

**University of California  
Los Angeles**

**The development of Shaykhí  
thought in Shí'í Islam**

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in Islamic Studies

by

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1979

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## To my parents

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- \* This document is a digital version of a typewritten dissertation. Many minor errors in the original text have been corrected. The author uses “Tehrán” (Ṭihrán) for the name of the city and “Ṭehrání” when it is a name of a person from Ṭihrán. Irán is used instead of Írán
- Level two headings have been added to the Table of Contents.
- The all capital letter text and the up-and-down capitalization used in headings has been replaced with lower-case letters, except for the first word and proper names.
- Punctuation has been placed where it logically belongs rather than a default position inside quote marks where they exist.
- Dual dates represent the Shamsí Hijrî (SH) (the Solar Hijri) calendar (the official calendar of Iran and Afghanistan), followed by *anno Domini* (AD). Single dates are shown as SH nnnn, or without a label if they are *anno Domini* (AD). The convention that SH, AD, AH, etc., should precede a date, and BC follow a date has been applied in this document.

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## **A note on transliteration and Quranic references**

The transliteration system employed in this work for Arabic Romanization is that of the Library of Congress. Persian personal names, words in book titles, and geographical names, however, are transliterated according to the standard Persian pronunciation. Titles of certain well-known figures are given in the form by which they are usually reproduced in English (e.g., Bahá'u'lláh).

For the noun, “Shí’a” is used; for the adjective, “Shí’í”.

All Quranic references are to the English translation of the *Qur’án* by Maulvi Muhammad Ali (London, 1917).

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## ***Publications***

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  2. Seven articles, "Mutamimát-i-Umn al-Kitáb" (The Supplements to the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*) published in *Áhang-i-Badí'*, (1976-). The series is continuing.
  3. "Hadaf va Ravešh dar Taḥqíq-i-Ma'árif-i-Bahá'í", (Purpose and Method in Studying the Bahá'í Writings), *Áhang-i-Badí'*, 1977.
  4. "Gozáreshí bi Ikhtisár dár bára-i-Alwáḥ-i-Ḥáḍrat-i-'Abdu'l-Bahá Khítáb bi Yárán-i-Gharb" (A Short Report on 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Letters to American Believers). A study of 1420 manuscript letters in Persian and Arabic written by the leader of the Bahá'í Faith. *Áhang-i-Badí'*, 1977.

## Abstract of the dissertation

The Development of Shaykh Thought in Shí'í Islam

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In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í (d. 1241/1825), a native of Aḥsá, founded a new school of thought within the Imámí Shí'a. The heterodox doctrines of Shaykh Aḥmad laid the foundations for a new approach to Shí'í theology and caused the traditional Shí'í theologians to denounce him as an innovator in their polemical works.

Shaykh Aḥmad's doctrines were a synthesis of the views of the Akhbárí and the Uṣúlí schools. He emphasized the importance of the *imáns*\* and prepared his students for the advent of the Twelfth Imám or Mahdí, whose appearance had been expected for centuries.

Shaykh Aḥmad wrote extensively, traveled widely and, with his erudition and personal magnetism, won over adherents from different parts of the country and from different social and intellectual backgrounds including many members

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\* Hybrid "word"—the plural of imám is a'imma.

of the royal family.

After Shaykh Aḥmad's death, the leadership of his school fell to Sayyid Kázim Rashtí, his close student, who continued Shaykh Aḥmad's approach and, in numerous works, elaborated his thoughts. The death of Sayyid Kázim was followed by a series of crises, aggravated by the fact that he did not designate a successor.

The teachings, particularly the predictions, of both Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kázim prepared their followers for the acceptance of the expected Maḥdí. When the Báb, the founder of the Bábí religious movement, claimed (in 1260/1244) that he was the expected one, many Shaykhís accepted his claim.

The Shaykhí school was the latter branch of the Imámí Shí'a, an intellectual link between Islam and the Bábí movement, and a point of departure for a series of religious and social developments in later periods which had a great impact upon the intellectual life of the Persians.

## Introduction

Throughout its history, Shí'í Islam has witnessed numerous sectarian developments and extremes of ideological diversity. One of the most important and influential developments occurred during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í (d. 1241/1825) founded a new school of thought which, although still within the Shí'í fold, became the focus of sectarian polemics. Shaykh Aḥmad maintained that the religious leaders no longer taught the truth, and that truth should be received directly from divine sources. His school was the direct result of the religious and social struggles of the period, and it, in turn, later contributed to social and religious change.

To place the Shaykhí<sup>1</sup> school in the context of Islamic schism, it is useful to sketch the definition of and approach toward religious sects in general as formulated by Western scholars on the basis of study of Christian sects, and then to provide an Islamic perspective on the subject.

The term 'sect' refers to a body of believers which has become separated from the main body of the religious community. While one sect of a religious body differs in nature, ideology, and purpose from other sects of the same religion, sociological studies show that sects share certain common social features: they originate out of protest, whether aggressive or nonaggressive, against the parent organization's beliefs, doctrines, or rituals; they usually consist

of people who belong to a lower class than the members of the parent church and are sometimes geographically isolated; they almost always begin functioning under a charismatic leader; and they come into being as a result of the church's inability to meet the social and psychological needs of some of its members.

B. R. Wilson, a leading authority on sectarianism, has distinguished six types of sects on the basis of the sect's response to the world: (1) conversionist sects, whose "reaction towards the outside world is to suggest that the latter is corrupted because man is corrupted";<sup>2</sup> (2) revolutionary sects, whose "attitude towards the outside world is summed up in a desire to be rid of the present social order when the time is ripe—if necessary, by force and violence";<sup>3</sup> (3) introversionist sects, "whose response to the world is neither to convert the population nor to expect the world's overturn, but simply in retiring from it to enjoy the security gained by personal holiness. This type is completely indifferent to social reforms, to individual conversion and to social revolutions";<sup>4</sup> (4) manipulationist sects, which, "previously called gnostic, are those which insist especially on a particular and distinctive knowledge. They define themselves *vis-à-vis* the outside world essentially by accepting its goals";<sup>5</sup> (5) thaumaturgical sects, or "movements which insist that it is possible for men to experience the extraordinary effect of the supernatural on their lives";<sup>6</sup> and (6) reformist sects, which "seem to

constitute a case apart. But the dynamic analytic approach to religious movements demands a category corresponding to those groups which, though sectarian in more than one respect, have affected transformations in their early response towards the outside world.”<sup>7</sup>

In the Western literature on Islamic schism, essential terms such as “sect”, “theological school”, “group”, and “school of law” are used inconsistently and often inter-changeably. For example, the writers of articles in the *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam* have used the various terms listed above to define or describe schisms with common elements and similar natures. There one finds under “al-Murđji’a”,\* “name of one of the early sects of Islam”,<sup>8</sup> and under “al-Mu’tazila” one reads, “the name of the great theological school which created the speculative dogmatics of Islam”.<sup>9</sup> The “Kháridjites” are called “the earliest of the religious sects”,<sup>10</sup> and “al-Zaidíya” are described as “the practical groups of the Shí’a”.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, “Málikís” are called “the school of law”,<sup>12</sup> and for the “Ĥanafites” the Arabic term “*madhhab*”—without even its equivalent in English (which could be “school”)—is used.<sup>13</sup>

In contrast to the undifferentiated approach illustrated above, the introduction to *al-Farq Bayn al-Firaq*, a well-known book by one of the most eminent Muslim heresiographers, Abú Mañşúr ‘Abd al-Qádir b. Ṭáhir al-Bağhdádí (d. 429/1037), is a good example of a Muslim scholar’s approach toward and evaluation of sects in an Islamic

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\* Murji’a(t), Murjiya(t): name of a Muslim sect who procrastinate, or think good works unnecessary, and faith sufficient. [the letter “t” here represents a tá’ marbúṭa].

context.

According to al-Baghdádí, a Tradition on the authority of the Prophet Muḥammad reads, "My people will be divided into seventy-three *firqa* [sections, groups] of which only one will be saved."<sup>14</sup> Al-Baghdádí categorizes the Islamic sects into seventy-three, of which the only one to be "saved" is the Sunnī. He differentiates the groups into two main categories. The first category deals with theological questions such as the understanding of God, His unity, justice, and other attributes; free will versus predestination: the possibility of seeing God on the Day of Judgement; and the qualities of the Prophet Muḥammad. Each sect maintains its own attitude toward these questions, and each group, considering itself right and justified, accuses the others of being infidels. The second category comprises jurisprudential questions defined by an understanding of Quranic teachings. The jurisprudential attitudes of a sect are not considered grounds for accusing its members of being infidels.

To decide who belonged to the saved sect and who did not, al-Baghdádí had to provide a definition for the term "Muslim". He enumerates various definitions according to different sects, and then he states the definition which, apparently, is accepted by the saved sect, namely the Sunnīs.

According to the Karámíya sect, a Muslim is one who believes in the oneness of God and in His Prophet Muḥammad.

According to another sect, a Muslim is one who believes that (1) the universe is accidental (*ḥádīth*), (2) God and His attributes are eternal, (3) Muḥammad is the messenger of God for the entire human world, (4) Muḥammad's religion will last forever, (5) the *Qur'án* is the main source for religious order, and (6) the Ka'ba is the direction of obligatory prayer. Al-Baghḍádí then asserts, as the last condition of belief, that a true Muslim does not set up or adhere to heretical doctrine (*bid'a*), of which he identifies two categories. The first category of heretical doctrine causes a believer (Muslim) to become a nonbeliever. For example, the members of Bayáníya or Mughayríya sects would not be considered Muslims because they maintain the divinity of the *imáms*. Belief in incarnation, or belief in the acceptability of marriage between a man and his daughter's daughter, which was practiced by the Maymúníya, made them cease to be Muslims, according to al-Baghḍádí. Similarly, the belief that Islam would be abrogated on the Last Day was a heretical doctrine which caused the Abáđíya to become non-Muslims in his view.

The second category of heretical doctrine does not cause the believer to become a nonbeliever, but it does deprive him of some social rights. For example, he can neither lead the group prayer nor marry a woman from among the saved sect, the Sunnís.

Al-Baghḍádí's approach to Islamic sects appears to imply that only heretical doctrines concerning religious

matters played a role in generating new sects in Islam. To support his claim that social and economic factors did not play any part, he contends that the controversial issues raised immediately after the death of the Prophet were also of theological or religious nature, and that Abú Bakr, who became the first successor (caliph) of the Prophet, solved them all by quoting the Prophet's statements (*hadíth*); thus, none of the issues caused schism in Islam at that time. Such controversial issues included the question of whether the Prophet was dead or had ascended to heaven like Jesus; whether the Prophet should be buried in Mecca, his birthplace, or in Medina, the city of Emigration where he established his religion; whether the Prophet's successor (*imám*) could be a man from outside the Prophet's clan (Quraysh) or had to be a member of the Quraysh. Although every one of these issues had immediate socio-political implications, it is significant that traditional Muslim perspective assigns merely theological value to them. In fact, two jurisprudential issues had been raised: (1) could anyone inherit from the Prophet, or did his property belong to the community? and (2) was a non-*zakát* (alms) payer still a Muslim? Even the imamate, the question of who would succeed the Prophet, which split Islam, was originally perceived as a religious issue and only later developed into a social and political dispute.

In actuality, the "religious" problems that caused schism in Islam, like the issue of the imamate, could also

fall into the categories of jurisprudential, theological, and philosophical differences in the interpretation of the *Qur'án* and *ḥadīth*, the validity and authenticity of *ḥadīth*, daily worship practices, and theological discussions about God, the prophets, the angels, and man's predestination or free will.

The applicability of the terms "sect", "movement", "school", and so on, to these doctrines depends upon the definition of these terms within the framework of Islamic history, the social function of the group, its sense of group solidarity, and the relationship of the schismatic group to the parent group. It must be borne in mind, however, that it is nearly impossible to draw a line between "sects" and "schools" in Islam, or to affix a certain term to a certain group and expect the term to be applicable in all the historical phases of that group.

The *Shaykhí* school has been referred to in Persian works as "*firqa*" (division, section) or "*madhhab*" (school, religious creed), but more often as "*Shaykhíya*", a term consisting of "*Shaykh*" and the suffix "*íya*"\* which denotes either a group of people who follow a certain person, for example, "*Zaydíya*", or a group with a certain ideological system, such as "*Qadaríya*".

In this work the term "*Shaykhí* school" is used, being the preferred term of the *Shaykhís* themselves and appropriate to a theological study of the *Shaykhí* ideology, which is intended as a primary attempt at clarification of the

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\* Persian, "-iyya" (Bahá'ís use "-íyya").

intellectual parameters of the Shaykhí school, as well as examining the issue in its wider historical context.

The Shaykhí school, although primarily a theological school, had definite practical and sociological implications, promoted group cohesion, strengthened the moral order, and offered new approaches toward dogmatic, traditional principles of Shí'í thought. Although the school's theoretical approaches were a revolution in the Shí'a, they were strongly rooted in Shí'í Traditions and the utterances of the Shí'í imáms. The school reevaluated Shí'í dogmas, redefined the religious norms, reconsidered the traditional understanding of Shí'í beliefs, and introduced a series of new doctrines, not in the name of a new independent value-oriented movement or religious revolution, but as a system which claimed to be the very essence of Shí'í thought. Many Shí'í authorities did not accept this claim, however, and considered the Shaykhí school to be heresy.

The doctrines of the Shaykhí school were a syncretism of indigenous religious Shí'í beliefs, and were not imported from foreign cultural or religious ideologies. Of the theological, sociological, and ritual aspects that characterize the school, this study is concerned mainly with the theological aspects, for it is the theological doctrines of the school that form its strongest connection to the mainstream of Shí'í thought, and also constitute the most significant links between the school and the Bábí religious movement. In studying the theology of the school, only the

basic ideas of Shaykhí ontology and eschatology will be discussed. A detailed discussion of the sources which influenced the Shaykhí school, and of nature of the similarities between the ideology of the Shaykhí school and other theological and philosophical trends of thought, is beyond the scope of this work.

In spite of the fact that numerous significant social and political events took place during this era, few scholarly works about the period have been written. The religious and intellectual climate has received even less scholarly attention. The abundance of historical sources,<sup>15</sup> travelers' narratives, biographical works, political documents, and religious treatises produced in this era requires careful study and presents a challenge to the scholar.

This study employs an analytical approach based on primary sources written by Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kázim Raṣhtí, his successor. In discussing points of controversy between the Shaykhí school and other trends of thought, reference is made to scholarly works by specialists in the field.

Shaykh Azmad's contribution in reconciling conflicting beliefs unified a group of people from different social backgrounds and geographical regions and prepared them intellectually to accept the Báb, who in the middle of the nineteenth century claimed to be the fulfillment of the Islamic expectation of the Mahdí and ultimately proclaimed

that his was a religious system independent of Islam, with a new revealed Holy Book.

While the Shaykhí school was not a value-oriented, religious revolutionary, messianic, and charismatic movement, it contained the seeds of all these features, which were later to germinate and develop to fruition in the Bábí movement, a movement which proved to be broader in scope and more comprehensive in ideology than the Shaykhí school which had preceded it.

## Notes

- 1 The term “Shaykhí”, the adjective from the word “Shaykh”, is derived from the title of Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá’í.
- 2 B. R. Wilson, “A Typology of Sects”, p. 364.
- 3 *ibid.*, p. 365.
- 4 *ibid.*, p. 366.
- 5 *ibid.*, p. 367.
- 6 *ibid.*, p. 368.
- 7 *ibid.*, p. 369.
- 8 *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. “al-Murdj’a”, by A. J. Wensinck.
- 9 *ibid.*, s.v. “al-Mu’tazila”, by H. S. Nyberg.
- 10 *ibid.*, s.v. “Kháridjites”, by G. levi della Vida.
- 11 *ibid.*, s.v. “al-Zaidíya”, by R. Strothmann.
- 12 *ibid.*, s.v. “Málikís”, by W. Heffening.
- 13 *ibid.*, s.v. “Ḥanafites”, by W. Heffening.
- 14 Abú Maṣṣúr ‘Abd al-Qádir al-Baḡhdádí, *al-Farq Bayn al-Firaq*, p. 3.
- 15 Hafez Farmayan remarks that, “No period in Persian History is so rich in source materials as that of the recent Qájár (1794–1925).” “Observations on Sources for the Study of Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Iranian History”, No. 1, p. 41.

## I

### **The religious, intellectual climate of Iran during the first half of the nineteenth century**

The Qájár period (1193/1779–1342/1924) was characterized by the transformation of long-established institutions and the emergence of new approaches to social and religious life in Iran. It was a period of despair, of decline in intellectual creativity, and of spiritual and material deprivation. It was a period of European imperialistic designs, during which Eastern and Western cultures met and clashed. The transformation of institutions gave rise to several major political and religious reforms which, in depth, scope, and creativity, differed from many other reforms in Persian history.

Shí'í Islam, as the fundamental element in the life, manners, and attitudes of the Persians, has had a great influence upon the mentality, character, and attitudes of the Persians in their social and private life. Islam has also played a peculiar and influential role in all aspects of the intellectual and moral climate of the nation. Therefore, no study of the socio-political history of the Persians could be attempted without a close consideration of religious attitudes.

A comprehensive study of the religious climate of the period is still to be undertaken. In such a study, the activities of the religious circles, the life and the

contributions of the individual *'ulamá*, and relations among the *'ulamá* themselves and with the people, rulers, and religious minorities are important elements which must be considered in order to comprehend the roots of the religious reforms.

The intent of the present chapter is to sketch the basic facts in the religious life of the Persians in order to provide a foundation for the discussion of the main *Shaykhí* doctrines.

*Shí'í* Islam has been a factor in the religious life of Iran from the early period of the Islamic era. From the *Şafavíd* period (907/1501–1145/1732), to the present, except for a short time during the *Afşár* Dynasty (1148/1736–1210/1795), *Shí'a* has been the official religious system of Iran. The strong intellectual connection of the Persian *Shí'a* with the *Shí'í* centers of *'Atabát*<sup>1</sup> must be emphasized. The holy shrines of the *Shí'í imáns*\* and the *Shí'í* circles of *'Atabát* have always attracted the Persian *Shí'a* and have been the most respected places for *Shí'í* studies in the Islamic world. Although Iran has several well-known centers for these studies, such as *Mashhad*, *Qom*,<sup>†</sup> *Işfahán*, and *Tehrán*, it is generally believed that the best schools and the most qualified teachers for advanced studies in *Shí'í* doctrines are located in *'Atabát*. Attendance at the lectures of the *Shí'í 'ulamá* in *'Atabát* and study in their circles is the utmost desire of the *Shí'í* knowledge seeker.

The curriculum of the circles consists of the study of

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\* Singular of *'Atabát* is *'Atabat* and plural of *imám* is *a'imma*.

† *Qum*.

the *Qur'án*, Shí'í tafsír (interpretation), *ḥadīth* (Tradition), *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), and Arabic grammar. The students begin their career by memorizing the *Qur'án* and by studying the Arabic language through memorization of the *Niṣāb al-Ṣibyān* of Badr al-Dín Maḥmúd b. Abí Bakr Faráhí (d. 1208/1793). Alongside the *Niṣāb*, or a little later in their studies, the *Amthila* and *Ṣarf Mír* of Mír Sayyid Sharíf Jurjání (816/1413) are studied as basic texts for Arabic grammar. In the literary sciences (e.g., *Ma'ání*, *Bayár*, and *Badí'*), the *Muṭawwal* of Mas'úd b. 'Umar Sa'd Taftázání (d. 793/1390) is the basic text. In principles of jurisprudence the *Ma'álim al-Uṣúl* of Shaykh Ḥasan b. Zayn al-Dín al-Shahíd al-Thání, or the *Qawánín al-Muḥkama fí al-Uṣúl* of Mírzá Abú al-Qásim b. Muḥammad Ḥasan, known as Mírzá-i-Qumí (d. 1231/1815), is taught. Although the basic courses offered in each circle are almost identical, the material covered in each course and the duration of the course depends on the interest of the teacher.<sup>2</sup>

Fields of specialization do not exist, and each learned man can teach whatever he wishes. The teachers of higher rank are expected to answer any questions and discuss any religious issue. In spite of the lack of specialization in religious studies, some of the *'ulamá* are better known for their knowledge and authority in certain fields. The most respected teachers are those who can teach different courses to many students.

The term of study in *'Atabát* is not fixed. Students

may stay in *'Atabát* anywhere from a few months to five, or even seven, years. They usually complete a course by writing a treatise on a religious subject. If the treatise is approved by the teacher, the writer is awarded an *ijáza* (authorization, license).<sup>3</sup> An *ijáza* is a great honor for a student and the official recognition of his academic, moral, and religious qualifications. The fame and the esteem of the issuer of an *ijáza* is significant for the later religious and academic life of the receiver: biographical books always provide the names of the *'ulamá* from whom the *'álim*\* has received his *ijázas*.<sup>4</sup>

In spite of the fact that the religious circles of *'Atabát* and Iran provided religious education for hundreds of *Shí'a*, the general public, which was illiterate, lacked any formal religious education, and the general knowledge of the *Shí'í* community rarely went beyond the details of daily rituals. In such a society, the religious understanding of the individuals is based on obedience to religious leaders. The fact that in Persian society only a certain group of people receive a religious education is partly due to the fact that a person traditionally follows the occupation of his father, and, as a result, several members of one family often receive a good education, and even reach the highest ranks of religious leadership.<sup>5</sup>

During this period, a great number of books and treatises were written in various fields of Islamic sciences.<sup>6</sup> It is reported, for example, that Mullá Muḥammad

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\* *'álim* is singular of *'ulamá'* and plural of *ijáza* is *ijázát*.

