Job or Ezekiel?) were in darkness until they testified to the truth of the “point of the Gate” (nuqṭatu’l-báb= the Báb). In his *T. Laylat al-qadr* (Q. 97), the Báb explicitly refers to 3, 4, and 5 portions of one of the forms of the “Greatest Name” existing in the *Tawrát*, *Injíl* and Q. (INBMC 69:17).

Commenting on the *bismi’lláh* and first verse of the Qur’anic Súra of the Pen (Súra 68), Bahá’-Alláh mentions that God divulged something (a “letter”/”word” *harfan*) of the “Greatest Name” as *Bahá’* in every religious dispensation. In the Islamic dispensation, he states, it is alluded to through the letter “B” (*bá’*; the first letter of the *bismi’lláh*) and in the Gospels (*Anájíl*) through the word Ab (= “Father” Gk. = πατέρας), in the Arabic Bible, a two letter word corresponding to two of the letters of *bahá’* (“A” & “B”). The word *bahá’*; BA\* indicates, is

clearly intimated in the Bábí Bayán and is representative of the *nafs* (Logos-Self) of God in the Bahá’í era (INBAMC 56:25). The Arabic word *bahá’* obviously does not occur directly in the NT. Here its theological equivalent is the Gk. δόξα (doxa) which often translates Hebrew כבלד (kabôd = ‘radiant glory’). In the HB and Gk. LXX both these words can be indicative of a radiant theophanic splendour or “glory”. (Exod. 33:18f; Isa. 60:1f; Mk. 8:38) Various suggestive biblical texts in which these Hebrew and Greek terms occur were referred by BA\* to his eschatological theophany as the *al-ism al-a‘ẓam*. (“Mightiest Name of God -->).

The Judaic, Isrá’íliyyát mightiest Name motif was very early adopted within Sunní and Shí‘í Islam. Jewish rooted notions of the powerful *al-ism al-a‘ẓam* were voiced by various early *ghulát* thinkers and later transformed within a more orthodox, evolving Imámí, Shí‘í theology. Neo-Shí‘í Bábí-Bahá’í doctrines of the *ism al-a‘ẓam* to some extent have their Islamic roots in these primitive theological speculations of the *ghulát* factions. A fascinating example propounded by one of these thinkers is that of al-Mughíra b. Sa‘íd al-Bajalí (d.c. 119/737), a *mawla* (non-Arab) of the then governor of Iraq Khalíd al-Qaṣrí (105–120/724–738). Associated with Imám Muḥammad al-Báqir (d.c. 126/743) his “gnostic” doctrine is said to have given central importance to the *ism Alláh al-a‘ẓam*. To some degree reminiscent of Jewish *Shi‘ur Qomah* (“Dimensions of the Body”) mysticism, God existed in humanoid form for him and his followers. Their anthropomorphic Deity had “members in the number and form of the letters of the Arabic alphabet”. When God initiated creation he uttered his “Mightiest, Greatest Name” which fell on Him as His crown” (Madelung, EI2 VI:347–8).

A faction the Mughíriyya believed that at the time of the “return” of *al-Nafs al-Zakiyya* (the Pure Soul), seventeen souls among them would be taught one of the letters of the “Greatest Name” of God. Then, by means of its power, they would wage war and establish a messianic kingdom on earth. al-Mughíra has been thought to be the first of Shí‘í thinkers to

speculate about the mystical nature of the alphabet (Tucker 1975:34ff).[[247]](#footnote-247)

Among the influential Sunní Muslims who made considerable use of *al-ism al-a‘ẓam* concepts in his theology of the names of God in the context of esoteric gnosis and magic, was Aḥmad b. ‘Alí al-Búní (d. Cairo, c. 622/1225). He authored forty or more Arabic works and was known to 19th cent. Shí‘í writers including Shaykh Aḥmad (5.1f <--).[[248]](#footnote-248) Existing in several recensions his *Shams al-ma‘árif al-kubrá wa laṭá’if al-ma‘árif* (The Greater Sun of Mystic Meaning and the Subtleties of Gnosis, pp. 500+) mentions the *al-ism al-a‘ẓam* and its various graphic forms on several occasions (Shams, 52ff; 86ff; 93f; 101ff, etc.).

The *Shams al-ma‘árif* makes creative use of *abjad* and other number correspondences, (magic) number-letter squares and deals with *jafr* and the construction of amulets and circles of astronomical, talismanic and magical import. There are detailed comments upon numerous theologically loaded divine Names and Attributes. Other theophoric Names including those of the mother of Músá (Moses), various arcane scripts and components of the secreted Greatest Name are cryptically discussed.

Angelological and other matters rooted in or expressive of Isrá’íliyyát are also present. Goldziher, Vajda and others have touched on these Jewish-rooted magical, mystical, theological and angelological subjects. A close study of the *Shams* and related works of al-Búní will undoubtedly reveal important doctrinal links with the talismanic and related *‘ulúm al-ghayb* (occult sciences) aspects of the sometimes neo-lslamic, gematric, quasi-qabbalistic gnosis (*jafr*) of the Báb. The Isrá’íliyyát themes reflected in the Báb’s writings sometimes appear to go back to al-Búní.[[249]](#footnote-249) The following passage in the *Shams al-ma‘árif* is similar to

statements of the Báb (<--2.1),

Know … that the secret of every [religious] community is in its Book and that the secret of the Book of God is in the letters (*al-ḥurúf*) [in which it is written] … Within it [the Q.] are the secrets of all the revealed [sacred] Books and Scrolls (*al-kutub wa’ṣ-ṣuḥuf*) [of the past] and others besides them. As for *abjad*, it is Syriac (*as-suryániyya*) which was the medium of revelation unto Adam, Enoch (*Idrís*), Noah, Moses and Jesus (al-Búní, *ash-Shams*, 31:3–4).

Such theologically profound aspects of the writings of al-Búní undoubtedly influenced the first Shaykhí leaders and the Báb whose Arabic style and vocabulary, like that of Sayyid Káẓim ar-Rashtí, at times echos that of al-Búní. The Báb’s sometimes abstruse writings encompass similar subjects to those covered in the Shams, including considerations of the divine Names and attributes, *ramz*, *jafr*; talismans, alchemy and the *al-ism al-a‘ẓam*.

The *Shams al-ma‘árif* identifies and discusses the divine Name through which Moses was commissioned when God proclaimed, “I verily am God, no God is there except Me”. It was by means of the *al-ism al-a‘ẓam* that Jesus resurrected the dead. al-Búní has it that Jesus utilized the Mightiest Name and also uttered various life-giving prayers (*Shams* I:52f). He records that Abú Hudhayl transmitted the tradition that Jesus would bow twice in prayer (*rak‘atayn*) then fall prostrate and address God with the following six Divine Names:

*Yá Qadím* (O Ancient!). *Yá Dá’im* (O Everlasting!). *Yá Aḥad* (O One!) *Yá Wáḥid* (O Unicity!). *Yá Ṣamad* (O Eternal!) (*Shams*, 54).

Within the *Shams al-ma‘árif* are various obscure, Hebraic angelological Names (with genitive אל = يل =‘el “--of God” terminations). Apart from the usual four archangels (Jibríl, Míká’íl, Isráfíl and ‘Azrá’íl, Shams, 76, etc.) there is mention, for example, of Asyá’il, Dunyá’il, Hizqiyá’il, Dardiyá’il, Maṣmá’il and Surá‘íl (*Shams*, 52–52, 57, 71; cf. Sayyid Káẓim, Sh-Qasida). Vajda has shown that some of these names derive from the Jewish pseudepigraphical, angelologically intensive incantation textbook, *Sepher Ha-Razim* (Book of Mysteries, 4th cent.? CE). This source presents itself as having been revealed to Noah by the angel Raziel (The Mystery of God) before he entered the ark. Thereafter it came to be in the possession of Solomon whose famed wisdom encompassed all secrets (*Shams*, I/7, 52–55,

57, 71; Vajda 1948:400; Morgan, 1983; Gruenwald, 1980:224f).

The Safavid theologian and Sufi-inclined philosopher mystic Bahá’ ad-Dín al-Ámilí (<--) adopted the pen-name (*takhalluṣ*) Shaykh-i Bahá’í (Ar. al-Shaykh al-Bahá’í) and wrote a Mathnaví poem, *Dar rumúz-i ism-i a‘ẓam* (On the mysteries of the Greatest Name) (Jawáhirí, *Kulliyat*, 95f). This work contains no reference to the word *bahá’* or the common Islamic epithet *Bahá’ ad-Dín* (<--) from which Shaykh Bahá’í (as Ámilí is often designated) probably derives. This poem, like early traditions known to al-Búní and others, states that the power of the Mightiest Name was such that Jesus’ raised the dead thereby.

Shí‘í devotional texts and the Arabic word *bahá’*

It is the Arabic verbal noun *bahá’* which is regarded by Bahá’ís as the quintessence of the *al-ism al-a‘ẓam*, more fully expressed in the title Bahá’ Alláh. This word has a wide variety of non-theological verbal and nominal meanings and a wide semantic field encompassing aesthetical and theological terminology. As a Persian (Arabic) loan word it has other mostly non-theological senses.[[250]](#footnote-250) Drawing on weighty Arabic lexica, Lane’s widely respected dictionary includes the senses ‘perplexity’, ‘incomprehensibility’ (cf. Heb. בֹּהוּ ḇō-hū, “void”, Gen. 1:2) ‘poverty’, ‘goodness’, ‘greatness’, ‘perfection’, ‘majesty’, ‘magnificence’, ‘grandeur’, ‘beauty’, ‘brilliancy’, ‘luminosity’ and even ‘the sheen of the spittle of a lion’ or ‘the calmness of a she-camel used to her milker’! The semantic field within which the Bábí-Bahá’í sources understand the word *bahá’* includes words expressive of ‘beauty’, ‘excellence’, ‘godliness’, ‘divine majesty’, ‘splendour’, ‘light’, ‘brilliancy’ and radiant ‘glory’.

The Arabic word *bahá’* is probably derived from three (“B” + “H” + “A”/“W”) and made up of four root letters, (“B”+ “H” + “A” + the glottal stop *hamza*). Though fundamental to the Arabic spelling, the final glottal stop hamza (ء) is usually omitted in Persian. *Bahá’*, in other words, is made up of the four letters and has an *abjad* numerical value of nine: [1] “B” = 2 +

[2] “H” = 5 + [3] “A” = 1 + [4] ء *hamza* (the glottal stop) ‘ = 1, total = 9, which is considered by Bahá’ís a “sacred number” symbolic of perfection as the highest numerical integer. This number nine came to be expressed in many aspects of Bahá’í semi-ritual practises and even configured aspects of Bahá’í architecture and the number of persons (nine) serving on certain Bahá’í administrative institutions.[[251]](#footnote-251)

The numerous Shí‘í devotional texts and compilations form a foundational background to Bábí-Bahá’í vocabulary, worship and theology. Among important Shí‘í devotional compilations is the metaphysically rich *aṣ-Ṣaḥífa as-Sajjádiyya* (The Scroll of the Prostration) ascribed to Imám ‘Alí as-Sajjád (d.c. 95/713), the *Miṣbáḥ al-mutahajjid al-kabír[[252]](#footnote-252)* of aṭ-Ṭúsí (d. 460/1067; cf. Báb P. Dal:66), several works of Raḍí ad-Dín Ibn Táwús (d. 664/1226; said to have been favoured with a knowledge of the *ism Alláh al-a‘ẓam*, Kohlberg, 1992:14) including his *Muhaj ad-da‘wát* (The Essence of the Supplications), the *al-Miṣbáḥ* (“Luminary”) of Taqí ad-Dín al-Kaf‘ámí (d. 900/1494–1495), the Persian *Zad al-ma‘ád* (Knapsack for the Eschaton) of Majlisí and the more recent and very popular *Mafátíḥ al-jinán* (Keys of Paradise) of ‘Abbás al-Qumí (d. 1359/1940) (see further Ja‘fariyán, 1999).

All of these works contain materials of importance in tracing the use of the word *bahá’* and the devotional theology of the *al-ism al-a‘ẓam*. Among the highly significant supplications attributed to the twelver Imams contained in certain of these volumes[[253]](#footnote-253) is a dawn supplication transmitted by Imám ‘Alí ar-Riḍá’ (d. 203/818) *Du‘á’ as-saḥar* for the fasting month of Ramaḍan (al-Qummí, *Mafátíḥ*, 238–9). It is very closely related to a similar *Du‘á’ yawm al-*

*mubáhala* (Supplication for the Day of Mutual Execration)[[254]](#footnote-254) said to have been transmitted by Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣádiq (al-Qummí, ibid., 351–355). Its alliterative, rhythmically intense opening line with five occurrences from the *bahá’* root (splendour/beauty/glory) is as follows,

O my God! I beseech thee by thy *bahá’* (Splendour) in its utmost Splendour (*abhá*) for all thy Splendour (*bahá’*) is truly resplendent (*bahiyy*); I, verily, O my God! beseech thee by the fullness of thy Splendour (*bahá’*). (al-Qummí, *Mafátíḥ*, 238f).

The Arabic text of this *Du‘á’ as-saḥar* was centrally important to both the Báb and BA\*. The frequency of the non-qur’anic word *bahá’* in the writings of the Báb is in large measure a result of his very frequent citing and reworking of both this opening line and large portions of the whole supplication. The *Du‘á’ as-saḥar* (Dawn Prayer) appears to have been deeply significant for the Báb. He derived the names of the nineteen months of his new *badí‘* (“novel”, “new”) calendar from recensions of it: month [1] *Bahá’* (Splendour) [2] *Jalál* (Glory) [3] *Jamál* (Beauty)[4] *‘Aẓima*t (Grandeur) [5] *Núr* (Light, etc.). The Báb creatively re-wrote this Dawn Prayer perhaps a hundred or more times in his numerous ‘stream of consciousness’ devotional revelations. Early in his mission he creatively refashioned the almost identical opening lines of the *Du‘á’ yawm al-mubáhala* (INBA 6006C:[90–95] 92f) as he did very frequently towards its end; especially in his weighty *K. asmá’* (Book of Names) (INBMC 29:4f, 26, 31f, etc.) and *K. PanjS.*, (Book of the Five Grades) (I/1:3f; VII/1:316; VII/2:224, etc.).

BA\* has given the *Du‘á’ as-saḥar* a tremendous gravitas referring to it as the *lawḥ al-baqá’* (“Tablet of Eternity”). This in that it commences (*díbácha*; is “prefaced”) with the word *bahá’[[255]](#footnote-255)* identified as the Mightiest Name of God (*ism Alláh al-a‘ẓam*). This was a “reality” with which God

ornamented his own Logos-Self (= BA\*) (AQAMunaját, 45–6). BA\* saw the opening words of the *Du‘á’ as-saḥar* (= *Du‘á’ yawm al-mubáhala*) as an indication of himself as the refulgent *ism Alláh al-a‘ẓam* (Ma’idih 4:23). He cited segments of its opening line in thousands of benedictions upon his devotees such as the following upon Shaykh Káẓim Samandar (d. 1336/1918) from a 1307/1891 Tablet, *‘alayhú min kulli bahá’ bi-ahbá-hu* (“upon him be a portion of the totality of *bahá’* (Glory) at its most glorious”) (BA\* in AyatB:318–9, No. 152).

Among other Shí‘í supplications the Greatest Name is said to be contained in the Dawn Prayer of Muḥammad Báqir though it is not explicitly identified with the word *bahá’*. Majlisí in his Persian *Zád al-ma‘ad* (Knapsack for the Return) and Kaf‘ámí in his *al-Miṣbáḥ* (the Luminary) and other Shí‘í and Shaykhí authorities including the Báb’s antagonist Karím Khán Kirmání (d. 1288/1871) wrote an Arabic commentary on the *Du‘á’ as-saḥar* in 1274/1857 (Sh-Du’a, 19f; Lambden, 1998) all record a tradition that the Mightiest Name is found in this prayer. The following paragraph introduces the *Du‘á’ as-saḥar* in Majlisí’s *K. Zad al-ma‘ád*:

As for the worthy, greatly respect supplication (*du‘á’*), it has been related that his highness Imám Riḍá stated that this is a supplication that his highness Imám Muḥammad Báqir would recite in the mornings. He would say that if people knew the greatness (*‘aẓamat*) of this supplication before God, the speed with which it would [enable the devotee to] be answered, they would certainly kill each other with swords in order to obtain it. And if I took an oath that the *ism Alláh-i a‘ẓam* (Mightiest Name of God) is in this prayer, I would be stating the truth. Thus, when you recite this supplication, recite it with all concentration and humility and keep it hidden from other than his people [i.e. non-Shi‘is] … (Majlisí, K. Zad, folio 63b).

It is obviously not stated that the word *bahá’* is the Mightiest Name within this prayer, neither does the Báb explicitly state this. Bahá’ís, however, understand it thus, especially since the word *bahá’* is the first major divine attribute after Alláh, itself one possible *ism al-a‘ẓam* (this would make Bahá’-Alláh a double Mightiest Name). Yet, the personal name *Alláh* is not exactly “hidden”. Thus, in numerous writings BA\* underlined the “sealed”, “hidden” nature of the non-qur’anic (non- 99 Names) word *bahá’*. He saw it as “hidden” in the sense of its being

known and manifest but for most not recognized as the all-powerful *ism Alláh al-a‘ẓam*.[[256]](#footnote-256)

The word *bahá’* occurs thousands of times in Islamic literatures throughout Islamic history.[[257]](#footnote-257) An early usage is that of the philologist Abí Zakariyá’ Yaḥyá b. Ziyád al-Farrá’ (d. 207/822) who wrote a now lost grammatical textbook entitled *K. al-bahá’* (The Book of Glory) (*Ma‘ání*, 11). The epithet *Bahá’ ad-Dín* (lit. ‘The Glory of Religion’), for example, had a widespread Islamic usage from around the 11th cent. CE (Kramers, 1926). *Bahá’* occurs in several prophetic *aḥádíth*, several times in the *Futúḥát* of Ibn al-‘Arabí and in a very large number of other mystical writings (Lambden, 1998). It is found more than 70 times in the multifarious Shí‘í texts making up the (110 volume) *Biḥár al-anwár* of Majlisí.

Islamic tradition lists many different (perhaps over 100) suggested possible Mightiest Names which cannot all be spelled out here. In, for example, the *Miṣbáh* of al-Kaf‘ámí and the *Muhaj al-da‘wát* of Ibn Táwús, the following are among the possibilities that are listed: (1) the Name Alláh, (2) the bismi’lláh—followed by *al-akbar* or *al-a‘ẓam* (? Imám Ṣádiq),[[258]](#footnote-258) (3) a portion from (*maqṭa fí*) the *Umm al-kitáb* (Archetypal Book) or within the *muṣhaf* (“Book” = Q.?), (4) one among the 99 Names of God, (5) *Yá Ḥayy Yá Qayyúm* (O Living One! O Self-Subsisting), (6) in certain verses of specific qur’anic surahs, *al-Baqara* (= The Cow, Q. 2), *Ál ‘Imrán* (= The Family of ‘Imrán, Q. 3) and *Ṭá’-Há’* (= Q. 20), etc., and (7) in a prayer recited by Joshua son of Nún, (8) (Muhaj: 378ff; Miṣbah: 408ff where, 60+ possibilities are listed).

It is worth noting that certain early Shaykhí writings were understood by BA\* and AB\* to anticipate the word *bahá’* being the Mightiest Name. These opening words of Sayyid Káẓim’s commentary upon *al-Qaṣída al-lámiyya* of ‘Abd al-Báqí Afandí al-Musilí (d. 1278/1861), are perhaps the best example,

Praise be to God Who hath ornamented the brocade of existence with the mystery of differentiation (*sirr al-baynúnat*) by virtue of the ornament of the emergent Point (*ṭiráz an-nuqṭat al-báriz*) from whence cometh the letter “H” (*al-há’*) through the letter “A” (*bi’l-alif*), without filling up (*ishbá‘* or segregation (*inshiqgáq*). (Sh. Qaṣída, 1)

This passage is referred to by BA\* in a Tablet to Mullá ‘Alí Bajistání (Ma’idih 7:139) and by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in his *Commentary on the Bismi’lláh* (*Min Makátib ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 1:33ff). In somewhat cryptic fashion Sayyid Káẓim mentions the “Point” (.) interpreted as alluding to the hidden letter “Bá’” (cf. its dot ب) and related to the letters “Há’” (هـ) and “Á” (ا) which combine to spell *bahá’*. Also worth noting here is Sayyid Káẓim’s comments on *ḍiyá’* (splendour) in his Commentary on the *Sermon of the Gulf* (<--2.2). It is associated with *bahá’* as “the light of lights” explained by Jesus as the first letter of the *bismi’lláh* (ب) signifying *bahá’-Alláh*, the “Splendour of God” which Sayyid Káẓim also relates to the *Du‘á’ as-saḥar* (<--Sh.TTNJ:20). In his *Sh. Qaṣída* Sayyid Káẓim, also comments on the ‘Light Verse’ (24:35) explaining that this “Light” is synonymous with the *al-ḍiyá’* (radiance) and *al-bahá’* (splendour) adding that “the *bahá’* … is the “Primordial Light” and the “Mightiest, Greatest Name” (*al-ism al-a‘ẓam al-a‘ẓam*) through which God created the “heavens and the earth” and whatsoever is therein. Shaykhí theology at times anticipated aspects of the centrality given in Bábí-Bahá’í theology to the word *bahá’* as a luminous phenomenon and a very creative, dynamically powerful Word.

Details cannot be registered here about the complexities of the Báb’s uses of *bahá’* or the wide-ranging theological senses that BA\* gave this word. Both before and after [*recte* during] his religious mission the Báb was especially given to the devotional life. This devotional preoccupation led him to cherish and meditate much upon the two Shí‘í supplications *Saḥár* and *Mubáhala* containing multiple references to the word *bahá’*. (<--). He probably gained further fascination

with various cosmic and theophanological aspects of *bahá’* spelled out in Shaykhí sources (see QA where there are 14 occurrences of bahá’.

The Báb came to use the word *bahá’* quite frequently in his devotional revelations, some of which contain neologisms generated from the word *bahá’* (K.PanjS:171ff). In some writings of the Báb the word *bahá’* is associated with the Bábí messiah *Man Yuẓhiruhu Alláh*, “All the *Bahá’* (glory-beauty) of the Bayán is ‘Him whom God shall make’” (Per. Bay. 3:14; cf. K.PanjS:88). The Báb occasionally used the genitive phrase *bahá’-Alláh*, though not exactly as a personal name.

Following the Bábí conference of Badasht (June 1848), BA\* defined himself through the word *bahá’* (<--). He thereby opened the possibility of his being identified as the *ism Alláh al-a‘ẓam* alluded to in some Shí‘í-Shaykhí texts such as the *Du‘á’ as-saḥar Mubáhila* devotions so central to the Báb’s devotional and high theological writing. From the early 1850s BA\* used the word *bahá’* as a proper name (BA\*, Rashḥ, 184–6; K-Ta‘am, 265). In due course the *laqab* (honorific title) of Mírzá Ḥusayn ‘Alí Núrí became Bahá’-Allah. Following the *ahl al-bahá’*, “people of *bahá’*” terminology of the Báb for the saved elect within the mysterious *ṣafinat al-ḥamrá’* (“Crimson Ark”, QA 57:226, etc.), BA\* referred to his followers in this way (L-Shaykh, XXX/ESW:139). In later years he occasionally called his devotees *al-bahá’iyyún* (= Bahá’ís, (lit.) ‘those imbued with *bahá’* as the divine splendour; L. Ḥikma 2:267, No. 130). This designation became central within the developed Bahá’í religion.

There are thousands of occurrences of the word *bahá’* in Bahá’í sacred scripture, many theologically weighty statements about the *ism Alláh al-a‘ẓam*. BA\* has stated that all the Divine Names in both seen and the unseen spheres are dependent upon the *bahá’* as the Mightiest Name of God (Ma’idih 8:24). The use of *bahá’* as the Mightiest Name is, in a sense, the alpha and the omega of Bahá’í existence. It is nine times repeated in the daily Bahá’í *ṣalát*, the “Long Obligatory Prayer” and can be recited at meal times (L.Tibb). It has a healing and protective potency, and is recited six times during BA\*’s communal Prayer for the Dead (P&M No. 167). Too sacred to be used on gravestones, this and other calligraphic representations of

the Bahá’í Greatest Name are hung in Bahá’í homes or engraved on personal ring stones worn on the little finger of the right hand. In his Most Holy Book (K.Aqdas) BA\* made the repetition of the “Greatest Name” ninety five times (95 = 5 × 19) each day a regenerating religious activity (Aqdas ¶ 26; cf. SE\* in LG:905). It is hardly surprising that the last individual head of the Bahá’í religion, SE\* (d. 1957) wrote, “The Greatest Name [as *Bahá’*, etc.] is a distinctive mark of the [Bahá’í] Cause and a symbol of our Faith.” (LG:895)

Finally, a few notes about the Bahá’í theology of the *ism Alláh al-a‘ẓam* relative to the HB and NT. The word *bahá’* seems to have no precise equivalent or cognate in Biblical Hebrew although it is represented theologically by the Hebrew כבלד (*kabôd* = “radiant glory”) and its occurrence as יְהוָה כְּבוֹד (“Glory of the Lord”) as well, theophanologically by BA\*’s application of the tetragrammaton to himself (<--). BA\* claimed to be the eschatological theophany of the tetragrammation. One such statement addressed to the Bahá’í poet ‘Andalíb (“Nightingale”) reads, “He [= BA\*] it is who in the *tawrát* (Torah) hath been named Y-H-W-H (loosely Yahweh)” (BA\* AQA2:28; see Lambden 1988:157–8). For BA\* the Exodus account of the revelation of the divine Name (Ex. 3:13–14; 6:2) incorporating the phrase אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה (<--2.1), has a mystical significance as an allusion to his pre-existent reality, the *ism Alláh al-a‘ẓam* which communicated with Moses on the mystic Sinai (Ma’idih 4:38–41; Lambden 1986:33ff; 1988 esp. 155–8).

At one point in certain Arabic NT translations, most notably the London 1858 (= 1671) William Watts printed Arabic Bible for the Eastern Churches, the genitive phrase *bahá’-Alláh* translates δόξα τοῦ-θεοῦ (AV “the glory of God”) in Revelation 21:23 where John of Patmos predicts,

And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God (Gk. δόξα τοῦ-θεοῦ = bahá’ Alláh) did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof (AV tr).

In a very large number of *alwáḥ* BA\* applies to himself NT references to Christ’s parousia

in radiant “glory” (Gk. *doxa* <--Mk. 8:38, 13:26; Matt. 16:27; Lk. 9:26b). As the eschatological “Father” he claimed to be the return of Christ the “Son”, initially, it seems, from Edirne (Ottoman Empire) in the early-mid. 1860s (L. Ibn; S.Mulúk, etc.) almost exactly 200 years after Sabbetai Tzevi (1626–1676) made his messianic claims known (1665–1666) in this location. In Arabic NTs the masculine adjective *majíd* (= “glorious”) or *majd* (“glory”, cf. Q. 11:73; 85:15) not *bahá’* most frequently translate *doxa* “glory”. Many of BA\*s post-1863 references to his theophany thus use [of] *majd*/*majíd* alluding to the synoptic predictions of a parousia in “glory”.[[259]](#footnote-259) In addressing various ‘kings and rulers’ in major *alwáḥ* of the late Edirne, early Galilean (= ‘Akká/Acre) period (1867–1862) this claim is frequently voiced as in the following brief extracts from epistles addressed to the “Christian west”, to Napoleon III (d. 1873), Queen Victoria (d. 1901) and Pope Pius IX (d. 1878):

Wert thou to incline thine inner ear unto all created things, thou wouldst hear: ‘The Ancient of Days (*al-qadím*) is come in His great glory (*dhu’l-majd al-‘aẓím*) (BA\* to Napoleon III AQAK 99)

He, in truth, hath come unto the world in his most great glory (*bi-majdihi al-‘aẓím*) ( BA\* L. Vikturiya, AQAK:131 tr. PDC:35).

Blessed be the Lord (*ar-rabb*) who is the Father (*al-áb*)! He verily, hath come among the nations in His most great glory (*bi-majdihi al-a‘ẓam*, L. Pap. AQAK:/tr. TB:79).

From the above paragraphs it should be clear that the Arabic word *bahá’* was identified by BA\* from the 1860s as the locus or quintessence of the *ism Alláh al-a‘ẓam*. This latter Isrá’íliyyát motif has clear Judaic-Islamic roots. It has its secondary roots in the deep Shaykhí-Bábí theophanological gnosis. BA\*, personalized the *bahá’* motif during his early Bábí years later claiming to be a pre-existent incarnation of that *bahá’* which is the *ism Alláh al-a‘ẓam* intimated to Moses on the mystic, timeless Sinai. This, it would seem, was by virtue of the Báb’s use of *bahá’* phrases and derivatives in Shí‘í-Shaykhí inspired *Du‘á’ as-saḥar*/*mubáhila*

generated devotional meditations and prophecies (cf. Qismatí, 38).

8.2 Bahá’-Alláh and the emergence of the Bahá’í interpretation of the Bible

Very little is known about BA\*’s pre-Bábí years (1817–1844). Before becoming a Bábí [*recte* supporter of the] Báb at the age of twenty-seven he spent most of his time in Mázandarán (Núr, Tákúr, etc.) or in around Tehran the then capital city. Though Jews, Christians, missionaries, foreign diplomats and Europeans all resided in Tehran, Arabic and Persian Bibles had only been sporadically distributed there from early in the 19th century. Before 1844 there is no record of BA\*’s having had intimate links with any of these aforementioned groups. Though opportunity existed within the Tehrani milieu for him (prior to 1852) to have communicated with Europeans or acquired some knowledge of the Bible and matters Judaeo-Christian, there are no primary or secondary sources which suggest that this was the case.[[260]](#footnote-260)

Extant primary and secondary sources suggest that BA\*’s knowledge of the Bible has its roots in the late Iraq period of his life. No canonical Bible quotations appear to exist prior to 1861 when the *Jawáhir al-asrár* (Essence of Mysteries) was written (-->). None of his pre-Iraq writings have anything to say about his Jewish or Christian associations or the Bible aside from a few Islamicate citations (-->). It was in Baghdad in the 1850s and early 1860s that BA\*, unlike his reclusive half-brother Mírzá Yaḥyá, socialized quite openly (sometimes in coffee houses) in order to promote Babism. In his *Súrat al-zíyára* (Surah of the Visitation) written for the wife of Mullá Ḥusayn, BA\* mentions his expulsion from Iran and his being amongst Bábís and “those who disbelieved [in Babism] of the [religious] communities (*min millal al-qablí*) (Ma’idih 8:84). This is slightly expanded upon by AB\* who, in the early 1900s, explicitly stated that Bábí gatherings in Baghdad attended by BA\* often incorporated learned Jewish and Christian religionists:

It often happened in Baghdad that certain Islamic, Jewish and Christian divines (*‘ulamá’*) as well as well-informed Europeans (*arbáb-i ma‘árif-i urúpá*) were congregated for a blessed [Bábí] gathering (*majlis-i mubáraka*) … (SAQ VII:22)

It was doubtless BA\*’s attending such ecumenical Bábí gatherings that led to his close dialogue with Jews and Christians with whom he very likely discussed biblical issues. In this he would have argued the truth of Muḥammad and Islam as well as Babism and thus would have made use of various Arabic (and possibly Persian) Bible translations. This perhaps to some degree accounts for his citing a Christian Arabic translation of the Bible within his *Jawáhir al-asrár* (1861) and *K. íqán* (1862).

An intimate association of BA\* and Christians is also suggested by other things. Probably relevant to this is the fact that important Christian portrait(s) of BA\* shown to Bahá’í pilgrims at the Bahá’í World Centre (Haifa, Israel) date from the Iraq period (pre-1863). Some have distinctly Christian (“Roman Catholic”?) cherubic iconographic features strongly suggesting an intimate association between BA\* and Christians. Among the persons known or who might have come into contact with BA\* at this time were the Jew ‘Abd-Alláh ben Abraham Somekh (d. 1889), the (British consul) Arnold Burrowes Kemball (d. 1908) and the “freethinker” Mírzá Málkum Khán (d. 1908).

Prior to the early 1860s the only quasi-bible, Islamo-biblical citations known to the present writer are found within certain of BA\*’s alchemical *alwáḥ*. They do not derive from Christian Arabic Bible translations are Islamo-biblical citations most likely cited from Islamic “alchemical” works. This pursuit of alchemy was widely indulged in the early Qajar years. Arabic, often pseudo-biblical citations or discourses within such works, often have an only vague relationship with the canonical Bible. Such biblical materials occasionally surface, for example, in works attributed to the enigmatic Jabír b. Ḥayyán (fl. 2nd-3rd/mid. 8th cent.? CE), an alchemical initiate and alleged disciple of the sixth Shí‘í Imám Ja‘far Ṣádiq (d. 147/765 <--2.1) Both Jabír and Ja‘far are reckoned alchemical initiates in Shí‘í and other sources (Ruska, 1924;

Haq, 1994).[[261]](#footnote-261) Sometimes cryptic Isrá’íliyyát traditions and motifs inform Islamic alchemical writings including items within the Jabirean corpus and writings attributed to the founding mother of Greek alchemy Mary the Jewess (prophetess or Copt; fl. 1st cent.? CE).[[262]](#footnote-262) Well-known to BA\*, for example, Jabír’s *Kitáb al-mawázin al-saghír* (Lesser Book of the Balances) makes reference to a (lost?) book of Jabír in which he expounds pre-Islamic scripture including the Hebrew Torah. Therein Jabír writes, “[therein] do I expound, through the gnosis of the divine Assister (*ma‘rifat al-mu‘ín*), the *Tawrát*, the *Injíl*, the *Zabúr* and the *Mazámír*” (= Psalter) (Berthelot, [III] 1893:115–6 [Arabic] cf. 148).[[263]](#footnote-263)

It is in an alchemical Tablet to a certain Mírzá ‘Abbás, for example, that BA\* cites alchemical Isrá’íliyyát and biblical passages. They include a cryptic alchemical pronouncement of Abraham about the nature of the cosmos (*al-‘álam*) as an Egg (*al-bayḍá*) and its constituents as well as an enigmatic statement of Jesus about *ká’in* (“Being”) in association with the *kalám Alláh* (Word of God) (cf. Jn. 1:1–2?). In this context Jesus utters the command “He that hath no sword, let him buy a sword!” (cf. Luke 22:35–8). The *Sitz im Leben* presupposed here for Jesus’ alchemical gnosis, is obviously a far cry from anything that might emerge from the redaction criticism of the Lukan pericope (INBA 36:277–80).

Biblical citations and the question of *taḥríf* (“falsification”)

Just over ten years after the death of the Báb (1850), BA\* wrote his important Arabic *Jawáhir al-asrár* (1860) and *Kitáb-i íqán* (c. 1862) both of which modify the Islamic doctrine of

biblical *taḥríf* (“falsification”) and contain biblical citations. The Biblical citations are from the NT with one exception in the form of a Persian paraphrastic version of Isaiah 65:25 introduced as a *ḥadíth-i mashúr* (“well-known tradition”; KI 73/75) existing in many Islamicate versions (-->). It can thus be said at the outset that BA\* did not cite the HB until the post-Iraq period of his life. No fully fledged citations from the Torah/HB are found in any of the currently available Persian or Arabic writings of the Báb or BA\* until the post-Iraq period of BA\*’s life.

The Bible and biblical taḥríf in the Jawáhir al-asrár

The *Jawáhir al-asrár* (The Essence of the Mysteries) according to the evidence of one of its manuscripts dates to the (Bábí) year *bahiyy* = *abjad* 17 or 1277/1860–1861 (INBMC 46:40). It certainly pre-dates the *K. Íqán* which is partly based upon it and seems to refer to it (KI13/17, cf. Ganj:28). The *Jawáhir* is an important Arabic work of BA\* written in response to questions posed (or communicated to him?) by Sayyid Yúsuf-i Sidihí (Iṣfahání), a one time resident of Karbála, Shí‘í mujtahid and pupil of the Marjá at-Taqlíd, Shaykh Murtaḍá al-Anṣárí (1759–1864). His questions, apparently posed before he had met BA\* (AQA 3:20), related to the advent of the Mahdí and when the Bábís might expect the theophany of Bábí messiah. The *Jawáhir* has a good deal in common with both the (Persian) mystical *Haft Vádí* (Seven Valleys, c. 1858?) and the *K. Íqán* of BA\*.

The first third or so of the *Jawáhir* (AQA 111:4–31) consists of an exposition of the reason for the rejection of past messengers of God and the need to understand biblical and qur’anic eschatological prophecies non-literally. After bemoaning the fact that Jews and Christians failed to “comprehend the melody of the utterance” (*laḥn al-qawl*) through a wrong (hermeneutical) approach to biblical scripture, BA\* says that this was the reason for their rejection of the *amr Alláh* (“Cause of God”) meaning the message of Jesus and Muḥammad (AQA3:6–9). BA\* next sets down something of what God has mentioned in the previous scriptures (*kutub al-qabl*) to the end that his reader might incline towards Babism. He cites, in Arabic, a series (in canonical order) of NT passages taken from the synoptic versions of Jesus’ eschatological discourse (Matt. 24:Iff; Mk. 13:1ff; Lk. 21:5ff) and citations extracted from the Johannine ‘Farewell Discourse’

(Jn. 14:1ff). Introducing these texts with a citation from Matthew BA\* first writes:

This is the form (*ṣúrat*) of what was revealed afore time [contained] in the Gospel of Matthew (*injíl al-mattá*), in the first Book (*fí sifr al-awwál*, of the Gospels) in which he [Jesus] makes mention of the signs of the theophany (*ẓuhúr*) which [who] shall come after him [after Jesus = Muḥammad] (Jawahir: 9/46:3).

An accurate citation of Matt. 24:19 (AQA 3:9) follows which is textually identical with that printed in the Christian Arabic NT text of the 1657 London Polyglot of Brian Walton (= L.Poly.), the Rome Vulgate compared 1671 (Eastern Churches) version of Sergius Risius (= Sarkís ar-Ruzzí; R. Watts reprint, 1850) as well as the 1811 Arabic Newcastle Bible (Carlyle) and the (later) Van Dyck (1860s) independent (Protestant) translation:

Woe unto them that are with child [pregnant] and to them that give suck in those days (Matt. 24:19, AV/KJV).

This text is immediately followed by a highly elevated reference to Jesus to whom the synoptic words are directly attributed in introducing the citation of Matt. 24:24:29–31a. The Arabic text here is identical to that cited in the later *K. Īqán*.[[264]](#footnote-264) It has several variations from the Arabic Christian versions referred to above and the *textus receptus* reflected in modern critical editions. This text reads as follows using the AV translation with textual variants notes in capital letters,

[But Immediately] after the oppression of those days shall the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the EARTH (*quwwát al-arḍ*) shall be shaken [= 24:29]. [And] then shall appear the signS (Ar. pl. *‘álamát*) of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with powerS and great glory [= 24:30]. And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet [= 24:31a] (AV) (Ar. AQA 3:10/46:4).

BA\*’s Arabic here thus has the following textual differences:

[a] For (Gk.) δυνάμεις τῶν οὐρανῶν = “powers of the heavens”, Ar. *quwwát al-*

*samá’l al-samawát* (= L.Pol. sing. 1671 [1850] = pl. + VDyck) the *Jawáhir* (+ K. Íqán) has Ar. *quwwát al-arḍ* = “powers of the earth” (cf. Jawahir 46:4 which has *quwwat al-samá’*).

[b] For (Gk.) τὸ σημεῖον = “the sign”, the Ar. correctly has *‘aláma* (sing.) (L.Pol. etc.) while the *Jawáhir* (+ K.Īqán) has *‘alamát* = “signs” (pl.).

[c] For (Gk) μετὰ δυνάμεως = “with power”, the Ar. (L. Pol.) has *quwwát* (pl.) as does *Jawahir* (+ K.Iqán), while the other Arabic texts agree with the Gk. singular.

These three variations in the *Jawáhir* are also, for the most part presupposed in the identical text cited in the *K.Íqán* as well as in the (untranslated) Persian paraphrase of BA\* in this later work (-->). The agreement of point [c] with the L.Pol. might suggest that the probably reprinted Christian text cited by BA\* was more in agreement with this 1657 London Polyglot. No categorical statement could be made without a full consultation of reliable mss. When at [a] BA\* has (Ar.) *quwwát al-arḍ* (“powers of the earth”) and not “powers of the heavens” it is likely that this phrase here is a lapse though it is sufficiently minor that BA\*’s main arguments are not disrupted.

Many great Islamic scholars and thinkers occasionally cited sacred texts “wrongly” or with minor errors and variants. BA\* apparently did this and no less a figure than al-Gházalí (d. 505/1111). The latter, for example, is known to misquote some of his Q. citations and *aḥádíth* citations (Lazarus-Yafeh, 1975:217 fn.). The relatively minor textual idiosyncrasies here do not alter the fact that BA\*’s main point is the veracity of the biblical text as opposed to the negative implications of Islamic *taḥríf*. Later BA\* actually states that he is paraphrasing or making inadequate citations because of lack of space and the need to move forward.

The other texts cited in the *Jawáhir al-asrár* include Mk. 13:19 which BA\* notes parallels the text in Matthew’s Gospel (Matt. 24:21; cf. Lk. 21:23). It is an Arabic version in full agreement with the L. Poly (AQA 3:10+46:4). BA\*’s aim is to draw attention to the distinctly eschatological materials in each of the four Gospels that he quotes Mark 13:19 even though it roughly parallels to Matthew 24:21. From “the third book … the Gospel of Luke” (*sifr ath-thálith* … *injíl lúqá*) BA\* quotes a partial and largely accurate Arabic version of Luke 21:25–7 which has several

minor variants from the Christian Arabic versions. The text BA\* cites is again closest to the London Polyglot.[[265]](#footnote-265)

In illustration of Jesus’ eschatologically oriented utterances recorded in the “fourth book … the Gospel of John”, BA\* cites three clusters of paraclete texts. First he quotes a slightly variant (Arabic) version of Jn. 15:26–27a,

[But] When *al-mu‘azzí* (“the Comforter”) is come, whom I shall send unto you, the Spirit of Truth (*Rúḥ al-ḥaqq*) which cometh from the Truth (God, *al-ḥaqq*) he shall testify of me. And ye [also] shall bear witness (AQA 3:11 = INBMC 46:4).

Here (Gk.) παράκλητος (paraklêtos = “Paraclete”) is translated by the Arabic *al-mu‘azzí* (lit. “Comforter”) as in the L. Polyglot (1657) and a large number of subsequent Arabic translations including that of Van Dyck (see Lambden, 1997). While the English translation “comforter” apparently goes back to the English reformer John Wycliffe (d. 1384), the Greek was from patristic times thought to have an active sense of consoling or comforting (Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, Jerome, etc.). Most Arabic collections of *testimonia* to Muḥammad cite Islamicate versions of Johannine Paraclete promises considered as prophecies of Muḥammad (= Aḥmad Q. 61:6).

BA\* next cites what appears to be a conflation of Jn. 14:26 and 16:5–6aβ said to be what Jesus uttered in “another place” (in John’s Gospel):

[But] when the Holy Spirit cometh, the Comforter whom my Lord will send in my name, he shall [assuredly] teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said unto you [Jn. 14:26]. But now I am going unto him that sent me; and not one among you asketh me where I am going [Jn. 16:5]. But because I have said these things unto you [Jn. 16:6aα] (AQA. 3:11–12 = 46:4).[[266]](#footnote-266)

It is curious in this unexpected juxtaposition of verses that Jn. 16:16a breaks off and the words “sorrow hath filled your hearts” (16:16b) is omitted. Finally, BA\* quotes a juxtaposed

(Arabic) version of Jn. 16:7 and 16:13:

[Nevertheless] I tell you the truth; it is best for you that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Comforter (*al-mu‘azzí*) will not come unto you; but if I go I will send him unto you [Jn. 16:7]. And when that Spirit of Truth *rúḥ al-ḥaqq*) is come, he will guide you unto all the truth: for he will not cry out of himself but shall speak out whatsoever he shall hear; and he will declare unto you the things that are to come [Jn. 16:13] (AQA 3:12 = 46:4–5).

In selecting (and conflating) key texts from John’s Gospel indicative of future events, BA\* makes the advent of the Comforter (*al-mu‘azzí*) the centre of attention. This figure is mentioned in each of the three Johannine passages quoted. Having quoted an Arabic version of Matt. 24:19, 29–31a; Mk. 13:19; Lk. 21:25–27 + 31 and Jn. 15:26–27a, 14:26 + 16:5–6a, 16:7 + 13, BA\* characterises these texts as “the substance (súrat [*recte* *jawhar*, *kunh* or *máhiyya*]) of what was sent down [to Jesus] afore time” (AQA 3:2). He swears by God that he had felt compelled to abbreviate, condense them, hence it would seen, the unusual conflations or juxtapositions.

BA\* also underlines his ability to quote at length from past scriptures:

If I desire to make mention of the words of the prophets (*kalimát al-anbiyá’*) which were sent down from the *jabarút* of the Divine Grandeur and the Kingdom of the Divine Sovereignty (*malakút al-sulṭanat*) the pages (*al-awaraq*) and the tablets (*al-alwaḥ*) would assuredly be filled up before matters be concluded (AQA:12).

Sayyid Muḥammad is assured that “all the scriptures (*al-zuburát*), psalms (*al-mazámír*) and scrolls (*aṣ-ṣaḥífa*) contain messianic texts similar to the NT passages quoted (AQA 3:13). Were they to be quoted at length this might be counter productive for the Sayyid. The subject of the manner of interpreting NT texts is next discussed. Muslims must not be literalist in their exegesis.

If they [Muslims] say that these words [NT texts cited] are from God and have no *tá‘wíl* (“allegorical meaning”) but should be [understood] according to the outer mode of expression (*ẓáhir al-qawl*) in the most literalistic manner (*fí ẓáhir al-ẓáhir*) then how can they object to the [existence of] the unbelievers of the “People of the Book” (*ahl al-kitáb*)?

As literalists Muslims cannot complain about Jews and Christians rejecting Islam when they need to be led to understand prophetic scriptures non-literally:

They neither believed in them nor obeyed them inasmuch as they did not

witness the darkening of the sun and the falling of the stars from heaven upon the face of the earth or the descent of the angels in their outward form upon the earth. Therefore did they reject the Prophets and the messengers. Nay, rather, they considered them opponents of their religion and their laws. They levelled false charges against them … (AQA 111:14–15).

Muslims accepting the veracity of the NT predictions are compelled to recognise their allegorical level of interpretation. Otherwise non-believing Christian literalists have a valid position regarding non-fulfilment. NT texts must be interpreted allegorically (AQA 111:15).

In quoting and discussing NT texts BA\*’s primary aim is to enable Muslims to interpret qur’anic eschatological prophecies non-literally. In so doing they should be able to recognise the truth of Babism. They should not repeat the error of literalists among the “people of the Book”. This argument presupposes the existence and authenticity of the NT commonly believed by Muslims to be have been largely if not wholly fabricated or textually corrupted (<--). It is thus argued that Christian scripture really exists:

If they [Muslims] should assert that these [NT] books (*al-anájíl* = the Gospels) in the possession of this community (= the Christians) and which they have named *al-anájíl* and attribute to Jesus son of Mary were not revealed by God and [through] the manifestation of His Self [= Jesus] this would necessitate [Muslims asserting] the cutting off of [divine] grace on the part of the Source of Graces [God] and the non-realization of the Proof on the part of God with respect to His servants. … If, when Jesus ascended unto heaven, his Book also went up with him then by what means would God be able to present them with scriptural proof on the Day of Resurrection or punish them [the Christians] for their unbelief in accordance with what is written down from the Imams of the [Islamic] religion and established by the rightly guided *‘ulamá’* (AQA 3:16).