Ja'far Astarábádí (d. 1263/1846) wrote 70 books,<sup>7</sup> and Sayyid Kázim Rashbí (d. 1259/1843) wrote 150.<sup>8</sup> Although, on the basis of these reports, the number of religious works of the period approaches several thousand volumes, the majority of them are in the nature of marginal notes to the well-known works of the earlier Shí'í writers. Rather than encouraging originality and creativity, Shí'í scholarship has pursued various forms of *taqríz* (eulogy), *taḥshíya* (insertion),\* and *talkhís* (abridgment) on the important works of the past.<sup>9</sup> For example, among the works written by Astarábádí, fourteen are in the form of *taḥshíya* and *sharḥ* (exegesis).<sup>10</sup>

Very rarely did an *'álím* concentrate his works in one field. Fame and popularity among the *'ulamá* also depended on their versatility. The result was a multitude of authors who contributed very little to the critical study of Shí'í scholarship.

The language of the scholarly texts in Islam has always been Arabic. Although during this period the tendency toward writing religious texts in Persian was beginning to increase among some of the *'ulamá*, the main works of all the distinguished *'ulamá* were still being written in Arabic.

An examination of the religious works of the period reveals that aside from a few influential and well-respected works on *fiqh*, such as Shaykh Murtaḍá Anṣarí's (d. 1281/1864) works, greatest attention was given primarily to the minor questions of *fiqh*, while much less attention was given other religious fields. This is understandable, for each *mujtahid*

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\* Ar. *taḥshíya*.

tried to consolidate his authority as the “*marja’-i-taqlíd*” by providing an immediate and personal framework of legal sanctions relating to a plethora of daily dilemmas in the lives of his followers. Works on *fiqh* were so common that it is hard to find an *‘álim* who did not write a few works on this subject. It is not surprising, then, that only a small number of them have been accepted and widely used by the entire *Shí’í* community.

In the field of *tafsír* nothing was written that is comparable, either in length or in quality, to the earlier *Shí’í tafsírs*,\* such as the *Majma’ al-Bayán* by Ṭabrisí (d. 548/1153).<sup>11</sup> The well-known books of *tafsír* written in this period are commentaries on a few verses or chapters of the *Qur’án*. A full, comprehensive commentary was not attempted.<sup>12</sup>

The *‘ulamá*, collectively known in Persian society as the *Jámi’a-i-Rúháníyat* (the spiritual concourse), were in charge of religious rituals.<sup>13</sup> The members of this group, although differing from one another in rank, all functioned as commentators on the *Qur’án* and Islamic law, religious leaders, judges, teachers, arbitrators, managers of the holy shrines, and recipients of the income of the religious endowments (*auqáf*). They were also entitled to receive the *khums*<sup>14</sup> on behalf of the *imáms*.

The *‘ulamá* were in charge of various socio-religious affairs of the community. They were trusted by the people as representatives of the holy *imáms* among the *Shí’a*. They

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\* Plural of *tafsír* is *tafásír*.

were also considered the true leaders, decision makers, reliable sources, and leading authorities in religious doctrine, and were thought to be the arbiters of the common good of the community. Such an attitude gave the *'ulamá* power and influence and enabled them to assume leading roles in social conflicts. The *'ulamá* were also a refuge for people who were treated unjustly. In this respect they were the main link between the ruling class and the masses.

The involvement of the *'ulamá* in various socio-religious affairs produced a noticeable competition among them for students, attendance at daily prayers, and income from *auqáf*. In most cases, it was accompanied by ideological disputes. The most common device used against one's rivals was *takfír* (accusing someone of being an infidel), which could cause the accused person to lose his following and even be put to death by the followers of the issuer of the *takfír*. *Takfír* was always pronounced in the name of defending and protecting Islamic interests.

The relationship between the *'ulamá* and the ruling class was not fixed and determined. It varied on an individual as well as temporal basis. As the nature of the relationship was affected by many factors, any generalization on this subject must be made with care. Since religion was the most influential factor in the private and social life of the Islamic community, naturally the *'ulamá* were the most respected and influential group. They ascribed to themselves the roles of interpreters of the Word of God and

protectors of Islam on earth. As a result of such functions, the rulers of Islamic societies needed the support of the *'ulamá* to consolidate their political positions. They would obtain wider support and popularity if they could establish friendly relations with the *'ulamá*. Politically or militarily weak rulers particularly required their support. It is generally true that, as the power and stability of a ruler increased, his appeal for *'ulamá*'s support decreased, but it must immediately be added that the personal tendencies of the ruler played a fundamental role in defining his relations with the *'ulamá*. A ruler with a religious interest was more attached to the *'ulamá* than a ruler lacking such an interest. From the standpoint of the *'ulamá*, the personal tendencies of the *'álim* were significant in defining his relations with the rulers. While some of the *'ulamá* were so detached from material involvement that they paid no heed to the rulers, others were active in political affairs. This group, which did not object to being paid by the court, carried out its commands and tended to forget their roles as spiritual leaders. It is true, however, that an *'álim* was better able to fulfill his function if he had a satisfactory relationship with the rulers. Mutual support was, therefore, of benefit to both sides.

Fath 'Alí Sháh (d. 1250/1834), who was a man with a strong religious sense,<sup>15</sup> respected, financially supported, and paid visits to the *'ulamá*. The Sháh invited Mullá Ja'far of Astarábád (d. 1263/1846) to Tehrán and housed him

near the royal palace, visiting him at least once a month.<sup>16</sup> It is also reported that Fath ('Alí Sháh visited Mullá 'Abd Alláh Zonozí\* (d. 1257/1841) and presented gifts to him and to his students.<sup>17</sup> Mullá 'Abd al-Razzaq Donbolí (d. 1242/1820) states that Ná'yib al-Saltana 'Abbás Mírzá (d. 1249/1833) and Qá'im Maqám (d. 1251/1835) expressed the utmost respect for the '*ulamá*. Ná'yib al-Saltana was said to attend the congregational prayer every Friday, and Qá'im Maqám would host a reception for the '*ulamá* every Thursday and Friday.<sup>18</sup> It is also reported that Muḥammad 'Alí Mírzá (d. 1237/1821), son of Fath 'Alí Sháh and the governor of Kermánsháh, invited Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í (d. 1241/1825) to Kermánsháh and paid him one thousand *tománs*<sup>†19</sup> for his travel expenses. Shaykh Aḥmad was also paid a monthly salary of seven hundred *tománs*.<sup>20</sup>

In spite of such generosity and kindness, rulers did not tolerate any serious opposition from the '*ulamá*: whenever the '*ulamá* threatened the security of a ruler, he would act against them.<sup>21</sup>

Doctrinal conflict and crisis was at a high level during this period and affected the entire life and attitude of the Persian Shí'a. In the year 260/873 when, according to the Shí'í belief, the Twelfth Imám disappeared in Sámarrá and his occultation (*ghaybat*) began, the Shí'a were cut off from his direct religious and spiritual guidance. Prior to that time, religious problems had been solved by asking his advice or by emulating his conduct, deeds, and words.

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\* Zunuzí.

† Túmán (singular and plural). Endnote quotes the work by Muḥammad Taqí Lisán al-Mulk Sepehr.

Therefore, the Traditions were consulted as the main sources for Islamic law. This situation continued until the end of the Lesser Occultation (which began in 260/873 and ended in 324/940).<sup>22</sup> By the beginning of the Greater Occultation (329/940), the Shí'a could only refer to the *Qur'án* and the Traditions on the authority of the Prophet and the *imáms*, since all material connection with the *imáms* had been severed in 329/940. In the early decades of the occultation period, the most important collections of Traditions, which are considered to be second in validity only to the *Qur'án*, were compiled by Kolayní (d. 329/940), Şadúq (Ibn Báawayh) (d. 381/991), and Tosí (460/1067).

The occultation of the *imám* raised a fundamental question: who would be the center of authority and what would be the sources of legislation? Some Shí'í scholars believed it was permissible to employ "reason" to solve problems for which the *Qur'án* and the Traditions offered no clear solutions. Other Shí'í scholars considered the *Qur'án* and the Traditions to be sufficient sources for legislation and maintained that there was no need to use individual reasoning for new religious cases. In the early period, the dispute between the two groups, although important, did not create a serious rift in the Shí'í community, but in the late fifteenth century, when confessional affiliation assumed major importance in the tribal struggles for power in northwestern Iran, the gap widened until two separate groups, the Akhbárís and the Uşúlís, emerged.

The Akhbáris identify as the earliest Akhbáris scholars Kolayní and Şadúq, who collected and classified the Traditions. The next great Shí'í scholar was Muḥammad b. 'Alí known as Ibn Abí Jumhúr of Aḥsá (d. about 901/1495),<sup>23</sup> who appeared a full five centuries later. Akhbáris theology, with a distinct ideological system, begins with Mullá Muḥammad Amín Astarábádí (d. 1025 or 1031 or 1036/1617, 1621 or 1626).

Mullá Muḥammad Amín b. Muḥammad Sharíf Astarábádí was born in Astarábád and resided in Mecca and Medina. He was the first *'álim* to challenge the authenticity of the *mujtahids*' (*Uşúlis*') judgments,<sup>24</sup> and in many books, including the *Fawá'id al-Madaniya*, accused the *mujtahids* of being the cause of corruption in Islam.<sup>25</sup> Although the founding of the Akhbáris school by Astarábádí marks the division of the Shí'í *'ulamá* into two antagonistic groups, it was not until the eighteenth century that the Uşúlí ideology was identified with a particular founder.

After Muḥammad Amín Astarábádí, the Akhbáris school included a number of scholars such as Mullá Muḥsin Fayḍ Káshání (d. 1091/1680), who wrote the *Safínat al-Naját* and criticized the Uşúlis. Fayḍ states in the *Safínat al-Naját* that religious legislation can be based only on the *Qur'án* and the Traditions, not on the other sources used by the Uşúlis.<sup>26</sup> After Fayḍ, the doctrines of the Akhbáris school were developed by *'ulamá* such as Mullá Muḥammad Ṭáhir of Qom (d. 1098/1686), Mullá Khalíl b. Ghází of Qazvín (d. 1098/

1686),<sup>27</sup> and Shaykh Muḥammad b. Ḥasan Ḥurr ‘Ámilí (d. 1033/1623). Among these, Shaykh ‘Ámilí is the most important because of his work, *Wasá’il al-Shí’a*. He also wrote the *Fawá’id al-Tosíya*, a book on Akhbárí ideology which attacked the approach of the Uṣúlís. In addition to the above works, ‘Ámilí wrote the *Hadíyat al-Abrár*, devoted to the disputes between the Akhbárís and the Uṣúlís. He also wrote the *Hidáyat al-Umma ilá Aḥkám al-A’imma*. As a major voice of “learned orthodoxy”, he was opposed to the “ecstatic heterodoxy” of the Şúfís.<sup>\*28</sup>

The views of Astarábádí, which were supported and enriched by the later Akhbárí ‘ulamá, were accepted by the majority of the Shí’a in Iran, Iraq, and the Gulf provinces.62/1651) established the Akhbárí school in Baḥrayn<sup>29</sup> and was followed by Shaykh Sulaymán b. ‘Abd Alláh Máhúzí (d. 1121/1709) and his students. The intellectual activities of the Akhbárís in Baḥrayn made the province a major Akhbárí center. The most distinguished Akhbárí scholar of Baḥrayn was Shaykh ‘Abd Alláh b. Şáliḥ Samáhíjí (d. 1135/1722), who severely attacked Uṣúlí beliefs and went to extremes in his enmity toward the Uṣúlís. Samáhíjí has described the views of the Akhbárís and the Uṣúlís in two of his works. The first, the *Munyat al-Mumárisín fí Ajwabat Su’álát al-Shaykh Yásín* (Yásín b. Şáliḥ al-Dín), was cited by the famous biographer Mírzá Muḥammad Báqir Khánsárí (d. 1313/1895) to describe the ideological differences between the two groups. The second,

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\* al-mutaṣawwifa—Sufis,

*al-Núhíya*, clearly states that the Shí'a are not obliged to obey the *mujtahids* because such an obligation is not established by God, the Prophet, or the *imáms*.<sup>30</sup>

The later Akhbárí scholar, Shaykh Yúsuf b. Aḥmad BaḥraynÍ (d. 1186/1772), well-known for his books, the *Ḥadá'iq al-Nádira* and the *Lu'lu'at al-Baḥrayn*, was a moderate. He criticized the extremist Akhbárís in his work, *al-Durr al-Najafíya fÍ Radd al-Akhbáríya*.<sup>31</sup> It was during the lifetime of this man that the founder of the Uşúlí school, Muḥammad Báqir b. Muḥammad Akmal al-Dín of Behbahán (d. 1205/1790), known as Waḥíd BehbahánÍ, rose against the Akhbárís, and Shaykh Yúsuf BaḥraynÍ gave way to the new Uşúlí ideology.

Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-NabÍ AkhbárÍ (d. 1232/1816), better known as Muḥaddith NísháborÍ, was the last distinguished AkhbárÍ scholar. He wrote the *Qal' al-Asás fÍ Naqḍ Asás al-Uşúl*<sup>32</sup> and the *Maşádir al-Anwár fÍ al-Ijtihád wa al-Akhbár* to criticize the Uşúlí *mujtahids*. Muḥaddith NísháborÍ was killed by the Uşúlí in 1232/1816 in Kazímayn at the age of 54.<sup>33</sup>

The persecution of Muḥaddith NísháborÍ and the rise of Muḥammad Báqir BehbahánÍ put an end to the AkhbárÍ school; AkhbárÍ ideology, which had for centuries dominated the religious and intellectual life of the Shí'a in the main Shí'í scholastic centers, was replaced by the Uşúlí ideology.

Although the historical roots of Uşúlí thought go back

to the occultation period, and since then there have been numerous Uşúlí 'ulamá among the Shí'a, Muḥammad Báqir Behbahání is considered to be the founder of the Uşúlí school.<sup>34</sup> The new jurisprudential system he formulated was subsequently adopted by the Shí'a, and with some modifications was accepted by well-known scholars such as Shaykh Murtaḍá Anşárí and Mullá Muḥammad Kázim (d. 1329/1911), known as Ákhond Khorásání.\*

Because of his contribution to the formulation of Uşúlí thought, Behbahání became known among the Shí'a as Mu'assis Behbahání (Founder), Murawwij Behbahání (Disseminator), Ostád-i-Akbar† (Great Teacher), and Ostád-i-Kull (The Teacher of Everyone). He wrote a number of books, mostly in Persian, among which the *Risála dar Ijtihád va Akhbár* is significant for its repudiation of Akhbárí views and for its support of the position of the *mujtahid* and his functions, namely, *ijtihád* (individual judgment).<sup>35</sup> He also wrote two other works on the same subject: *Inḥişár-i-Mardom bi Mujtahid va Muqallid*,<sup>36</sup> on the theme that people are either legists or imitators, and the *Fawá'id al-Uşúlíya*, a refutation of the *Fawá'id al-Madaniya* of Muḥammad Amín b. Muḥammad Sharíf Astarábádí.

Behbahání's views on the legislative authority of the 'ulamá won universal acceptance in Shí'í circles through the work and efforts of some distinguished students of the Behbahání circle who wrote, preached, and popularized the viewpoints of the Uşúlí's. One of these was Shaykh Ja'far

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\* Ákhund Khorásání.

† Ustád (Pers.).

Najafí (d. 1227/1812), the author of the well-known work, *Kashf al-Ghiṭá*. The beginning of this book is devoted to a description of the Uṣúlí approach to legislative problems. Najafí also wrote two other works on the same subject: the first, *al-Ḥaqq al-Mubín fi al-Radd 'ala al-Akḥbáríyín*,<sup>37</sup> to discuss the views of two parties and to reject the extremist Akḥbárís, and the second, another *Kashf al-Ghiṭá*, to refute the views of Muḥaddith Nísháborí. Najafí sent a copy of this book to Fath 'Alí Sháh to prove to him the falsity of the beliefs of the Akḥbárís and of their leading authority, Muḥaddith Nísháborí.<sup>38</sup>

Behbahání's views were elaborated in the works of the later Uṣúlís, and the repudiation of the Akḥbárís continued in the works of other Uṣúlí 'ulamá such as Muḥammad Ṭabáṭabá'í (d. 1242/1826).<sup>39</sup> The dispute between the Akḥbárís and the Uṣúlís did not remain on an intellectual level. It became so intense that the Uṣúlís killed Muḥaddith Nísháborí for his Akḥbárí views and fed his body to the dogs.<sup>40</sup>

The polemical works<sup>41</sup> of the Uṣúlís and their violent measures against the Akḥbárís caused the Akḥbárís to lose their leadership of the Shí'í community. The transfer of religious leadership from the Akḥbárís to the Uṣúlís was a turning point in the history of Shí'í doctrine. It gave the 'ulamá an active role in the political and social development of the nation. The leadership of the Uṣúlí 'ulamá, such as that of Mír Sayyid Muḥammad Ṭabáṭabá'í,

known as Mujáhid,<sup>42</sup> against the Russians (in 1241/1825) during the reign of Fath 'Alí Sháh, is a clear example of the part the Uşúlis played in shaping the destiny of the Persian nation.<sup>43</sup>

The crucial doctrine of the Akhbárís and the Uşúlis rests on the question of the authority of the religious leader.<sup>44</sup> The Uşúlis believe that a Shí'a can reach the position of *ijtihád* through his personal study of Islamic sciences. A man who is well educated and known for his piety, nobility, and moral standing may become a *mujtahid*. Whoever reaches these required qualifications<sup>45</sup> is able to interpret Islamic law and legislate regulations which do not already exist in the *Qur'án* and the Traditions. In addition, the Uşúlis believe that a *mujtahid* is the representative of the *imám* among the Shí'a and that obedience to the *mujtahid* is obligatory in the Shí'í community. Therefore, the personal understanding and judgment of a *mujtahid*, which is based on the *Qur'án* and the Traditions, must be accepted and followed by the Shí'a who are the imitators (*muqallid*) of the *mujtahid*. Thus, the Uşúlis believe that the "gate" (*báb*) of *ijtihád* is open for the Shí'a.

For the Akhbárís, on the other hand, the personal understanding of the *mujtahid* is not acceptable. While the Akhbárís hold that only the text of the *Qur'án* and the Traditions are legitimate sources for legislation, the Uşúlis maintain that the principles (*uşúl*) from which solutions to religious problems can be derived are four:

(1) the *Kitáb* (*Qur'án*), (2) the *sunna* (the deeds, conduct, and sayings of the Prophet and the *imáms*, i.e., Traditions), (3) *ijmá'* (consensus of the authorities in a legal question the precedent for which does not exist in the first and second sources), and (4) *'aql* (reason).

Since the Traditions are substantially significant for the Akhbárís, they give full validity to all of the Traditions collected in the Four Books of the Shí'í Traditions, namely, *Káfi*, *Tahdhíb*, *Istibṣár*, and *Man lá Yaḥḍuruhu al-Faqíh*. For the Uṣúlís, on the contrary, the contents of the Four Books do not have the same validity. The Uṣúlís allow action on the basis of "opinion" (*ẓann*) when they cannot reach "knowledge" (*'ilm*), whereas the Akhbárís do not trust opinion. They contend that knowledge is always attainable from the Traditions and is trustworthy.

Uṣúlí doctrine maintains that there are two groups in Shí'í society: (1) *mujtahids* (legalists formulating independent decisions in legal or theological matters, based on the interpretation and application of the four *uṣúl*), and (2) *muqallids* (imitators, who imitate the *mujtahids* as their religious guides). The Akhbárís believe that the Shí'a must only imitate the infallible figures, that is, the *imáms*, and not the *mujtahids*, who are not infallible.

Concerning *ijtihád*, the Uṣúlís assert that it is possible for anyone to reach the position of *ijtihád* through his personal endeavors during the occultation period (which

lasts until the appearance of the Mahdí), and whenever he has reached that position he is qualified to legislate religious regulations. The Akhbárís, on the other hand, believe that perfect religious knowledge cannot be obtained during the period of occultation because knowledge must be obtained from infallible sources, i.e., the *imáms*: thus knowledge is obtainable only from the Traditions. Therefore, they deny that the *mujtahids* possess perfect knowledge and understanding on religious questions.

The *‘Ilm al-Uşúl*<sup>46</sup> is a significant field of study for the Uşúlís and a *mujtahid* must be a master in this field. The Akhbárís disregard the *‘Ilm al-Uşúl* and believe that sound knowledge of the terminologies employed in the Traditions is sufficient to understand the law.

Another fundamental point of dispute between the two schools deals with the imitation of a deceased *mujtahid*. While the Uşúlís do not regard it lawful to imitate a deceased *mujtahid*, the Akhbárís do.

Regarding the use of the *Qur’án* and the Traditions, the Uşúlís prefer to use the esoteric meaning of these works, whereas the Akhbárís are inclined to use the interpretations of the *Qur’án* and the Traditions offered by the *imáms*, if they are available. In regard to the “chain of Traditions”, while the Uşúlís do not allow reference to Traditions related by an authority who is not infallible, the Akhbárís recognize as authentic Traditions related by ordinary people.

A comparison of the two schools shows that the Uşúlí

school believes in the individual authority of the *mujtahids*. The school also admits the freedom of personal understanding and, as a result, keeps the "gate" of *ijtihad* open. The flexibility of the Uşúlí approach toward law may have been the major reason for its appeal to the majority of the Shí'a. This flexibility and the individualistic nature of the Uşúlí may also have aided the Shí'í law to be more adaptable to the new needs of the society.

While the social and geographical background of the leading Akhbári authorities show that they were mainly the residents of Mecca, Medina, and the Arabic provinces of the Gulf area, the Uşúlí were mainly Iranian, either residents of Iran or *'Atabát*. In addition, because Muḥammad Báqir Behbahání, the founder of the Uşúlí school, wrote mostly in Persian, and also because the Uşúlí *'ulamá* participated in nationalistic movements during the Qájár period, the Uşúlí may be considered as forerunners of the nationalistic movement which, in its early days, appeared in religious form. As such, the Uşúlí may perhaps be regarded as the Persian element against the Arabs, or at least against the Arabic element, which predominated in the intellectual and social background of the Akhbári leaders. The Persian nature of the Uşúlí school was probably a reason for its popularity among the Iranians. From the intellectual point of view, it is evident that the rise of the Uşúlí represents the return of "rationalism" to the religious attitude of the Persians after being dominated by the fundamentalist

approach of the Akhbáris.

## Notes

- 1 *'Atabát*, literally, "thresholds", refers to the Shí'í cities in Iraq, namely, Karbalá, Kázimayn, Najaf, and Sámarrá.
- 2 For further information about the curriculum and the life of the religious circles see 'Abbás 'Alí Kayván, *Hájj Náma*, pp. 98–100; Muḥammad Ḥasan Khán Šaní al-Dawla, *Maṭla' al-Shams*, vol. 2, pp. 31–32; Comte Arthur de Gobineau, *Les religions et les philosophies dans l'Asie Central*, p. 105.
- 3 Muḥammad 'Alí Mu'allim Ḥabíbábádí, *Makárim al-Áthár*, vol. 1, p. 84.
- 4 For a typical *ijáza*, see that of Mullá 'Alí Wá'iz-i-Khiyábání in the *Kitáb-i-'Ulamá-i-Mu'áshirín*, pp. 408–409.
- 5 For example, in the families of Ṭabáṭabá'í, Behbahání, and Káshif al-Ghiṭá, a few individuals reached the highest rank of leadership.
- 6 E. G. Browne states that, "The literature produced by this large and industrious body of men (*'ulamá*), both in Arabic and Persian, is naturally enormous, but the bulk of it is so dull or so technical that no one but a very leisured and very pious Shí'a scholar would dream of reading it. The author of the *Qišaṣu'l-'Ulamá* remarks that the *'ulamá* often live to a very advanced age, and as their habits are, as a rule, sedentary and studious, and they devote a large portion of their time to writing, it is not unusual to find a single author credited with one or two hundred books and pamphlets." (*A Literary History of Persia*, vol. 4, pp. 376–377.
- 7 Mu'allim Ḥabíbábádí, *Makárim al-Áthár*, p. 86.
- 8 *ibid.*, p. 213.
- 9 E. G. Browne states that, "Many of these writings are utterly valueless, consisting of notes or glosses on super commentaries or commentaries on texts, grammatical, logical, juristic or otherwise, which texts are completely buried and obscured by all this misdirected ingenuity and tail." *A Literary History of Persia*, p. 377.
- 10 Mu'allim Ḥabíbábádí, *Makárim al-Áthár*, pp. 87–90.
- 11 Ḥusayn Karímán shows that the term Ṭabrisí is the Arabized form of the Persian word Tafresh. Ṭabrisí, however, is commonly mispronounced Ṭabarsí. See Ḥusayn Karímán, *Ṭabrisí va Majma' al-Bayán*, vol. 1, pp. 166–187.
- 12 For an annotated bibliography of the books of *tafsír* see Muḥammad Shafí'í, *Mufasssírín-i-Shí'a*, pp. 159–182.
- 13 For a detailed description of the functions of the *'ulamá* see Hamid Algar, *Religion and State in Iran 1785–1906*, pp. 11–14.
- 14 *Khums* is a religious tax paid to the family of the Prophet and after him to his successors, i.e., the *imáms*. After the occultation of the Twelfth Imám the *'ulamá* have been receiving the *khums* as the

- representatives of the *imáms* in the Shí'í community.
- 15 For a description of the Fath 'Alí Sháh's religious attitudes see Riḍá Qolí Khán Hidáyat, *Rawḍat al-Ṣafá-i-Násirí*, vol. 10, p. 106; and Muḥammad Taqí Lisán al-Mulk-i-Sepehr, *Násikh al-Tawáríkh, Dawra-i-Kámil-i-Táríkh-i-Qájáriya*, pp. 188–189, 214–215.
  - 16 Mu'allim Ḥabíbábádí, *Makárim al-Áthár*, p. 85.
  - 17 Gobineau, *Les religions et les philosophies dans l'Asie Central*, p. 96.
  - 18 'Abd al-Razzáq Maftún-i-Donbolí, *M'áthir Sulṭáníya*, p. 140.
  - 19 According to *Násikh al-Tawáríkh* (p. 214) one *dirham* is equal to thirty-six *nokhod* of silver and one *dínár* is equal to eighteen *nokhod* of gold. Nine *dirham* is equal to one *dínár* and one *dínár* plus one *dirham* is equal to one *tomán*.
  - 20 Muḥammad 'Alí al-Kašmírí, *Nujúm al-Samá fí Tarájim al-'Ulamá*, p. 368.
  - 21 Comte Arthur de Gobineau, *Trois ans en Asie*, p. 42.
  - 22 Muḥammad Báqir al-Músawí al-Iṣbahání, *Rawḍat al-Jannát fí Aḥwál al-'Ulamá wa al-Sádat*, vol. 1, p. 121.
  - 23 'Alí Davvání, *Ostád-i-Kull, Áqá Muḥammad Báqir b. Muḥammad Akmal Ma'rúf bi Waḥíd Behbahání*, p. 96.
  - 24 *Mujtahid*: "A legist formulating independent decisions in legal or theological matters, based on the interpretation and application of the four *uṣúl* (*Qur'án*, *Sunna*, *Qiyás* "analogy" or *Aql* "reason" in the Shí'í view, and *ijmá* "consensus"), as opposed to *muqallid* (Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern written Arabic*, p. 143.).
  - 25 al-Kašmírí, *Nujúm al-Samá*, p. 42.
  - 26 Muḥammad 'Alí Mudarris, *Rayḥánat al-Adab fí Tarájim al-Ma'rúfín bi al-Kunyat wa al-Luqab yá Kunna wa Alqáb*, vol. 4, p. 377.
  - 27 Mullá 'Alí Wá'iz-i-Khiyábání, *Kitáb-i-'Ulamá-i-Mu'áshirín*, p. 283.
  - 28 al-Músawí al-Iṣbahání, *Rawḍat al-Jannát*, vol. 7, pp. 96–106.
  - 29 'Alí Davvání, *Ostád-i-Kull*, p. 98.
  - 30 al-Músawí al-Iṣbahání, *Rawḍat al-Jannát*, vol. 4, p. 250.
  - 31 The title of this work is given as *al-Durar al-Najafíya fí al-Multaqītat al-Yúsufíya* in Muḥammad 'Alí Mudarris, *Rayḥánat al-Adab*, vol. 3, p. 360.
  - 32 Muḥammad 'Alí Mudarris, *Rayḥánat al-Adab*, vol. 1, pp. 85–86.
  - 33 *ibid.*
  - 34 Mu'allim Ḥabíbábádí, *Makárim al-Áthár*, p. 222.
  - 35 *Ijtihád*: "Independent judgment in a legal or theological question, based on the interpretation and application of the four *uṣúl*, as opposed to *taqlíd*." Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, p. 143.
  - 36 Mu'allim Ḥabíbábádí, *Makarim al-Áthár*, p. 234.
  - 37 The title of the work is given as *al-Ḥaqq al-Mubín fí Taṣwīb al-Mujtahidín wa Takḥī'at Juhhál al-Akḥbáríyín* in Muḥammad 'Alí

Mudarris, *Rayḥānat al-Adab*, vol. 5, p. 24.

38 al-Músawí al-Iṣbahání, *Rawḍát al-Jannát*, vol. 2, pp. 200–206.

39 Algar, *Religion and State in Iran*, pp. 35–36.

40 Kayván, *Ḥájj Náma*, p. 127.

41 For a list of the polemic works see Áqá Bozorg al-Ṭehrání, *al-Dhārí'a ilá Taṣáníf al-Shí'a*, vol. 10, pp. 182–183.

42 al-Músawí al-Iṣbahání, *Rawḍát al-Jannát*, vol. 7, p. 145.

43 Sayyid Muḥammad Ṭabáṭabá'í was the son of Sayyid 'Alí Ṭabáṭabá'í and the son-in-law of Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdí Baḥr al-'Ulúm. The son of Sayyid Muḥammad Ṭabáṭabá'í, Sayyid Ḥusayn, married the daughter of Shaykh al-Mulk who was the son of Fath 'Alí Sháh. This shows the relation by marriage of the Uṣúlís and the royal family. (See 'Alí Davvání, *Ostád-i-Kull*, pp. 345, 356.)

44 For a full discussion of points of disputes between the Akhbáris and the Uṣúlís, see al-Músawí al-Iṣbahání, *Rawḍát al-Jannát*, vol. 1, pp. 127–130.

45 A book written during this period about the qualifications of a *mujtahid* is the *Jámí' al-Funún* by Mullá Muḥammad Ja'far Astarábádí.

46 "In the usual classification of Muslim sciences, the *uṣúl al-fīkh* (*'ilm al-uṣúl*) are generally defined as the methodology of Muslim jurisprudence, as the science of the proofs which lead to the establishment of legal standards in general." (*Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, s.v. "Uṣúl", by J. Schacht.).



## II

### **Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í: his life and works**

#### **Sources on the life of Shaykh Aḥmad**

Information on the life and achievements of Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, the founder of the Shaykhí school, is to be found in the main biographical works written on the life of the eminent figures of Iran in the Qájár period.<sup>1</sup> In addition to the biographical works, general histories of Qájár Persia as well as encyclopedias on Iran and Islam<sup>2</sup> contain information about the Shaykh and his movement.

The oldest and most authentic source on the life of Shaykh Aḥmad is a short treatise written by Shaykh Aḥmad himself at the request of his son, Shaykh Muḥammad Taqí. This work provides brief information about the childhood and education of Shaykh Aḥmad and some facts about the social and religious climate of his society. The work was published in the *Fihrist*<sup>3</sup> and also separately by Ḥusayn 'Alí Maḥfúz.<sup>4</sup> In addition to this autobiography, Shaykh 'Abd Alláh, another son of Shaykh Aḥmad, wrote a treatise in Arabic on the life of his father. This work was translated into Persian and published by Muḥammad Ṭáhir Khán.<sup>5</sup> Another primary source on the life and achievements of Shaykh Aḥmad was *Dalíl al-Mutaḥayyirín*<sup>6</sup> written in 1258/1842 by Sayyid Kázim Raští (d. 1259/1843), the successor of Shaykh Aḥmad.

This work contains biographical information about the life of Shaykh Aḥmad and the author himself. The author has included excerpts of the *ijázas* of Shaykh Aḥmad and a list of his works. According to the *Fihrist*,<sup>7</sup> the work was translated into Persian by Muḥammad Rađí b. Muḥammad Riđá, a follower of Sayyid Kázim. Another primary source on the life of Shaykh Aḥmad, the *Hidáyat al-Ṭálibín*,<sup>8</sup> was written in 1261/1845 by Ḥájj Muḥammad Karím Khán Kermání (d. 1288/1871), the second leader of the Shaykhís. This book, basically a response to the ideological opponents of Shaykh Aḥmad, includes a description of the Shaykh's personality and some of his doctrines.

In addition to the above-mentioned works, a few Persian and European scholars have written about Shaykh Aḥmad and the Shaykhí school. Among the Persian authors, Murtađá Mudarrísí-i-Chahárdehí is the leading author on the Shaykhí topics. In addition to a book entitled *Shaykhígari, Bábiqarí az Nazar-i-Falsafa, Táríkh va Ijtimá'*<sup>9</sup> on the life, personality, and principle doctrines of Shaykh Aḥmad and the historical development of the movement, Mudarrísí has also published a series of articles on the subject in various Persian publications.<sup>10</sup>

Sayyid Muḥammad 'Alí Jamál Zádeh published a series of historical articles on the lives of the first five leaders of the Shaykhí movement, i.e., Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, Sayyid Kázim Raští, Ḥájj Muḥammad Karím Khán Kermání, Ḥájj Muḥammad Khán Kermání (d. 1324/1908), and Ḥájj Zayn al-

'Ábidín Kermání (d. 1360/1941).<sup>11</sup>

Among the European scholars who became interested in the Shaykhí school, Louis Alphonse Daniel Nicolas and Joseph Arthur Comte de Gobineau (d. 1882) are important. Nicolas' work, *Essai Sur Le Chékhisme*,<sup>12</sup> deals with the life of Shaykh Aḥmad and his successor, Sayyid Kim Rashtí, and the main doctrines of the Shaykh. Comte de Gobineau, although he did not devote any specific work to the Shaykhís, discussed some of their basic doctrines in the second chapter of his *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans L'Asie Centrale*.<sup>13</sup>

Edward Granville Browne (d. 1926) came across the Shaykhís and their beliefs in the process of studying and writing about the Báb.<sup>14</sup> In the introduction to *A Traveller's Narrative*,<sup>15</sup> he gives a short account of the life of Shaykh Aḥmad, mentions his major works and doctrines, and very briefly discusses the development of the school after his death.

Henry Corbin, the contemporary scholar of Shí'í theology, has written *L'École Shaykhie en Théologie Shi'ite*.<sup>16</sup> This book provides a sketch of the life of Shaykh Aḥmad and the succeeding Shaykhí leaders up to Abú al-Qásim Ibráhímí (d. 1389/1969). It also contains a brief discussion of Shaykhí doctrines.

In spite of the studies which have already been made by scholars of the East and the West on the Shaykhí movement, the subject has yet to be critically studied. Such a

comprehensive study must be done on the basis of the socio-religious life and beliefs of the Persians during the Qájár period. The magnitude of Shaykh Aḥmad's achievements and his intellectual contributions are so vast, and his influence upon subsequent religious and social movements is so profound, that any mature judgment about him and his school must be made with utmost care and sound understanding of the period.

### **The life of Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í**

Shaykh Aḥmad b. Zayn al-Dín b. Ibráhím b. Ṣaqr b. Ibráhím b. Dághir, known as Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, was born in Rajab 1166/1752<sup>17</sup> in the village of Muṭayrafí in the region of Aḥsá,<sup>18</sup> a hinterland of Baḥrayn. The clan of Shaykh Aḥmad belonged to the bedouin tribe of al-Maḥáshír, which had settled in Aḥsá during the lifetime of Dághir (five generations before Shaykh Aḥmad, around the middle of the seventeenth century). The tribe was Sunní, but Dághir and his clan, under unknown circumstances, became Shí'a. Although Shaykh Aḥmad was raised in a Shí'í family, it is reported that the majority of his countrymen were Sunní and that there were also Şúffí orders.<sup>19</sup> Thus, from childhood Shaykh Aḥmad was familiar with different trends of thought in Islam, a familiarity that played an important role in his later career. In his autobiography, Shaykh Aḥmad complains that his people know nothing about their religious obliga-

tions and duties. They can hardly differentiate between forbidden (*ḥarám*) and lawful (*ḥalál*).<sup>20</sup> This irreligiosity may have led Shaykh Aḥmad to call for a revitalization of religious life in his society.

Information about the childhood and early education of Shaykh Aḥmad is limited to his own statements and those of Shaykh 'Abd Alláh, his son. Both sources indicate that he possessed a prodigious memory reaching back into his early childhood. He is reported to have recalled a heavy rain in his home town when he was only two years of age.<sup>21</sup>

The early formal education of Shaykh Aḥmad, like that of most educated Muslims, began with reading the *Qur'án*, which he could do at the age of five years.<sup>22</sup> He then studied the *Ajurrúmiya*<sup>23</sup> and the *'Awámil*,<sup>24</sup> two Arabic grammar textbooks,<sup>25</sup> with Shaykh Muḥammad b. Shaykh Muḥsin,<sup>26</sup> who was his formal teacher. Shaykh Aḥmad is reported to have been acquainted in early life with Ibn Abí Jumhúr,<sup>27</sup> the author of *al-Mujlí*,<sup>28</sup> and to have received further instruction<sup>29</sup> from Quṭb al-Dín Muḥammad Shírází Dhahabi, who subscribed to the doctrines of Ibn al-'Arabí (d. 637/1239), which he apparently was teaching in Baḥrayn. This seems to be the first intellectual acquaintance of Shaykh Aḥmad with the theosophy of Ibn al-'Arabí, which later became one of the main themes in his works.

Upon completing the elementary religious courses in his native land, Shaykh Aḥmad went to *'Atabát* to attend the academic circle of scholars such as Muḥammad Báqir Behbahání

(d. 1207/1792), Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdí Ṭabāṭabá'í known as Baḥr al-'Ulúm (d. 1212/1797), Shaykh Ja'far Najafí known as Káshif al-Ghiṭá (d. 1231/1815), and Mír Sayyid 'Alí Ṭabāṭabá'í (d. 1231/1815).<sup>30</sup> He received *ijázas*\* from the most distinguished scholars of his time, obtaining his first one in 1209/1794.<sup>31</sup> Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdí Baḥr al-'Ulúm, who issued this *ijáza*, asked Shaykh Aḥmad if he had written a dissertation. Shaykh Aḥmad presented to him a portion of his *Sharḥ-i-Tabṣira*.<sup>32</sup> Baḥr al-'Ulúm studied it and replied, "You are the one who ought to give me an *ijáza*."<sup>33</sup> In addition to the *ijáza* of Baḥr al-'Ulúm,<sup>34</sup> six eminent scholars of his time issued *ijázas* to Shaykh Aḥmad: Ḥusayn 'Alí 'Uṣfúr (d. 1216/1801),<sup>35</sup> Aḥmad Baḥrání Damistání,<sup>36</sup> Mírzá Mahdí Shahrestání (d. 1216/1801),<sup>37</sup> Sayyid 'Alí Ṭabāṭabá'í,<sup>38</sup> Shaykh Ja'far Najafí,<sup>39</sup> and Hájj Muḥammad Ibráhím Kalbásí (d. 1262/1846).<sup>40</sup>

Sayyid Kázim Raṣhtí as well as Hájj Muḥammad Karím Khán Kermání have listed the branches of knowledge in which Shaykh Aḥmad was considered a master,<sup>41</sup> including, in addition to various branches of Islamic sciences such as *rijál*, *fiqh*, *tafsír*, and literature; astronomy, medicine, geometry, mathematics, and even music. Although his literal mastery of all these sciences is not the issue, it is evident in his own writings that he was gifted with the power of memory and was able to comprehend even the most difficult theological and philosophical problems. His vast knowledge and originality is also attested to by his

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\* Plural of *ijáza* is *ijázát*.

biographers<sup>42</sup> and the religious authorities who issued him *ijázas*.

Although Shaykh Aḥmad received his education from the most learned men of his age, he was never fully satisfied with his formal education. Dissatisfaction with the social and religious atmosphere in which he grew up and his own contemplative temperament led Shaykh Aḥmad to piety and meditation.<sup>43</sup> As a consequence of lengthy meditations and recitation of the *Qur'án*, he had recurrent dreams of the *imáms*. His own perception of his dream associations with the *imáms* constituted the spiritual cornerstone of his life, influencing his personality and creating in him an intense love for the *imáms*. For Shaykh Aḥmad, his dreams were the source of his knowledge and inspiration. Recalling his childhood, he states that early in his life the gate of dreams was opened to him by Imám Ḥasan b. 'Alí.<sup>44</sup> In his first dream, an extraordinary experience for him, he presented several questions to the *imám* and received answers. It was in this first dream that the *imám* put his mouth on Shaykh Aḥmad's mouth and that Shaykh Aḥmad drank the *imám's* saliva. Shaykh Aḥmad also related that he dreamed of the Prophet and drank of his saliva as well.<sup>45</sup>

Shaykh 'Abd Alláh on the authority of his father relates that the effect of such experiences on Shaykh Aḥmad was so strong that he devoted more and more time to meditation, prayer, and recitation of the *Qur'án*. It was now possible for him to meet with any *imám* he wished and to

present to him any questions of difficulties that he encountered in the understanding of the truth.<sup>46</sup>

In his autobiography, Shaykh Aḥmad does not mention the name of any of the teachers who issued him an *ijāza*; rather, he states that through his dream he met with Imám 'Alí b. Muḥammad Hádí and received twelve *ijāzas* from each of the twelve *imáms*.<sup>47</sup>

He made a number of pilgrimages to the shrines of the *imáms* in Iran, 'Atabát, Mecca, and Medina. In fact, he spent the last fifty years of his life visiting these holy cities, preaching, and teaching the multitudes of students who attended his lectures. In the year 1186/1772, when Shaykh Aḥmad was in his twenties, he journeyed to 'Atabát. The prestige of 'Atabát as the center for higher Shí'í education and the absence of any scholars in his native land led to this decision. This was the beginning of his direct connection with the center of the Shí'í intellectual, cultural and academic world. His stay in 'Atabát, although it lasted only one year, was very fruitful for him. He was able to obtain an *ijāza* from Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdí Baḥr al-'Ulúm which brought him fame and respect in 'Atabát and his native land. Apparently the typhus epidemic of the year 1186/1772 caused him to return to his native land.