In the next few paragraphs BA\* informs Sayyid Muḥammad that the true meaning of the texts quoted should be sought from exalted Beings and not from those who do not know their “right hand side from their left” and who cannot penetrate such secrets. He mentions a celestial “City of Knowledge” (*madínat al-‘ilm*) where all knowledge and all secrets are treasured. Therein are the “essences [gems] of the mysteries” (*jawáhir al-asrár*, cf. the title of this work) and the secrets of scriptural texts. Outside of entering this celestial source of inspiration which appears to take on features of the New Jerusalm of the Apocalypse (Rev. 21), which is the source of NT exegesis, the predictions cannot be fathomed (AQA 3:16–20).

Nay, by He in Whose hand is my soul! It is impossible that anyone should quaff even a dewdrop [of the mysteries of these verses] save he who hath entered beneath the shade of this City, the pillars of which were established upon mountains of red ruby, its walls of the chrysolite of the Divine Unicity (*zabarjad al-aḥadiya*), its gates of the diamond of the Divine Perpetuity (*‘a Imís* [*qurṭus*?] *al-aḥmadiyya*)[[267]](#footnote-267) and its earth the perfume of nobility (*rúḥ al-mukarram*) (AQA 3:20).

After confessing that he has digressed somewhat, BA\* calls Siyyid Muḥammad’s attention back to Gospel texts. He quotes an accurate though slightly idiosyncratic Arabic version of Matt. 24:35 (// Mk. 13:31; Lk. 21:33) as that which is written in “all the Books of the Gospel” which Jesus, “the Spirit” (*ar-rúḥ*) uttered “through the light” (*bi’l-núr*) when he communicated with his disciples (*talámídh*). Taken literally this verse would inhibit Christian faith in Islam. Muslims must thus recognise the *ta‘wíl* non-literal senses of eschatological prophecies. The Báb came but was rejected because Muslims failed to interpret the scriptures befittingly.

Having made these points the issue of *taḥríf* (“biblical falsification”) is now directly raised.

Be not veiled on account of all that which was sent down in the Qur’án and that which you [Siyyid Muḥammad] have heard of the traces of the suns of infallibility and full moons of the divine Grandeur [= statements of the Imams] concerning the “corruption of those who exceed the proper bounds [extremists]” (*taḥríf al-ghalín*) and the alterations of those who falsify scripture” (*tabdíl al-mutaḥarrifín*; cf. Q. 4:58; 5:16, etc.) for they did not intend such expressions to apply save in the case of certain specific, declared instances (*al-mawárid al-makhṣúṣát al-manṣúṣát*) (AQA 3:27).

BA\* here argues that as indicated by the [twelver Imams] biblical *taḥríf* was limited to a few specific instances. This same subject is discussed in more detail by BA\* in a parallel section of his *K. Íqán* which will be discussed below.

The latter two thirds of the *Jawáhir* is in large measure an exposition of the seven mystic stages to spiritual realization. At various points BA\* cites NT texts including Jn. 3:5b–7 (Arabic text fully agreeing with the London Polyglot) in his exposition of Islamic eschatological predictions that should be spiritually interpreted. A conflated Arabic text of the first few verses of the Apocalypse (of John of Patmos = Rev.) is cited their author being referred to as “one of

the prophets (*anbiyá’*)”. Apparently presupposing that Rev. 1:13ff is a prophetic description of the exalted being of Muḥammad, BA\* quotes a conflated Arabic version of certain phrases occurring in Rev. 1:14–16:

His eyes were as a flame of fire [1:14b] and his feet were like unto … brass … [1:15aα] … And out of his mouth went a [sharp] two-edged sword [164 … (AQA 3:59).

Illustrative of the abstruse language of scripture these allegedly prophetic words, BA\* holds, cannot possibly be taken literally. If the parousia of the one depicted in Rev. 1:14–16 should appear he would not be human. Intimacy with him would be impossible. Christians who expect a man to appear in such a form will never come to true faith. Great wisdom nonetheless, BA\* states, is enshrined in Rev. 1:14f. BA\* gives a detailed non-literal interpretation to phrases within these verses which cannot be fully registered here (AQA 3:62ff). Neither is it possible to adequately discuss the implications of all the NT texts cited in the *K. Íqán*, many of which are also included in BA\*’s this Persian rewrite of his *Jawáhir al-asrár*.

The Bible and biblical *taḥrif* in the *Kitáb-i Íqán*

Like the *Jawáhir al-asrár*, the *K. Íqán* (Book of Certitude) was written as a response to questions posed by an uncle of the Báb, Ḥajjí Mírzá Sayyid Muḥammad mostly revolving around problems of the seeming non-fulfillment of Shí‘í eschatological predictions. Originally known as the *Risála-i Khál-i Akbar* (Treatise for the Greatest Uncle), this elegant Persian *istidláliyya* (Demonstrative treatise) was later named the *K. Íqán* or “Book of Certitude” (= KI., 1278/1861). It is the chief cornerstone of middle Bábí and emergent Bahá’í theology. And dates to about a year after the *Jawáhir al-asrár,* namely, 1278/1862 (cf. Buck, 1995). Within his *Kitáb-i Íqán* BA\* devotes considerable space to the spiritual interpretation of Matthew 24:29–31a (KI:19ff/16ff) cited in Arabic exactly as it is in the *Jawáhir al-asrár* (<--). These NT verses are again interpreted in terms of Muḥammad being the return of Christ. Expounded non-literally, the eschatological signs of the synoptic gospels accompanied his parousia of the Arabian prophet. Literalist Christian divines unable to convert to Islam were deprived of the

“streaming grace of the Muhammadan [*recte* *Islámí*, Islamic] Revelation and its showering bounties” (KI:17–18/20–21). Having outlined the nature of the rejection of a succession of past prophets, BA\* quotes a few Persian paraphrases of Paraclete texts (rooted in Jn. 14:26b, 28; KI:16/14) and introduces the matter of the “return” of Jesus after which Matthew 24:29–31a is cited (<--). Several passages from this text are then allegorically interpreted in a manner similar to the exegesis in the *Jawáhir* though in more detail. After commenting upon “And he shall send his angels” (Matt. 24:31a) BA\* raises hermeneutical issues. The need for non-literal exegesis of eschatological prophecies is again underlined. The failure of Christians to incline in this direction is lamented in that it led to their rejection [of] Muḥammad. Muslims must acknowledge the need for deep spiritual exegesis otherwise they cannot blame Christians for rejecting Muḥammad. The genuine scriptural prophecies in the NT are obviously figurative (KI:61–2/50–51).

In discussing the above issues Muslims simply fall back on their assertion of biblical *taḥríf*. The texts are corrupt therefore what these texts predict is meaningless. As in the *Jawáhir* BA\* refers to statements of the twelver Imams, the “Aḥmadí mirrors, about the *taḥríf-i ghálín* (= Ar. *Jawáhir*, *taḥríf al-ghán* AQA 3:27) translated by SE from a faulty text (a missing dot over the first letter ghayn: ع not غ, so Cairo KI:65) and reading *taḥríf-i ‘álín* [*‘áliyyín*] which he translated “Modification by the exalted beings (= *‘álín* [*áliyyín*])” instead of “corruption of the exaggerators” (*taḥríf-i ghálín*) or the like.[[268]](#footnote-268)

The phrase expressive of textual manipulation in the tradition of the Imams in the Persian of the *K.Íqán*, is *tabdíl-i mustakbirín* which is translated by SE\* “alteration by the disdainful” (lit. “haughty”) (KI:65/54) which only loosely corresponds to the (Ar.) *Jawáhir* parallel *tabdíl al-mutaḥarrifín* (“alteration of the [textual] corrupters”). That the correct reading here is *taḥríf-i ghálín* (“corruption of the exaggerators”) is indicated in that the *K. Íqán* is drawing on Shí‘í tradition(s) which have this reading. Important in this respect is a passage from the following

Imámí Shí‘í *ḥadíth* (= “the utterances of the Aḥmadí mirrors”);

For us in every discrepancy there is abandonment for they [the Imams] interdict from our [Shí‘í] religion the *taḥríf al-ghálín* (“corruption of the exaggerators”), the selectivity of the false ones (*intiḥál al-mubṭilín*) and the eisegesis of the ignorant (*ta’wíl al-jáhilín*)”.[[269]](#footnote-269)

The *Jawáhir* parallel to the *K. Íqán* passage translated above is an expansion which clearly acknowledges its indebtedness to Shí‘í traditions that speak of *taḥríf* (“corruption”) or *tabdíl* (“alteration”) in connection with biblical (and qur’anic?) revelation. The implication of these latter paragraphs is that the existing text of the Bible is essentially a largely uncorrupted divinely revealed Book. This became the standard Bahá’í viewpoint though it does not signify that the whole Bible constitutes *waḥy* (divine revelation).

In illustration of his understanding of the limited applicability or context of qur’anic verses mentioning *taḥríf* (not being indicative of whole scale biblical *taḥríf*), BA\* (like certain Muslim exegetes) relates the context of the qur’anic references to *taḥríf* by narrating the well-known story of the dialogue between Muḥammad and the Jewish Rabbi ‘Abd Alláh Ibn Ṣúríyá as the occasion for the revelation of Q. 4:45 (or 5:45).[[270]](#footnote-270) This cannot be fully discussed here though it can be noted that the story of Ibn Ṣúríyá and the question of stoning as punishment for adultery is much discussed in *tafsír* and related sources.[[271]](#footnote-271) Such, BA\* explains, were the circumstances that precipitated Gabriel’s revealing, to Muḥammad, the words “They [the Jews] pervert

(yuḥarrifúna) the text of the Word of God” (= Q.4:45, or 5:45).[[272]](#footnote-272) They indicate a specific occasion of *taḥríf* which does not support a notion of the whole scale textual *taḥríf* of the Bible.

BA\* underlines his rejection of textual *taḥríf* by pointing out that neither Jewish nor Christian divines have removed from the Bible (*kitáb*) verses predicting the advent of Muḥammad. Muslims who hold this view are seriously in error because devout Jews and Christians would not universally excise scripture from their sacred texts (KI 55/67). This argument in favour of the fundamental authenticity of biblical revelation is found in many Muslim liberal sources. For BA\* *taḥríf* really indicates the erroneous exegesis of scripture. Jews at the time of the Prophet Muḥammad indulged in *taḥríf* in that they interpreted scripture after their own fancies. Muḥammad thus accused them of *taḥríf*. Q. 2:75ff. has to do with the *taḥríf-i ma‘ání*, the “falsification of the meaning” of the sacred word in corrupt Jewish anti-Islamic polemic (KI 55–56/67–69).

Summing up his view of biblical revelation in the light of his previously outlined exegesis of Gospel texts (Matt. 24:29ff), BA\* acknowledges that various modes of textual *taḥríf* had occurred but places the emphasis upon the unfortunate *taḥríf-i ma‘ání* (“the falsification of meaning”). It is ego centred hermeneutical disorientation that constitutes *taḥríf* not textual manipulation of corruption (KI 57f/69f). For BA\* the Bible is fundamentally authentic though widely misinterpreted. The Muslim assertion that the genuine text of the *Injíl* is non-existent, having “ascended unto heaven”, is also countered (KI 57/69). Such an assertion is grievously in error and is a mockery of the divine providence. When “the sun of the beauty of Jesus” ascended unto the “fourth heaven” (*falak-i chahárum*)[[273]](#footnote-273) how, BA\* asks, could the

“holy Book” disappear also? It is inconceivable that divine, scriptural guidance would be cut off by God during the pre-Islamic period (*The Kitáb-i-Íqán* 57/69–70).

Despite prejudices born of exaggerated notions of biblical *taḥríf*, there were a fair number of Sunní and Shí‘í apologists, thinkers and philosophers who cited the Bible with confidence and apologetic acumen. BA\* had a good deal in common in his rejection of biblical *taḥríf* with, among others, the following Muslim scholars several of whom to some degree shared a positive attitude towards the Bible: Imám ‘Alí ar-Riḍá’ who acknowledged an apostolic rewriting; the Shí‘í historians al-Yaqúbí and al-Mas‘údí, ash-Shahrastání and Ibn Khaldún. It will be appropriate to also mention here the great Iranian (possibly Ismá‘ílí thinker?) Abú Fatḥ ash-Shahrastání (d. 548/1153), best known for his *K. al-milál wa niḥal* (‘The Book of Religious and Philosophical Creeds’), today recognized as the first history of religion text in world literature (Wasserstrom IOS XVII:128).

Aside from ash-Shahrastání’s positive view and knowledge of the Bible evident in his *K. Milál* the little known prologue to his incomplete Persian *Tafsír* work *Mafátíḥ al-asrár wa miṣbáḥ al-abrár* (“Keys of the mysteries and Lamps of the Pious”) contains passages of great interest. Therein it is stated that despite some Jewish twisting of scriptural word(s) (*al-kalám*) out of their context (<--) (*yuḥarrifúna al-kalima ‘an mawáḍi‘hi*) (Q. 4:46) there existed a single recension (*naskh*) of the tawrát representative of the *alwáḥ* (Tablets, given to Moses) in the safekeeping of the Aaronites (*awlád hárún*). The *tawrát* did not loose its status as an honourable expression of “Word of God” (*kalám Alláh*). This is clear from the qur’anic reference to the *tawrát* as “a guidance and a light” (Q. 5:44a). The *Injíl* (Gospel[s]) are likewise the “Book of God” (*kitáb Alláh*) although existing in four differing recensions with innumerable differences deriving from the four evangelists. The extant Gospels are thus not wholly the *kalám Alláh* (Word of God) but contain portions of the true Gospel, just as the Q. is not wholly present in the commentaries of the Islamic commentators (*tafsír al-mufassarín*). That there is *waḥy*

(“divine inspiration”) in the existing Gospels is also apparent from the Q. which states that the *injíl* (Gospel[s]) confirms previous scripture (Q. 3:3, 50) (Shahrastání, *Mafatiḥ*, 122–3).

Unlike the majority of Shí‘í scholars such as Sayyid Aḥmad ‘Alawí (<--), ash-Shahrastání was able to accept the partly if not largely inspired nature of the Bible. BA\*’s position was very similar. He argued in favour of the basic authenticity of biblical revelation in his *K. Íqán* and more succinctly in his *Jawáhir al-asrár* (<--). This was of fundamental importance for the evolution of the Bahá’í interpretation of the Bible. The Báb’s qur’ano-centric perspectives hardly opened up or bypassed the Muslim doctrine of *taḥríf* though he did view the *Injíl* as the *kalám Alláh* (<--4.1ff). BA\* addressed the matter straightforwardly. He endorsed the most liberal of Muslim attitudes towards Judaeo-Christian scripture. BA\* confidently quoted the Bible throughout his life after the writing of the *K. Íqán*. This was an example followed assiduously by his eldest son AB\* and many others among his successors and followers. His strong arguments against biblical *taḥríf* were key factors that led to the oriental and subsequent occidental Bahá’í dialogue with Jews and Christians through biblical exegesis.

Certain arguments found in the writings of the Báb and the contacts BA\* had with Jews and Christians in Baghdad, doubtless contributed to his positive view of the Bible. Having said this, however, it should be pointed out that there are writings of BA\* (as well of AB\* and SE\*) that modify any overstate[ment of] any doctrine [regarding] of the authenticity of the Bible argued in the *Kitáb-i Íqán*. As BA\* was exiled during an almost thirty year period (1863–1893) from Iran to the Ottoman Empire and Palestine he not only openly rejected hardline Islamic concepts of *taḥríf* but gradually came to address weighty epistles informed by accurate biblical citations to Jews, Christians, numerous believing devotees and various western rulers and ecclesiastics.

Further biblical citations in the *K.Íqán*

In setting forth evidences of the spiritual sovereignty of Muḥammad, how he “with one single verse … sundered light from darkness”, BA\* draws on his exegesis of Rev. 1:16aβ (“And out of his mouth went a … sharp two-edged sword”) as detailed in the *Jawáhir*. The revelations of Muḥammad were a divisive revolutionary “sword” though also highly unitative. Hostile and

antagonistic peoples were bound together through the qur’anic word. This is indicated in a *ḥadíth al-mashúr* (“well-known tradition”), actually the paraphrased citations rooted in the book of Isaiah 65:25a (cf. Isa. 11:6f) not cited in Arabic like most of his NT, but in Persian.[[274]](#footnote-274)

The wolf (*gurg* [Persian]) and the lamb (*mísh*, ‘sheep’ [Pashto]) shall eat and drink from the same place.” (KI:73/75).[[275]](#footnote-275)

BA\* regarded the taking of this text literally both foolish and ignorant.[[276]](#footnote-276) It’s literal realization would disrupt the natural order of things and serve no purpose. This text of Isaiah indicates the power of the divine word to reconcile and unite opposing and diverse peoples.

BA\*’s understanding of the lsaianic tradition is in line with that of a not inconsiderable number of Jewish, Christian and Muslim exegetes of Isa. 11:6f and 65:25 or traditions rooted therein. Schimmel in her *Mystical Dimensions* notes that the theme of the “drinking together of the wolf and the lamb” from HB prophecies, “occurs as a sign of the ruler’s perfect justice in Ismaili propaganda” and “also forms part of Rúmí’s imagery, in which it is applied to the mystical beloved under whose spell the differences between men and animals disappear” (359 + fn. 2). The “lying together of the lion and the lamb” was also an image of importance in Moghul paintings of the early seventeenth century (ibid.; Schimmel, 1978:97–98). In several talks and writings AB\* interpreted Isa. 65:25/11:6f figuratively in the light of his father’s explanation (SAQ. XII:58f. cf. 102; PUP:369–70; PT:55, 56 etc.)

In arguing for a non-literal understanding of “life”, “death” and “resurrection”, BA\* has

it that the following Arabic Johannine texts indicate a figurative sense to these matters,[[277]](#footnote-277)

It is appropriate for you that you be born again” (Jn. 3:7b)

Whosoever is not born of the water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God since that which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the spirit is spirit (Jn. 3:5b-6, KI:73–6/86–90).

For BA\* this text indicates that Jesus, in view of his ethereal power and heavenly sovereignty, called for and had the power to effect a mystic “resurrection”. BA\* also understands Matt. 8:22b (= Luke 9:60a) to be illustrative of the inner significance of “death”. Matt. 8:21 (= Luke 9:59) is paraphrased in Persian and verse 22b quoted in Arabic, “Let the dead bury the dead”. (KI 77/91) It is presupposed that these words of Jesus allude to the spiritually “dead” (those without faith renewed) being left to bury the physically dead. The condition of “death” as the absence of the true “life” of spirituality is thus indicated. For AB\* and subsequent Bahá’í writers Matt. 8:22b (= Luke 9:60a) was an important proof text indicating the spiritual sense of the general “resurrection” of the “dead”.

Following further detailed arguments designed to underline the inner significance and cyclic occurrence of mystic “resurrection” and the attendant actualization of the inner states of “life” and “death”, BA\* says more about the spiritual “wealth” and “sovereignty” of God’s chosen Messengers (KI 77–84). In illustration of their heavenly “riches” some apocryphal words attributed to Jesus by Imám Ja‘far Ṣádiq are cited and commented upon:

Thus Jesus, Son of Mary, whilst seated one day and speaking in the strain of the Holy Spirit, uttered words such as these:

‘O People! My food is the grass of the field, wherewith I satisfy my hunger. My bed is the dust, my lamp in the night the light of the moon, and my steed my own feet. Behold, who on earth is richer than I’ (KI 85/101).[[278]](#footnote-278)

In the course of discussing the essentially spiritual sovereignty of Jesus and the divine

manifestations, BA\* draws on a number of NT texts referring to two episodes in the life of Jesus, (1) the synoptic accounts of his trial before Caiphas, the Jewish High Priest and Pilate the Roman procurator of Judea (esp. Matt. 26:57ff + parallels, cf. John 18:1ff) and (2) the Lukan account of Jesus’ ability of perform healing miracles illustrated by summing up and commenting upon [the] story of Jesus’ ‘Healing of the Man Sick of the Palsy’ (Paralytic) at Capernaum (Luke 5:17–26, refashioned cf. Mk. 2:1–12, Matt. 9:1–8).[[279]](#footnote-279)

… Whether is it easier that I say unto him, ‘Take up thy couch’, or that I say,’Thy sins are forgiven’? that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power (*sulṭánan*, “sovereignty”) on earth to forgive sins”[[280]](#footnote-280) (KI 86/103–4)

Explicitly referred to in the Arabic version of Jesus’ words to his critics just quoted, is the “power” or “sovereignty” of the “Son of Man”. He has “power (*sulṭánan*) on earth to forgive sins”. Such celestial authority, BA\* comments is the s*ultánat-i ḥaqíqqí* (“real sovereignty”) and the power (*iqtadar*) of God’s chosen ones” (KI 86/104).

These episodes are quoted as they were thought to underline the ethereal power and authority of God’s messengers. Among other texts, the following Son of Man saying from Jesus is cited,

Beholdest thou not the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and might? (KI 85/102–3)[[281]](#footnote-281)

The implication of this interrogative and truncated Arabic version of Jesus’ words, is that he invited his hearers to see and acknowledge him (the Son of Man) now seated at the right hand of God (cf. the Persian paraphrase, immediately following the Arabic). This is not exactly

the sense of the synoptic verses on which BA’s quotation is based. They have a futuristic or eschatological import (Matt. 26:64 // = Mk. 14:62; Lk. 22:69. cf. Dan. 7:13; Jn. 1:51). The past/present tense of BA\*’s version apparently precludes the inclusion of the rest of the Matthaean/Markan version(s) of these words, namely, “and coming on/with the clouds of heaven” (Matt. 26:64b = Mk. 14:62b). Jesus was outwardly devoid of power but possessed of an all-encompassing inner power (KI:86/103). Though derided and about to be sentenced to death he invited his hearers to vision and acknowledge his exalted heavenly status. BA\* does not mention the mode of Jesus’ death.

BA\* concludes his exposition of the heavenly sovereignty of the prophets by likening the Jewish and Christian rejection of Muḥammad to the Muslim rejection of the Báb, the “Point of the Bayán” (*nuqṭay-i bayán*). The last eighty or more pages (KI:87–164/105–199) of the *K. Íqán* contain no further biblical quotations though there is much that has been highly influential in determining the mode and manner of the Bahá’í interpretation of the Bible. The following notes must suffice to sum up and indicate themes of particular importance and influence.

The Arabic bible text used by Bahá’-Alláh

In conclusion of this section it will be appropriate to make some preliminary remarks about BA\*’s biblical citations in the light of Arabic Bibles available in mid. 19th century Iran and Iraq. A number of Arabic Bibles were available to the Shí‘í *‘ulamá’* and others in Qajar Iran and 19th century Ottoman Iraq. Arabic printed editions of the NT (16th century CE onwards) were for the most part varieties of a 13th century eclectic Arabic recension known as the “Alexandrian Vulgate”. This lies behind the Arabic version in the ten volume Paris Polyglott (1625–1645). Most pre-19th century partial or complete Arabic printed Bibles were adaptions or revised reprints of this Paris Polyglott including the Arabic texts within in the *Biblica Sacra Polyglotta* (1653–1657) of Bishop Brian Walton (d. 1661) known as the ‘London Polyglot’ (<--).

Also widely distributed in numerous reprints was the 1671 Vatican Vulgate, compared [with] but little revised, Rome published Arabic Bible of Sergius Risius (Sarkís ar-Ruzzí, d. 1638) who worked under the patronage of the Catholic Authorities. This version hardly supersedes the

weaknesses of this Paris or London Polyglots. An early Protestant attempt at updating is the 1727 slightly revised and corrected Arabic NT version by Sulaymán ibn Ya‘qúb as-Salbání (of Damascus = Solomon Negri).