Knowledge about the life of Shaykh Aḥmad between his return in 1186/1772 and his second departure for 'Atabát in 1212/1797 is very limited. It is likely that during this period Shaykh Aḥmad devoted most of his time to studying,

meditating, and writing rather than to the intellectual challenges that would occupy him in the following decades of his life.

When Shaykh Aḥmad was forty-six years old, the Wahhábí attack on Aḥsá led him to emigrate to Baṣra in 1212/1797.<sup>48</sup> This emigration was a turning point in his life: he never returned to his homeland, but remained in Iran and 'Atabát to the end of his life in 1241/1825. The period 1212/1797 to 1241/1825 was the period of his fame, popularity, and close association with the officials and religious leaders in Iran and 'Atabát.

The following is a brief chronology of Shaykh Aḥmad's travels: After he emigrated to Baṣra in 1212/1797, he went to the small village of Dhuraq where he stayed for about three years. He returned to Baṣra and went to Ḥabarát, a village near Baṣra, returning to Baṣra and proceeding to the village of Tanwíyh and then to Nashwah, where he stayed for eighteen months. In 1219/1804 he moved to Ṣafawah and stayed there for a year. He returned then to Baṣra, and in 1221/1806 he went to Najaf, Kázimayn, and then to Iran. The period between 1222/1807 and 1229/1813 was mostly spent in Yazd. During this time he paid three visits to the shrine of Imám Riḍá in Mashhad and made a trip to Tehrán to visit Fath 'Alí Sháh. He left Yazd in 1229/1813 for Iṣfahán and then continued his journey to Kermánsháh, arriving there in Rajab 1229/1813. He departed from Kermánsháh for Mecca in 1232/1816 and after his pilgrimage returned to 'Atabát,

where he stayed for about eight months; he then moved back to Kermánsháh in Muḥarram 1234/1818. This time he stayed in Kermánsháh for a few years until he left for another visit to the shrine of Imám Riḍá and went to Mashhad via Qazvín, Qom, Tehrán, Sháhrood, and Nishábor. After twenty-two days in Mashhad he continued his journey to Yazd via Torbat and Ṭabas. Shaykh Aḥmad was in Yazd for only three months when he was ordered by Imám 'Alí, in one of his dreams, to go to 'Atabát.<sup>49</sup> Consequently he left Yazd and went to Kermánsháh via Iṣfahán, where he stayed about forty days.<sup>50</sup> After staying in Kermánsháh for one year, he departed for 'Atabát and Mecca. Shaykh Aḥmad died in Hadíya, about two stages from Medina, on 21 Dhí al-Qa'da 1241/1825<sup>51</sup> at the age of seventy-five and was buried in the cemetery of Baqí' in Medina.

According to Shaykh 'Abd Alláh, Shaykh Aḥmad married eight women and had twenty-nine children: eighteen boys and eleven girls.<sup>52</sup> Only seven of his children survived and reached maturity. Among his sons, three are themselves distinguished: Shaykh 'Abd Alláh, who wrote the treatise on the life of his father; Shaykh Muḥammad Taqí, for whom Shaykh Aḥmad wrote his autobiography; and Shaykh 'Alí or 'Alí Naqí, who was ideologically in disagreement with his father. From an intellectual point of view, Shaykh 'Alí was the most learned of Shaykh Aḥmad's sons.<sup>53</sup>

After the death of Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, his disciple, follower, and very close companion Sayyid Kázim Rashtí

became the leader of the school. (The life and works of Sayyid Kázim Rashtí will be discussed in a separate chapter.) The spiritual and intellectual ties between Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kázim, and the Shaykh's trust and confidence in Sayyid Kázim, were so obvious to Shaykh Aḥmad's followers that, without any appointment, all of them regarded Sayyid Kázim as Shaykh Aḥmad's only possible successor and recognized him as the most authentic interpreter of Shaykh Aḥmad's doctrines. Consequently, for Shaykhí doctrines, the works of Sayyid Kázim are as fundamental as the works of Shaykh Aḥmad himself.

Shaykh Aḥmad's learning and piety brought him fame, respect, popularity, and influence. He was welcomed by governors, officials, religious leaders, and the masses wherever he traveled. In Yazd, he received letters of invitation from Faṭḥ 'Alí Sháh, who had expressed his wish to visit with him personally.<sup>54</sup> Shaykh Aḥmad responded positively and went to Tehrán, where he was warmly received by the Sháh and his court. He was invited to make his residence in Tehrán, but Shaykh Aḥmad found the invitation incompatible with the piety and simplicity of his life, and soon left the capital.

It is reported that the governor of Kermánsháh, Muḥammad 'Alí Mírzá, known as Rukn al-Dawla, felt so honoured that he went four-*farsakh*s (about 13.5 miles) out of the city to welcome Shaykh Aḥmad to Kermánsháh.<sup>55</sup> The same kind of respect and hospitality was also paid Shaykh Aḥmad by the

governors of Torbat and Ṭabas.<sup>56</sup> In Iṣfahán, Ṣadr al-Dawla is said to have presented the village of Kamál Ábád to Shaykh Aḥmad.<sup>57</sup>

Toward the end of his life, his widespread popularity and fame as well as his doctrinal stand, which some of the *'ulamá* regarded as heresy, brought him the bitter experience of being denounced as a heretic—*takfír*.<sup>\*</sup> During his stay in Qazvín, about the year 1239 or 40/1824, Shaykh Aḥmad met with the *'ulamá* of the city, including Mullá Muḥammad Taqí Baraghání (d. 1264/1847), the famous and influential religious leader of the city. In one of their meetings, Baraghání raised some theological questions and asked Shaykh Aḥmad to explain his views. After hearing Shaykh Aḥmad's views, Baraghání stated that Shaykh Aḥmad's answers were not in accordance with the universally accepted beliefs of the Shí'a and declared Shaykh Aḥmad a heretic.<sup>58</sup> Baraghání's opposition was the first and most important opposition Shaykh Aḥmad encountered.

Baraghání's opposition was the beginning of serious intellectual as well as physical conflicts which extended to *'Atabát* during the time of Sayyid Kázim and resulted in a distinction between the followers of the Shaykhí school and the rest of the Shí'í community. Although it is not clear when the appellation of "Shaykhí" was first applied to the followers of Shaykh Aḥmad, it seems that the *takfír* of Qazvín contributed to the distinct identity of the; followers of Shaykh Aḥmad, and the Shí'a gave them the title in order

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\* There are many words for heretic; *takfír* is the denunciation.

to differentiate them from the Shí'a. The term Shaykhí was used in contrast with the *Mutasharri'ín* which, in this case, stands for the Shí'a.<sup>59</sup>

The Shaykhís were also given the title of "*Posht-i-Sarís*" (literally, "behind the head"). When he visited the shrine of an *imám*, it was Shaykh Aḥmad's custom, as a matter of respect and politeness, to stand at the foot of the grave and not circumambulate it. This practice was adopted by his followers and came to distinguish them from other Shí'a who, because they circumambulated the graves of the *imáms* were called "*Bálá Sarís*" (literally, "above the head").<sup>60</sup>

The Shaykhís are also known as *Kashfíya*. Sayyid Kázim explains that they were given this name because God lifted (*kashf*) from their intellect and from their vision the veil of ignorance and lack of insight into the Religion, and removed the darkness of doubt and uncertainty from their minds and their hearts. They are the ones whose hearts God illumined with the light of guidance.<sup>61</sup>

Although the terms "Shaykhí", "*Posht-i-Sarí*", and "*Kashfíya*" refer to a certain group of people, and were intended to distinguish them from the rest of Shí'a, the group solidarity and identity of the Shaykhís was in fact not so distinct as to sharply separate them from the rest of the Shí'í community of Iran as an independent sect or even branch of Twelver Shí'a. The Shaykhís considered themselves true Shí'a who thought and behaved in accordance with the teaching of the Shí'í imáms; they did not consider them-

selves innovators.

It is difficult to believe that during Shaykh Aḥmad's lifetime he was considered the founder of a new school of thought within the Shí'í framework. However, as time went on and the nature of his ideology received greater intellectual attention, a group of fundamentalist *'ulamá* perceived a radical distinction between his views and the established doctrines of the Shí'a and increasingly differentiated themselves from the Shaykhís. The Shaykhí school, then, gained more group solidarity as it developed historically, reacting as a group against the main body of the Shí'a when it encountered social and intellectual opposition.

Shaykh Aḥmad states that his views were based on understanding and knowledge derived, in dreams, from communications with the *imáms*; that he received the Truth from them; and that whatever he learned was in accordance with the Traditions of the *imáms*.<sup>62</sup> He acknowledges himself to be in opposition to the leading philosophers (*ḥukamá*)\* and theologians (*mutakallimín*) on most theological questions, however, he asserts that his doctrinal positions are rooted in, and fundamentally in accordance with, the Traditions which derive this authority from the *imáms*. Shaykh Aḥmad believed that it was impossible to name a Tradition that was against his own sayings. Therefore, since the majority of the philosophers' and theologians' views were in disagreement with the views of Shaykh Aḥmad, they were consequently in disagreement with the Traditions of the *imáms*. He goes

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\* *ḥukamá* is the plural of *ḥakím*.

on to say that the majority of the theologians and philosophers do not know the true meaning of the sayings of the *imáms*, which they interpret in a way contrary to the intent of the *imáms*.<sup>63</sup> Although he asserts that the main source of his knowledge and understanding is his dreams, he endeavors to base his understanding in the *Qur'án* and the Traditions.<sup>64</sup> The combination of these two sources is supported by personal reasoning.

To clarify Shaykh Aḥmad's approach, Sayyid Kázim Rashtí, in the *Dalíl al-Mutahayyirín*, states that the source of Shaykh Aḥmad's knowledge was not only his dreams, but the *Qur'án*, *Sunna*, and Traditions of the *imáms* as well. In addition to these sources, Shaykh Aḥmad used his intellect and personal reasoning. Sayyid Kázim points out that Shaykh Aḥmad has applied both the external reasoning and its internal meaning.<sup>65</sup> To distinguish between the Shaykhís and the philosophers, Sayyid Kázim states that philosophers use the intellect (reasoning) in discussing theological problems, whether or not the result is in accordance with the Sharí'a. In contrast, we (the Shaykhís), he states, are not among those who rely only upon intellect. We consider the intellect as one tool, then we consider the clear (*muḥkamát*) verses of the *Qur'án* if they are in agreement with our rational reasoning. Then we consider the Traditions, that is, only the *musallam* (indisputable), *mashhúr* (well-known, evident) and *ghayr mutashábíh* (unambiguous) Traditions, and not all of the Traditions, if they are in agreement with

rational reasoning and the Book. Then we consider the *Madhhab*,<sup>66</sup> if it is in agreement with the three others. Then we consider the law of the universe (*al-áyát al-murattaba fi al-áfáq wa al-anfus*)<sup>67</sup> as the fifth tool to reach to the Truth.<sup>68</sup>

Sayyid Kázim believes that while reason alone is insufficient for establishing any regulation, if the content of a weak Tradition, weak either because of its text or its chain of narrators, is not in contradiction with the Book, *Sunna*, and *Ijmá'*, then reasoning can be the arbiter of the validity of such a Tradition.<sup>69</sup>

Regarding the validity of Traditions, Sayyid Kázim believes that there are two kinds of *mutawátir*<sup>70</sup> (successive) Traditions: *al-mutawátirát al-ma'nawíya* (spiritually successive; that is, relating to the sense of import of a Tradition as opposed to literal Traditions) and *al-mutawátirát al-lafzíya* (literally successive). The spiritually successive Traditions are undoubtedly reliable, but the literally successive Traditions, although on the authority of the *imáms*, are not reliable because of the possibility that the *imám* had practiced dissimulation (*taqíya*)<sup>71</sup> for himself or for his community.<sup>72</sup>

From the Shaykhí point of view, the Uşúlís' approach towards jurisprudential problems is justified. According to Sayyid Kázim, the Book, *Sunna*, *Ijmá'*, and Reasoning (or Book, *Hadíth*, *Sunna*, and Reasoning)<sup>73</sup> are the legislative sources.<sup>74</sup> But the Shaykhís, unlike the Akhbárís, do not

believe that the whole body of Traditions are substantially valid. Traditions, however, are undoubtedly valid as secondary support.<sup>75</sup>

On the basis of these established methods for reaching the Truth, it is evident that Shaykh Aḥmad was neither an Akhbarí nor an Uṣulí, although he made use of the methods of the two groups. Shírvaní rightly points out that Shaykh Aḥmad was an 'arif (gnostic, saint) among the 'ulamá and an 'alim among the 'urafá.<sup>76</sup>

Sayyid Kázim appreciates the approach of those Shí'í 'ulamá through the centuries who were not merely concerned with the superficial aspects of law, but were illumined by an inspiration which came to them through their piety. Sayyid Kázim gives the names of some of them: Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Nu'mán Shaykh al-Mufid (d. 413/1022), Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Ṭosí (d. 460/1067), Ḥasan b. Sadíd al-Dín 'Alláma al-Ḥillí (d. 726/1325), Muḥammad b. Makkí (known as Shahíd al-Thání) (d. 966/1558), and Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Muqaddas al-Ardabílí (d. 993/1585).<sup>77</sup>

Sayyid Kázim regards his teacher, Shaykh Aḥmad, as the man who exposed the innovations of the Ṣúfís and pointed out the misunderstandings of the theologians. Sayyid Kázim believes that Shaykh Aḥmad followed in the path of the Prophet and glorified the significance of the station of the *imáms*.<sup>78</sup>

For Sayyid Kázim, the 'ulamá are the deputies of the *imáms* among the people and, in the absence of the *Hujjat*

(Proof, i.e., the Hidden *Imám*), the interpreters of the word of God. People are divided into two groups: the *muqallids* (imitators) and the *mujtahids* (leaders, strivers),<sup>79</sup> but *ijtihád* is not an absolute necessity for the community because it is against the Traditions of the *imáms*, and the text of the *Qur'án* does not indicate the necessity of such an institution. He says that much knowledge is required to reach the rank of *ijtihád* and that very few people have achieved it.<sup>80</sup>

### The works of Shaykh Aḥmad

In nearly fifty years of scholarly activity, Shaykh Aḥmad produced an extensive body of works devoted to questions in all areas of Islamic studies. Indeed, he was one of the most prolific authors of his time. The study of his works, his approach, his sources, the influence upon him of his predecessors, and his intellectual contribution to Islamic thought in general and to the religious attitude of the Persians in particular, is an enormous task which is yet to be undertaken.

Abú al-Qásim Ibráhímí, the sixth leader of the school, devoted the second volume of the *Fihrist* to the works of Shaykh Aḥmad and other leaders of the Shaykhí school. In the first chapter of this volume he provides information on the length, place, and date of publication, number of chapters, and the name of the questioner for each work. He

describes 132 works<sup>81</sup> but does not comment on their quality. In the introduction to this volume, Ibráhímí gives the sources of information. He mentions four lists,<sup>82</sup> which are:

1. A list arranged by Sayyid Kázim Rashtí with a short description of each work. Some of the works mentioned in this list are not extant.
2. A lengthy list of the works of Shaykh Aḥmad and other leaders of the Shaykhí school prepared by 'Abd al-Majíd Fá'iqí and including the number of lines, the questions, and brief answers given to the questions posed in each work.
3. A short list of the works of the first four leaders of the school, provided by an unknown author, which is used as the foundation for the information in the *Fihrist*.
4. A list of the works of the Shaykh prepared by Muḥammad Ṭáhir Khán, the author of a treatise on the life of Shaykh Aḥmad. Bibliographical information in this treatise is basically derived from the list of Sayyid Kázim Rashtí.

Ibráhímí has used these four lists as primary sources for his list of Shaykh Aḥmad's works in the *Fihrist*. Therefore, the *Fihrist* contains the most comprehensive list of the works of Shaykh Aḥmad, although it does not go beyond providing bibliographical information on each work.

In addition to the four sources given above and the *Fihrist*, the booklet *Fihrist Taṣáníf al-'Alláma al-Shaykh* Aḥmad al-Aḥsá'í, by Riyád Ṭáhir,<sup>83</sup> contains a brief biography of Shaykh Aḥmad followed by a list of 104 of his works, as well as references to the location of some of

Shaykh Aḥmad's manuscripts in the libraries of Iraq and Tehrán University.

The author of the *Fihrist* has categorized the 132 works of Shaykh Aḥmad into nine chapters according to the main subject of the work:

1. Works on divine theology and virtues
2. Works on doctrines and refutation of his opponents' views
3. Preaching and mysticism
4. Works on principles of *fiqh*
5. Works on *fiqh*
6. Commentaries on the *Qur'án* and Traditions
7. Works on philosophy and practical wisdom
8. Works on literature
9. Other works<sup>84</sup>

A glance at Shaykh Aḥmad's works shows that the majority were written in response to the religious, theological, and philosophical questions of his students, followers, other scholars, rulers, and other individuals whose identity is not known. These works of reply usually have as titles the name of the questioner. Thus the work entitled *Rísála-i-Baḥráníya* was composed in response to the questions of Sayyid Ḥusayn b. Sayyid 'Abd al-Qádir Baḥrání. In such work, Shaykh Aḥmad answered varied questions in different fields of Islamic sciences. Some questioners asked him up to seventy different questions. As a result, very rarely is a work devoted to one specific subject.

Since often people asked him the same question, it is not unusual to encounter the same response in several works.

Shaykh Aḥmad also wrote commentaries, and it was for this that he became best known. Although he did not write a commentary on the entire *Qur'án*, he did write them on a number of Quranic verses. He also wrote commentaries on several Traditions attributed to the Prophet and the *imáms*. Of the latter, the *Sharḥ al-Ziyára* is the most important.

Shaykh Aḥmad was the leading nineteenth century religious commentator on the works of Mullá Şadrá (d. 1050/1640), his commentaries on the *Mashá'ir* and the *'Arshíya* being of special importance. Shaykh Aḥmad also wrote commentaries on the *Risála-i-'Ilmíya* of Mullá Muḥsin Fayḍ (d. 1091/1680) and the *Tabşirat al-Muta'allimín* of Ḥasan b. Sadíd al-Dín 'Alláma al-Ḥillí (d. 726/1325). Shaykh Aḥmad also wrote commentaries on some of his own earlier works: for example, his *Sharḥ-i-Fawá'id* was a commentary on his earlier work, the *Fawá'id*.

The majority of Shaykh Aḥmad's works are undated; of those works which do bear a date, is not clear whether the date refers to the work's composition or its copying at a later time. Furthermore, the place of composition is usually not stated. Therefore, a chronological arrangement of his works, which could have shed light on his life and the development of his ideas, is impossible. The earliest date on a work of Shaykh Aḥmad's is 1197/1782. Written at the request of Shaykh Músá b. Muḥammad Şá'igh, this work is

a short treatise of twenty-six lines on the birth and advent of the expected Qá'im, in curious language.<sup>85</sup> The last dated work of Shaykh Aḥmad is a treatise dated 8 Sha'bán 1239/1823, which responds to the questions of Shaykh Ya'qúb b. Hájj Qásim Shírvání and in which Shaykh Aḥmad elaborated previous statements on matter and form.<sup>86</sup>

The language of Shaykh Aḥmad is complicated by technical terms, allegorical expressions, and extensive gnostic terminology. This was probably one reason why Shaykh Aḥmad himself, his successors, and many others after them found it necessary to write explanations on his works.

Shaykh Aḥmad wrote some works for the intellectual elite (*khawáss*), and others for laymen. Those works which he wrote for the elite have a rather allegorical and ambiguous tone, whereas those he wrote for a general audience are more straightforward and, in content, closer to common beliefs. Therefore, since the tone of each of Shaykh Aḥmad's works depended upon the audience for which the work was intended, a great deal of familiarity with the circumstances under which a work was written is required in order to come to a solid and mature understanding of his doctrines.

The extensive number of Shaykh Aḥmad's works does not permit providing a sketch of each work here. The topics he discusses are also too numerous to fully list. Hence, only a cursive examination of his works which incorporate the distinguishing features of his thought is attempted.