Largely reviewed above, the biblical citations of BA\* within the (Ar) *Jawáhir al-asrár* and *K.Íqán* dating to the last Iraq years (1861), are, apart from a few minor paraphrastic Persian exceptions (Isaiah, John), all Arabic NT quotations. The texts cited are invariably a Christian Arabic translation, most likely one deriving from the London Polyglot or a slightly variant NT reprint of this text. These Arabic quotations were probably copied, consulted or otherwise obtained via Christians, Europeans or missionaries active in Baghdad around 1860. The occasional idiosyncrasies within the quotations merit further study. They cannot easily all be accounted for on the basis of variant texts.

While BA\*’s pre-Edirne Bible citations are largely if not wholly, directly or indirectly London Polyglot derived, in later years he seems to have drawn on the Persian translation of Henry Martyn (*K. Badí‘*, c. 1867) and the Protestant Arabic translation of Eli Smith (d. 1857) and Cornelius van Dyck (d. 1895) which first appeared (as the NT) in 1860 (1865) the whole Bible appearing just a few years later. This much favoured version was translated direct from the biblical languages with some assistance from Buṭrus al-Bustání (d. 1883), Yusúf al-Asír (d. 1889) and Náṣif al-Yázijí (d. 1871). Frequently printed from the CE 1860s this version became the standard Arabic text adopted by Protestant missionaries. It was much cited by BA\* and intimately studied by AB\*.

8.3 Conclusions: from neo-Shí‘í Bábí faction to the global Bahá’í religion of the Book

The opening chapters of this thesis commenced with an examination of basic aspects of the Islamic Isrá’íliyyát (Israelitica) tradition, not initially a separate literary tradition but an orally transmitted phenomenon. It was decided that in this thesis Isrá’íliyyát would be used with the wider inclusive definition suggested by some academic scholars such as Kister. Academic definitions seem still to be in a state of flux. Isrá’íliyyát at times appears roughly synonymous with “Abrahamic” and is probably best left transliterated. Just as Muslims assimilated Abrahamic

Isrá’íliyyát traditions and Islamified them, so Bábí-Bahá’í scriptural sources sometimes give them new levels of meaning in the light of its emphasis upon a spiritual hermeneutic and new religious theophany.

The Q. has sometimes been considered an expression of (proto-) Isrá’íliyyát. The Arabic term Isrá’íliyyát may have originated in the 2nd cent. AH being closely associated with the early practice of *tafsír* (Q. commentary) and the tradition of *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* (stories of the prophets) entertainment and circulation. It may have been through the Yemenite Jewish convert to Islam, Wahb Ibn Munabbih, a major fountainhead of early Islamic Isrá’íliyyát, that the term entered the Islamic vocabulary.

The Isrá’íliyyát traditions were initially wholeheartedly embraced within *tafsír*, *ḥadíth* and other emergent Islamic disciplines. A reaction against this great wave of seemingly ‘non-Muslim data’ came about within an increasingly self-conscious ‘Abbásí [Abbaside] (or earlier?) distinctly Muslim community. Some among the pious came to look negatively upon Isrá’íliyyát despite its obvious foundational presence in the Q. Early Shi‘ism, however, especially the so-called *ghuluww* (extremist) factions, were especially open to the creative apologetic utilization of biblical data, insights and allegedly proto-Shí‘í Isrá’íliyyát traditions. The roots of the centrally important Bábí-Bahá’í concept of the *ism Alláh al-a‘ẓam* (Mightiest Name of God) traditions are found in certain of these groups as well as in sources more centrally within mainstream Shí‘í religious tradition.

Fourteen categories of Islamic literature most centrally enshrining Isrá’íliyyát materials and traditions were suggested. Four of these areas are especially foundational. They are (1) *Tafsír* (Q. commentary), (2) *akhbár*/*ḥadíth* (traditions), (3) *Táríkh* (historical sources) and (4) *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* (stories of the prophets). It was shown that Bábí-Bahá’í primary literatures register Isrá’íliyyát materials from each of these four areas as well as the other ten not discussed in detail here. Original neo-*tafsír* materials born out, for example, of the allegorical story of Joseph are central to Bábí and Bahá’í salvation history. While BA\* presented himself as the new eschatological Joseph, his great-grandson SE\* reckoned this biblical-qur’anic figure a *maẓhar-i iláhí* (Manifestation of God). Bábí-Bahá’í scripture is full of such traditions and

motifs rooted in Islamicate Isrá’íliyyát. They sometimes receive distinctly Bábí-Bahá’í levels of meaning.

Shí‘í esoteric traditions including verses of the *Khuṭba aṭ-ṭutunjiyya* (“Sermon of the Gulf”) are viewed as foundational within Bábí-Bahá’í scripture. Both the Báb and BA\*’s self understanding was shaped by the eschatological expectation of the *mukallím músá* [more commonly *kalím músá*] (He who conversed with Moses) on Sinai mentioned in this quasi-*ghuluww* sermon. It was suggested that the frequent Bábí-Bahá’í use of terms like *‘amá’* (loosely, “cloud of unknowing”) might go back through Ibn al-‘Arabí (or a member of his school) to an early Arabic appropriation of the kind of traditions found in the writings of Gregory of Nyssa (d. 395), author of the seminal *Life of Moses*.

Muslim historians were seen to utilize biblical history and on occasion cite biblical texts. Certain of these historians viewed the Bible as a work that could be directly cited while others reckoned it in one way or another subject to *taḥríf* (‘falsification’) and refrained from citing the text, though paraphrases were not uncommon, as was the case with aṭ-Ṭabarí. Among the examples given of the Bábí-Bahá’í use of Isrá’íliyyát within Islamic history was BA’s possible use of al-Bírúní’s reference to a ‘Book of the Ages’ (skt. [Per.] *Kitáb-i yúga*) in his Tablet regarding the pre-Adamic era (*Lawḥ-i qabl-i ádam*). It was also pointed out that BA\* in this same writing probably registered a passage found in the *K. Tanbíḥ* of al-Mas‘údí about the association of Abraham’s crossing the Jordon [River] with the origin of the term Hebrew (*‘ibrání*) (<--3.2.)

*Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* materials in various literary forms were seen to be widespread in Bábí-Bahá’í sources. BA\* frequently reviewed the lives of major pre-Islamic figures showing how their rejection was similar to that which he and the Báb experienced. Motifs associated with Joseph, Job and Moses are greatly utilized in the writings of the Báb and BA\*. The perfumed garment of Joseph, for example, became a type of the spiritually regenerating robe of BA\* pictured as the *yusúf al-bahá’* (All beauteous Joseph). Among the *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* motifs utilized by BA\* in his *K. Íqán* is his association of Noah and *badá’* (“change of circumstances”) which very likely results from the concerns of the Báb’s uncle about a cancelled *jihád* episode in early Bábí history.

In the discussion of the Bible and Isrá’íliyyát in Shí‘í Islam, it was pointed out that Islamic sources exhibit a widespread transmission of Islamicate or Islamo-biblical sources, often as pseudo-biblical citations. This was especially true of the early period. Early Islamo-biblical citations range from reasonably accurate to having nothing whatsoever to do with the Bible as a piece of canonical Judaeo-Christian scripture. Such variant Islamo-biblical citations not infrequently found their way into considerably later, greatly respected Islamic sources including Ibn al-‘Arabí and Mullá Ṣadrá. An example set down below is the saying of Jesus originating with Muqátil b. Sulaymán as cited by the great philosopher Mullá Ṣadrá in his commentary on the *Uṣúl al-káfí*.

The charge of biblical *taḥríf* (“falsification”) levelled by Muslims against ‘People of the Book’ was seen to have been exacerbated in the early 19th century Middle East when Pfander and Henry Martyn indulged in evangelical orientalism in the form of anti-Islamic Christian missionary propaganda. Shaykh Bahá’ ad-Dín al-‘Ámilí (Shaykh Bahá’í), whose name has nothing to do with his being a kind of ‘proto-Bahá’í’, was one of those Shí‘í figures whose writings appear to have influenced both Shaykhí and Bábí-Bahá’í numerological speculations regarding Adam and Eve and the number nine. It was seen that missionary activity in early Qajar Iran both made the Bible more readily available than it had been and led around thirty Shí‘í Muslims to write anti-missionary tracts.

The sixth chapter of this thesis reviews aspects of the Bible and Isrá’íliyyát in early Shaykhism, selected writings of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsá’í and Sayyid Káẓim ar-Rashtí. These two often arcane exegetes indulged in the *‘irfání*-type interpretation of a number of biblically based *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* episodes and motifs, most notably Moses’s Sinaiatic request to see God. These two foundational figures for Bábí-Bahá’í studies on occasion interpreted Islamicate biblical citations and other points of exegetical interest. The Báb’s doctrines and interests have a very close relationship to these figures. The style of the Báb’s Arabic in its deep, intense gnostic orientation appears close to that of Sayyid Káẓim, his one-time teacher. Graphic and other forms of the *ism Alláh al-a‘ẓam* (Mightiest Name of God) were interpreted in detail by the

architects of Shaykhism, and in this, they prepared the way for the Bahá’í theology of the Greatest Name and the graphic representation of it, which became a central symbol of the Bahá’í religion. Certain of their Islamicate Bible citations were repeated by the Báb.

The main purpose of the last two chapters of this thesis was to examine the nature of the Báb’s alleged or actual Bible knowledge and to make some comments upon the nature of the Bábi-Bahá’i interpretation of the Mightiest or Greatest Name motif ultimately believed by Bahá’ís to be personified in the figure of BA\*. Examination of the Báb’s Persian and Arabic writings failed to locate any citations of the HB and the canonical NT. Canonical NT quotations from the Báb were likewise found to be non-existent. Islamicate, Islamo-biblical citations of a distinctly Sufi orientation do appear in the Báb’s writings though they have no bearing at all on his direct knowledge of the canonical, Judaeo-Christian Bible.

E. G. Browne suggested seven signs of NT influence at specific points in the Persian Bayán of the Báb were each found to be unconvincing. The Báb’s alleged citation of NT texts in his supposed speech to the ‘Letters of the Living’ found in the SE\* redaction of a recension of the *Táríkh-i Zarandí* (= *Dawn-Breakers*) was also seen to be without foundation. It is thus concluded that the Báb did not cite any of the books of the Bible, either NT or HB, preferring to focus upon the all-encompassing spiritual reality of the Q. and his own revelations (the *Bayán*). Through his knowledge of *jafr* (gematric gnosis) and various *‘ulúm al-ghayb* (esoteric sciences) such as talismanry the Báb claimed as the representative of the hidden Imám and in due course a theophanic Being with a “spiritual” knowledge of all Abrahamic scripture. Though he did not exactly over-rule Islamic *taḥríf* he did regard both the *tawrát* and the *injíl* as the *kallám Alláh* (Word of God) even though the spiritual dimension of these sacred texts was all but negated before the holistic exaltedness of later divine revelations.

The final chapter eight introduced BA\* as a leading Bábí [supporter], and one who early on adopted the word *bahá’* as his title. In so doing, he centered within himself numerous Abrahamic motifs associated with the *ism Alláh al-a‘ẓam*. In doing this, he seems to have been markedly influenced by the Báb’s frequency of the use of this term, especially in his many ‘stream of

consciousness’ revelations rooted in the two Shí‘í devotional texts, the *Du‘á’ as-saḥar* and the *Du‘á’ yawm al-mubáhala*. In particular, BA\* saw the former text as a Tablet of Eternity (*Lawḥ al-baqá*) encapsulating the reality of his own spiritual being as the ‘secreted’ Mightiest Name of God.

Unlike the Báb, BA\* began to cite the Bible, or more specifically the Arabic NT, towards the end of his Iraq years (1861–1862). This most likely came about through his association with Christian missionaries, one or more of whom may have been responsible for his portrait. The biblical text cited in his *Jawáhir* and *K. Íqán* seem most closely related to the ‘Alexandrine text’ as expressed in the London Polyglot Bible of William Walton or one of its many sometimes redacted Arabic versions. The aforementioned writings of this period contain the first biblical quotations within Bahá’í sacred literature. They were greatly expanded by BA\* in the subsequent almost thirty year period of his frequent allegorical interpretation of the Bible.

BA\*’s successors AB\* and SE\* wrote thousands of texts further expressive of the Bahá’í interpretation of the Bible. The neo-Shí‘í phenomenon that was the religion of the Báb evolved through these latter figures into the global Bahá’í ‘religion of the Book’. The initial appeal of the Báb to Shí‘í-Shaykhí Muslims and all humankind in his neo-qur’anic *Qayyúm al-asmá’* (= QA 1) was realized through the modernistic, ecumenical religion of one who claimed to personify the Mightiest Name of God. The call of the Bahá’í leaders to Jews, Christians and others began through the exegesis of the Q. but evolved to incorporate the rehabilitation and modernistic demythologization of biblical scripture.

Select Bibliography

Select bibliography[[282]](#footnote-282)

This bibliography is basically set out in two sections:

1. Bábí-Bahá’í primary texts, mss. and printed materials

1.1 The writings of the Báb.

1.2 The writings of Bahá’-Alláh.

1.3 The writings of ‘Abd al-Bahá’ (= AB\*) and Shoghi Effendi (= SE\*).

2. Bábí-Bahá’í and other secondary sources

1. Bábí-Bahá’í primary texts, mss. and printed materials

1.1 The writings of Sayyid ‘Alí Muḥammad, the Báb

In preparing this thesis I have been able to consult mss. versions of most of the major and minor writings of the Báb now largely in unedited mss. Here the abbreviation INBA will indicate mss. forming part of the Iran National Bahá’í Archives, photocopies of a number of mss. have become available to me. INBMC (= Iran National Bahá’í Manuscript Collection, 100+ vols [Tehran] mid. 1970s) indicates volumes of bound photocopies of Arabic and Persian manuscripts mostly of the writings of the Báb and BA\* as well as some letters (*alwáḥ*, ‘Tablets’) of AB\* and select other Muslim [Shaykhí] and Bábí-Bahá’í secondary sources.

Over the years a very large quantity of the writings of the Arabic and Persian writings of the Báb have become available to me, some through the generosity of individuals others through university collections and Bahá’í archives. Among the mss. I have consulted are the many works of the Báb found in seventeen volumes of the INBMC series which were privately published in bound photocopies in Iran in the mid. 1970s.[[283]](#footnote-283) Other Bábí mss. within other collections have also been consulted, including several from the E. G. Browne Collection of the University of Cambridge.[[284]](#footnote-284) Other Arabic and Persian mss. of the Báb’s writings acquired by the British [Museum] Library, the Bibliothèque Nationale (Paris) and the International Bahá’í archives in Haifa, Israel were also consulted. The Bahá’í World Centre (BWC) in Haifa, Israel

were kind enough to provide me with copies (some in typescript, some in electronic form) of generally inaccessible Bábí-Bahá’í mss. They are abbreviated Haifa: BWC.ms. An invaluable source of reference, have been Denis MacEoin’s, *The Sources for Early Bábí Doctrine and History, A Survey* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992; abbreviated here as Sources).

A) Published and unpublished writings of the Báb[[285]](#footnote-285)

Ar.Bay *al-Bayán al-‘arabí*. Ḥusayní, al-Bábiyyún, 82–107; [2] INBMC 43:1–68;

Ar.Dal *Dalá’il-i sab‘ih*. np. nd. [Azalí ed. Tehran, 196?] [pp.] (alif- nún); IBA (? = Nicolas ms. 106), 102a–104b.

K.Asmá’ *Kitáb al-asmá’.*  INBMC 29. [2] Uncat. mss. Marzieh Gail Coll. Bosch Bahá’í Library (USA).

K.Fihrist *Kitáb al-fihrist*. INBA. Ms 6007C:339–348.

K.Panj.S. *Kitáb-i panj sha’n*. np. nd. [Tehran Azalí ed. 196?)

K.Haykal *Haykal ad-dín*. np. nd [Tehran, Azalí ed. 196?]

K.‘Ulamá’ *Kitáb al-‘ulamá’*. INBMC 67:206–16; Afnán 2000:107–111.

K.Rúh *Kitáb al-rúḥ* [incomplete]. Haifa mss.

Kh.Huruf *Khuṭba on ‘ilm al-ḥurúf*. INBA 91; INBA6004C: 209–213.

Kh.Jidda *Khuṭba at Jeddah*. INBA 91: 61–81

Kh.Qah. *Khuṭbay-i qahriyya*. INBMC 64:127–150.

P.Bay *Bayán-i farsí*. np. nd. [Tihran, Azalí ed.]

P.Dal *Dalá’il-i sab‘ih*. IBA (ii) (? = Nicolas ms. 106), 104bff. + n.p. n.d (Azalí edition [Tehran, 196?]) 1–72.

QA *Qayyúm al-asmá’*. Afnán Lib. ms.[[286]](#footnote-286)

Q.Hafiz *Su‘al ‘an al-lawḥ al-ḥafiẓ* (Q. 85:22), TBA. mss. 6006C:79–80.

Q.Zavarih Reply to the three questions of Mírzá Muḥammad Sa‘íd Zavárih on *Basíṭ al-ḥaqíqa* and other matters INBMC 69:419–437.

R.Dhah Risála Dhahabiyya (cf. Afnán, 2000:449). INBMC 86:70–98.

R.Jasad Risála fí’l-jasad an-nabí (= Sharḥ kayfiyyat al-mi‘ráj) INBMC 69:416–418.

R.Nub.K Risála fí’n-nubuwwa al-kháṣṣa. INBMC 14:385.

R.Suluk Risála fí’s-sulúk. TBA, ms. 6006C:73–74.

S. Bayn Ṣaḥífa bayn al-ḥaramayn. CUL, Browne Or. Ms. F 7(9):1–125; TBA, ms. 6007C:348–413.

S.Ja‘far Ṣáḥífay-i Ja‘fariyya. INBMC 98:48–108; INBMC 60:57–154.

Shu’unK Shu‘ún-i khamsa al-fársí (= Persian K.Panj?) INBMC 82:78–133.

T.Akhi Tafsír ḥadíth ‘allamaní akhí rasúl-Alláh. INBAMC 14:410–417.

T.‘Ama’ Tafsír, ḥadíth al-‘amá’. TBA. Ms 6007C:1–16.

T.‘Asr Tafsír súra wa’l-‘aṣr (Q. 110) INBMC 69:21–119.

T.Baqara Tafsír súrat al-baqara (Q. 2) INBMC 69: (1ff) 157–294 + 377–410.

T.Basmala Tafsír (ḥurúf) al-basmala. TBA ms. 6014C:f. 301–370.

T.Ha’ (1) Tafsír al-Há’ (1) INBMC 14:221–283; INBMC 67:4–52.

T.Ha’ (2) Tafsír al-Há’ (2) INBMC 14:284–320; INBMC 67:53–85.

T.Hamd Tafsír Súrat al-ḥamd (Q. 1). INBAMC 69:120–153.

T.Kawthar Tafsír Súrat al-kawthar. EGB Coll. Ms. Or. F10 [7].

T.LaylatQ T. Laylat al-qadr (Q. 97) INBMC 69:14–21.

T.Kumayl Tafsír ḥadíth Kumayl ibn Ziyád al-Nakhá’í. INBMC 53:63–8.

T.Man Tafsír ḥadíth man ‘arafa nafsahu faqad ‘arafa rabbahu. INBAMC 14:468–477; [2] INBMC 40:46–53.

T. Wajh Tafsír Naḥnu wajh Alláh. TBA 6006C:f. 69–70; INBMC 53:56–8.

Wasiyya Waṣiyyat-náma. INBA 64:95–102; BWC, Haifa Ms. (unpaginated)

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P. Béyan *Le Béyan Persan*, tr. A. L. M. Nicolas, 4 vols. Paris: Librarie Paul Geuthner, 1911–1914.

Ar. Béyan *Le Béyan Arabe*, Le Livre Sacré Bébyse. Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1905

S.Prev. *Le Livre des Sept Preuves de la mission du Bab*. Paris: Maisonneuvre, 1902

Translations by the Bahá’í World Centre (Haifa, Israel)

SWB *Selections from the Writings of the Báb* ([= SWB] tr. by Habib Taherzadeh (et. al.). Haifa: BWC,1976.

SWB\* *Muntakhabátí az áthár i ḥaḍrat-i Nuqṭih-i Ulá*. Wilmette: BPT, 1978.

1.2 Writings of Mírzá Ḥusayn ‘Alí, Baha’-Alláh[[287]](#footnote-287)

Published Sources, Abbreviations:

AQA *Áthár-i qalam-i a‘lá*. 8+ vols. Bombay & Tehran: MMMA: Tehran, 1890–198?. rep. Vol. 1 (= *K. Mubín*), Dundas, Canada, 1996/BE 153.

Amr.K Fáḍil-i Mázandárání (Ed.) *Amr va Khalq*. 4 vols. In 2 Hofheim-Langenhain: Bahá’í-Verlag, 1986

AMuluk *Alwáḥ-i názilh khiṭáb bi-mulúk wa ru’asáy-i arḍ*, Tehran: MMMA, 1968/BE 124.

AQAM *Áthár-i qalam-i a‘lá, Majmú‘ay-i munáját*. n.p. [Tehran]: BPT, BE 128.

Aqdas *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas. The Most Holy Book*. Haifa: BWC, 1992/5.

AyatB *Áyát-i Bayyinát* (ed. R. Samandarí), Dundas, Canada: Association for Bahá’í Studies, 1999/BE 156.

ESW\* *Lawḥ-i Khiṭáb bi-Shaykh Muḥammad Taqíl Mujtahid-i Iṣfahání ma‘ruf bi Najafí*. Cairo: nd. 1338/1919–1920.

ESW tr. *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* (tr. Shoghi Effendi). Wilmette: BPT, rev. ed., 1971 (1976).

Ganj ‘Abd al-Ḥamíd, Ishráq Khavárí. *Ganj-i sháyigán*. Tehran: BPT, 1968/BE 124.

GWB\* *Múntakhabátí az áthár i-ḥarát-i Bahá’u’lláh* [= *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*], Hofheim-Langenhain: Bahá’í-Verlag, 1984.

GWB *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, tr. + comp. SE\*, London: BPT, 1949 + Wilmette Illinois: BPT, 1978.

HW *Kalimát-i maknúnih* in MAM: 17–32 (Pt. 1 Arabic) + 373–398 (Pt. 2 Persian).

IQ. *Iqtidárát va chand lawḥ-i dígár*. n.p. [Bombay] AH 1310/1892–1893.

LH *La’áli’ al-ḥikma*. 3 vols (ed. Vahid Behmardi). vol 1. Brasil: Editoria Bahá’í, BE 143/1987; Vol. 2, Brasil: Editoria Bahá’í, BE 146/1990. Vol. 3, Brasil: Editoria Bahá’í, BE 148/1991.

Ma’idih ‘Abd al-Ḥamíd, Ishráq Khávari (ed.) *Má’iday-i ásmání*. vols 1, 4 &7 (= writings of BA\*). Tehran: MMM., BE 128–9.

MAM *Majm‘ay-i alw*á*ḥ-i mubraka arat-i Bah*á*’u’ll*á*h*. Cairo: AH 1338/[1919–] 1920. Rep. Wilmette, Illinois, 1982.

P&M (tr.) *Prayers and Meditations of Bahá’u’lláh* [trans. Shoghi Effendi] London: BPT, 1957.

P&M\* *Munáját, Majmú‘a adhákir wa ad‘iya min áthár ḥaḍrat Bahá’ Alláh*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Bahai-Brasil, BE 138/1981 [= Arab. & Per. text of P&M].

Ayyám-T *Risálihy-i ayyám-i tis‘ih*. 2nd ed. Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 1981.

TB *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Haifa: BWC.

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Jawahir *Jawáhir al-asrár*. AQA 3:4–88 [2] INBMC 46:1ff [3] INBMC 99.

K.Badi‘ *K.badí‘* (c. 1867). mss., (Pers. Library); Prague: Zero Palm Press, BE 148/1992.