### **Sharḥ al-Ziyárat al-Jámi'a**

This work is a commentary on the *Ziyárat al-Jami'a* written at the request of Sayyid Ḥasan b. Sayyid Qásim al-Ḥusayní al-Ishkavarí al-Jílání in 1230/1814. The *Ziyárat al-Jámi'a* is a prayer of visitation of the holy shrines of the *imáms*, related on the authority of Imám 'Alí b. Muḥammad Naqí (the Tenth Imám, known as Imám al-Hádí) (d. 254/868) and is recorded by Ibn Bábawayh (Shaykh Ṣadúq)<sup>87</sup> and Shaykh Abú Ja'far Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭosí.<sup>88</sup> The prayer is well known among the Shí'a, and several Shí'í scholars have written commentaries on it.<sup>89</sup>

In the *Sharḥ al-Ziyára*, Shaykh Aḥmad quotes the text of the prayer phrase by phrase, gives the meaning of each phrase, and then discusses its theological and religious aspects.

Sayyid Kázim Rashtí began a commentary on the *Sharḥ al-Ziyára*, but as he himself states, he realized that he was unqualified for the task and therefore left his commentary unfinished.<sup>90</sup> Sayyid Kázim states that Shaykh Aḥmad was inspired and directed by the *imáms* while he wrote the *Sharḥ*. According to Sayyid Kázim, Shaykh Aḥmad revealed some of the secret and esoteric nature of the prayer and brought together in this work the *záhir* (external), i.e., *sharí'a* (religion) and the *báṭin* (internal), i.e., *ḥaqíqa* (reality).<sup>91</sup> An unpublished abridgment of this book was made by Mír Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ḥá'irí Shahrestání (d. 1315/1897), entitled *Talwíḥ al-Ishára fí Talkhís Sharḥ al-Ziyára*.<sup>92</sup>

The *Sharḥ al-Ziyára* of Shaykh Aḥmad is a collection of the most important theological problems in Shí'í thought. The "Ziyára" itself is a master work in expressing the status of the *imáms* and Shaykh Aḥmad explains its status as such. The *Sharḥ al-Ziyára* was published in 1267/1850 and in 1276/1859 in lithography in Tabríz.

### **Sharḥ Tabṣira**

One of the earliest of Shaykh Aḥmad's works, this commentary on the *Tabṣirat al-Muta'allimín fí Aḥkám al-Dín*, a well-known work of *fiqh* by 'Alláma al-Ḥillí,<sup>93</sup> is the treatise Shaykh Aḥmad presented to Baḥr al-'Ulúm and for which he received his first *ijáza*.<sup>94</sup>

### **Sharḥ 'ala al-Risálat al-'Ilmíya**

The *Risálat al-'Ilm* is a theological treatise by Fayḍ Káshání, on the knowledge of God. Shaykh Aḥmad wrote a commentary on this work at the request of Mírzá Báqir Nawwáb<sup>95</sup> in Kermánsháh in 1230/1814.<sup>96</sup> This *Sharḥ* was published in the *Jawámi' al-Kilam*.<sup>97</sup>

### **Sharḥ al-Mashá'ir**

*al-Mashá'ir* is a work of Mullá Şadrá. Shaykh Aḥmad wrote a commentary on this work at the request of Mullá Mashhad b. Mullá Ḥusayn 'Alí Shabestari. This work deals with the philosophical question of the essence of Being. The *Sharḥ al-Mashá'ir* was written in 1234/1818.<sup>98</sup>

### **Sharḥ al-'Arshíya**

*al-'Arshíya* is another work by Mullá Şadrá. Shaykh Aḥmad wrote a commentary on it in Kermánsháh at the request of Mullá Maşhad b. Mullá Ḥusayn 'Alí Shabestari.<sup>99</sup> The commentary consists of two volumes; the first, written in 1234/1818, regarding *mabda'* (God) and the second, written in 1236/1820, regarding the *ma'ád* (return). The Sharḥ al-'Arshíya was published in 1271/1854 and 1279/1862.

### **Fawá'id**

This general theological work, which Shaykh Aḥmad wrote in Yazd in 1211/1796,<sup>100</sup> deals mainly with three Beings: Being of God (*wujúd al-ḥaqq*), Being of Unlimited (*wujúd al-muṭlaq*), and Being of Limited (*wujúd al-muqayyad*). The *Fawá'id* consists of twelve *Fá'ida*. In 1233/1817, at the request of Mullá Maşhad b. Ḥusayn 'Alí, Shaykh Aḥmad wrote a commentary on this work entitled the Sharḥ al-Fawá'id. In the Sharḥ al-Fawá'id, Shaykh Aḥmad defines the terms he has used in the *Fawá'id*. The book was published in 1272/1855 and 1287/1870. In the Sharḥ al-Fawá'id, seven *Fá'ida* are added to the twelve *Fá'ida* of the original work.

In addition, two of Shaykh Aḥmad's students have written commentaries on the *Fawá'id*. Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn Semnání, who wrote his commentary in 1233/1817; and Shaykh Mullá Kázim Semnání. Both commentaries exist only in manuscript form.<sup>101</sup>

***Ḥayát al-Nafs***

This book was written on the five principles of Islamic belief, i.e., *tawḥíd* (oneness of God), *'adl* (justice), *nubuwwat* (prophethood), *imámat* (imamate), and *ma'ád* (return). The book's epilogue concerns the necessity of belief in the advent of the promised Qá'im. The work was written in 1236/1820<sup>102</sup> and published in the *Jawámi' al-Kilam* in 1273/1856. This work was translated into Persian by Sayyid Kázim Rashtí.

## Notes

- 1 The following are the major sources: Maḥammad Báqir al-Músawí al-Iṣbahání, *Rawḍát al-Jannát fí Aḥwál al-'Ulamá wa al-Sádat*, 8 vols. (Tehrán: Ismá'ílyan, 1390/1970), vol. 1, pp. 88–94; Muḥammad 'Alí Mudarris, *Rayḥánat al-Adab* (Tehrán: Khayyám, 1967), vol. 1, pp. 78–82; and al-Sayyid Muḥsin al-Amín, *A'yán al-Shí'a* (Beirut: Maṭba'at al-Inṣáf, 1960), vol. 8, pp. 272–282.
- 2 See in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. “al-Aḥsá'í” by A. Bausani; *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. “Shaikhí” by C. Huart; 'Alí Akbar Dehkhodá, *Luḡhat Náma-i-Dehkhodá*, s.v. “Aḥmad Aḥsá'í”.
- 3 Abú al-Qásim Ibráhmí, *Fihrist-i-Kutub-i-Masháyikh-i-'Izám*, pp. 132–143.
- 4 Ḥusayn 'Alí Maḥfúz, *Síraṭ al-Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsá'í*, pp. 9–22.
- 5 This translation was published along with the *Risála-i-Tadhkirat al-Awliya* in Kermán in 1383/1967. References to this translation are made under the title of *Risála-i-Shaykh 'Abd Alláh* throughout this work.
- 6 Sayyid Kázim Raṣhtí, *Dalíl al-Mutaḥayyirín*.
- 7 Ibráhmí, *Fihrist*, p. 311.
- 8 Ḥájj Muḥammad Karím Khán Kermání, *Hidáyat al-Ṭálibín*.
- 9 Murtaḍá Mudarrisi Chahárdehí, *Shaykhígari, Bábigari az Nazar-i-Falsafa, Táríkh va Ijtímá'*.
- 10 Murtaḍá Mudarrisi Chahárdehí, *Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í*. This work, with very little addition, was republished in *Táríkh-i-Falásifa-i-Islám*; “Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í”, *Yádgár* vol. 1, no. 4; “Ḥájj Muḥammad Karím Khán Kermání”.
- 11 Jamál Zádeh's articles were published in *Yachmá*, vol. 14, no. 9, pp. 402–409; no. 10, pp. 440–448; no. 11, pp. 488–493; no. 12, pp. 538–543. The series ended with the biography of the fifth leader, Zayn al-'Ábidín Khán Kermání.
- 12 A. L. M. Nicolas, *Essai Sur Le Chéikhisme*. Vol. 1: Cheikh Aḥmed Lahçahi. Vol. 2: Séyyèd Kazem Rehti. Vol. 3: La Doctrine. Vol. 4: La Science de Dieu.
- 13 de Gobineau, *Les Religions et les Philosophies*, pp. 23–39.
- 14 Edward G. Browne, “The Bábis of Persia. II. Their Literature and Doctrines”, pp. 884–885, 883–892. In his introduction to the *Kitáb-i-Nuqṭatu'l-Káf*, pp. xx-xxiii; Browne briefly discusses the major beliefs of the Shaykhís.
- 15 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *A Traveller's Narrative*, vol. 2, pp. 234–244.
- 16 The work, with its translation into Persian by Fereydoun Bahmanyar, was published in Tehrán in 1967.
- 17 Ibráhmí, *Fihrist*, p. 132.
- 18 According to Zayn al-'Ábidín Shírvání in his *Bustán al-Siyaḥa*, p.

- 522, Aḥsá is the original name of the country, but it is also called as Laḥsa and Ḥasá. Thus the people of the county are known as Laḥsáwí or Ḥasáwí as well as Aḥsá'í.
- 19 Shaykh 'Abd Alláh, *Risála-i-Shaykh 'Abd Alláh*, pp. 17–18.
- 20 Ibráhímí, *Fihrist*, p. 132.
- 21 *ibid.*, p. 133.
- 22 *ibid.*
- 23 *ibid.*, p. 136.
- 24 Shaykh 'Abd Alláh, *Risála-i-Shaykh 'Abd Alláh*, p. 8.
- 25 *al-Ajurrúmiya fī Qawá'id 'Ilm al-'Arabíya*, a textbook in Arabic grammar, written by Abú 'Abd Alláh Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Ibn Ajurrúm: the 'Awámil, a textbook in Arabic grammar, written by 'Abd al-Qáhir b. 'Abd al-Raḥmán al-Jurjání.
- 26 Ibráhímí, *Fihrist*, p. 136.
- 27 Chahárdehí, *Tárikh-i-Falásifa-i-Islam*, p. 62.
- 28 The complete title of the book is *Masálik al-Afhám wa al-Núr al-Munjí min al-Zalám*, known as *al-Mujlí*.
- 29 Muḥammad Ma'súm Shírází, known as Ma'súm 'Alí Sháh and Náyib al-Ṣadr, *Tará'iq al-Ḥaqá'iq*, vol. 3, p. 217.
- 30 Shaykh 'Abd Alláh, *Risála-i-Shaykh 'Abd Alláh*, p. 18.
- 31 Mudarris, *Rayḥanat al-Adab*, vol. 1, p. 79.
- 32 *Tabṣira* is one of the main works of 'Alláma al-Ḥillí.
- 33 Shaykh 'Abd Alláh, *Risála-i-Shaykh 'Abd Alláh*, p. 18.
- 34 For Muḥammad Mahdí Baḥr al-'Ulúm's *ijáza* see Ḥájj Muḥammad Khán Kermání's *Risála-i-Behbaháníya*, pp. 23–24; Ḥájj Muḥammad Khán Kermání's *Hidáyat al-Mustarshid*, pp. 59–60; and Sayyid Kázim Rašhtí, *Dalíl al-Mutaḥayyirín*, p. 39.
- 35 For Ḥusayn 'Alí 'Uṣfúr's *ijáza* see *Risála-i-Behbaháníya*, p. 26; *Hidáyat al-Mustarshid*, p. 56; and *Dalíl al-Mutaḥayyirín*, p. 40. According to *Makárir al-Áthár* (vol. 2, p. 572) this *ijáza* was issued on the second of Jumádá al-Thání 1214/1799.
- 36 A portion of Shaykh Aḥmad Damistání's *ijáza* was published in *Hidáyat al-Mustarshid*, p. 57.
- 37 For Shahrestání's *ijáza* see *Risála-i-Behbaháníya*, pp. 24–25; *Hidáyat al-Mustarshid*, pp. 57–58; and *Dalíl al-Mutaḥayyirín*, p. 39.
- 38 For Ṭabáṭabá'í's *ijáza* see *Risála-i-Behbaháníya*, p. 27; *Hidáyat al-Mustarshid*, pp. 58–59; and *Dalíl al-Mutaḥayyirín*, p. 41.
- 39 For Shaykh Ja'far Najafí's *ijáza* see *Risála-i-Behbaháníya*, p. 25; *Hidáyat al-Mustarshid*, pp. 60–61; and *Dalíl al-Mutaḥayyirín*, p. 40.
- 40 Ibráhímí, *Fihrist*, p. 150.
- 41 Sayyid Kázim Rašhtí, *Dalíl al-Mutaḥayyirín*, p. 20. See also Ḥájj Muḥammad Karím Khán Kermání, *Hidáyat al-Ṭálibín*, pp. 63–65.
- 42 Mudarris, *Rayḥanat al-Adab*, p. 79.
- 43 Ibráhímí, *Fihrist*, p. 133.

- 44 *ibid.*, p. 140.
- 45 *ibid.*
- 46 Shaykh 'Abd Alláh, *Risála-i-Shaykh* 'Abd Alláh, p. 13.
- 47 Ibrihímí, *Fihrist*, p. 141.
- 48 Hájj Muḥammad Khán Kermání, *Risála-i-Behbaháníya*, pp. 11–12.
- 49 Hájj Muḥammad Karím Khán Kermání, *Hidáyat al-Ṭálibín*, p. 41.
- 50 *ibid.*, p. 43.
- 51 In the *Rayḥánat al-Adab* two phrases are recorded which have numerical values of 1242, for first: فزت بالفردوس فوزا يا ابن زين الدين احمد and the second: رحم الشيخ احمد (*Rayḥánat al-Adab*, vol. 2, p. 81).
- 52 For detailed information about the members of the Shaykh's family see *Risála-i-Shaykh* 'Abd Alláh, pp. 41–42.
- 53 al-Mírzá Muḥammad 'Alí al-Kashmírí, *Nujúm al-Samá fí Tarájim al-'Ulamá*, p. 368.
- 54 Shaykh 'Abd Alláh, *Risála-i-Shaykh* 'Abd Alláh, p. 23.
- 55 *ibid.*, p. 34.
- 56 *ibid.*, p. 37.
- 57 *ibid.*, p. 39.
- 58 A complete report on the nature of this dispute and its consequences is given in Muḥammad Tonekáboní's *Qišaş al-'Ulamá*, pp. 34–43.
- 59 Aḥmad Kasraví, *Baháyígarí*, p. 18.
- 60 For a full description of the conduct of Shaykh Aḥmad see Hájj Muḥammad Karím Khán Kermání's *Hidáyat al-Ṭálibín*, p. 84.
- 61 Sayyid Kázim Raští, *Dalíl al-Mutahayyirín*, pp. 14–15.
- 62 Ibrihímí, *Fihrist*, p. 141.
- 63 *ibid.*
- 64 A full discussion of the Shaykh's sources would be a significant task requiring a great deal of research. It is not intended here to study his sources of knowledge and information or even to provide a full list of works used by the Shaykh. On the basis of his major works such as *Sharḥ al-Ziyára*, it is obvious that he made much use of the well-known Shí'í collections of Traditions. *Uṣúl al-Káfi* of Kolayní (d. 329/940), *al-Amáli*, *al-Khiṣál*, and *'Uyún Akhbár al-Riḍá*, three major works of Ṣadúq are quoted often. Shaykh Aḥmad also frequently refers to the works of Faḍl b. Ḥasan b. Faḍl Ṭabrisí (d. 548/1153) such as *Majma' al-Bayán* and *al-Wáfi*. Among the exegeses on the *Qur'án*, Shaykh Aḥmad is fond of those that contain the Traditions concerning qualities and attributes of the *imáms*. He refers to *Tafsír al-'Ayyáshí* by Muḥammad b. Mas'úd b. Muḥammad b. 'Ayyásh and the exegesis of Mírzá Muḥammad b. Mullá Muḥammad Riḍá Jamálat-Dín Qomí entitled the *Kanz al-Daqá'iq wa Baḥr al-Ghará'ib*, which both contain the Traditions on the *imáms*. The Shaykh frequently quotes other works of such

- 'ulamá as Muḥammad Taqí Majlisí, particularly his *Sharḥ al-Ziyára; Majma' al-Baḥrayn* of Fakhr al-Dín b. Ṭurayḥ (d. 1085/1674); *Kámil al-Ziyára* of Ja'far b. Muḥammad Qolawayḥ (d. 368/978); and *al-Iḥtijáj* of Aḥmad b. 'Alí Ṭabrisí.
- 65 Sayyid Kázim Raṣṭhí, *Dalíl al-Mutaḥayyirín*, p. 19.
- 66 By the term "*madhhab*" he may mean the Shí'í doctrine.
- 67 He is referring to the verse of the *Qur'án* which reads, we will show them Our signs in all the regions of the earth and in their own souls, until they clearly see that this is the truth." (41:53).
- 68 Sayyid Kázim Raṣṭhí, *Dalíl al-Mutaḥayyirín*, p. 69.
- 69 Sayyid Kázim Raṣṭhí, *Risála-i-Uṣúl*, p. 135. Sayyid Kázim wrote a treatise on the principles of Islamic jurisprudence. This treatise is combined with three other *Shaykhí* manuscripts in one volume under the call number 2013-F in the Bahá'í National Archive in Iran. The 71-page treatise was written at the request of an unknown questioner.
- 70 "*Mutawátir*" is applied to a tradition with so many transmitters that there could be no collusion, all being known to be reliable and not being under any compulsion to lie." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 3, p. 25.
- 71 According to Hughes' *Dictionary of Islam*, *taqíya* is, "A Shí'ah doctrine. A pious fraud whereby the Shí'ah Muslim believes he is justified in either smoothing down or in denying the peculiarities of his religious persecution. Hughes, *Dictionary of Islam*, p. 628.
- 72 Sayyid Kázim Raṣṭhí, *Risála-i-Uṣúl*, p. 136.
- 73 *ibid.*, pp. 99–100.
- 74 *ibid.*, p. 132.
- 75 *ibid.*, p. 131.
- 76 Zayn al-'Ábidín Shírvání, *Bustán al-Siyáha*, p. 522.
- 77 Sayyid Kázim Raṣṭhí, *Risála-i-Uṣúl*, p. 109.
- 78 Sayyid Kázim Raṣṭhí, *Dalíl al-Mutaḥayyirín*, p. 14.
- 79 *ibid.*, *Risála-i-Uṣúl*, p. 152.
- 80 *ibid.*, p. 153.
- 81 Considering the fact that *Shaykh* Aḥmad usually did not make a second copy of his treatise for himself, and the fact that his works were kept in the house of Sayyid Kázim Raṣṭhí in Karbalá, which was robbed twice, the *Shaykh* could well have written more than 132 works (Ibráhímí, *Fihrist*, p. 125).
- 82 Ibráhímí, *Fihrist*, pp. 214–215.
- 83 Riyád Ṭáhir, *Fihrist Taṣánif al-'Alláma al-Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsá'í*.
- 84 Ibráhímí, *Fihrist*, p. 219.
- 85 *ibid.*, p. 242.
- 86 *ibid.*, p. 237.
- 87 Abí al-Ṣadúq Muḥammad b. 'Alí b. al-Ḥusayn b. Bábawayḥ al-Qomí,

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*Man Lá Yahđuruh al-Faqíh*, vol. 2, pp. 370–375.

- 88 Abí Ja'far Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭosí, *Tahdhíb al-Aḥkám*, vol. 6, pp. 95–101.
- 89 For the list of commentaries written on the *Ziyárat al-Jámi'a* see Áqá Bozorq al-Ṭehrání, *al-Dḥarí'a ilá Taşáníf al-Shí'a*, vol. 13, pp. 305–306.
- 90 Sayyid Kázim Raşhtí, *Dalíl al-Mutaḥayyirín*, p. 128.
- 91 *ibid.*
- 92 Áqá Bozorq al-Ṭehrání, *al-Dḥarí'a*, vol. 4, p. 430.
- 93 Commentaries have been written on *Tabşirat al-Muta'allimín* by not less than 30 Shí'a 'ulamá. (See Áqá Bozorq al-Ṭehrání, *al-Dḥarí'a*, vol. 3, pp. 321–323; and vol. 13, pp. 133–138.
- 94 Shaykh 'Abd Alláh, *Risála-i-Shaykh 'Abd Alláh*, p. 18.
- 95 Ibráhímí, *Fihrist*, p. 228.
- 96 In Áqá Bozorq al-Ṭehrání, *al-Dḥarí'a* (vol. 13, p. 288), the title of the work is recorded as *Sharḥ Risálat al-'Ilm* and the references to the manuscripts of the work are given.
- 97 A collection of Shaykh Aḥmad's important treatises was published under the name of *Jawámi' al-Kilam* in two volumes, the first in 1273/1856 and the second in 1276/1859. The first volume consists of 40 treatises and the second has 52.
- 98 Ibráhímí, *Fihrist*, p. 228.
- 99 *ibid.*, p. 241.
- 100 Riyáđ Ṭáhir, *Fihrist Taşáníf*, p. 6.
- 101 *ibid.*, p. 12.
- 102 *ibid.*, p. 13.

### III

#### The basic Shaykhí ontological doctrines

The ontological doctrines of Shaykh Aḥmad constitute the most important link between the Shaykhí school and the mainstream of Islamic thought. In these views he relates his thought to Shí'a and challenges Sunní and Şúfí positions.

Shaykh Aḥmad's ontological doctrines do not constitute any new system of ontological thought, nor did the Shaykh himself ever claim to have produced such a system. The importance of Shaykh Aḥmad, however, lies in the emphasis he placed on certain theological doctrines and the new framework into which he put them. It lies also in the doubt that he cast upon some of the well-accepted doctrines of the Muslim philosophers and the Şúfís.

Shaykh Aḥmad's primary purpose was to purify Islamic thought from the intellectual innovations of those Muslim scholars who neglect the *imáms'* teachings and rely upon their own understanding. Although a Shí'a himself, his attitude toward the purification of Islam was not limited to Shí'í innovation.

His standard for understanding the Truth was the *Qur'án* and the Shí'í Traditions, and he considered himself the interpreter of the Truth as revealed in these works. Thus he severely criticized the religious scholars who had not sought the truth from infallible sources, i.e., the *imáms*, whom God made the guardian for His people. Shaykh Aḥmad,

who regarded himself as a revealer of the truth, asked his audience to disregard those innovated thoughts that may divert one from the right path and urged them to heed his words, in which the truth is expressed, and to seek the truth with their own understanding and judgment instead of imitating others. The understanding and judgment to which the Shaykh refers is based on intellectual reasoning as well as intuition. A man can comprehend the truth from the sayings of the *imáms* if he detaches himself from innovated thoughts and refers to the genuine source of inspiration and intellectual reasoning.<sup>1</sup>

The two primary sources for the Shaykh ontological doctrines are (1) the commentaries Shaykh Aḥmad himself wrote on certain Quranic verses and Shí'í Traditions, and those theological and philosophical treatises he wrote at the request of individuals; and (2) the works Sayyid Kázim Raṣṥtí wrote to elaborate Shaykh Aḥmad's doctrines, works equally important for Shaykhí ontology.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter will focus on ontological questions that have been given prominence in Shaykh works, with attention given only to aspects of these questions which are particularly important for Shaykh Aḥmad and which differentiate his school from others.

A fundamental question that has always occupied scholars of Islamic theology is the nature of God, His attributes, and His relationship with material being. The same question is a central concern in all the Shaykh's

doctrines. According to the *Qur'án*, basic Islamic doctrine holds that God is eternal, single since eternity, and incomprehensible. Among these attributes, the absolute impossibility of comprehending the essence (*dhát*) of God, as the most important ontological principle, has received great emphasis in the works of the Shaykhís. On the impossibility of knowing God's essence, Sayyid Kázim says that knowledge can exist only when there is a similarity between the known and the knower. Thus, the essence of God can not be known because no similarity exists between God and the knower, i.e., man: God is eternal (*qadím*) and man is "accident" (*hádith*), and there is absolutely no similarity between eternal and accident.<sup>3</sup>

There is no doubt that as long as there is no correlation (*munásabat*)\* or similarity (*mushábahat*) between two things, one can not cite an example from it. Thus, one can not say that water is a thing like (*mithál*) fire or heat is a thing like cold or wind is a thing like earth, and so on. If correlation were not a condition of citing an example, one could cite an example between any two things, but this obviously can not be done, as above examples show. In the case of God, there exists nothing in the material world similar to God; therefore, one can not describe Him by citing an example from the material world or know Him through likeness. Possible Being is only able to understand a subject within the realm of the Possible and is not able to understand anything beyond it, i.e., the Necessary Being.<sup>4</sup>

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\* *munásabat*: relation, connection.

Thus, if Possible Being wants to cite an example from the Necessary Being, it needs two things; first, it needs to comprehend the Essence of the Necessary Being, to know whether the example is His example or not. Second, it needs to cite the example by using phenomena from Possible Being, because it was proved that the Necessary Being is one and there must exist a correlation between one object (*mithl*) and the object to which it is being compared (*mumathal*), otherwise it is not its likeness (*mithál*). In order to cite an example from God, resemblance (*mithl*) and likeness to Him is necessary, and this is in contradiction with the belief that there is no likeness (*shabíh*), comparison (*nazír*), or resemblance (*mithl*) for God, because the *Qur'án* says, "Nothing is like a likeness of Him; and He is the Hearing, the Seeing." (42:11) And also it reads, "Therefore do not give a likeness to Allah; surely Allah knows and you do not know." (16:74) Thus, such terms as "resemblance", "relatedness", "equivalent", "corresponding", "parallel", and so on, only define Possible Being and cannot refer to the Necessary Being.

Furthermore, in order to know something, the knower is required to be superior (*iḥáṭa*)\* over the subject that is to be known. The subject, in this case God, cannot be comprehended as the *Qur'án* says, He [God] knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they cannot comprehend anything out of His knowledge." (2:255) And also, "Nay: they reject that of which they have no

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\* *iḥáṭa*: comprehension, grasp, understanding, knowledge, cognizance (of something), acquaintance, familiarity (with).

comprehensive knowledge.” (10:39) And, “Vision comprehends Him not, and He comprehends (all) vision; and He is the Knower of subtilities, the Aware.” (6:104) These verses indicate that nothing, neither inspired knowledge (*ḥuḍúri*) nor imagination (*taṣawwur*), is able to comprehend Him. One only comprehends those subjects within the limitations of one’s comprehension, and even those are not necessarily what exists in reality. For example, if one sees the reflection of a star in the water, one is not seeing the true star, but rather the image (*ṣúrat*) and the example (*mithál*) of the star, which is nothing but water. Therefore, whatever Possible Being comprehends is only Possible Being and nothing beyond that, i.e., Necessary Being. This attitude is based on Traditions such as the one on the authority of Imám Riḍá which reads, “One does not know God if he points out a similarity between Him and His creation; and one does not understand His oneness but puts up a companion to God if he believes that he has comprehended His very Essence; and one does not reach His recognition, who holds up a likeness (*mithál*) for Him and puts up a resemblance (*mithl*) for Him; and one does not believe in His Diety, who maintains infinity for Him; and one does not eliminate anthropomorphism for Him who has pointed at Him. ... Whatever one comprehends is the creation of his own comprehension (and not what exists out of him in reality).”<sup>5</sup>

Not only can man not comprehend God, but neither can

the prophets of God, who are more excellent than man. The Prophet Muḥammad, who, according to Sayyid Kázim was more excellent than the other prophets, says, "We did not comprehend You as You deserve to be comprehended" (*má 'arafnáka ḥaqqā ma'rifatika*).<sup>6</sup>

Just as man cannot comprehend the Essence of Necessary Being, he cannot properly speak about Him, since, in order to do so, he must comprehend Him. Speech is the external expression of intellect or imagination, and, since neither intellect nor imagination is able to comprehend God, speaking about His Essence, as It is, is impossible. A Tradition on the authority of Imám Báqir states, "Speak about anything but do not speak about God. Speaking about God does nothing but increase the speaker's perplexity."<sup>7</sup>

The attributes of God are of two kinds: essential (*dhátíya*) attributes, which have no connection with contingencies, and actional (*fi'líya* or *imkání* or *muḥdath*) attributes.<sup>8</sup> Perfect belief in the oneness of God requires one to regard the essential attributes as identical with the essence of God. There is absolutely no separation between His essence and, for example, His knowledge (*'ilm*), which is an essential attribute. Knowledge is His essence and essence is His knowledge, without distinction. In this respect, we neither know what His knowledge is (as we do not know what His essence is), nor how He knows. Since the essential attributes such as knowledge, power (*qudrat*), hearing (*sam'*) and vision (*baṣar*), cannot be separated from

Him, God cannot be attributed with their opposites, i.e., ignorance (*jahl*), weakness (*'ajz*), and so on.

Essential attributes are pre-existent, i.e., they have existed as long as the essence of God has existed; however, this does not imply that essential attributes may be considered as separate from essence.

There exists no distinction between essential attributes: knowledge is identical with power and power is His knowledge without distinction.<sup>9</sup> Since the essence of God is unknowable, His essential attributes, which are identical with His essence, are also unknowable.

The second kind of attributes are actional attributes, which are quite different from essential attributes. Actional attributes come into being when God acts in the realm of Possible Being, or as long as His actions are regarded in Possible Being. To clarify the nature of the actional attributes, Shaykh Aḥmad gives the following example: when a man writes, as a result of the action of writing we learn that he is a scribe and we can describe him as such. If the same man sews a garment, through his action of sewing we discover that he is a tailor and can describe him as such. The attributes, i.e., scribe and tailor, are not part of his essence, but rather his essence is single and not composed of the elements of being a tailor and a scribe. The man who performs these functions is perfect enough (capable) to perform them. This does not indicate that he is made up of these functions. There exists only

one single essence, i.e., the man, who acts as a tailor or as a scribe. The multiple aspects of this essence appear as soon as he acts. Before his actions took place, he was a single essence, and after he acted, his essence was still single and unchanged. Likewise the multiplicity of God's attributes is conceivable only when His actions are viewed in Possible Being.<sup>10</sup>

In contrast to essential attributes, actional attributes are new (*hádith*) and created (*makhluq*). Will (*mashí'a*), decree (*iráda*), and speech (*kalám*), in the Shaykhí's view, are actional attributes and, therefore, are new and created.<sup>11</sup> God can be attributed with the actional attributes, or, in contrast to essential attributes, with their opposites. For example, God may will or may not will.

Since there is no similarity between the Necessary Being and Possible Being, none of the qualities and attributes applied to Possible Being are applicable to the Necessary Being, and none of the qualities and attributes of the Necessary Being are applicable to Possible Being. In other words, the attributes of Possible Being do not exist in the Necessary Being, and vice versa. Therefore, man's knowledge, power, and life is not like God's knowledge, power, and life. Man's knowledge, power, and life, or man's concept of them, are conditioned by the limitations of Possible Being and are not similar to the knowledge, power, and life that God possesses. God has knowledge, power, and life, but one whose intellect is limited by the conditions

of Possible Being is not able to comprehend them. God is powerful and all-knowing; if He were not, it would have been necessary for Him to be imperfect and this is not possible for God.

We attribute to God the qualities we think a perfect being should possess. These attributes, however, are signs of perfection only to us. This does not mean that He actually possesses them, because we know nothing about His essence. In fact, by assigning God certain attributes we imply the absence of their opposites and do not prove these attributes to Him.

God is known to Possible Being only through His actions and works, but because they are conditioned by the limitations of Possible Being, they do not define His essence. Even God's description of Himself, since it is intended to be understood by man, has been expressed within the limitation of Possible Being and is not a description of what He really is.<sup>12</sup>

The *Qur'án* and Traditions tell us that the purpose of existence is to know and worship God.<sup>13</sup> But Shaykh Aḥmad believes that man cannot know God. He resolves this apparent contradiction by suggesting that man is created to know God only through His actions (*af'ál*) and works (*áthár*), not to know His essence, which is beyond man's intellectual comprehension. God created all things by means of His action, not His essence. The action of God, which is identical with His will (*mashí'a*) and decree (*iráda*),

creates the creation from absolute nothingness. Shaykh Aḥmad refers to a Tradition on the authority of Imám Riḍá which states that the terms *mashí'a*, *iráda*, and *ibdá'* are synonymous.<sup>14</sup>

Since Shaykh Aḥmad denies any relationship between the Necessary Being and Possible Being, he must explain how Possible Being came into existence, and the nature of the relationship between the eternal (*qadím*) and the new (*ḥádith*). Shaykh Aḥmad accepts the view that only a single being can issue from the essence of God, which is single. Consequently, the Single Being (God) issues forth His single will by itself, as an act and not as a part of His essence. The will, which is the first creation of God, is called God's possible will (*al-mashí'at al-imkáníya*). From it, Possible Being comes into existence. This view is found in a Tradition on the authority of Imám Ṣádiq, which reads, "God created the will by itself, and then the will created things" (*khalaqa Alláhu al-mashí'ata bi nafsihá thumma khalaqa al-ashyá'a bi al-mashí'a*).<sup>15</sup> On the basis of this Tradition, Shaykh Aḥmad explains that the will is a "creative movement" (*al-ḥarakat al-ijádíya*)<sup>16</sup> which, although created (*muhḍath*), depends upon nothing except itself. Thus, when we say that God created the will by itself, we mean that the will is a single thing by itself and in its essence, i.e., the will is not "a" thing and its "self" something else; rather, the will is the simplest thing in the realm of Possible Being. Shaykh Aḥmad has

called the simplicity of the will the “possible simplicity” (*al-bisáṭat al-imbáníya*) to differentiate it from the simplicity of God.<sup>17</sup>

The will is at the highest level of the hierarchy of Possible Being and has produced everything below it; the will was the first being, preceding all else in the realm of Possible Being. The will is eternal (*sarmad*) and God has created (*aḥdathá*) the possibilities (*imbánát*) of things from it in a general, infinitive sense (*‘alá wajhin kullin lá yatanáḥí*) in the Possible Being.<sup>18</sup>

Shaykh Aḥmad states that the possible (*imbán*) is the source (*mansḥa’* or *aṣl*) of the existent (*wujúd* or *akwán*).<sup>19</sup> As an adjective depends upon the noun it qualifies, existence depends upon the possible. The relationship between the possible and the existent, in a more tangible example, is like the relationship between sperm and a man.<sup>20</sup>

When we say that things exist in the possible realm we mean that they exist collectively, and not individually, in the will. It is the will which produces the individuality of things and issues them into Possible Being one after another. We need to think in this way because God is not affected by time; therefore past, present, and future are identical to Him, even though from the Possible Being point of view, the action is past or is yet to occur. If this were not so, God would be in the position of “waiting” (*muntaḥira*),<sup>21</sup> which, as a deficiency, would be inconsistent with His perfection.

From the fact that to God, every thing is in the present we do not mean that things are eternal, for only the essence of God is eternal. We mean, rather, that things receive their existence as soon as they are created. For example, Adam was created at one time and Zayd at another. Both times are in the present to God, each one in its own turn. We exist here and now: before this moment we had no existence. Likewise, Adam existed at his time and Zayd at his time, but, to God all of these times and places are in the present.

Shaykh Aḥmad's doctrines on God and His attributes, particularly God's knowledge, put him in serious disagreement with the Şúfís, such as Ibn al-'Arabí (d. 638/1240); theologians, such as Mullá Muḥsin Fayḍ Káshání (d. 1091/1680); and philosophers, such as Mullá Şadrá (d. 1050/1640). While a detailed study of the points of disagreement between Shaykh Aḥmad and these three eminent figures of Islamic thought would be beyond the scope of this work, a discussion of the major points as they are revealed in the Shaykh's better known works, should suffice to illustrate the dispute.

Among the Şúfís, Muḥy al-Dín Ibn al-'Arabí has been severely criticized in the works of Shaykh Aḥmad. Shaykh Aḥmad sarcastically calls Muḥy al-Dín (Reviver of religion), "*Mumít al-Dín*", (slayer of religion)<sup>22</sup> and regards him as an infidel.

Among Şúfí thinkers, Ibn al-'Arabí is a classical example and the best known representative of Islamic

pantheism. His pantheism is clear in his theory of Love. To him, "The ultimate goal of love is to know the reality of love and that the reality of love is identical with God's Essence."<sup>23</sup>

He praises me and I praise Him,  
 And He worships me and I worship Him.  
 In one state I acknowledge Him  
 And in the a'yán I deny Him.  
 He knows me and I know Him not,  
 And I know Him and behold Him.  
 How can He be independent,  
 When I help Him and assist Him?  
 In my knowing Him, I create Him.<sup>24</sup>

A basic belief of the *Šūfīs*, including Ibn al-'Arabí, concerns the love of God and the idea that, in the last stage of the journey to God, the lover may become unified with Him. According to Ibn al-'Arabí,

Man makes various progresses [sic], which are thought of as a series of journeys (*asfár*),\* in particular three: (1) from God, *al-safar'an Alláh*, by which a man having traversed the various worlds (*'awálim*) is born into this world, and is then thus furthest removed from God; (2) to God, *al-safar ila'lláh*, by which, with the help of a guide, he makes the spiritual journey with the goal of reaching the "station of junction [with Universal Intelligence] after separation" (*makám al-djam'ba'd al-tafriqa*); (3) in God, *al-safar fi'lláh*. The first two journeys have an end, the third has no end: it is *baqá'bi'lláh*. The traveller (*sálik*) who is making the third journey performs those precepts of the *sharí'a* which are *farq*; externally, he is living with his fellows; but internally he is dwelling with God. Not every man is capable of more than the first journey; only those specially endowed (*khawáss*) may win to the vision of God, but even for them this depends on certain conditions (*shurút*), some fulfilled by the traveller (*sálik*, *muríd*) himself, some provided by the *shaykh*. Even the Prophet had a *shaykh*—Gabriel ... There will be awakened in his heart a love (*maḥabba*), which grows to be a passion (*'ishk*)† quite distinct from selfish desires (*shahwa*). It is this passion which

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\* safar, pl. asfár departure; (plural) journey.

† 'ishq.

particularly brings men to God. On the journey the *sálik* experiences a series of "states" (*aḥwál*), some continuing and hence called "resting-places" (*maqám, manzil*), at each of which he learns various *ma'árif*. When the heart is thoroughly purified, the veil (*ḥidjáb*) of those "other" things which hide God (*má siwá' Alláh*) is drawn aside; all things, past, present and future, are known; God grants the manifestation (*tadjiállí*) of Himself; and finally union with Him (*waṣl*) is achieved.<sup>25</sup>

Shaykh Aḥmad maintains there exists connection in creation, but the connection does not physically reach God. No created being can attain to what is not created, i.e., the Necessary Being. To be able to do so it would have to be the Necessary Being itself.<sup>26</sup> The Necessary Being is limitless, eternal, immortal, and invisible. The world of creation, on the contrary, is bound by natural law, finite, mortal, and visible. To him the Necessary Being does not ascend or descend and is never an object for any kind of unification with His creation.

Because there can be no connection between Possible Being and the Necessary Being, Shaykh Aḥmad believes that it is absolutely impossible for a man, no matter how exalted in rank, to love God and to achieve union with Him. Loving someone, in the views of Shaykh Aḥmad, is a function of soul (*nafs*) and intellect (*'aql*). This function is not possible without the continuous remembrance of the beloved and concentration on the ways of loving and joining him, which requires picturing him. Without imagination, one cannot achieve His remembrance or think about the ways of joining Him, and this is not possible in the case of God.<sup>27</sup> Shaykh

Aḥmad's second major point of disagreement with the Ṣúfís, particularly Muḥy al-Dín Ibn al-'Arabí, concerns the Ṣúfí theory of "unity of being" (*waḥdat al-wujúd*). According to this theory, existence (*wujúd*) is described as one plain (*basít*), continuous thing (*shay' wáḥid*), which is nothing but God, and God is nothing but that existence. Shaykh Aḥmad denounced this pantheistic doctrine and therefore designated its upholder, Ibn al-'Arabí, as an infidel.<sup>28</sup> Such a doctrine necessitates that God be, on the one hand, a creator, and, on the other, a creature—which is patently against the basic principle of the *Qur'án* and the Islamic Traditions.<sup>29</sup> Schimmel writes,

The concept of *waḥdat al-wujúd* does not involve a substantial continuity between God and creation. In Ibn 'Arabí's thought, a transcendence across categories, including substance, is maintained. God is above all qualities—they are neither He nor other than He—and He manifests Himself only by means of the names, not by His essence. On the plane of essence, He is inconceivable (transcending concepts) and nonexperiential (transcending even non-rational cognition). That means that in their actual existence the creatures are not identified with God, but only reflections of His attributes.<sup>30</sup>

Although Schimmel's description of an aspect of *waḥdat al-wujúd* denies that the creatures are identical with God, it still maintains that they are the reflections of His attributes. Even if by "attributes" the actional attributes are meant, Shaykh Aḥmad would still not agree with the concept of *waḥdat al-wujúd* as long as God stands at one end of it. It does not seem that even the non-pantheistic interpretations of Ibn al-'Arabí's thought advanced by Henry

Corbin and Seyyed H. Nasr would be acceptable to Shaykh Aḥmad, because in these interpretations, too, God is assumed to have produced creation as a mirror for His *tajalliyát*, His manifestations,<sup>31</sup> whereas Shaykh Aḥmad maintains that the mirror for His *tajalliyát* is His will, from which the creation came into being.

A basic point of disagreement between Shaykh Aḥmad and Shí'í theologians is the question of God's knowledge. Mullá Muḥsin Fayḍ Káshání was one of the leading Shí'í theologians whose views on God's knowledge the Shaykh criticized. Mullá Muḥsin believed that God knew about His creation "before" He actually created it. He maintained this because he believed that God, who is the knower (*'álim*), could never have been without knowledge and that this knowledge must always have had an object.<sup>32</sup> This "object" is a created thing about which God knew since He existed, i.e., since eternity.