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**Zarandí, Mullá Muḥammad (Nabíl)**

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**Zayn al-‘Abidín, ‘Alí ibn al-Ḥusayn**

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1. Using secondary meaning for transcribe: to represent (speech sounds) by means of phonetic symbols.

 The method of Romanisation of Arabic and Persian text recommended by Shoghi Effendi is commonly assumed to be one of transliteration. However, when presented with definitions and examples of transcription and transliteration, *Perplexity AI* agreed it was one of **transcription**.—M.W.T. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See also *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Pederson, 1948; Pellat, EI2 IV:733–5; Thackston, 1978:xiv–v; Newby, 1980:689–91; Kister, 1981:186; Brinner EAL2:465–6; Adang 1996:9–10; Berkey 2001. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. In addition to these three transmitters of Isrá’íliyyát numerous other figures could be listed. Space prevents details being given, for example, about the illiterate though knowledgeable (in the Torah and other areas) companion of Muḥammad (‘Abd Shams =) Abú Hurayra (d. c. 58/678), Ubayy b. Ka‘b c. 21/641?) a convert from Judaism and ‘Abd-Alláh b. ‘Amr b. al-‘Aṣ (d. c. 66/685?) who allegedly “read Syriac, engaged in theological discussions with converts and had extensive knowledge of the Talmud” (Newby, 1980:687). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See H. Schmitz, EI2 II:582–3+bib.; Sezgin, GAL 1:304–5; Nagel, 1967:60f; Juynboll, 1969; Khoury, 1972; Halperin, 1982; Brinner, EAL 2:421; Donner, 1998:299. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See Wahb b. Munabbih, *K. al-Tiján*; Norris, CHAL 8:381. On Wahb see GAL. Sup. 1:101–2+ refs.; Sezgin, GAL I:306–7; Horowitz, El IV:1084–5; Guillaume, 1955:xv, xviii; Khoury, 1972; Abbott, 1977; Hirschberg, EJ 16:241–2 [CD]; Schwartzbaum, 1982: 58–61; Duri, 1983:30–32+ index; Brinner EAL2:801–2; Adang, 1996:10–12; Donner, 1998 [index]). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Particularly ecumenical is the following prophetic tradition, ‘Believe in the Torah, the *Zabúr* [Psalter] and the Evangel, but the Qur’án should suffice you (Ibn Kathír, *Tafsír* [1:329–330] in Kister, 1972:239). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. According to some mss. of this work the author did not accept the literal sense of the *taḥríf* (“corruption”) of the Torah (see ibid.). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Until recently academics have paid scant attention to the specifically Shí‘í assimilation of the Bible and Isrá’íliyyát. Aside from various 1909–1910 articles by I. Friedlander, a 1915 article by Aichle (-->bib.) and occasional articles touching upon this subject by Vajda (1941–1945, 1981), Ayoub (1976); Rubin (1979), Kohlberg (1980 [rep. 1991:XVI]), Thomas (1988), Lassner (1993; 993a), Wasserstrom (1995) and Moreen (1999) little seems to have been written. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. At this point it should be noted that while the largely unchanged massive 1993 2nd edition of the *Lughat-Námah* of ‘Alí Akbar Dekhoda (d. Tehran 1956) includes a very basic, only slightly dismissive definition of Isrá’íliyyát (Ed.2 2:1924), the even more recent, Shí‘í centred and very bulky Persian *Dá’irat al-ma‘árif-i buzurg-i Islámí* (‘Great Islamic Encyclopaedia’, Tehran, 1998) contains a substantial entry ‘Isrá’íI[iyyát]’ which includes a thorough overview of Isrá’íliyyát seen as a technical term in the realm of *tafsír* and *ḥadíth* studies (vol. 8:290–4). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Questioned further, Muḥammad allegedly added, “Narrate [about the children of Israel], there is nothing objectionable [in that].” Seeking guidance from the “people of the Book” is wrong but narrating things about them is not (see Kister, ibid., 219). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. as-Sakháwí (d. 902/1497) like certain other late medieval commentators and historians, was ill-disposed towards fanciful Isrá’íliyyát communicated by over imaginative storytellers or derived from the ‘people of the Book’ (*I’lan bi’l-tawbíḥ*. tr. Rosenthal, 1968:335; cf. Vajda, ‘Isrá’íliyyát’, EI2 IV:21 1f). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Various records of the proceedings were produced (3 Arabic vols. 1970 + 1 English vol. of 935 pp.) as well as an independent English summary with extracts from the 1970 English volume by D. Green entitled, ‘Arab Theologians on Jews and Israel’ (Geneva, [19721, 74). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. A certain Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabí, for example, delivered a paper which seems to be identical with the several times separately published volume, *al-Isrá’íliyyát fí’l-tafsír wa’l-ḥadíth* (Jáma‘at al-Azhar/Majma‘ al-buḥúth al-Islámiyya, 1391/1971 + 4th printing, 1991). A recently published al-Azhar sponsored though somewhat mangled ‘translation’ of Ibn Kathir’s ‘Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’ (‘Stories of the Prophets’) also, for example, contains some fairly trenchant anti-Bible statements (introduction, xii–xiii, etc.). In 1992 there appeared the useful volume *al-Isrá’íliyyát wa’l-mawḍú‘át fí kutub al-tafsír* by Muḥammad Abú Shahaba which continues in much the same vein and registers some interesting dimensions of Isrá’íliyyát which occur in Sunní ḥadíth compilations and *Tafsír* literatures. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Vajda goes on to define “three kinds of narratives” as [1] “Narratives regarded as historical” serving to complement and clarify summary qur’anic information touching upon biblical personalities; [2] “Edifying narratives” loosely set within the framework of the “period of the (ancient) Israelities”; [3] “Fables belonging to folklore, allegedly (but sometimes actually) borrowed from Jewish sources”—often not too distinct from [2] above (‘Isrá’íliyyat’ EI2 IV:211–2). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Nettler’s insightful article provides an excellent basis for understanding the roots of Isrá’íliyyát and articulates a balanced mode of critiquing modern Sunní (especially Egyptian) anti-Isrá’íliyyát and its occasionally extreme, allegedly proto-Zionist roots. The positive Bahá’í attitude towards pre-Islamic faiths and towards Palestine-Israel also contrasts markedly with modern Shi‘ite anti-Zionist polemic. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Loosely speaking, the term “Abrahamic” can indicate religious traditions and practises in one way or another believed (according to salvation history or heiro-history) to stem from Abraham (fl. 2,100? BCE) and his progeny, especially Isaac the symbolic forbear of Judaism & Christianity and Ishmael the symbolic father of the Arabs, Muḥammad and Islam. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Since antiquity an originally Zoroastrian then Judaeo-Christian dualistic time-scheme of world eras (“This [perishable] Age” and “The [eternal] Age to Come”) had been an “an essential feature of apocalyptic” (Vielhaur & Strecher, NTA II: 549f). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Each of the 7 days of creation were understood as 1,000 years of history; the final millennium being a kind of ‘messianic sabbath’. Thus there is the notion of the “timeless new world of the eighth day” which follows a kind of ‘messianic sabbath millennial day’ (Caird, 1966[71]:250). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. See further Finegan, 1964 esp. 137ff; Caird, 1966 [71]:250; Grabbe, 1982:107–8; Massyngbaerde Ford, ‘Millennium’, ABD., IV:832–834; Smith, ‘Ages of the World’, ERel. 1:128–133; Hughes, ‘Chronology’ DBI:120–123. The expectation of a 6,000 year age of the world period was also known among the Jews as is clear from the *Seder Olam Rabba* and the saying of ‘the Tanna of the House of Elijah’. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Apparently on the basis of the chronology of Julius Africanus and that of the *Cave of Treasures* (-->) the (Syriac) Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius divides history into seven millennia placing the eschatologically suggestive Arab conquest late in the seventh or last millennium (Alexander, 1985:17ff, 44; Reinink, 1992:150+fn.2; 178f). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. e.g. Adam->Noah, 1, 200; Noah->Abraham, 1,142; Abraham->Moses, 575; Moses->David, 569; David->Jesus, 1,365; Jesus->Muḥammad, 600. Additionally, the Great Shaykh notes that Wahb Ibn Munabbih calculated 5,600 years and gives details of the calculations of other religionists including the a history of the Jews as 4,640 years and the computations of the Greek Christians as 5,772+ years (*Muḥaḍarat*, 120–1). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Most notably (indirectly) on various works of Eusebius of Caesarea (d. CE 370) and his successors: Eusebius wrote both a two part Greek *Chronicom* (pre. CE 330, on sacred and profane peoples and figures of antiquity and their parallel chronologies) and the well-known *Ecclesiastical History*. Of Ibn al-Munajjim’s sources Stern also refers to the 6th cent. Byzantine chronicler Andronicus (cited in Syriac literature) and to a work of Cyril of Alexandria (d. CE 444) (1972:441–2). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Ibn Qatayba also records a tradition to the effect that that *Injíl* (Gospel) has it that there are three sets of 14 generations separating Abraham and Jesus (*K. al-Ma‘árif*, 34). This is basically in line with the Matthean genealogy (Matt. 1:1ff; esp. 1:17) which is in all likelihood founded upon the numerical value of the messianically suggestive Hebrew name David (D = 4 + W = 6 + D =4 total = 14). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Maqdisí also gives detailed chronological information from the lost *Kitáb at-taríkh* of Ibn Khurdádh[bih] (fl. 3/9th cent.) (II:151f) [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. In the section ‘On the chronology of the years of the Israelites’ (= sect. III) in his (predominantly pre-Islamic) *Ta‘ríkh siní al-muluk al-arḍ wa’l-anbiyá’* (‘Chronology of Kings and Prophets of the Earth’, finished 350/951) the Muslim chronographer Ḥamzah al-Iṣfahání (fl. mid-late 10th cent. CE) basing himself on biblical sources and Jewish informants writes, “So everything that has elapsed of the years of the world up till the beginning of the era of the Arab, from the *hijrah* [of the prophet] amounts to 4,382 years [AM] …” (*Táríkh*, 68; cf. Rosenthal, 1968:79, 90f; idem, ‘Ḥamza al-Iṣfahání’, EI2 III:156; 1989 [= Tabari 1]:184 fn. 148). Rosenthal further notes that the 5,992 figure is “close to that of 5,990 in Ḥamzah [al-Iṣfahání] and that of the 5,969 of the Antiochian era (*Táríkh*, 184 fn. 147). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. In his Persian *Dalá’il-i sab‘ih* the Báb makes specific reference to the *ḥadíth* of Abí Labíd Makhzúmí about the qur’anic “*ḥurúf al-muqaṭṭa‘át*” noting that he had explained this matter in his *T. Kawthar* (P.Dal. 48–49). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. There have been many ancient and modern attempts to relate biblical chronology to an absolute chronological scheme so as to divine the ‘plan of history’ and the ‘time of the end’. Some like the famous Archbishop James Ussher (1581–1656) whose computations were virtually incorporated into the English 1611 Authorized (King James) version of the Bible, reckoned the creation around 4004 BCE (4004 BCE + 6,000 = CE 1996). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. The above paragraphs should not be read so as imply that Bábí-Bahá’í leaders took Genesis texts literally. Both AB\* and SE\* explicitly rejected that the idea that “this world of existence was created six of seven thousand years ago” (PUP: 462, Hornby LG3: 494–5). The Genesis narratives and biblico-qur’anic story of the first couple are likewise non-literally interpreted (SAQ, index, etc.). [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. See, for example, Horovitz, ‘Nabí’, El VI:802–3; *Biḥár*, 11:13ff; McDermot, 1978 Ch. IV; al-Razí, *an-Nubuwwát* …; Ceylan, 1996, Ch.6; Wensinck, 1932:203ff; Corbin, *En Islam* … I:219–284; Rahman, 1958:30ff; Fahd, ‘Nubuwwa’ EI2 VIII:93–97, Takehita, 1987:107–169; Robinson Waldman, ‘Nubúwah’, ERel. 11:1–8; Brinner, 1989; Chodkiewicz, 1988[?]. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Within Islamic thought the Arabic verbal noun *wa*[*i*]*láya* (Per. *viláya*[*t*]) has a wide and complex range of senses going well beyond the qur’anic roots of this term (Q. 8:44, 72). Fundamental aspects of the “Islamic social and spiritual life” are encompassed by *waláya* (Landolt, Enc.Rel., 15:316–323). In Shi‘ism and Sufism *waláya*/*wiláya* (these spellings are synonymous) have multi-faceted theological, [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. . imamological and related meanings. *Waláya* can be indicative of divine ‘Authority’, ‘Trusteeship’, and ‘Overseership’. It figures significantly in numerous Sunní and Shí‘í sources and in a multitude of Ṣúfí writings especially those of Ibn al-‘Arabí and his followers where *wiláya* (sainthood, etc.) and *walí* (saint, friend [of God], etc.) are centrally important concepts (Corbin, En Islam I:242ff; Muṭahharí, 1402/1982; Ḥá’irí Shírází, nd.; Elmore, 1999:109ff, 110 fn.7). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. In his edition of the *Fuṣuṣ*, Afifi explains that Ibn al-‘Arabí uses various prophetological terms including, *an-nubuwwa al-‘ámma* (general prophethood), *an-nubuwwa al-muṭlaqa* (absolute prophethood) and an-*nubuwwa al-khaṣṣa* (specific prophethood) which is identical with an-*nubuwwa at-tashrí* (legislative prophethood) (Fusus, Ar. 176). [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Certain qur’anic surahs and texts and later Sunní and Shí‘í sources provide numerous loosely chronological lists. The Meccan Súra Húd (Q. 11), for example, gives the succession Noah, Hod, Ṣáliḥ, Abraham, Shu‘ayb, Moses and Jesus. Muḥammad Báqir Majlisí also, for example, cites from earlier sources an interesting extended chronological list contained in a lengthy ḥadíth qudsí (-->3.2), the Du‘a’ Umm Dáwúd. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Hawwá’ (Heb. עֶרֶב, Havváh = Eve the wife of Adam) is not named in the Q. but is twice referred to as his “spouse” (7:18f; 20:120f). Also unnamed are their sons Cain (*Qábíl*), Abel (*Hábíl*) and Seth (*Shíth*, see 02). The story of the first couple is related in the probably late Medinan fifth Súra (*al-Má’idah*, Q. 5:27[30]f). [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. BA\*, KI:5f/7–8; S. Aḥsáb AQA 4:XX; K. Badí‘, 214 (mss.); cf. Buck,1999:114f. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Islamic traditions reckon Húd (-->05), Ṣáliḥ (-->06), Shu‘ayb (-->07), Ibráhím (-->08) and Muḥammad (-->028), five Arabian prophets (-->). [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. In his EI2 article ‘Shu‘ayb’, (IX:491 + see refs. and bib.) Rippin notes that it was on the basis of Q. 9:91 that he was “understood to have come after Ḥúd, Ṣálíḥ and Lot (Lúṭ).” [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Linked (among others) with Jacob and his half-brother Ishmael (Q. 9:71; 19:39; cf. 10 below) most of the qur’anic references to him occur in miscellaneous lists of prophets and associated figures. (Alexander, DBI:44–7 + bib.; Montgomery Watt ‘Isḥaq’ EI2 IV:109–110; Naudé, 1971). [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. See https://hurqalya.ucmerced.edu/node/538 [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Note the use of the exclamation “Good news!” (*yá bushrá*) in Qur’án 12:19b followed by the words “Here is a youth (*ghulám*)!” (Q. 12:18, 25ff) and the use of the word *bashír* (“bearer/herald of good tidings”) in Q. 12:93 which recounts the episode of Joseph’s garment being placed on the head or face of the patriarch Jacob/Israel (= “But when the *bashír* [“bearer of good tidings” came to him, and laid it on his [Jacob’s] face [*wajhihi*], forthwith he saw once again”). It is this qur’anic verse which lies behind the Báb’s words translated above and the following passage from BA\*’s S.Qamis. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Man Yuẓhiruhu Alláh or Man Yuẓhiruhu’lláh. مَنْ يُظْهِرُهُ اللّٰهُ consists of مَنْ (man, “whom” or “he whom”) يُظْهِرُهُ (yuẓhiruhu, “He manifests Him”), and اللّٰهُ (Alláhu, “God”).—M.W.T. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. See Coats, ‘Joseph …’, ABD 3:976ff; Dijkstra, ‘Joseph …’, DDD:895–8; Enc.Jud. X:202–217; Heller, ‘Yúsuf b. Ya‘kúb’, EI VIII:1178–9 + bib.; MacDonald, MW 46 (1956), 113ff+207ff; etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. AB\* in a letter to the British Bahá’í Ethel Rosenberg held that histories prior to Alexander the Great (d. 323 BCE) were “very confused”, adding that statements in the *L. Ḥikma* were in accordance with eastern historical records (AB\* Má’idih 2:65–7). SE\*, on the other hand, indicated that Bahá’ís need not take too literally the reference to the contemporaneousness of Pythagoras and Solomon since the meaning of *fí zamán* (lit. “in the time”) may be “far more elastic” than the English word “contemporary” implies (Letter written on behalf of SE\* dated 15 February 1947). [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. See further, Ibn Nadím [Dodge], Fihrist II:643; Cheiko, *Thálath maqálát ‘Arabiyya* … in al-Mashríq IX (1906), 18ff (21–28); Carra De Vaux, ‘Le Invention de L-Hydraulis’ REG 21 (1908), 326–340; Farmer, 1931:16ff, ‘Muriṭus’ EI2 VII:610–11; Rosenthal, 1975 [92]:235–8); Shiloah, 1979: 286–7 (nos 200–201). [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. cf. Walker, (MW 16 [1926]:399–400) where it is argued on the basis of Job 42:10 that this title indicates Job himself who received “twice as much as he had before”. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Both a name of a book of the Hebrew Bible (one of the ‘minor prophets’) and a súra of the Qur’án (Q. 11) are after this legendary (?) figure (cf. II Kings 14:26 + New Testament refs.). [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. This typological parallelism is also spelled out in other *alwáḥ* of BA\*. See especially his *Súrat al-asmá’* (IQ:95ff) [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. The more than 500 or so year period between Jesus and Muḥammad is often regarded in Muslim sources as a period when the people remained without a concrete or outward *ḥujjat* (‘Proof, Guide’) for 250 or 400 or more years after Jesus (Bihar2 14: 234; 347). [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. This reckoning the number of *rusúl* (*al-mursalún*) at 313 corresponds to the number of persons who participated in the first major battle of Badr (2/624) (Friedman, 1989:50, fn. 4). Bábí-Bahá’í sources extend the symbolic applicability of this number to the alleged Bábí battling companions who fought the (for Bábís) eschatological battle(s) in the service of the Qá’im (= the Báb) at the fortress of Shaykh Ṭabarsí in Mazandarán (Lambden, 1986:28–9 fn. 36.). [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Kulíní, *al-Káfí* I:223ff; Bihar2 11:30ff. Numerous Shí‘í sources record traditions that plot throughout history the appearance of major prophet figures and their immediate successor(s) after the typology of Muḥammad and ‘Alí. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Refer, Kulíní, *al-Káfí* I:174f, 223ff; Corbin, *En Islam* 1:235f; cf. Wensinck, 1932:204. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. An interesting prophetic ḥadíth is relayed from Abú Ḥurayra is recorded in the *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* of Tha‘labí (-->4.1), “The prophets (*al-anbiyá’*) are brethren (*ákhwat*) though of various mothers and their religion is one (*dínuhun wáḥid*, Qisas: 403). [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Adam, Dáwúd (David) and others are not normally included in Islamic lists of the *ulú al-‘azm*. The former had fallen from heaven and the *Zabú*r (Psalter) of the latter has no legal component (cf. Q. 38:24–5). [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. On those marked with [0] see below. That Zoroaster, Melchizedek, David (1 & 2?), Joseph son of Jacob [Israel], John the Baptist and others are counted in developed Bahá’í texts as *maẓhar-i iláhí* will be taken up below. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. See Gulpáygání, K. Fará’id, index; Ishráq Khávarí, QI:383ff; *at-Tibyán wa’l-Burhán*, I:59ff Rawshání, *Khátamiyyat*; Momen 1999:34f, 87ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. In early Shí‘í Khaṭṭabí [Nusayrí) gnosis the pentadic “Five Companions of the Mantle” (Muḥammad, Fáṭim[a], ‘Alí, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn) represented by the initial letters of their names, become “Names” or “Principles” as well as *tajallíyát* (‘theophanies’) and *maẓáhir* (manifestations) of the “Light” (Corbin, [1974] 1998:186–7). [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. The first Safavid ruler Sháh Ismá’il (d. 930/1524), a Sufi Shaykh and one time head of the Qizilbash made use of *maẓhar* in certain of his Turkish, distinctly (neo-) *ghuluww* (extremist) high imamological and theophanologically oriented poems. Apparently referring to himself he states in one poem (no. 259), ‘A man (*ádam*) has become a *maẓhar* of the *ḥaqq* (Ultimately Real) … My Beauty is a *maẓhar* of Our God (*jamálí maẓhar íláhhum* …; Minorsaky, 1942: 1039a–1040a, 194). [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. It was perhaps due to Samaritan (Jewish) influence from the late 2nd/8th century that the principle expressed by the non-qur’anic terms *‘iṣma* (moral impeccability) and *ma‘ṣúm* (immunity from error) first (?) came to be applied to the Shí‘í Imams and subsequently to the Prophet Muḥammad as well, on occasion, as other the pre-Islamic prophets and agents of God. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. The doctrine of *‘iṣma* is found in the Sunní *Fiqh al-Akbar* (Greater Understanding) vol. II (10th cent.) and was earlier championed by various Shí‘í thinkers including Hisham b. al-Ḥakam (d. 179/795). [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. The Bahá’í exegesis of the story of Adam and Eve as explained by AB\* is wholly removed from the sphere of history. The story is symbolic of the plight of humankind in the material world. Adam represents of the *rúḥ-i Ádam*, the higher “spirit of Adam” (= humanity). Humanity (the first couple) fell from paradise when Eve who represents the *nafs-i Ádam*, the lower self of humanity, precipitated a “fall” from spirituality as a result of being enticed by the “serpent” (= materiality). To eat of the “fruit” of the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” is to be engrossed in the material world by the satanic lower self (AB\*, SAQ:92f /tr. 122f cf. AB\* explanation, “The Tree (*shajarat*) [ of the knowledge of good and evil] of his eminence Adam is the reaching out to the [material] world (*bulúgh-i a‘lam*) Ma’idih 9:128–9). [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Prophetological and *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* motifs, stories and associated materials exist within a very large variety of Islamic literary sources including the 14 categories listed above. They are encapsulated within a variety of literary forms and subjected to diverse hermeneutical transformations. In his *All the King’s Falcons* Renard usefully listed the following categories into which such Islamicate prophetological materials might be divided. With an indication of where they correlate with my own (above-mentioned) list they are [1] Qur’anic prophetology (-->3.1, 4–5), [2] Historical prophetology (-->3.3), [3] Philosophical prophetology (-->3.8), [4] Theological prophetology (-->3.2. 9, 11), [5] Theosophical prophetology (-->3.12–13) and [6] Mystical prophetology (-->3.10 + 12–13). The difference between Renard’s categories (5) and (6) is not particularly distinct. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. The following tradition recorded by Dáwúdí in his *Ṭabaqát al-mufassirín* illustrates this, “A man asked al-A‘mash [2nd century], ‘Why do men avoid the *tafsír* of al-Mujahid?’ He answered, ‘Because they think that he used to ask the people of the Book”. (Dáwúdí, II:307 cited Ayoub 1:30) [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. *Dharí‘a*, IV:244 No. 1186; Smith, 1970:58–9f; Ayoub 1984 = 1:27–32. Though there are continuing doubts as to its authenticity a recent printing is Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1412/1992. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad* I:375f; etc.; Rosenthal, tr. Ṭabarí, *Táríkh*, 1:75ff; Dhahabí, *Siyár A‘lám*, noted Ṣáliḥí, 199X:10; Rippin, Mudjáhid, EI2. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. See Lawson, 1990:214f, 1993:130; Plessener [Rippin] ‘Mukátil b. Sulayman’ EI2 VIII: 508–9. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. The etymology of Moses’ name is debated, but most scholars agree it has Egyptian origins: It likely derives from the Egyptian word “mose” or “mes”, meaning “child” or “son”. However, the provided explanations are not considered linguistically accurate by modern scholars.—M.W.T. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Ṭabarí, *Tafsír*, 1:280 on Q. 2:51/ tr. Cooper, 309; *Maḥádarat*, 130; *Fuṣuṣ*, 197f / tr. Austin, 254. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. The relationship between Merkabah mysticism and Islamic thought awaits detailed [investigation] (Halperin, 1988, App. 2). Both the *‘arsh* (Throne) and the *kursí* (Seat) are mentioned in the Q. In his *Mirát al-anwár* (Mirror of Lights) the Shi‘ite theologian and qur’án exegete Abú’l-Ḥasan al-‘Ámilí al-Iṣfahání (d. Najaf 1138/1726) records that *al-‘arsh* (among other things) is borne by the the Prophet and the Imams etc., who are the bearers [custodians] of the knowledge of God, the locus of which is the *‘arsh* (“Throne”). (‘Ámilí Iṣfahání, *Mirat*, I:236–7) [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. See Hirschberg ‘Bible: Religious Impact’ in ‘Islam’ EJ., 4 [CD]; Ṭabarí, *Taríkh*, 514ff; trans. Brinner, *History* III:96ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. In Abrahamic (Jewish and Islamic) traditions God and/or the ancients are reckoned to have spoken Hebrew, Syriac or Arabic. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* are fundamental to this Persian *Tafsír*. The *Súrat al-núr* (Q. 24), for example, is wholly replaced by the partially exegetical story of the ‘Slander of ‘Á’isha’. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Only indirectly in the Egyptian (Búlaq) edition of 1294/1877 (and later editions) has it apparently been made partially, indirectly available through the condensed version of the Shá’fi‘í traditionist and commentator Muḥyí al-Sunna al-Baghawí (d. 526/1117) entitled *Mu‘álim at-tanzíl* (‘Instruction in the Revelation’; 4 vol. ed. Beirut: Dár al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1414/1993). [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. See further Abdurrahman Habil’s chapter ‘Tradition Esoteric Commentaries on the Quran’ where important figures of the ‘Central Asian School of Najm ad-Dín Kubra’ are mentioned (1987:33). [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Abú al-Qasím al-Zamaksharí’s influential and linguistically profound rationalist commentary was entited *al-Kashsháf ‘an Haqá’iq* (The Disclosure of Realities). [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Qummís interpretation of A-L-M (Q. 2:1 etc.) was repeated in later Shí‘í *Tafsír* works including the lengthy Persian *Tafsír Sharíf* of the philosopher-theologian student of Mullá Ṣadrá, ‘Abd ar-Razzáq al-Láḥíjí (d.c. 1072/1662). Láḥíjí explained these three isolated letters as an acrostic expressing the phrase *aná Alláh al-mulk* (‘I am indeed God, the Sovereign’) (*Tafsír Sharíf* 1:7). [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. *T. Kawtha*r, 40a; P.Dalá’il, 48–9 drawing on ‘Ayyashí/Qummí *Tafsír*, on Q. 2:1; cf. T. Ḥamd 69:145. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Towards its beginning the al-‘Askarí *Tafsír* contains an interesting dialogue between Moses and God partially rooted in this prophet’s request to see “his Lord” (Q. 7:143). Without going into details God instructs Moses to the effect that Muḥammad and his (Shí‘í) family and community, are the most honoured among the prophets (*al-anbiyá’*) and all other creatures (al-‘Askarí, *Tafsír*, 15ff). [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Basmala is a modern “word” coined from the first four consonants of *Bismi’lláh* (“B-S-M-L”) with the meaning to **utter** the invocation *bismi’lláh ar-raḥmáni ar-raḥími* (“In the name of God, the Benificent, the Merciful”). The more linguistically accurate term is *Tasmiya*. Here and elsewhere, *Bismi’lláh* is meant.—M.W.T. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Ibn al-‘Arabí also wrote a *Tafsír áyat al-kursí* (Commentary on the Throne Verse, Q. 2:256 = Yaḥyá ibid., ii, no. 728) and a *Tafsír áyat an-núr* (Commentary on the Light Verse; Q. 24:35). See also *Yaḥyá* ibid., ii: 482, no 729 (unfortunately these works remain unpublished). [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Nasr, CHI 6:688–690; Achena, EI2 Supp. ‘Fayḍ-i Káshání’, 305; Lawson, 1993:180ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Abdurrahman Habil, IS 1:37+fn.59, 46; Corbin ElIr., 3:228 n. 58 cf. 1:644–646. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Various Ismá’ílí *tafsír* works also contain interesting allegorical and other non-literal, sometimes esoteric modes of exegesis. Such is the case with the fragmentary *Mizáj at-tasním* (The Condition of *Tasním*) of Ibn Hibat Alláh (d. 1760). [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Written in the 1200s/1800s this work has been published in Egypt in six volumes, Cairo: al-Matba‘at al-Amírah, 1870; Bulaq 1301–10/1883–92 and also recently reprinted (-->bib.). [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. I have not been able to locate these references in either the edition printed in or the CD version though the Arabic text is cited by Noghabá’í. This Bahá’í writer has Álúsí refer to Ṭáhirih as “one in whom I witnessed grace and perfection the like of which I had not perceived in most men.” (1983:137) Gulpáyigání, *Kashf al-Ghiṭá’*, 95–6; Mázandarání, ZH III:356–9; AB\* *Tadhkirat*, 194/ *Memorials*, 194–5). [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. BA\* sometimes asked his son AB\* to respond to questions regarding *tafsír* issues. Among AB\*’s *tafsír* works is a commentary on the *Basmala* [*recte* Bismilláh], on the *Súrat ar-Rúm* Q. 30:1–5 (The Byzantines [Romans], probably dating to the late 1880s) and various commentaries on passages within the Báb’s QA relating to the Súrat Yúsuf (Q. 12). AB\* wrote various *Tafsír* letters in Persian, Arabic and Turkish. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Traditions are valued for doctrinal guidance and for patterns of life-style they set down for emulation. Though Sunní and Shí‘í collections of tradition have much in common, as the Báb does not seem to have specifically cited Sunní *ḥadíth* collections and BA\* only did this sparingly in his latter years, the Bible and Isrá’íliyyát in specifically Sunní sources will be bypassed (Goldziher, GS [1971]; Schwartzbaum, 1982:29–38 + fns). [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. The legalistic books among these four are (2) the legal textbook [*Kitáb*] *Man lá yaḥḍuruhu al-faqíh* (The Book for whomsoever is without a lawyer) of Muḥammad b. Bábúya al-Qummí (= aṣ-Ṣadúq, d. 381/991) (9,000 + traditions) and the two works (3) Tahdhíb al-aḥkám (The Correction of the Judgements) (3,000 + traditions) and (4) *al-Istibṣár … al-akhbár* (The Examination … of the Reports) (5,000 + *hadiths*) of Muḥammad b. Ḥasan aṭ-Ṭúsí (d. 460/1067). [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. In his *K. íqán* BA\* cites traditions from both the *Káfí* and the *Rawḍat al-káfí* (KI:190–1/56–7). [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. The Báb and BA\* as well as AB\* and SE\* sometimes challenged the authenticity of Islamic traditions recorded by Majlisí and others. Citing eschatological proof texts in his (Persian) *Dalá’il-i Sab‘ih* [*Dalá’il-i-Sab‘a*], for example, the Báb directs his (Shaykhí?) questioner to the *Biḥár* though he boldly has it that the authenticity of such traditions is suspect (*taḥqíq-i ín aḥádíth ithbát níst*, DSP:51). Going further in a complex commentary upon the prophetic import of certain isolated letters of the Q., the Báb cites then disagrees with Majlisí holding that he had failed to grasp the true *ẓáhir* (outer) import of the qur’anic isolated letters which he had applied to his own time (Bihar2 52:107; INBMC 98:35ff). [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. There were a number of 19th cent. editions of works ascribed to al-Mufaḍḍál/Imám Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣádiq. Among them a Persian translation by Majlisí of an Arabic work entitled *Tawḥíd-i Mufaḍḍál* (Tehran, 1860 + Najaf 1375/1955). This Arabic text was also recently printed as *Tawḥíd al-Mufaḍḍál*, Maktabat Aḥmad ‘Ísá’ al-Zawád, Suyahát: Saudi Arabia. 1403/1983. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Abú Razín al-Uqaylí, a Companion of Muḥammad.—M.W.T. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. The massive (*K.*) [*al-* ] *Awá’lim al-‘ulúm wa’l-ma‘árif wa’-aḥwál min al-áyát wa’l-akhbár wa’l-aqwál* … of al-Baḥrání seems to have been partially published at least three times (-->bib.). [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Also cited in the same context in the *Kitáb-i íqán* is a [*K. al*-] *‘Arba’ín* ([Book of the] Forty [Traditions], a common title of compendia of treasured traditions. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. The Sermon which follows the *Khuṭba aṭ-ṭutunjiyya* consists of over 100 such “I am …” sayings of ‘Alí several of which are translated above (Bursí, *Masháriq* 170–172). Certain of Sháh Ismá’íl’s (the founder of the Safavid dynasty d. 930/1524) Turkish poems contain similar such “I am” sayings (Minorsky 1942, esp. 1042a). [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Ṭutunjayn and khalíjayn are (according to Sayyid Káẓim Rashtí) synonyms for “two gulfs”.—M.W.T. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. The word *al-ab‘adayn* means “the two most distant/remotest”, which apparently is not the term used in the original Arabic sources for this esoteric concept. The correct Arabic expression, as found in Shí‘í mystical and Shaykhí literature regarding Imám ‘Alí’s statement, is *min al-ṭutunjayn* or *min al-khalījayn*.—M.W.T. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. The Egyptian philologist Ibn Hishám was, as noted, not only responsible for one of the surviving recensions of the *Síra* of Ibn Isḥaq but also the *K. at-Tiján fí muluk Ḥimyár* which derives from Wahb b. Munabbih. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Cited by later Muslim writers including Ibn Isḥáq the earlier possibly historical sage and antiquary ‘Abíd [‘Ubayd] b. Sharya al-Jurhumí, (fl. 2nd cent. AH) is said to have had his quasi-historical narrations about ancient Arab, Persian and biblical history recorded at the order of the ‘Umayyad Caliph al-Mu‘awiya (Rosenthal, EI2 III:937; Sezgin, Geschichte I:260; Abbott, Studies I:9ff). [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Bezold, 1883–8; Budge, 1927; Adang 1996:38; Ebied & Wickham, 1970; Ferrê, 1977. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. It is exactly 811 pages in the Ar. Leiden edition (Brill, 14 vol. + index, 1879–1901). The English translation of this portion fills vols 1–4 of the Yarshater (ed.) translation (-->bib.). [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Note the *Zubdat at-taváríkh* (Quintessence of Histories) by Abú al-Qasím al-Káshání (early 14th century? CE) and the *Táríkh-i Guzídah* (composed 1330) of Ḥamd-Alláh Mustawfí Qazvíní (d.c. 744/1334). [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. The several eighteenth century editions include that of J. Gagnier, *Die vita … Mohammedis*, (Oxford, 1723). The complete Arabic text was apparently first published in 2 vols. In Istanbul in 1286/1869–1870 (Gibb, ‘Abu’l-Fiḍá’ EI2 I:118–9). [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. In its recent 7 (14) volume printing over 450 pages are allotted to biblical and other figures of the pre-Islamic era (Ibn Kathír, *al-Bidayá*, vol. 1 [1–2]). [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. The *Raḍwat* was supplemented and extended in Qájár times by Riḍá’ Qulí Khán Hidáyat (d. 1288/1871) as the *Rawḍat aṣ-ṣafáy-i Náṣirí*. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Refer Storey, 1:92–101 (342); Zaryáb, ‘preface’ [1:xff] Beveridge [Manz], ‘Mírkhwánd …’ EI2 VII:126–7; Quinn, 2000:14. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. The Rehatsek 1891–1892 partial translation of the first volume of the *Rawḍat aṣ-ṣafa* is an English rendering of the Bombay Lithograph printing of 1271/1854. It includes passages not found in the recent (Sh. 1375/1996) Zaryáb edition printed in Tehran. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Khwándamír also completed his grandfather’s *Rawḍat aṣ-ṣafá’* writing a seventh volume and a conclusion. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. In the 1333/1954 edition of Khwándamír edited by Humá’í (4 vols) in excess of 250 pages are devoted to pre-Islamic history. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. There have been many 19th century printings of the *Násikh* including Tehran 1860; 1888–1889; early 1890s; Bombay, 1892, etc. (Storey, 1:152f, 1247; Minorsky, ‘Sipihr’ EI2 IX:658). [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Mání’s dates were actually CE 216–274 [277?]. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. In an unpublished letter of AB\* to Luṭfu’lláh Ḥakím the *Násikh at-tawáríkh* is strongly criticized. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. There is little doubt that the Arabic, جوك (*júk*) transliterates the Sanskrit *yuga* (= ages[s]) and is indicative of a period of time relative to the four ages (Sanskrit yugas) of the world expressed in divine years though representing many thousands of human years (see the great Hindu epic *Mahábhárata* and the *Mánú-Samhitá*, “Lawbook of Manu” where these yugas are set out). The transliteration of BA\* is that which al-Birúní used in his *Taḥqíq li-l-hind* (“The Reality that is India”, 3rd ed. Beirut: ‘Alam al-kutub, 1403/1983), 279 (trans. Sachau, 1910:367). [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. This Tablet was in reply to a question of a certain ‘Abd ar-Razzáq and was partially translated by SE\* in Gleanings (No. LXXXVII). BA\* was asked about the existence of extant records (*dhikr-i anbiyá’ qabl az Ádam abú bashar va salaṭí-i án* …) of pre-Adamic prophets and kings (text in IQ:68–78). [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Some have thought *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* and Isrá’íliyyát virtually synonymous terms (Nagel, 1967). As a literary genre though *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* is probably best understood as a sub-category or development from Isrá’íliyyát. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. The aforementioned Muḥammad b. ‘Abd-Alláh Sahl aṭ-Ṭustarí (d. 283/986 <--2.1), it is relevant to note here, most probably authored a Sufi oriented *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* text, entitled *K. Laṭá’if al-qiṣaṣ fí qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* (Böwering, 1980:16–17; Habil, in Nasr, ed. 1987:30–31; Rippin, ERel. 14:241). [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. In line with the 17th cent. CE bibliographer Ḥájjí Khalífah some have identified him with the Qur’án reader ‘Alí b. Hamza al-Kisá’í (d.c. 189/805) (Schussman, 1981 followed by Milstein et. al., 1999). Others, including Brockelmann (EI III:1037) and Nagel (1961) consider this al-Kisá’í to have been Muḥammad b. ‘Abdu’lláh al-Kisá’í (10th cent.? CE; cf. Thackston, 1978:xxxiii, n. 29). An early version of al-Kisá’í’s *Qiṣaṣ* was published by Eisenberg under the title (Lat.) *Vita Prophetarum* … (2 vols 1922–1923 -->bib.). This text has been translated into English by Thackston (Jr. 1978). [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. This ar-Ráwandí should not be confused with Abú ar-Riḍá Faḍl Alláh ar-Ráwandí (d. ?) who also authored a *qiṣas al-anbiyá’* work (see *Dharí‘a* 17, No. 569, 104). [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. This work was lithographed three times in Tabriz from 1279/1862 and once in Tehran in 1284/1867 (Storey I/i:158; Thackston, xxxi). In some mss. this *Qiṣaṣ* work purports to have been translated from an Arabic original (by order of the fictitious) Sulṭán Ghiyáth ad-Dín Muẓaffar though one early mss. dating to 1000/1591–1592 is bereft of these details (Milstein et. al. 1999:12). [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. On other Persian *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* and associated works see Storey, I, 129 §2, 159, §196 and Thackston, 1978:xxxii. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. I wonder if this ‘Abd-Alláh b. Muḥammad Riḍá al-Ḥusayní (d.c. 1243/1826) is the same person as Sayyid ‘Abd-Alláh ibn Muḥammad Riḍá’ ash-Shubbrí al-Káẓimí (b. Najaf, 1188/1774–1775, d. Mashad 1242/1825–1826) who wrote the recently published *Ḥaqq al-yaqín fí ma‘rifat uṣúl ad-dín* (Beirut: Mu’assassat al-‘Álamí, 1418/1997), and is also credited with a *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* volume (no. 39 in a list of 63 in introd. to *Ḥaqq al-yaqín* (<--11). [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. It should not be forgotten that Persian Jewry also produced significant prose and poetical texts in Judaeo-Persian about biblical prophet figures. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. The image of the text in this dissertation appears to crop the top of the square brackets of what appears to be “[\*]”, and the Arabic for Hallelujah is هَلِلُويا. A likely explanation is that it is a prayer (to be repeated many times) starting with Hallelujah and pleading for Mary to intercede on our behalf for perfection or the accomplishment of something.—M.W.T. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. A Turkish mss. of Rabghúzí’s *Qiṣaṣ* was reproduced 1948 by the Danish Turkologist Kaare Gronbech. In 1995 the edition and translation of Boeschoten and Vandamme was published (-->bib. cf. Malov, “Legendes musulmanes”; Thackston, 1978: xxxii; Dankoff, 1997. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Majlisí, Bihar2 14:161ff; Ṭabarí, Táríkh (Per.) [Zotenberg] 1:569–79; Sidersky, 1933:139–40; Milstein, 1999:154–5). [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. See, for example, the Persian *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyá’* of Juvayrí where Noah’s name is actually Shukr ibn Lamak (= Lamech, Gen. 5:28) who came to have the name Noah (Qiṣaṣ 59). The *Qiṣaṣ* of al-Kisa’í states, “It is said that Noah was so called because he wailed (*náḥ*)” (tr. Thackston, 98). SE\*’s translation of the above passage “Noah … prayerfully exhorted his people …” fails to clearly register this Islamicate play on Noah’s name or, it appears, the full 950 years of his period of grief. In Shí‘í sources the total length of Noah’s life exceeds 950 years (Majlisí, Ḥayát:246ff). [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. The length of Noah’s life is greatly extended in the light of the lengthy periods of *ghayba* (occultation) of the hidden twelfth Imám, the Qá’im. Hence the tradition originating with the 4th twelver Imám Zayn al-‘Ábidín (d. 95/713), “In the Qá’im there is a sign from Noah which is longevity (*ṭawl al-‘amr*) (cited Ibn Bábúya, *Kamál*, 475). [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. After his return from pilgrimage in 1845, the Báb cancelled an earlier proposed Bábí congregation in Karbala, most probably for the initiation of an eschatological *jihád* (holy war). A prayer of the Báb written in response to questions relating to the meaning of the *jihád* oriented tradition of Mufaḍḍál b. ‘Umar, makes it clear that eschatological expectations spelled out therein could be cancelled through *al-badá’* (INBA Ms 6003C:173ff cf. Sachedina, 1981:165–6). [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. *Kerygma* (Greek “proclamation”) is used in the New Testament to represent the apostolic proclamation of salvation through Jesus Christ.—M.W.T. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. By the time of Eusebius (d. 339) the saying had already arisen *Arabia haeresium ferax* (“Arabia fertile in heresies”). By the mid. 3rd cent. CE Origen (d. CE 254) had already had reason to address the tendencies of Beryllus of Bostra (now Jordan) and the Arabian bishop Heraclides. For the record of his dialogue with the latter and his fellow bishops see *Dialogue with Heraclides* c. 245) (trans. Daly, 1992:57–78; also Eusebius, HE VI, 33 and Spencer Trimingham, 1979[90]:55ff). [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. It is difficult, for example, as Beeston remarks, to know what to make of the Alexandrian biblical scholar Origen’s (d. CE 256) reference to his having consulted existing “Chaldean [= Syriac] and Arabic” Bible versions in framing his lost polyglot Bible, the Hexapla (CHAL 1:22). Only minor importance is now given to this and related issues of the Arabic Bible by twentieth century Islamicists and biblical scholars. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. On similar though even more focussed lines is the *Iẓhár tabdíl al-yahúd wa’n-nasárá* (Exposition on the Alternation [of the Torah and Gospel] by the Jews and the Christians). According to Pulcini, Ibn Ḥazm’s numerous Arabic biblical quotations which sometimes differ significantly from the Masoretic text and the Greek LXX are derived from a complete Christian produced Arabic Bible fundamentally based upon a Latin *Vorlage* (source document) (Pulcini, 185). [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. See for example, the details contained in the Tablet of AB\* to Rosenburg cited in Weinburg, *Ethel Jenner Rosenburg*, 78–81. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. The *Iḥyá ‘ulúm ad-dín* (The Revival of Religious Sciences) of al-Ghazalí cites numerous often quasi or non-biblical sayings of Jesu (see Khalidi, 2000). [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. Arabic text matching the English: جاء في التوراة أو الحكمة (*já’a fí at-tawráh aw al-ḥikmah*).—M.W.T. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. See Fodor ‘Malhamat Daniyal’, in The Muslim East, … (Budapest, 1974 -->bib.), 85–133, which reproduces 26 pages of the anonymous (Najaf n.d. ed.) of Malhamat Daniyal. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. To some degree in this connection mention has already been made of the alleged role of Imám ‘Alí in *tafsír* (cf. -->2.10? on dialogue), of the probably Zaydí, Muqátil b. Sulaymán (<-- 1.1) and of the Shi‘ite historians Ya‘qúbí, Mas‘údí, and Maqdisí. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. Volumes 9 and 10 within the second edition of Majlisí’s *Biḥár* form the *K. al-iḥtijáj* (‘Book of the Confrontation’ = 345 pp. + 454 pp.) and reproduce material from a wide range of *Iḥtijáj* sources. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. Bulky Shí‘í *Iḥtijáj* volumes date from the 3rd/9th century. The *Dharí‘a* lists a dozen or more *al-Iḥtijáj* (Religious Disputation) volumes (Dharí‘ 1:281–4 Nos 1471ff). Among them is one of Ibn Shahráshúb (d. 588/1191; Dharí‘a no. 1472) [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. Thomas notes that “It is known that Hishám b. al-Ḥakam was a merchant as well as an intellectual and that he moved from his native lacuna to Baghdad sometime in the mid-second/eighth century” (1988:60). Apart from the *K. al-tawḥíd* this religious encounter is cited the *iḥtijáj* of Tabrízí (<--) and, among other Shí‘í sources, in Majlisí’s *Biḥár al-anwár*2 (10:234ff). [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. Refer aṭ-Ṭabarsí, *Ihtijaj*, 11:415–432; Bihar2 10:299–307 cf. 49:173ff and also Ibn Bábúya, *‘Uyún al-akhbár* (2:139f) and *K. al-Tawḥíd* (sect. 65 417–441). [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. It is of interest to note that this order of the four Gospels is also given [by] ash-Shahrastání in the third prolegomenon to his *al-Milal wa’n-nihal* (Cairo 1968:15). In his commentary on the *Uṣúl al-Káfí,* Mullá Ṣadrá also at one point lists the four Gospels (pl. *al-anájíl al-arba‘a*) in this order in a citation from ash-Shahrastání (= Lk., Mk., Jn., Matt.) (Sh-Kafi, 3:597; cf. Imám Riḍá’ in K.Tawhid, 426 cf. Bihar2 10:306f) [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. With such Shí‘í biblical citations from one allegedly learned in the Hebrew writings [sic.] of the Sabaeans [or Sabians?], the Persian texts of the Zoroastrians and the Greek writings of the philosophers problems of *taḥríf* (“falsification”) are obviously compounded. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. No detailed discussion of the relationship between Ismá’ílí Islam and the Bábi-Bahá’í religions can be attempted here. There are several doctrinal and hermeneutical similarities which may be accounted for by virtue of the Shí‘í-‘Irfání and Shaykhí appropriation of Ismá’ílí doctrines. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. e.g. R 2:277 *a‘lá al-‘aliyyín*, “The most elevated of the exalted ones” (-->), although this matter is beyond the scope of this thesis. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. These terms were early utilized by al-Ḥalláj (Massignon 1997:31) and subsequently used by many Sufi writers and in Bábí-Bahá’í mystical cosmologies (R2:283–4; R2:367; R3:161; Netton 1982:55, 122:fn. 23). [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. Cited in the *K ‘Uyún al-akhbár* of the Ismá’ílí dá‘í Idrís of Yemen. This passage appears to be identical with a part of al-Kirmání’s *Risála mabásim al-bishárat bi’l-imám al-Ḥákim bi-Amr Alláh* (written, 405–6/1–14–5). See Hamid Ḥají, 1998:45–54; cf. Cortesse, 2000:42–3. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. Upon the death of the Caliph al-Ḥakím in 411/1021 a break away faction remained faithful to this Ismá‘ílí imám. With this factionalism lie the roots of the Druze movement some of the texts of which contain Biblical texts and interpretations. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. For Bahá’ís 1963 marks the end of a decade long Bahá’í global mission (1953–1963) initiated by SE\* in 1953 (SE\*, GPB:151; UHJ, Comp., Prophecy of Daniel). [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. Bab.Tal. *Ḥagiga* 12b; *Bershith* 17a, *Midrash Rabbah*, Gen. VI:6ff (cf. Samuelson, 1994[7]:118f.). The *Bab.Talmud* records that the following words were uttered by the Rabbis on parting from one of their learned associates, “may your eyes be enlightened by the light of the Torah and your face shine like the brightness of the firmament (רָקִיעַ) (B.Tal. Berachoth 17a). [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. It may be that the traditional voweling Húrqalyá’, especially if rooted in biblical Hebrew, could be regarded as an interesting example of an *Isrá’íliyyah* motif. Contrary to the erroneous critiques of some Islamic anti-Shaykhí writers *húrqalyá* is an Ishráqí cosmological term and not invented by Shaykh Aḥmad. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. Suhrawarí’s philosophy of illumination was also influential upon the Jewish convert to Islam Ibn Kammúna (d.c. 1285) who cites the Bible frequently in his *Tanqíḥ al-abḥáth li’l-milál ath-thaláth*. (Perlman, 1971). [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. ‘Awálí al-La’álí al-‘Azízíyyih fí al-Aḥádíth ad-Díníyya (“The most precious pearls religious Aḥadíth”).—M.W.T. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. Such non-canonical citations from pre-Islamic prophets can also, for example, be found in the *K. al-Isrá’* (Book of the Night Ascent) and the *K. at-tajilliyát* (Book of the Epiphanies) of Ibn al-‘Arabí. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. While Shaykh Aḥmad, for example, commented upon Ibn al-‘Arabí and the science of *jafr* in one of his epistles (JK 1/2:86f), Sayyid Káẓim cited the *Futúḥát* in writing about the elevated status of Muḥammad in his *Sh. Qaṣída* (unpaginated). [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. Though the *Fuṣuṣ* of the Great Shaykh was one of the few works which the Báb specifically cited (“Muḥyí ad-Dín in his Fuṣuṣ mentions”, T.‘Aṣr. 99–100) he is very dismissive of the *waḥdat al-wujúd* (existential oneness) associated with Ibn al-‘Arabí. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. Positive aspects of the *shakl at-tathlíth* (“the form of threefoldnesss”) are quite frequently mentioned by the Báb. In this one is reminded of Ibn al-‘Arabí’s doctrine of the “third entity” in such writings as his *Inshá’ al-dawá’ir* (The Genesis of the Circles). There the Great Shaykh elaborates *ash-shay’ ath-thálith* (the third entity) which, as a cosmological principle, is centered upon the relationship between God and man (Ibn ‘Arabí, Insha, cf. Takeshita, 1982:243–260). [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. The designation of Mullá Muḥammad Ḥusayn, Bahá’ ad-Dín as Shaykh Bahá’í seems to be based upon the (common) epithet, *Bahá’ ad-Dín* (Splendour of Religion) and has nothing to do with his being a kind of proto-Bahá’í or ‘timeless’ follower of BA\*. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. Abjad value of Eve in Arabic is 16, 15 if the ending Hamza is ignored or dropped as in Persian.—M.W.T. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. At times this work is reminiscent of Ibn Qutayba’s *K. Ta’wíl mukhtalif al-ḥadíth* (Disputed Traditions <--3.1) which cites the Bible in attempting legitimate Islamic traditions (Adang 1996:4–5). [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. Xavier was also the author of a Persian life of Christ based on the Gospels entitled *Mir’át al-qúds* (The Mirror of Sanctity) and also referred to as *Dástá i Masíḥ* as well as a life of the Apostles, *Dástá-i Aḥwál-i Hawáriyyán*. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. Quṭb ad-Dín Ashkiwarí (d. c. 1075/1664–5) not only identified the Paraclete with the twelfth Imám but also with Astvat Ereta (Av. “He who embodies righteousness”, see Yasna 43:3) who is the Saoshyant (“Future Benefactor”), the ultimate eschatological saviour of Zoroastrianism (Corbin, 1971:56f; 1976:232). [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. The quotation is translated in the light of the sense given the phrase by Sayyid Aḥmad who is very likely directly or indirectly drawing on the *K. ad-dín wa’d-dawla* (Book of Religion and Empire) of ‘Alí b. Rabbán aṭ-Ṭabarí (d.c. 251/865). The latter quotes this phrase from the beginning of Psalm 50 as a prophecy of Muḥammad. His Arabic translation is identical (DDawla 140; tr. Mingana 89). [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. cf. Bihar2 15:208ff. The Hebrew *me’od* basically means “very” or “exceedingly”. Many Islamic writers register this as a “name” of Muḥammad in the Torah. It probably became a “prophecy” in connection with an Ishmael-Muḥammad typology. The numerical (*abjad*) value of *be-me’od me’od* (מְאֹד בְּמֹאֹד; “most exceedingly”) (ב (2) + מ (40) + א (1) + ד (4) + מ (40) + א (1) + ד (4) = 92), it was observed, is the equivalent of Muḥammad (40 + 8 + 40 + 4 = 92). Some Islamic scholars argue this numeric equivalence (92) identifies Muḥammad as the “exceedingly fruitful” descendant of Ishmael prophesied in Genesis 17:20. This forms part of a broader Ishmael-Muḥammad typology, where gematria links Torah phrases to Islamic prophecies. Such use of numerological (*abjad*) equivalents is common in both Shí‘í and Bábí religious literatures.—Corrected and extended.—M.W.T. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. Omitting the *bismi’lláh*, the Hebrew of Genesis 1:1 *Bereshit bara ‘elohím et-ha-shamayim va et-ha‘aretz* (“[When] In the Beginning God created the heavens and the earth”), can be compared with the Persian of Abi Chand which reads, *Dar awwal áfrínish áfríd khudá mar ásmá-rá va mar zamí-rá*. Raḥím Riḍázáda Malik the editor and annotator the the recent 2 vol edition of the *Dábistán*, highlights the importance of this Abi Chand’s translation (*Dábistán* 2:207f). [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. References to the ancient figure Máh-Ábád could, for example, be ascribed to the influence of the *Dábistán*. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. Details regarding many of the Arabic and Persian translations of the Bible or its various testaments and books can be found Darlow and Moule, 1903–1913 and E.Ir 111:199–214. See esp. Thomas ‘Chronology of Bible translations’, E.Ir IV.iii:203–204 + bib. 205–6. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. This version was reworked with reference to the Vulgate by Xavier though it is apparently lost (<--EIr. IV:204). [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. Khátúnábádí’s *Tarjumay-i anájil-i arba‘a* was first edited and published in Tehran in 1996 by Rasúl Ja‘fariyán. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. Lockhart notes that a copy of the Persian translation of the Gospels, made under the supervision of Pèrre Lagarde in Gilan in 1746, exists in the Bibliothèque Nationale, in Paris (see Blochert’s *Catalogue des Manucrits Persans* … Vol. 1:6, No. 7). [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. Colebrook was “professor of Sanskrit at the College of Fort William in Bengal, and surveyor-general of Bengal, pub. by College of Fort William in Calcutta” (EIr. ibid., see also Darlow and Moule, 2:1202). [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
173. Henry Martyn’s translation of the Psalms was also published in London in 1824. In 1831 and 1834 the books of Jonah and Isaiah were also translated into Persian. (EIr. IV:205; D&M 2:1205) [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
174. Worth noting is the 1827 Persian translation (from the Arabic) of Genesis by Mírzá Ja‘far, a lecturer in Persian and Arabic at the University of St. Petersburg, which was revised by Samuel Lee and Mírzá Ibráhím (D&M 2:1204; EIr. IV:205). [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
175. In the third volume of his *Missionary Journal* Wolff gives two lists of Shí‘í clerics who responded to the missionary challenge of Henry Martyn. In December 1826 a certain Mullá Muḥammad ‘Alí told him that various “Doctors of Persia” wote in reply to “Henry Martyn’s book” (MJ III:67). Five months later (May 1825) Wolff reports that a Persian Shaykh resident in Urumiya told him that Henry Martyn had “written a book against the prophet” (Muḥammad) and that various Mullas had “completely answered” this book. Seven ‘Mullas’ are listed (<--) (Wolff, MJ. III:156; Lee, 1824:cxv; QU:129–30; Algar 1978:100–101). [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
176. This text is apparently contained in Muḥammad Ṣádiq Ḥusayní, *Makhzan al-Inshá’*, Tabríz, 1274/1857 (Algar, 1969:100 fn. 115). [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
177. Tunukábuní, QU:129–39; Khwansarí, RawdatJ, 3:172; Algar 1978:101; Momen, 318; *ad-Dharí’a* 12:286 No. 1922. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
178. Among Pfander’s works are the *Mízán al-Ḥaqq* (Balance of Truth), Persian trans. published in Shusha (Trans Caucasian Georgia) in 1835; *Ṭaríq al-ḥayat* (The Path of Life) and *Miftáḥ al-asrár* (Key to the Mysteries) all of which appear to have been printed in either Persian or Arabic. [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
179. Ibráhímí, *Fihrist*, MacEoin, ‘Aḥsá’í …’, EIr. 1:674–9; 1992:165; Aḥsá’í, DMI 6:662–8. [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
180. This general *Ziyára* can be found in Ibn Bábúya’s *Man lá yaḥḍuruh al-faqíh* and aṭ-Ṭúsí’s *Tandhíb* (Momen, BSBM1:42). [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
181. *Tahdhíb al-Aḥkám fī Sharḥ al-Muqni‘a* (“Rectification of the statutes in explaining the disguised”) is a *ḥadíth* collection compiled by Shaykh aṭ-Ṭúsí.—M.W.T. [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
182. In this latter tome numerous often arcane texts are gathered including passages from Muḥyí Dín al-Búní, Ibn al-‘Arabí and the *Kalimat-i maknúnih* of al-Fayḍ al-Káshání. [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
183. Versions of Q. 5:116b are also found scattered among various writings of the Báb and BA\*. An example from BA\* can be found in one of his Riḍwán Tablets: “Thou [God] knowest what is in me, but I know not what is in Thee. Thou art the All-Knowing, the All-Informed” (Ayyámí:255). [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
184. Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsá’í and later Shaykhí writers refer to Bilqiyál ibn Búr as a cosmic figure or angelic being connected with the esoteric architecture of the heavens, the zodiac, or the metaphysical “Tree” referenced in Qur’án 25:20.—M.W.T. [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
185. Algar, ‘Eblís’, EIr. VII:656–661; Awn, 1983:25f. [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
186. 1 Enoch 8:1; 9:6; 4 Q180 17–8; Milik, 1976:314; *Apocalypse of Abraham* (CE c. 100? originally Hebrew?) 13:6–14; etc.; Janowski, ‘Azazel’ DDD:240f; cf. Enc.Jud. 3:999–1002. [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
187. Apparently printed in the 19th century, I been unable to locate a copy of this text. The Sayyid Aḥmad of Lucknow referred to above had a good knowledge of the Bible. This is evident in his correspondence with Joseph Wolff dated 1833 (Wolff, R&ML [1835]: 385–391. [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
188. See p. 257, fn. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
189. Additional material has been added to this section.—M.W.T. [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
190. On the *al-ism al-a‘ẓam* (“Greatest Name of God”) see al-Búní, *Shams al-ma‘árif al-kubrá*, sect. 12:86ff; 99ff. On page 89–90 of the *Shams* there is a poem allocating 4 portions of the *ism al-as‘ẓam* to the Torah and 4 to the *Injíl*. Then, on page 93 a prayer is included which commences, “O our God! I beseech thee by the *al-há’* (letter “h”) of Thy Mightiest Name and through the three Rods (*al-‘uṣiyy*) and the *alif* (Letter A) ….” This prayer spells out a different pattern of letters associated with the *ism Alláh al-a‘ẓam*, the mightiest Name of God (cf. Winckler, 69). [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
191. Arab text cited from al-Búní, *Shams*, cited Winckler, 1930:69–71 with German trans. 71; text and French trans. Anawati, 1967:24, 27; Eng. trans. MacEoin, 1982 [BSB 1/1:4–14] = 1992:93–97 = App. XXIII. I have adapted MacEoin’s translation in the light of the other translations and al-Búní’s *Shams*. [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
192. On some Shaykhí and Bahá’í speculations see below (-->7.1ff) and BA\* and ‘AB\* cited Ma’idih 1:12ff (cf. Vol. 3:4–5); *Raḥiq* 1:669–690. cf. idem., *Qámús* 4:1642f; Mázandarání, *Asrár al-áthár* 5:238–41, MacEoin 1982:11–23. [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
193. This form is called “blind” because: 1. It lacks the usual open curve or “tail” of the regular *mím*, making it “sightless” or “closed”. 2. In esoteric symbolism, “blind” (أعمى) can mean closed off, sealed, or hidden from view, aligning with the mystical notion of concealed or inner knowledge.