Shaykh Aḥmad holds that God's knowledge is an essential attribute and is identical with His essence, i.e., that there is no separation between His essence and His knowledge, and there exists no object for His knowledge because knowledge and the essence are identical, i.e., the knower and the known are the same. God's knowledge about what His essence does is not to be confused with His knowledge of His essence itself, because His knowledge of His essence has no object except His essence. This means that there was nothing to be known (although He knew His essence, and that knowledge was identical with His essence), until He created

things and knew about them “after” their creation.<sup>33</sup>

The Shaykh quotes a Tradition on the authority of Imám Şádiq which reads, “There was God, our respected and exalted God, and knowledge was His essence and there was nothing known [*ma’lúm*] to Him. ... When He created [*aḥdath*] things and the known came into being, His knowledge came to rest [*waq’a’a*] upon the known”.<sup>34</sup> The Shaykh explains this Tradition by saying that God certainly is all-knowing, but at first His knowledge comprehends only His essence, and after He creates things His knowledge knows them.<sup>35</sup>

Mullá Muḥsin says that God’s knowledge about Himself and His knowledge about His creation are one. Shaykh Aḥmad believes that Mullá Muḥsin is wrong in regarding these two kinds of knowledge as one and as identical with His essence. Shaykh Aḥmad, in opposition to Mullá Muḥsin, maintains that God’s knowledge about Himself and God’s knowledge about His creation are different; the first is a condition of the second.<sup>36</sup>

Mullá Muḥsin Fayḍ believes that everything in the material world has two aspects: first, the uncreated aspect which existed in the mind of God before it came into being, an aspect which is eternal and identical with God; second, the definite form it assumed as a material object in the universe.

Shaykh Aḥmad asserts that Mullá Muḥsin’s view is contrary to that of the *imáms*, and points out that created things (*ḥádith*) are not under any circumstances eternal

(*azalí*), and that God does not contain both eternal and new.<sup>37</sup>

Among the philosophers, Mullá Şadrá's views have been extensively discussed in the works of Shaykh Aḥmad, who rejects his theory that the elementary reality is all things" (*basít al-ḥaqíqa Kull al-ashyá'*), which holds that being, although single in its reality, manifests itself with varying degrees of intensity in different grades of existence. The concept of *basít al-ḥaqíqa* maintains that the being of God and the being of possible being are all one being, although they differ from each other in degree of intensity.

The Essence of God, which is simple (*basít*), manifests itself in various degrees and different stages in all things. Cause and effect, according to the concept of *basít al-ḥaqíqa*, are fundamentally the same. What differentiates things from God is their deficiencies and limitations. If one disregards these limitations and deficiencies, only perfection remains, which is identical with the essence of God, Who is perfect.<sup>38</sup>

The concept of *basít al-ḥaqíqa* holds that the Being, which is absolutely simple and free from any kind of limitation or composition, contains within it all the attributes of all beings. Thus, the concept refers to a hierarchy, each stage of which includes all those things that are in the stages below it. For example, the first intellect, which is the first manifestation of God, occupies

the second stage in the hierarchy and contains all the attributes of any other being inferior to it. This, however, does not mean that the first intellect contains the quantities of all material bodies, but that all the attributes of all creation are found in the first intellect, God, Who is beyond the first intellect and is the most simple Being, possesses all the attributes of the whole of existence. If God did not possess the attributes of the whole creation, He could not have given them to it.<sup>39</sup>

Shaykh Aḥmad rejects the concept of the *basīṭ al-ḥaqīqa* by maintaining that, first, there is only one Simple Being; all else is complex, i.e., composed of matter and form. Composed beings differ from one another only in concentration. For example, intellect and stone differ only in the matter of intellect, which is made of the liquid light (*al-nūr al-dhā'ib*), i.e., intellectual matter (*al-mádda al-'unṣuríya*). Intellect and stone, like other created things, are created by the action of God and not from His Essence. They also receive their quiddity—their form—from Him, because nothing can exist without both existence (*wujúd*) and quiddity (*máḥíya*). Second, Shaykh Aḥmad argues that the concept of *basīṭ al-ḥaqīqa* implies that things exist with God in His Essence. This is not acceptable because it, in turn, implies that things are co-eternal with His Essence, and, in addition, that the Essence of God is complex, which are both false, according to Shaykh Aḥmad.<sup>40</sup>

Shaykh Aḥmad believes that even the simplicity of

existence is not conceivable in the Possible Being: things that exist in the realm of the Possible Being occupy a different level in the hierarchy, and there is a substantial difference between things on different levels. For example, there exists no point of comparison between the first intellect and those things situated below it although the first intellect is the cause of their being.<sup>41</sup> To elaborate the point, Shaykh Aḥmad says that the light of Muḥammad was the first creation. From this light, the light of the *imams* came to being, and from the light of the *imáms* the light of the believers came into being, all the way down to the lowest level of the hierarchy. It is true that in all these levels we are talking about one substance—the light—but the degree of its manifestation is so different that we cannot say that abstract intellects, divine spirits, and dense mineral bodies are alike.<sup>42</sup>

Shaykh Aḥmad emphasizes that God's Essence is single, that there is nothing with it or in it. Things came into being as a result of His action in the Possible Being, which is not in any way comparable with His Essence. If we assume that things are identical with His Essence or that they are in His knowledge, then His Essence and His creation would be identical. This assumption is not correct because the creation is within the realm of Possible Being, and Possible Being cannot achieve union with the Necessary Being. Shaykh Aḥmad insists that God is absolutely incomprehensible to and unreachable by man. That which man imagines about Him is

not the Reality of God; He, the unknowable, the unthinkable, the inconceivable, is far beyond the highest conception of man.

In summary, the basic ontological doctrines Shaykh Aḥmad sets forth are: (1) God's Essence, which is simple, is, and has ever been, incomprehensible to and unreachable by man; (2) existence is the creation of God's action and not a part of His Essence; (3) His will is an actional attribute, separated from His Essence, and the cause of creation; (4) man is substantially unable to comprehend any being which is beyond his possible-conditioned intellect.

Such doctrines led the Shaykh to the belief that between God and man there are intermediaries who bear His names and embody His attributes. They are the manifestations or representatives of God's power, knowledge, and other attributes in the realm of Possible Being. Therefore, the highest point of comprehension and the ultimate level of unification for man is comprehension and unification with the intermediaries, as man has no access to any other being beyond them, i.e., God.

The intermediaries are the prophets and the *imáms*, who are in reality the hypostasis of the Necessary Being. Although they share certain functions, responsibilities, and qualifications, a prophet occupies a higher rank than an *imám*. The function of prophethood (*nubuwwat*) is to convey the will of God to people without a human intermediary. It also means to inform people of God's Essence, attributes,

actions, and teachings. There are two types of prophethood: prophethood of definition (*nubuwwat ta'rif*) and prophethood of legislation (*nubuwwat tashríf*). Prophethood of definition has to do with informing people about God, His attributes, names, and actions, whereas the prophethood of legislation, which is identical with messengership (*risálat*), means establishing moral, social, and political institutions—*sharí'a*.<sup>43</sup>

Prophethood is described as the receiving of knowledge by a purified soul (*al-nafs al-qudsíya*) from the essence of the first intellect (*al-'aql al-awwal*), and messengership is described as proclaiming that knowledge to the prepared (*musta'idd*) people.<sup>44</sup>

Regarding the relationship between God and a prophet, Shaykh Aḥmad denies that any point of comparison (*nisbat*) exist between God and the prophet. If, hypothetically, there were such a relation, the eternal (*qadím*), i.e., God, would have to be in relationship with the new (*hádith*), the prophet. To hold such an idea is infidelity (*kufír*) and blasphemy (*zandaqa*).<sup>45</sup> Just as there can be no point of comparison between God and His prophet, there can be none between a prophet and an ordinary man. A prophet is the man who is essentially qualified (*qábil*) to be a prophet because of a particular capability that an ordinary man does not possess. Thus, God does not choose just any man as His prophet, but only the one capable and worthy of proclaiming God's message to His people. The essential capability of

the prophet is unique among mankind, and no one else is capable nor worthy of receiving God's revelation.

This view of the relationship between God and His prophet, on the one hand, and between the prophet and the people, on the other hand, is one of the major points of dispute between the Shaykhís and the Şúffís. The Şúffís traditionally maintain that prophets reach the position of prophethood through their personal spiritual endeavor. Ascetic practices, including purifying the heart from temptations, abandoning all the natural inclinations, subduing human desires, and adhering to meditation and spiritual qualities increase the divine nature in man. The ultimate result of this process is that the individual loses his personal identity and receives God's divine identity. According to the Şúffís, such a journey culminates with the ability to be a prophet. Although the Shaykhís do not deny that a man makes spiritual progress through ascetic practices, they insist that an ordinary man cannot become a prophet no matter how highly he has development his spiritual qualities on the journey. A prophet has a unique capability not granted to any other man. Through the spiritual journey this unique capability develops and reaches its highest level. While the journey, by itself does not create the capability, it enhances it. This unique capability differentiates a prophet from an ordinary man and gives him a substantial superiority above mankind.

The relationship between a prophet and a man is like

that of the sun and its radiance. The radiance cannot achieve the station of the sun, yet its own existence depends upon it. In the same way, a man cannot achieve the station of a prophet, yet his life is dependent upon the prophet's life.<sup>46</sup>

Regarding the relationship between a prophet and an angel, the Shaykhís assert that an angel is not made of matter and, therefore, has no relationship to the material world.<sup>47</sup> The station of the prophet, however, is higher than that of an angel.<sup>48</sup> Sayyid Kázim relates a Tradition on the authority of the Prophet, who told 'Alí b. Abí Ṭálib, "God has not created any one more exalted and more loved than me (the Prophet)." When 'Alí asked the Prophet if he was more exalted than an angel, the Prophet replied, "O 'Alí, God has given His "Sent Prophets" [*mursalín*] a higher station than His "Close Angels" [*muqarrabín*] and He has given me a station higher than that of the other prophets and apostles. After me the highest station is yours and after you it belongs to the *imáms*. Verily, the angels are our servants and the servants of our lovers."<sup>49</sup>

Shaykh Aḥmad maintains that a prophet, as a receiver of God's revelation, is infallible and free from all sin.<sup>50</sup> He occupies the highest position in regard to moral standards, and his infallibility is thought to begin even before his declaration of prophethood.

The Prophet Muḥammad was sent to all creatures with proofs of his right to prophethood, the most important of

which is the *Qur'án*. He is the final Prophet until the Day of Judgment, and the last one in the chain of five prophets who preceded him, i.e., Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus.<sup>51</sup> The religion of the prophet, Islam, which is situated at the highest level of the religious hierarchy, is the most comprehensive religion, and the earlier religions were only introductions to it.<sup>52</sup> Islam abrogates all the previous religions.

Regarding the relationship between the Prophet Muḥammad and the *imáms*, Shaykh Aḥmad writes that the Prophet is like a house and that the *imáms* are the people of this house (*ítrat ahl bayt*). Here, "house" stands for kinship, referring to the fact that the *imáms* are the descendants of the Prophet. The house also stands for knowledge (*bayt al-'ilm*), to which the *imáms* are like the doors. This indication is based on many Traditions such as the one on the authority of Abú Ja'far al-Báqir which reads, "The children of Muḥammad [*ál Muḥammad*] are the doors to God and the ways to God."<sup>53</sup>

People are created from the radiance of the light of the *imáms*, and, therefore, the *imáms* are the actional cause (*al-'illat al-fá'ilíya*), as well as the material cause (*al-'illat al-máddíya*). The *imáms* are also the formal cause (*al-'illat al-súríya*) because the form of every single item of creation is their form; the *imáms* are the manifestation of the grace of God, and each creature has its form as a result of God's grace. They are also the ultimate cause

(*al-'illat al-ghá'í*) because God has created things for their sake.<sup>54</sup>

The *imáms* are the *a'ráf* (the area between Paradise and Hell), intermediaries through whom God can be understood, i.e., the understanding of God is only possible through the guidance of (*ahl al-ḥaqq*), the people of truth, i.e., the *imáms*.<sup>55</sup>

The *imáms* are like the gates between God and creation. or as the keys to His treasure. They are the scene (*maḥáll*) of the manifestation of His divine will and power, and the embodiment of His attributes among mankind.<sup>56</sup> The *imáms*, who are the trustees (*umaná'*) of God among the people, are installed in their position by the will of God, and the Prophet only announces the installation. They are free from all sin, forgetfulness, and ignorance before and after they take office.<sup>57</sup> As the representative of God on earth, they are the most learned people and the world cannot function without them.<sup>58</sup>

The *imáms* are the refuge (*malja'*), protection (*maládh*), and authority (*marji'*) for every thing that has issued from His will, namely, substance (*'ain*) or notion (*ma'ná*), matter (*jawhar*) or accident (*'araḍ*), essence (*dhát*) or attribute (*ṣifat*), ecstasy (*ḥál*) or condition (*ẓarf*), and even material (*bu'd jismí*), place (*bu'd makání*), and time dimension (*bu'd zamání*). In sum, everything takes refuge in them because of its poverty and needs.<sup>59</sup>

The Shaykhí's believe that certain verses in the *Qur'án*

and the Traditions refer to the *imáms*, and they interpret these verses in a way unacceptable to other Muslims. For example, one verse of the *Qur'án* reads, "And He it is Who has created man from the water, then He had made for him blood-relationship and marriage-relationship and your Lord is powerful." (25:54) The Shaykhís insist that in this verse 'Alí b. Abí Tálíb is the man referred to because he had a blood-relationship and marriage-relationship with the Prophet:<sup>60</sup> 'Alí was the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law. Another verse in the *Qur'án* reads, "Thus have we made you a central [intermediate] people, that ye may be witnesses in regard to mankind." (2:143) The Shaykhís believe that the terms "*ummatan wasaṭan*" (intermediate people) in this verse refers to the *imáms*. This interpretation is based on a Tradition on the authority of Abú 'Abd Alláh who, when asked about the meaning of these terms, replied, "We [the *imáms*] are the intermediate people and we are God's witnesses among His people."<sup>61</sup> Another verse in the *Qur'án* which the Shaykhís believe is a reference to the *imáms* reads, 'Certainly We created man in the best make [*aḥsani taqwímin*]." (95:4) Shaykh Aḥmad interprets the "best make" as the perfect men, i.e., Muḥammad, his twelve sons and his daughter Fátima.<sup>62</sup> A Quranic verse reads, "... A good tree, whose root is firm and whose branches are high." (14:24) Shaykh Aḥmad says that when Imám Báqir was asked about the meaning of the above verse, he replied on the authority of the Prophet, "I [the Prophet] am its root

[*aṣṣluhá*] and 'Alí is its branch [*far'uhá*]; and the *imáms* are its twigs [*aghṣánuhá*], our knowledge is its fruit, and our people [*shí'atuná*] are its leaves."<sup>63</sup> In addition to these verses, some Quranic terms such as "The Farthest Lote-Tree" (*sidrat al-muntahá*) (53:14); "The Garden, the Place to be Resorted to" (*jannat al-ma'wá*) (53:15) are also considered as references to the *imáms*.<sup>64</sup>

The attitude of Shaykh Aḥmad towards the *imáms* and his free interpretation of certain verses of the *Qur'án* to signify their station, significance, and holiness, made him the target of accusations that he was an Extremist, Ghálí.<sup>65</sup>

## Notes

- 1 Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, *Jawámi' al-Kilam*, vol. 1, part 2, p. 167.
- 2 Shaykh Aḥmad's works on ontology are too numerous to list in full. The main ones are as follows:
  - (1) *Jawámi' al-Kilam*. (Among the treatises compiled in this collection we have relied heavily on "Sharḥ 'ala al-Risála al-'Ilmíya", part 2. pp. 166–200);
  - (2) *Sharḥ al-Ziyárat al-Jámi'a*;
  - (3) *Sharḥ al-Mashá'ir*;
  - (4) *Sharḥ al-Fawá'id*.
- Sayyid Kázim's major works and those referred to here most frequently are: contained in the *Uṣúl-i-'Aqá'id*, a collection of manuscripts with the call number 2016-F in the National Bahá'í Archive of Iran, consisting of three works: (1) *Uṣúl-i-'Aqá'id* (pp. 1–215); (2) *Risála-i-Radd-i-Shubḥa-i-Ákill va Ma'kúl*, written at the request of Prince Muḥammad Riḍá Mírzá (pp. 216–263); (3) an untitled treatise written for Mírzá Muḥammad Ḥasan (pp. 263–281) to answer his questions on: (a) the meaning of the *Qába Qawsayn*, (b) *'Illíyat-i-Wájib* or *'Illíyat-i-Mash'at*, and (c) *Khalq-i-Mash'at bi Nafsihá*.
- 3 Sayyid Kázim Raṣṭtí, *Uṣúl-i-'Aqá'id*, pp. 12–13.
- 4 Necessary Being (*al-Wájib al-Wujúd*), is the Being which exists by itself in contrast to the Possible Being (*al-Mumkin al-Wujúd*), which receives its Being from another, i.e., from the Necessary Being. While the non-existence of Necessary Being is unthinkable, the non-existence of the Possible Being is thinkable. Philosophers use the term Necessary Being for God and Possible Being for the world.
- 5 Sayyid Kázim Raṣṭtí, *Uṣúl-i-'Aqá'id*, p. 9.
- 6 *ibid.*
- 7 *ibid.*, p. 11.
- 8 Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, *Sharḥ al-Ziyárat al-Jámi'a*, p. 124.
- 9 Sayyid Kázim Raṣṭtí, *Uṣúl-i-'Aqá'id*, p. 36.
- 10 Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, *Sharḥ al-Ziyárat al-Jámi'a*, p. 134.
- 11 Sayyid Kázim quotes a Tradition on the authority of Imám Riḍá which reads, "Will and decree are from among the actional attributes. One who claims that God has possessed will and decree from eternity (i.e., pre-existence with God) does not believe in the oneness of God." (*Uṣúl-i-'Aqá'id*, p. 36).
- 12 Sayyid Kázim Raṣṭtí, *Uṣúl-i-'Aqá'id*, p. 31.
- 13 The verse of the *Qur'án* reads, "I have not created Djinn and man, but that they should worship me." (51:56); and a Tradition reads, "I

was a hidden treasure, I wished to be known, therefore, I created all creation in order to be known.”

- 14 Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, *Sharḥ al-Mashá'ir*, p. 3.
- 15 *ibid.*, p. 308.
- 16 Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, *Sharḥ al-Fawá'id*, p. 457.
- 17 *ibid.*
- 18 *ibid.*
- 19 *ibid.*, p. 458.
- 20 *ibid.*, p. 459.
- 21 Sayyid Kázim Raṣṭtí, *The Treatise for Mírzá Muḥammad Ḥasan*, p. 279.
- 22 Reference to this term is frequently made throughout the works of Shaykh Aḥmad. For example see *Jawámi' al-Kilam*, vol. 1, part 2, p. 183.
- 23 A. E. Affifi, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muḥyid Dín-Ibnul 'Arabí*, pp. 171–172.
- 24 *ibid.*, p. 13.
- 25 *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. “Ibn al-'Arabí”, by A. Ateş.
- 26 Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, *Sharḥ al-Ziyárat al-Jámi'a*, p. 40.
- 27 *ibid.*, p. 123.
- 28 *ibid.*, p. 125.
- 29 Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, *Jawámi' al-Kilam*, vol. 1, part 2, p. 175.
- 30 Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimension of Islam*, p. 267.
- 31 *ibid.*, p. 268.
- 32 Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, *Jawámi' al-Kilam*, vol. 1, part 2, p. 176.
- 33 *ibid.*, p. 177.
- 34 *ibid.*
- 35 *ibid.*
- 36 *ibid.*
- 37 *ibid.*
- 38 'Abd al-Muḥsin Miṣḥkát al-Díní, *Nazarí bi Falsafa-i-Şadr al-Dín Şírázî* “Mullá Şadr”, pp. 174–175.
- 39 Jawád Muşlih, *Mabda'-i-Áfarínesh az Dídgáh-i-Falásifa-i-Islám*, p. 181.
- 40 Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, *Sharḥ al-Fawá'id*, p. 157.
- 41 *ibid.*, p. 455.
- 42 *ibid.*, p. 456.
- 43 Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, *Sharḥ al-Ziyárat al-Jámi'a*, p. 11.
- 44 *ibid.*
- 45 Sayyid Kázim Raṣṭtí, *Uşúl-i-'Aqá'id*, p. 119.
- 46 *ibid.*, p. 125.
- 47 *ibid.*, p. 117.
- 48 *ibid.*, p. 129.
- 49 *ibid.*, pp. 131–132.

50 There are verses in the *Qur'án* and Traditions that refer to sins and shortcomings of the prophets. Sayyid Kázim suggest that these verses are among those unclear (*mutashábihát*) verses that should be understood in the light of the clear (*muḥkamát*) verses. Here, for example, are three verses that indicate the sins and shortcomings of the prophets: "And Adam disobeyed his Lord, so his life became evil (to him)" (20:121); "God forgiveth thy earlier and later faults, and fulfilleth His goodness to thee, and guideth thee on the right way" (48:2); "And of old We made a covenant with Adam; but he forgot it; and we found no firmness of purpose in him" (20:115).

In contrast to these verses, there are others which clearly indicate the sublime morality of the prophets such as, "And most surely *you* conform (yourself) to sublime morality" (68:4); or, "Nor does he speak out of desire. It is naught but revelation that is revealed, the Lord of Mighty Power has taught him" (53:3-5). These verses clearly establish the infallibility of the prophet, for while the first denies that he does anything which is immoral, the second denies that he says anything which is not revealed to him. Sayyid Kázim says that if we do not want to understand the unclear sin-indicating verses in the light of the clear verses, these sin-indicating verses do not prove that the prophet committed that which is forbidden (*ḥarám*) or ignored that which is obligatory (*wájib*). He further remarks that the sins, if any, that are related to them could have been the sins of the community which they bore as a matter of favor to their communities.