 This graphical variant is significant in the occult and Sufi traditions, where specific letter forms are believed to have spiritual power or to encode hidden meanings. In the context of al-Búní’s diagrams, the “blind *mím*” is one of several altered letter forms used to construct talismans or to represent divine names in a way that is visually and symbolically distinct from ordinary script.—M.W.T. [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
194. The *Bismi’lláh* is an Arabic word indicating the oft-repeated qur’anic phrase “In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate” (Ar., *Bismi’lláh ar-Raḥmán ar-Raḥím*). [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
195. The diagram of the Mightiest Name at one point in the SOAS mss. of Sayyid Káẓim’s commentary (Sh. Ism, f. 271b) has an extra pentalpha () to the left of the inverted *wáw*. [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
196. This contradicts the statement in the last sentence of two paragraphs above.—M.W.T. [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
197. Bahá’u’lláh’s role during the Ministry of the Báb was characterized as a “supporter” and “champion” by Shoghi Effendi, reflecting His unique position as someone who actively promoted and defended the Báb’s Cause **without** being a mere follower. Bahá’u’lláh recognized the divine station of the Báb and played a pivotal role in advancing His mission, particularly through His leadership among early believers and His profound Writings that upheld the teachings of the Báb. This role was distinct from that of ordinary followers, as Bahá’u’lláh’s actions and insights demonstrated extraordinary spiritual authority and foresight, preparing the way for His own eventual declaration as “Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest” (*Man Yuẓhiruhu Alláh*).—M.W.T. [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
198. In his *K. Nuṣrat ad-dín Karím Khán* (see p. 2ff) does not clearly identify the “Padre” (a common designation for Christian missionaries) against whom he writes or the title of his book. Other later Kirmání Shaykhí leaders also had some dialogue with Christian missionaries and cited the Bible (Lambden, 1983b: 22ff). [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
199. See Vambery’s review of Browne’s edition and translation of AB\*’s *Sayyáḥ* where he makes some scathing remarks about Gobineau, reckoning him “no Orientalist at all”. In his opinion Gobineau merely “worked with the assistance of a Mirza and a learned Akhond of Teheran” (Vambery, 1892:215). [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
200. The unpublished trading accounts of the Báb apparently confirm Zoroastrian connections as Browne had speculated in his index to the *Persian Bayán* (Browne, *Nuqtat al-Káf*, XCIII–IV). [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
201. The recent English abridged translation of this Lavi history (-->bib. Lavi/Ebrahami tr. Maschke) omits all of the considerable space given in the 3rd. volume original to Jewish and Bábí-Bahá’í matters. [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
202. It is not impossible that Gobineau’s one-time Persian teacher and Jewish informant on Babism, Mullá (Eleazar) Hamadání was aware of the Báb’s links with Jews and informed Gobineau accordingly. [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
203. Note also. “The Mahdí will … bring forth the Ark of the Divine Presence (*tábút as-sakína*) from a cave in Antioch in which are the Torah which God sent down to Moses and the Gospel which he sent down to Jesus, and, he will rule among the People of the Torah according to their Torah and among the People of the Gospel according to their Gospel”. [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
204. Imám ‘Alí, *K. Jafr al jámi‘* (1987); Mullá Ṣadrá, Sh-Kafi 2:85–9; Majlisí, Bihar2 47:270ff; al-Baḥrání, *Awalim*; al-Bursí, Mashariq, 94; al-Aḥsá’í, JK 1/ii [68–114] 87–8; Steingass, 365–6; Sachedina, 981:22. [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
205. Dimensions of *jafr* referred to by the Imams as *jafr al jámi‘* (“Comprehensive Jafr”) also indicates modes of gematric prognostication (see [pseudo-Imam] ‘Alí, 1987). This *jafr* is mentioned by BA\* in his *L. Ḥurúfát al-muqaṭṭa‘a* (-->bib). [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
206. Qur’án 3:48 on which this is based reads: “And He (God) will teach him (Jesus) the Book (*al-kitáb*), the Wisdom (*ḥikmat*), the *Tawrát* and the *Injíl*”. [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
207. These statements may assume the pre-existent presence of letters of the *ism* *Alláh al-‘aẓam* (the “Mightiest Name of God”) in pre-Islamic scripture (cf. T.LaylatQ. 69:18 -->8). [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
208. Such scattered references to the *Tawrát*, *Injíl* and *Zabúr* as exist in the Báb’s *Dalá’il-i sab‘a* (Per. & Ar.), *K. PanjS*, *K. Asmá’* and other late writings are largely of passing or minor interest. [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
209. Qur’án 16:101 is known as *al-Tabdíl Verse* or the Verse of Substitution, since it contains the word *baddalná;* we change, replace or substitute). The original dissertation text used “alternation” instead of “alteration”.—M.W.T. [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
210. Matt. 10:28 seems to be the only NT saying that reflects a few Islamicate versions of the Delphic maxim: “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both souls and body in hell”. [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
211. Variant forms include, *a‘rafukum bi-nafsihi arafukum bi-rabbihi* (He among you who knows himself best knows his Lord best”). Both, for example, are found in *R. Ikhwán as-Safá’* (R.1:76). [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
212. See Ibráhímí, *Fihrist*, 225 [item 13 = Shaykh Aḥmad’s commentary on the aforementioned *ḥadíth* in reply to a question of Shaykh Muḥammad Mahdí Astarábádí]; Risála in reply to Sayyid Abú al-Ḥasan al-Jílání in MajR. 30:90–101, esp. 94f. [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
213. The Báb distinguishes this alleged quotation from the *Injíl* from the two expanded Islamic forms of the Delhpic maxim found in the *ḥadíth* literatures. He usually attributes the words *man ‘arafa nafsahu faqad ‘arafa rabbahu* to Imám ‘Alí and *a‘rafukum bi-nafsihi a‘rafukum bi-rabbihi* to Muḥammad. Commenting on these traditions and the alleged quotation from the *Injíl* he affirms that the world of creation or the human *nafs* (cf. Qur’an 41:53) may be the locus of the theophany of the names and attributes of God but underlines the impossibility of any relationship between the human *nafs* and the unknowable Godhead (cf. BA\*’s similar comments on *man ‘arafa nafsahu faqad ‘arafa rabbahu* in his L. H-Qazvíní, 35f). [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
214. This line is immediately followed by a similar saying of the “bearer of the law (*ṣáḥib ash-sharí‘a* = Muḥammad), “Whoso cometh to know his Lord best cometh to know his own self best” (Bursí, Mashariq, 188). On Bursí and his concept of self-knowledge see Lawson, 1992:270f. [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
215. See ‘An Interesting Document on the Báb [A letter of W. A. Shedd to the Editor of *The Muslim World*, dated Urumia, Persia, 28 August 1914]’ in *The Moslem World*, Vol. 5. (1915), pp. 111–12 also cited in Browne, *Materials* … 260–2. William Cormick and two other Persian physicians had been sent to ascertain, apparently on behalf of the Sháh and the Muslim divines of Tabriz (before 9 July 1850), whether or not the Báb was of sound mind and thus fit for execution. Cormick must have communicated his favourable impression of the Báb to John Shedd between 1870 and 1877 (on Cormick see Momen EIr. IV:275–6). [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
216. Epistle of Aristeas is an ancient Jewish work (not part of the Hebrew Bible or Christian Old Testament) that describes the translation of the Hebrew Torah into Greek, known as the Septuagint. Erubin, a tractate of the Mishnah and Talmud.—M.W.T. [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
217. The NT references are: Mk. 10:31; Matt. 19:30, 20:16; Lk. 13:30; Matt. 23; 11–12; Luke 14:11; 18:14; cf. Mk. 9:35, 10:43–4; Lk. 9:48, 22:26. [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
218. Mullá Ja‘far Gandum Pákkún was converted to Babism by Mullá Ḥusayn during the early years of the Bábí movement and died during the Ṭabarsí upheaval. [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
219. See Mk. 13:33f; Matt. 24:42f; Lk. 21:36; Matt. 25:13; I Thess. 5:2f; 2 Peter 3:10, cf. 1 Peter 4:1; Lk. 12:39; Matt. 24:43f; Rev. 3:3. [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
220. See also Q. 43:66; 21:41; 26:202; 29:43; 39:56. Various Islamic traditions, it should also be noted, express the belief that the Mahdí or Qá’im will come suddenly or unexpectedly. cf. Persian Bayán VII.9, where, alluding to the coming of God or *man yuẓhiruhu Alláh* on the Day of Resurrection, the Báb states that “He will suddenly shine forth” (*va ṭáli‘ míshavad baghtatan*). [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
221. *Ba‘ḍ* (بَعْض, NOT ba‘aḍ), *ba‘ḍá*, *ba‘ḍí*: part, portion; one; some, a few; a little of, some of; portion. In Arabic, repetition, e.g. *ba‘ḍ* *ba‘ḍ* or *ba‘ḍí ba‘ḍí*, is a standard way to indicate reciprocity or mutuality, meaning “each other” or “one another”.—M.W.T. [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
222. On the Dhahabiyya Sufi Order see Gramlich, 1965 1:14–26. This Order is traced back to its alleged founder, Sayyid ‘Abd-Alláh Barzishábádí (d. 872/1467–1468) whose *silsila* branches off from the Kubrawí master Sayyid Muḥammad Núrbaksh (d.c. 869/1464). On the 19th century Dhahbiyya of Shiraz see Lewisohn, 1998–1999 (BSOAS, 61). [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
223. *Parastish*, Pers., adoration, worship; attendance on the sick.—M.W.T. [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
224. Abu’l-Ma‘álí ‘Abdulláh Bin Abí Bakr Muḥammad Miyánjí, known as ‘Ayn al-Quḍát Hamadání (“The pearl of the judges”).—M.W.T. [↑](#footnote-ref-224)
225. See the appendix to his essay, ‘The ḥadíth as a means of Edification and Entertainment’ (Eng. trans. in Goldziher (ed) Stern vol. II:145–163 detailing NT influence upon *ḥadíth* literature written in 1888 (Eng. trans. in Stern 1971 vol. II:346–362). This appendix is further supplemented by Goldziher in his article, ‘Neutestamentliche Elemente in der Traditionslitterature’ in *Oriens Christians* II (1902), 315–22. [↑](#footnote-ref-225)
226. For further examples of the Muslim use of *fí Alláh* in the Q. and in select *ḥadíth* *qudsí* (<-- 2.2) see Graham 1978 which also registers some learned comments of Nöldeke (d. 1930) on the use of *fí-Alláh* in the Q (Graham, 1977:143 referring to Noldeke-Schwally 1:257). [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
227. Some details about the unpublished *Táríkh-i Nabíl Zarandí* can be found in Vahid Rafati’s 1996 article ‘Taríkh-i Nabíl Zarandí’ in *Khúshiháy-i az kharmá-i adab va hunar*, vol. 7 (Proceedings of a seminar on Nabíl-i a‘ẓam-i Zarandí), 76–87. In the following paragraph’s I draw primarily on this article by Rafati, the only easily available first hand account of the Haifa located mss. cf. MacEoin, Sources, index, 272–3. [↑](#footnote-ref-227)
228. See fn. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-228)
229. As far as I am aware very few Bahá’í or non-Bahá’í scholars have been allowed to examine or consult Zarandí’s original papers constituting a recension of the *Táríkh* (= in part the “Dawn-Breakers”). For reasons that are not entirely clear, contemporary Bahá’í authorities are loathe to allow scholarly examination of the Persian-Arabic originals in their possession. I was informed in 2000 that the Haifa ms. of Zarándí is not in fact the final recension incorporating all the revisions and suggestions of BA\* who apparently regarded Zarandí’s theological *Táríkh* as lacking concrete historical details. The fully revised edition of Zarandí was apparently appropriated by opponents of BA\* and is not now in the archives of the Bahá’í World Centre (Haifa, Israel). [↑](#footnote-ref-229)
230. The *Táríkh-i Zarandí* has never been wholly published in the original Persian (and Arabic) or in any other language into which it might have been translated. On its publication history see Rafati, 1996:83f. All partial publications of the *Táríkh-i Zarándí* are translations from SE\*’s English version. An Arabic translation entitled *Maṭá‘lí al-anwár* (Cairo, Egypt, 1941) was made by the Egyptian Bahá’í ‘Abd al-Jalíl Bey Sa‘d (d. 1942) but was banned and the original print run appears to have been destroyed by the Egyptian authorities. A Persian translation from the English via the Arabic (!) was made by Ishráq Khávarí (d. 1971) with a similar title and was first printed in BE 117 = 1961 (?). [↑](#footnote-ref-230)
231. Two of Amanat’s biblical cross references footnoted to these last two sentences, “Scatter throughout the length and breadth of this land …” (fn. 240 = cf. Matt. 11:3) and “… I am preparing you for the advent of a mighty Day” (fn. 241 = cf. Matt. 10:7, 23) are meaningless. They have no bearing upon the Báb’s alleged NT allusions. Several of the biblical references in R&R are erroneous. [↑](#footnote-ref-231)
232. The Báb’s references to the apostles of Jesus (*ḥawáriyyún*) are few and far between. See, for example, QA 63:255 (EGB. Coll. f. 109a), a passage inspired by Q. 3:52f and *T. Kawthar*, (EGB Coll. Or. F10 (7), f. 91a) (cf. P.Bay. 2:9). [↑](#footnote-ref-232)
233. On occasion SE\* used “mercy-seat” to (non-literally) render *al-‘arsh* (lit. the Throne) in QA 91 though the *‘arsh* of Islamic-Bábí cosmology has nothing to do with expiation (SWB: [QA 91] ] 45/tr. 68). In translating *alwáḥ* of BA\* in his *Prayers and Meditations of Bahá’u’lláh* (1st ed. 1934) SE\* also at one point used the English “mercy seat of Thy Oneness” to render the Arabic *‘arsh raḥmát waḥdániyyatika* (lit. Throne of the mercy of Thy Oneness”) (P&M No. 184, 323/Ar. 216). [↑](#footnote-ref-233)
234. Collins records several American printings of the 5 or so page ‘The Báb’s Address to the Letters of the Living’ (New York: Bahá’í Pub. Committee, 193?; 1949; 1953; 196?) (Collins, 1990:8). It was also included, for example, at the end (pp. 20–22) of the commemoration of the centennial anniversary of the ‘Martyrdom of the Báb 1850–1950’ (np .nd. [1950]) by the NSA of the Bahá’ís of Australia and New Zealand. [↑](#footnote-ref-234)
235. See, for example, T. Baqara, f. 254f.; cf. f.12 (on Q. 2:1–2); f. 264 (on 2:116); T.Tawhid [69]:2–13 [10ff]), QA 61:245; QA 91:365; QA 72:250; T. Aṣr: f 84ff, 98; T.Há’ (1):4, 238f, 257f; Q. Zavárih: 423ff. S. Ja‘far 96:51). [↑](#footnote-ref-235)
236. This boxed text is excerpted from the Báb’s Q. Zawarih 69:425. See also T. Baqara f. 195 (Q. 2:62); T. basmala, f. 339(b); T. Kawthar, f. 19b; T. al-Há’ (1): f. 268; T. ‘Aṣr 69: f. 29; T. Akhí 14: f. 414; Q. Hafiz: f. 79–80; Untitled: INBMC 14:163–80. It can also be noted that the use of the Syriac loan words *láhút* and *násút* for “divinity” and “humanity” has a long history in Islamic Trinitarian discussions as can be seen in the use of these terms by the Zaydí al-Qásim b. Ibráhím, in his *Radd ‘alá an-Naṣárá*, 317ff; al-Ḥalláj, and ash-Shahrastání in the section of Christians in his al-Milal 2:220 where a Christian opinion is expressed to the effect that Jesus’ ascension involved awareness of *al-láhút* (Divinity) in/through *an-násút* (the humanity). [↑](#footnote-ref-236)
237. Bahá’u’lláh was NOT a “follower” of the Báb! See Footnote page 221.—M.W.T. [↑](#footnote-ref-237)
238. According to at least one of his “seals” of the Edirne period (?) (BWV: 4 + Taherzadeh, RB 1, photograph opposite 78) BA\* states “God testifies by virtue of His own Self that I, verily, am one that is alive in the *Abhá* (most beautiful) Horizon and at every instant cries out from that Horizon, ‘I, verily, am God, no God is there except me’”. Elsewhere, in numerous *alwáḥ* BA\* associates himself with the Báb’s phrase *aná ḥayy fí ufuq al-abhá*. An example would be the untitled Tablet of BA\* in *La’álí* 3:15. [↑](#footnote-ref-238)
239. Zarandí [SE\*], AB\* and other Bahá’í historians also record that some months prior to his death the Báb penned 360 derivatives of the word *bahá’* in a fine *shikastih* (“broken script”), in the form of a calligraphic pentacle and arranged for it to be delivered to BA\* (DB: 370 + fn. AB\* Maqála tr. 26). [↑](#footnote-ref-239)
240. Compare AB\* *Mufawaḍat* …/ tr. SAQ:33, (talk of 18 April 1912 in) PUP:25 and ‘Izzíya Khánum, *Tanbíh*, 4, 34f, 58.fs [↑](#footnote-ref-240)
241. cf. words attributed to Ḥájjí Mírzá Āqásí by AB\* in a talk delivered in Haifa on 16 December 1919 in Herrick, *Unity Triumphant*, 156 …. [↑](#footnote-ref-241)
242. On BA\*’s earliest activities as a “Bábí” see for example, Balyuzi, BKG:39–42; Zarandí, [SE] DB:75–85; ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’, TN:58ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-242)
243. See also, idem, *Lawh-i-Sulṭán* in A.Muluk: 148, 190 (cf. AB\* SAQ: 79, 141, 143; S.Haykal AQA: 4:269 (tr SE\* GPB:101–02). [↑](#footnote-ref-243)
244. In certain of his writings the Báb had alluded to the importance of the ‘year nine’ (see for example, *Persian Bayán*). This year is understood by Bahá’ís to be the year AH 1269 (= 15 October 1852–4 October 1853) and seen as the period of BA\*’s assumption of Prophethood. [↑](#footnote-ref-244)
245. In his *Súrat al-haykal* (AQA 4:273) BA\* wrote, “We verily, caused the verses to descend in nine styles, each of them a testimony to the sovereignty of God, the Protector, the Self-Subsisting.” It is not clear what is meant by these “nine styles” (*shu’ún*) of revelation though the use of nine is obviously related to the *abjad* numerical value of the *Bahá’*, the Bahá’í “Greatest name” as contrasted with the five grades into which the Báb divided his writings. [↑](#footnote-ref-245)
246. A list of 154 major *alwáḥ* of BA\* was given by SE\* in various volumes of *The Bahá’í World*. (cf. Ishráq Khávarí’s *Ganj-i Shayigán*). [↑](#footnote-ref-246)
247. An Arab native of Kúfa named Bayán b. Sam‘án [at-Tamímí] (d. 119/737) was a literalist, extremist leader of the Bayániyya who came to claim the Imamite. Associated with Mughíra and Muḥammad al-Báqir he claimed to operate through the power of the *ism al-a‘ẓam* (Greatest Name of God) (al-Ash‘arí, *al-Maqálát*, 66–67; Hodgson, EI2 1:1116; Tucker, 1975). [↑](#footnote-ref-247)
248. See his *ar-Risála al-Rashtiyya* (1226/1811), JK 1/ii:63–114; Ibráhimí, *Fihrist*, No. 104 p. 260f; Momen, BSBM1:113. [↑](#footnote-ref-248)
249. That his qabbalistic gnosis may have been directly or indirectly influential upon the Báb is perhaps indicated by the fact that like the Báb he equated Joseph son of Jacob (*abjad* = 185) with God, the Self-Subsisting (*al-Qayyúm*) which has an identical abjad numerical value (Shams, 185f 481f). [↑](#footnote-ref-249)
250. For details and examples see, Ibn Manẓúr, *Lisán al-‘Arab* 1:35–6; Dozy, *Supplément* 1:123–4; E. W. Lane, *Lexicon* 1:263–4. Wehr, *Dictionary* 97. On Persian usuages and senses see Steingass 1892; Dehkhoda, *Lughat Námih*, entry *Bahá’*. [↑](#footnote-ref-250)
251. Just as YHWH has the abbreviated form יה Yáh so *bahá’* was sometimes abbreviated by BA\* through its first two letters “bá’” (ب) and “há’” (هــ). See the colophon ending the *Kitáb-i íqán*, ‘Thus hath it been revealed aforetime … revealed by the “Bá’” and the “Há’” [= Bahá’-Alláh]’ (KI:200/164). [↑](#footnote-ref-251)
252. This work also exists in a shorter though occasionally different recension entitled *Miṣbáḥ al-Mutahajjid al-Saghir.* (Kohlberg, 1992:272) [↑](#footnote-ref-252)
253. The biblically influenced *Du‘á’ as-simát* (Supplication of the Signs, cf. the testimonia Deut. 33:2) has been a much commented upon devotional prayer. It had a significant influence on Bábi-Bahá’í scripture and lies behind a number of occurrences of the (Islamo-) biblical location Paran (Ar. *fárán*) in Shaykhí and Bábi-Bahá’í primary literatures (Lambden, 1983b). [↑](#footnote-ref-253)
254. In the *Mafátíḥ* of al-Qummí the recitation by the Shí‘í faithful of the *Du‘á’ yawm al-mubáhala* is part of the commemoration on the 24th Day of the most sacred month Dhu’l-Ḥijja which is closely linked with the celebration of the *yawm al-ghadír* (Day of the Pool). For Shí‘í Muslims this day was that upon which ‘Alí was appointed *walí* (legatee) which is set a few days earlier (on the 22nd [or 18th] day of this month). ‘The Day of Mutual Execration’ (*yawm al-mubáhala*) denotes the day on which Muḥammad engaged in mutual execration (*mubáhala*) with select Christians of Najrán. It was on this Day that he is believed to have gathered the proto-Shí‘í (subsequently named) “people of the cloak” (*ahl al-kisá’*, cf. Qur’án 33:32) namely (apart from [1] Muḥammad himself) [2] ‘Alí, [3] Fáṭima, [4] Ḥasan and [5] Ḥusayn. [↑](#footnote-ref-254)
255. The first line is دُعاء البَهاء, “Du‘á’ al-Bahá’”.—M.W.T. [↑](#footnote-ref-255)
256. Note that in his *K. Aqdas* BA\* at one point states, “Say: This is that hidden knowledge whichshall never change, since its beginning is with nine [= *abjad* *Bahá’*], the symbol that betokeneth the concealed and the manifest, the inviolable and unapproachable Name …” (¶ 29, 28 cf. note p.188). [↑](#footnote-ref-256)
257. Probably pre-9th century CE Christian uses of the word *bahá’* occur in Arabic recensions of an originally Syriac work, *The Book of the Cave of Treasures* (*Me’ârath Gazzê*, original Syriac c. 4th cent.? CE) in the *Kitáb al-majjál* (“Book of the Rolls”). This work includes an account of the story of Adam and Eve in which reference is made to the First Man’s pre-fall (*bahá’ al-‘aẓím*, his “mighty glory” or “great beauty” (Bezold, Schatzohle, 2:14) as well as his *al-bahá’ al-‘ajíb* (wondrous glory), Gibson, Rolls, 6). According to the “Book of the Rolls” the first couple were both clothed in “glory” (*bahá’*) and “splendour” (Gibson, Rolls, 7). [↑](#footnote-ref-257)
258. The letter “l” (*lám*) within the Alláh of the *bismi’lláh* is, among other things, said to be the *ism al-a‘ẓam* (the Mightiest Name) and a *ramz* (“cipher”) which is the first thing which God chose for himself (*li-nafsihi*) (T. Basmala, 6014C:341). [↑](#footnote-ref-258)
259. In his the *Jawáhir al-asrár* (-->) BA\* cites Matt. 24:29–31a (in Arabic, AQA 3:10) as he does in his *K.íqán* (KI:19f /tr.16f; -->) though the parousia in “glory” is here associated with Muḥammad. [↑](#footnote-ref-259)
260. Of minor interest in this connection is the fact that BA\*’s father’s was friendly with Mírzá ‘Abu’l-Qásim Faráhání, Qá’im Maqám (<-- 5.4) who was among those who responded to the Christian missionary polemic of Henry Martyn. It is not known whether BA\* or his father were familiar with these exchanges. [↑](#footnote-ref-260)
261. According to Mázandarání BA\*’s family had an interest in exoteric and esoteric alchemy. He refers to BA\*’s brother Mírzá Músá and father Mírzá Buzurg as experienced alchemists (Athar 1:172–3 [Iksír] 5:53 [kímíyá]). They were allegedly in possession of gold and silver alchemical tools and instruments which BA\* had concealed in Tehran. During the two year period of his Sufi guise in Iraqí Kurdistan (1856–1856), BA\* was deemed “an adept in alchemy and the science of divination” (SE\* GPB:124). [↑](#footnote-ref-261)
262. Isrá’íliyyát informed traditions about alchemical processes were commented upon by BA\* including a cryptic utterance of the Mary the Jewess (fl. 1st cent.? CE). Including the saying, ‘Take from the “branch” of the [philosopher’s] Stone not from the “root” of the Stone’ (Ma’ida 1:26f) as well as a saying relating to the *samghat al-bayḍá* (“White Gum” = Silver) and the *samghat al-ḥamrá’* (“Red Gum” = Gold). A massive bibliography surrounds this subject. [↑](#footnote-ref-262)
263. Alchemical subjects were also an important element in Shaykhí esotericism. Shaykh Aḥmad, Sayyid Káẓim and Karím Khán Kirmání were learned in this area. [↑](#footnote-ref-263)
264. Exactly the same version (as that printed in AQA III:10) of Matt. 24:29–31a is quoted, paraphrased and commented on at some length in BA\*s *K. Íqán* (-->). SE’s translation of this text is not wholly literal but is assimilated to the AV, glossing over the minor variants and not translating BA\*’s Persian paraphrases of the Arabic NT texts. The Arabic plural *‘alámát* (“signs”) for example, is in conformity with the *textus receptus* and modern translations (+ INBAMC 46 & AQA III) translated as a singular (“sign”). He also has “in the clouds” not “on the clouds” (cf. KI tr. 16). [↑](#footnote-ref-264)
265. This text is essentially the Lukan redaction of Mk. 13:24–26 (// Matt. 24:29–30 cited by BA\* as above) with verse + 31 (there is no exact parallel in Mk. or Matt.) [↑](#footnote-ref-265)
266. Here instead of “the Father” the text of Jn. 14:26 quoted by Bahá’u’lláh has “my Lord” (Ar. *rabbí*), possibly a misreading (textually transmitted error) of *ábí* “my father” (so Polyglot) the “á” *alif* of *ábá* being read as the “r” *rá’* of *rabbá* (?). [↑](#footnote-ref-266)
267. Symbolically a diamond-like eternity with *al-aḥmadiyya* (divine perpetuity)? [↑](#footnote-ref-267)
268. cf. Qur’án 4:171a, *yá ahl al-kitáb lá taghlú fí dínikum*, (“O people of the Book! Do not commit excesses in your religion”). The Arabic word *ghálín* comes from the root gh-l-u/w the basic verbal form of which signifies ‘to exceed the proper bounds’. From this root comes *ghuluww* = ‘extremism’, ‘an adherant of an extremist sect’. [↑](#footnote-ref-268)
269. This “saying of the Imám” is cited by the Shaykhí Muḥammad Khán-i Kirmání in his *Ḥusám ad-dín*, 12 though it is not precisely sourced. Taking this context into account the reading *ghálín* (“exaggerators”) makes far better sense than *‘áliyyín* (“exalted beings”) inasmuch as one would not expect “exalted Beings” (assuming *‘alín* does not have the sense “haughty ones”) to engage in the *taḥríf* (“corruption”) of holy books. See also Majlisí, Biḥár 2:92, 151, 4:353; 23:30, 95; 25:274, 363; 27:222, 32:352; 35:326; 36:256; 37:27; 70:102 and 102:78. [↑](#footnote-ref-269)
270. See Ibn Ishaq, *Sirat* tr. Guillaume, 266ff; Burton, 1977: 68ff; Ishráq Khávarí, QI 1:22–3, 613–8. Q. 3:92 reads, “Say: Bring the Torah and read it if ye are truthful”, a verse said to have been addressed to Jews who submitted a man and a woman for examination who had committed adultery (Bukhárí, Ṣaḥíḥ, III:92). The version set forth by BA\* is a conflation and expansion of several early accounts. [↑](#footnote-ref-270)
271. The Pentateuch does in fact contain the stoning penalty for adultery (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22, etc.). It is not clear whether or to what extent the death by stoning for adultery was carried out by Jews during the biblical period. In post-biblical times adulteresses were variously stoned, strangled, burned, imprisoned etc., most commonly, publicly flogged (Tigay and Cohn ‘Adultery’ EJ 2:314). [↑](#footnote-ref-271)
272. In the Cairo ed. of the *K.Íqán* (p. 67) Q. 4:45 is partly cited as the words revealed to Muḥammad in connection with the Ibn-i Ṣúríyá episode. Q. 5:45 differs only slightly from Q. 4:45 in terms of the words quoted by BA\* (*mín ba‘ad*). It is Q. 5:45ff that, in Muslim commentaries, is usually explained in the light of the case of the Jewish adulterers and the stoning penalty issue. The phrase “they pervert (*yuḥarrifúna*) the text of the Word of God” in Q. 5:45 is taken by some (al-Ṭabarí, *Tafsír* VI:137) to indicate the Jewish concealment or suppression of the stoning penalty for adultery. [↑](#footnote-ref-272)
273. Here (KI:86) as elsewhere such as the *Lawḥ-i Abá al-Ḥasan* (BA\* Khádim-Alláh, dated 27th Rabí‘ AH 1297 [= 1879], INBMC 28:[447–63], 449) BA\* speaks of Jesus as having ascended up into the “fourth heaven”, the “solar” locale from whence he is to return. cf. Ibn al-‘Arabí, *Futuḥát*; Ishráq Khávarí, QI 1:103–107). [↑](#footnote-ref-273)
274. The Persian version cited is close to Isa. 65:25 though not identical with the *textus receptus*. BA\* may be paraphrasing the text or quoting an Islamic tradition inspired by Isa. 65:25a or, indeed, some other Islamic source in which this well-known prophecy is mentioned. Isa. 65:25 and 11:6f were sources of inspiration to Islamic thinkers and poets including for example, Jalál ad-Dín Rúmí. [↑](#footnote-ref-274)
275. SE\* in his translation of the this passage (KI:73) quotes the AV text (= RSV also) of Isa. 65:25a, “The wolf and the lamb shall feed together” as if it accurately renders the Persian. [↑](#footnote-ref-275)
276. Many modern Christian fundamentalist publications attest the continuing vitality of the hope that Isa. 65:25/11:6f will find concrete realization in the millennial age. [↑](#footnote-ref-276)
277. The Arabic text of Jn. 3:5b-6 here is identical with that quoted in the *Jawáhir* though Jn. 3:7a is omitted in the *K.Íqán*. The text is again very close to the L. Polyglot. BA\*’s Persian paraphrase is also untranslated by SE\*. [↑](#footnote-ref-277)
278. BA\* gives a partial Persian paraphrase of these words attributed to Jesus occurring in Majlisí, *Biḥár* 5:358 old edition (see QI 2:1145). [↑](#footnote-ref-278)
279. Worth noting is the fact that in his *Miftáḥ al-Asrár* Pfander (<--) has this Synoptic narrative indicate Jesus’ divinity and power to heal (tr. Tisdall, 23–5). [↑](#footnote-ref-279)
280. See Luke 5:23–24a; Mk. 2:9–10a; Matt. 9:5–6a with minor divergences. SE\* translation of this variant Arabic paraphrase of Lk. 5:23–24a, is highly paraphrastic and assimilated to the AV of the Markan account (Mk. 2:9–10a). Note the reference in the Arabic to Jesus’ *sulṭánan* (sovereignty), the subject BA\* is discussing (cf. also the Persian paraphrase, not translated by SE\* KI:104). [↑](#footnote-ref-280)
281. These words seem to be a rewritten and truncated Arabic version of Matt. 26:64b/Mk. 14:62b where BA\* finds reference to Jesus’ (= the Son of Man’s) “sovereignty”. [↑](#footnote-ref-281)
282. Key bibliographical abbreviations used are: BPT = Bahá’í Publishing Trust; BSB = Bahá’í Studies Bulletin; BWC = Bahá’í World Centre; MMM = *Majmu‘ihy-i millí maṭbu’at-i amrí* (Iranian BPT.) [↑](#footnote-ref-282)
283. The INBMC utilized were vols: 1, 14, 29, 40, 43, 50, 53, 58, 60, 64, 67, 69, 80, 82, 86, 91 and 98. [↑](#footnote-ref-283)
284. See R. A. Nicholson (ed.), *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Oriental MSS. Belonging to the late E. G.* (Cambridge: CUP, 1932). [↑](#footnote-ref-284)
285. Where two or more different texts are listed in the section it is normally the first mss. listed which has been cited in this thesis—as should be indicated in the referencing. [↑](#footnote-ref-285)
286. Most of the references in this thesis are to this uncatalogued, very clear handwritten copy contained in the Afnán Library (London). After the súrah number the page reference is written after a colon, e.g. QA 1:3 = súrah 1 page 3. This copy is dated Muḥarram 1323/1905. Other mss. consulted include a Haifa ms. dated 1261/1845 and the EGB. Coll. Ms. F (7). [↑](#footnote-ref-286)
287. An \* indicates an original text and a forward slash separates the pagination in original source[s] from that wherein there may be an English translation. [↑](#footnote-ref-287)
288. Shoghi Effendi (= SE\*). [↑](#footnote-ref-288)
289. In this bibliography the following publisher abbreviations will be used: CUP = Cambridge University Press; OUP = Oxford University Press; SUNY = State University of New York Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-289)
290. Additional information and correcting errors has forced a change of pagination for this section.—M.W.T. [↑](#footnote-ref-290)