51 Sayyid Kázim Raṣṭhí, *Uṣúl-i-'Aqá'id*, p. 156.

52 *ibid.*, p. 157.

53 Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, *Sharḥ al-Ziyárat al-Jámi'a*, p. 11.

54 *ibid.*, p. 112. See also pp. 116 and 120.

55 *ibid.*, p. 136.

56 *ibid.*, p. 37.

57 *ibid.*, p. 49.

58 *ibid.*, p. 44.

59 *ibid.*, p. 80.

60 Sayyid Kázim Raṣṭhí, *Uṣúl-i-'Aqá'id*, p. 176.

61 Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, *Sharḥ al-Ziy'rat al-Jámi'a*, p. 24.

62 *ibid.*, p. 80.

63 *ibid.*, p. 65.

64 *ibid.*, p. 49.

65 "A title given to a leading sect of the Shí'ahs who, through their excessive zeal for the Imáms, have raised them above the degree of human being." Thomas Patrick Hughes, *Dictionary of Islam*, p. 139.

## IV

### The basic Shaykhí eschatological doctrines

Shaykh Aḥmad's views on eschatological doctrines constitute his most significant attempt to reconcile reason and revelation. Such an undertaking was not new in Islamic thought: many scholars before him had tried to reconcile man's reasoning with the revealed text of the *Qur'án* and the narrated Traditions. Shaykh Aḥmad, therefore, sought not to wrench reason and revelation into agreement, for some kind of harmony between the two was already thought to exist. His effort was to identify and describe the nature of that harmony, and he based his doctrine on the belief that the entire universe functions in accordance with certain regulations and in absolute harmony. Reason and revelation are construed as two manifestations of one reality; as such, no conflict could exist between them.

It is true, however, that the exoteric aspect of certain Quranic verses and Traditions is not acceptable to the intellect. Shaykh Aḥmad describes such texts as unclear (*mutashábihát*)<sup>1</sup> verses, which according to the *Qur'án* are intended to be interpreted.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, his approach toward eschatological concepts, which are primarily expressed in the unclear verses of the *Qur'án*, is a rationalistic one, and his interpretation of them allegorical. His approach, however, conflicted with that of the fundamentalist thinkers who accepted only the literal

meaning of the verses and disallowed any use of man's intellectual reasoning to explore other, symbolic, meanings. Shaykh Aḥmad rejected these fundamentalist presentations of eschatological issues in the popular theological books of the Shí'a. In fact, his views on Islamic eschatology are closer to Abú 'Alí Síná (d. 428/1038) and Mullá Şadrá (d. 1050/1640), his forerunners in this field. His rationalistic approach made him an influential reconciler of reason and revelation in his period. Consequently, the intellectual opposition that he, and later his pupils, encountered was aimed more at his eschatological views than any other aspect of his thought.

The rationalistic nature of Shaykh Aḥmad's views attracted non-fundamentalists who were seeking a reconciliation between reason and revelation. In this respect, the Shaykhí school was a religious foundation for the intellectual enlightenment that developed in the latter decades of the nineteenth century in Iran.

Shaykh Aḥmad's basic ontological doctrine of the absolute distinction between Possible Being and Necessary Being forms the cornerstone for Shaykhí eschatological speculations.

Shaykh Aḥmad maintains that the will is the creative source and the producer of Possible Being, which consists of a hierarchy; beginning, at the lowest level, with the realm of matter and ending, at the highest level, with the realm of will. There are seven realms between the realm of matter

and the realm of will:

1. The realm of similitudes (*'álam-i-mithál*), known also as the realm of intermediary (*barzakh*, or *Havarqalyá*)\*
2. The realm of bodily matter (*mawádd-i-jismáníya*)
3. The realm of nature (*'álam-i-ṭabí'at*). This realm is contained in the realms of intellects (*'álam-i-'uqúl*), spirits (*arwáh*) and souls (*nufús*), but no separation or distinction exists among these three
4. The realm of souls (*nufús*)
5. The realm of spirits (*'álam-i arwáb*)
6. The realm of intellect (*'álam-i-'uqúl*)
7. The realm of heart (*'álam-i-fu'ád*)<sup>3</sup>

As the realm of Possible Being is produced by the will, any eschatological question which ends up with God, in the popular Shí'í view, ends up with the will in the Shaykh view.

The basic eschatological questions which Shaykh Aḥmad discusses are the Day of Judgment and its related issues—Resurrection, Return, Meeting with God, Paradise and Hell, and reward and punishment. The advent of the Mahdí (Guided One) is strongly related to eschatological issues, but, since it occupies a special place in Shaykh Aḥmad's works and played a significant role in the subsequent development of the movement, it will be dealt with in a separate chapter. Before considering Shaykh Aḥmad's views, it is necessary to review the essence of Islamic eschatology as it is revealed in the *Qur'án* and expanded in the Traditions.

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\* Arabic Húrqalyá. Havarqalyá is "speculative" Perisan transliteration. [www.scribd.com/document/21263244/HURQALYA-HAVARQALYA](http://www.scribd.com/document/21263244/HURQALYA-HAVARQALYA).

Islamic eschatology holds that the Day of Judgment will definitely come, but only God knows when it will occur. Its advent will be announced by the appearance of certain signs: “mountains will be like carded wool”; “heaven shall be rent asunder”; “the stars shall be dispersed”; “the seas shall be commingled”; and “the earth and the mountains will be borne away, and both of them crushed (to dust at a single crushing).”<sup>4</sup> The Antichrist, *al-Dajjál*,<sup>5</sup> who leads people away from the right path, will appear. The sun will rise from the west, the Beast will appear, and Gog and Magog<sup>6</sup> will come. Dense smoke, which will cover the earth for days, and several eclipses will proclaim the approach of the Day of Judgment. On that Day, the trumpet will blast twice. At the first blast, all living things will die; at the second, the dead will be resurrected. Then they will assemble in the gathering place, in the presence of God, for His judgment. God will ask them questions, weigh their deeds and then, in accordance with their conduct, send them to Hell or to Paradise. One of the major events of that Day will be the advent of the Mahdí (Guided One), who will be followed by the return of Christ.

Muslims maintain that the return of all to God and the physical resurrection promised on the Day of Judgment are the manifestation of God’s grace to mankind. Belief in that Day assists man to obey God and prevents him from committing sin. Whoever denies the Return denies the grace of God to His people.<sup>7</sup>

Shaykh Aḥmad's attitude toward the Day of Judgment differs from the approach of the other Shí'a. While the Shí'a maintain that on the Day of Judgment being will return to God, its source, Shaykh Aḥmad believes that the creation will return to its Possible source (*mabda'-i-imbkání*), rather than to God, because creation has never come from God, Himself, but from the will. In addition, resurrection will take place not in the physical body, as the Shí'í doctrine maintains, but in another body, which Shaykh Aḥmad calls the "subtle body" (*jasad-i-mithálí*). The subtle body consists of the elements of the realm of similitudes (*'alam-i-mithál*), or, in Shaykh Aḥmad's terminology, the *Havarqalyá* (the realm of the subtle). Since the concept of the "subtle body" and the realm of the subtle (*Havarqalyá*) is a key to Shaykhí eschatological views, it deserves closer attention.

Muḥammad Mu'ín's research on the etymology and history of the term *Havarqalyá* shows that it is derived from the Hebrew term *habal qarnaím* (Doppelgänger). According to this derivation, the pronunciation of the term should be *Havarqalyá* (هُورَقَلْيَا) as Mu'ín has suggested.<sup>8</sup> This pronunciation, although the most authentic, is, however, less common. While Shaykh Aḥmad does not mention the pronunciation of the term in his works, Muḥammad Tonekáboní (d. 1302/1884), who was very familiar with the Shaykhí ideology, in his *Qiṣaṣ al-'Ulamá* states that the term should be pronounced *Huvarqalyá* (هُورَقَلْيَا).<sup>9</sup> Tonekáboní, however,

adds that the term is commonly mispronounced *Hurqalyá* (هُورْقَلْيَا). He notes that when he pronounced the term *Huvarqalyá* (هُورْقَلْيَا) during a conversation with Ḥájj Mullá Hádí Sabzavári (d. 1289/1972).<sup>10</sup> Sabzavári pointed out that the correct pronunciation was *Hurqalyá* (هُورْقَلْيَا), not *Huvarqalyá* (هُورْقَلْيَا). Tonekáboní then told Sabzavári that he had heard a student of Mullá ‘Alí Núrí<sup>11</sup> quote Mullá ‘Alí’s statement that *Hurqalyá* (هُورْقَلْيَا) was wrong and that the correct pronunciation was *Huvarqalyá* (هُورْقَلْيَا).<sup>12</sup>

Today the popular, common pronunciation of this term is *Hurqalyá* (هُورْقَلْيَا), although it is not correct as far as its etymological derivation from the Hebrew term is concerned.

Shaykh Aḥmad was not the first to use the term *Havarqalyá*. According to Mu‘ín,<sup>13</sup> the term was first used by Shiháb al-Dín Yahyá b. Ḥabash Sohravardí, known as Shaykh al-Ishrâq (d. 587/1191), although the term itself received little explanation either in the works of Sohravardí or his commentators, such as Shams al-Dín Muḥammad b. Maḥmúd Shahzorí and Quṭb al-Dín Muḥammad b. Mas‘úd Shírází (d. 710/1310). In the works of Sohravardí, the realm of similitudes is described as consisting of an elementary (*‘amáṣir*) realm, within which are Jabursá and Jabulqá, and a celestial (*aflák*) realm: this celestial realm of similitudes (*‘álam aflák al-muthul*),<sup>14</sup> is called *Havarqalyá*.

In the works of Shaykh Aḥmad, *Havarqalyá* (the realm of the subtle) has several connotations and often is used synonymously with “the realm of similitudes” (*‘álam-i*

*mithál*) and “isthmus” (*barzakh*).

According to Shaykh Aḥmad, *Havarqalyá* is a Syriac term<sup>15</sup> meaning the next world” (*mulk ákhar*), located in the eighth climate (*iq lím*) and including two cities: Jabursá in the west and Jabulqá in the east.

Shaykh Aḥmad maintains that the realm of matter (*‘alam-i-mulk*) consists of two levels: the lower level, or the realm of this earthly world (*‘alam al-dunyá*), and the upper level, which Shaykh Aḥmad calls *Havarqalyá*, or the “second material realm” (*‘alam al-mulk al-thání*).<sup>16</sup> Thus, in this sense *Havarqalyá* is regarded as a kind of purgatorial realm or isthmus (*barzakh*), which is an intermediary between this material world (*‘alam-i-mulk*) and the next, spiritual, world (*‘alam-i-malakút*). Shaykh Aḥmad conceived of such an intermediate realm because he believed that since spirit is pure spirit and the physical body is pure matter, there should be another realm between the two, which is neither one nor the other.<sup>17</sup> The elements of the *Havarqalyá* are described as having less density than the temporal elements that make up the material world, yet more density than pure spirit. This intermediary realm is the source of the second body of man, which will survive death and experience resurrection.

Shaykh Aḥmad maintains that man has two bodies: first, the material body consisting of physical elements—water, earth, air, and fire—which dissolves in the grave and does not become resurrected at all; and second, the subtle body,

which will endure after the physical body has crumbled to dust.<sup>18</sup> It is the subtle body that will be resurrected on the Day of Judgment. The subtle body does not decompose because it consists of elements of the realm of similitudes (*‘alam-i-mithál*), or the *Havarqalyá* (the realm of the subtle).

Regarding the functions and characteristics of the subtle body, Shaykh Ahmad states that a “true man” consists of intellect (*‘aql*), soul (*nafs*), nature (*ṭabí‘at*), matter (*mádda*) and subtle (*mithál*). Intellect is in soul, and soul is in nature, and all three—intellect, soul, and nature—are in matter. But the existence of matter is dependent upon the subtle body. Only when the subtle clings to matter, does a body (*al-jism al-aṣlî*) come into being.<sup>19</sup> Shaykh Ahmad describes the first external body (*al-jasad al-awwal al-záhirî*) as a “shell” made of earth, air, fire, and water, while the second body (*al-jasad al-thánî*) is a more delicate internal substance, like a pearl, made of subtle elements which are hidden in matter, i.e., the shell. After death, matter remains in the grave and its external appearance perishes. But its internal substance, which is subtle, survives. This internal substance is the second body, made of the *Havarqalyá’s* elements.

In one of Sayyid Kázim’s works, the concept of the subtle body occurs, but clothed in another term: “essential element”. When Sayyid Kázim was asked how God would bring back the dead when they had been consumed by worms in their

graves, Sayyid Kázim answered that a thing consists of “essence” and “accident”. The being of a thing depends primarily upon its essence. Man, accordingly, consists of accidental elements, which will be consumed by worms, and essential elements, which cannot perish or be destroyed. That element which will be resurrected on the Day of Judgment is the essential element, which survives after death, and is so subtle that it is not visible.<sup>20</sup> The Return, therefore, will be in the essential element and not the accidental. Although in his explanation Sayyid Kázim uses “essential element” and not “spirit”, as opposed to “elementary element” or “body”, throughout his description it is well understood that by the term “essential element” he refers to man’s spirit. This speculation is supported in another treatise Sayyid Kázim wrote for Mullá Muqím Qazvíní, in which *nafs-i-nátiqa*<sup>21</sup> is used for “essential element”. In this work he says that the reality of man is in his spirit (*nafs-i-nátiqa*) and not in his body. During his life, Sayyid Kázim says, a person goes through the stages of childhood, adolescence, and old age. Through this process, many physical changes happen in his body, but his reality, which is his spirit, remains the same and does not change physically. He points out that some scholars, such as Mullá Şadrá, maintain that return of the body, as a religious dogma, is a fact and should be accepted, although intellect fails to prove it. Sayyid Kázim then remarks that God has given us two proofs through which the truth is revealed:

external proofs, such as the prophets, and internal proofs, such as man's intellect. These two kinds of proofs are in harmony and go together. Whatever a religion establishes, the intellect accepts as true. Therefore, it is not permissible to attempt to prove what is established by the divine decree, if the intellect does not testify to its righteousness.<sup>22</sup>

In answering the question of Kázim b. 'Alí Naqí al-Suhá'í on the nature of the relationship between letters, attributes of God, and creation, Shaykh Aḥmad outlines another aspect of the concept of the "realm of the subtle". He states that the "limited being" (*wujúd al-muqayyad*), which begins with the First Intellect and ends up with earth, consists of twenty-eight stages, each of which corresponds to an attribute of God as well as a letter of the Arabic alphabet as shown in Table 1.<sup>23</sup>

**Table 1**

1	Intellect ( <i>'aql</i> )	The Incomparable ( <i>al-badí'</i> )	ا
2	Soul ( <i>nafs</i> )	The Resurrector ( <i>al-bá'ith</i> )	ب
3	Nature ( <i>ṭabí'at</i> )	The Hidden ( <i>al-báṭin</i> )	ج
4	Matter ( <i>mádda</i> )	The Last ( <i>al-ákhir</i> )	د
5	Subtle ( <i>mithál</i> )	The Manifest ( <i>al-záhir</i> )	هـ
6	The Universal Substance ( <i>jism al-kull</i> )	The wise ( <i>al-ḥakím</i> )	و

7	The Heaven ( <i>al-'arsh</i> )	The All-Encompassing ( <i>al-muḥiṭ</i> )	ز
8	The Throne ( <i>al-kursi</i> )	The Appreciative ( <i>al-<u>shakúr</u></i> )	ح
9	The Celestial Spheres ( <i>falak al-burúj</i> )	The Self-Sufficient ( <i><u>ghani</u> al-dahr</i> )	ظ
10	The Celestial Stations ( <i>falak al-manázil</i> )	The Powerful ( <i>al-muqtadir</i> )	ى
11	The Sphere of Saturn ( <i>falak al-zuḥal</i> )	The Lord ( <i>al-rabb</i> )	ن
12	The Sphere of Jupiter ( <i>falak al-mu<u>sh</u>tari</i> )	The All-Knowing ( <i>al-'álim</i> )	ل
13	The Sphere of Mars ( <i>falak al-mirrikh</i> )	The Subduer ( <i>al-qáhir</i> )	م
14	The Sphere of the Sun ( <i>falak al-<u>sh</u>ams</i> )	The Light ( <i>al-núr</i> )	ن
15	The Sphere of Venus ( <i>falak al-zuhrah</i> )	The Fashioner ( <i>al-muṣawwir</i> )	س
16	The Sphere of Mercury ( <i>falak 'u<u>t</u>árid</i> )	The Counter ( <i>al-muḥṣiy</i> )	ع
17	The Sphere of the Moon ( <i>falak al-qamar</i> )	The Evident ( <i>al-mubín</i> )	ف
18	The Ethereal Globe ( <i>kura al-<u>ath</u>iriy</i> )	The Restrainer ( <i>al-qábiḍ</i> )	ش
19	The Atmospheric Globe ( <i>kura al-hawá</i> )	The Alive ( <i>al-ḥayy</i> )	ق
20	The Water Globe ( <i>kura al-má</i> )	The Quickener ( <i>al-muḥyi</i> )	ر
21	The Earth Globe ( <i>kura al-turáb</i> )	The Creator of Death ( <i>al-mumit</i> )	ش
22	Mineral ( <i>al-jamád</i> )	The Mighty ( <i>al-'aziz</i> )	ت
23	Vegetation ( <i>nabát</i> )	The Provider ( <i>al-ráziq</i> )	ث
24	Animal ( <i>al-ḥayawán</i> )	The Dishonorer ( <i>al-mu<u>dh</u>ill</i> )	خ

25	Angel ( <i>al-malak</i> )	The Strong ( <i>al-qawíyy</i> )	ذ
26	Jinn ( <i>al-jinn</i> )	The Gracious ( <i>al-laţíf</i> )	ض
27	Man ( <i>al-insán</i> )	The Gatherer ( <i>al-jámi'</i> )	ظ
28	The Comprehensive Stage ( <i>martabat al-jámi'</i> )	The One Who is Ex- alted in Rank ( <i>rafí' al-daraját</i> )	غ

The realm of the subtle is the fifth rank which corresponds to God's attribute, "Manifest" (*al-záhir*) and the letter "h" (ه). The location of the realm of the subtle, in this explanation, is between the realm of matter (*mádda*) and the realm of the universal substance (*jism al-kull*). The location of the subtle realm in this schema, however, differs from another schema that Shaykh Aḥmad has presented on the realms of the universe. According to the other schema, the universe consists of six realms, namely:

1. Intellects (*'uqúl*), substances free from any physical element or form
2. Souls (*nufús*), the words of the Preserved Tablet
3. Natures (*ṭabáyi'*),\* the realm of concrete individuals
4. The Realm of Jewel, or technical substances, referring to the atoms of atmosphere
5. The Realm of the Subtle, the forms in the atmosphere of the *barzakḥ*, between the *malakút* and the *mulk*, located between the non-material realm and the realm of time (the material)

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\* ṭabí'a(t), pl. ṭabá'i'.

6. The Realm of Material Bodies, which consists of elementary matter (*al-mawádd al-'unşuríya*) and the subtle forms (*al-şuwar al-mithálíya*) which Shaykh Aḥmad understands from the realm of subtle, in this context, as the realm of image of substance (*şuwar al-dhát*), and that is the image of existence and its origin.<sup>24</sup>

According to this theory, a man is made of matter (*al-mádda*) and image (*al-şurá*). The relationship between the matter and the image can be likened to a man in front of a mirror. The matter is like the mirror and the image is like a picture in the mirror.<sup>25</sup> The relationship between the realm of *mithál* to this world is like the relationship between the sun and the earth. The sun manifests itself in the earth without descending to earth or entering into it. The sun is always in a fixed position, but its radiance is manifested on the different objects on the earth.

The subtle realm, therefore, is like the image that one can see in the mirror. The subtle realm is beyond the limitation of the material world. What man sees in his dream, which is the image, is the subtle realm.<sup>26</sup>

If we, hypothetically, imagine that the realm of the subtle, like this material realm, has an earth and a heaven, *Jábulqá* and *Jábursá* would be its earth and *Havarqalvá* its heaven.

The concept of the subtle body is not only used to explain the resurrection of bodies on the Day of Judgment, it has also been used to discuss the Night Journey and the Ascension of the Prophet Muḥammad to heaven. On the basis

of the Quranic verses, it is commonly held that the Prophet was carried from the “Sacred Mosque” of Mecca to the “Remote Mosque” of Jerusalem at night (*isrá’*, night journey). From Jerusalem the Prophet ascended to the “Lote-Tree” (*sidrat al-muntahá*) and then was carried to the “measure of two bows or closer still” (*qaba qawsayn aw adná*).<sup>27</sup>

The exoteric meanings of this occurrence as given in the *Qur’án* and Islamic Traditions, and as they are understood by the Muslims, are: (1) the Prophet ascended beyond the material realm and (2) the Ascension took place with the material body of the Prophet. However, the Shaykhís explain that the Ascension took place within the Possible Being and that Muḥammad did not ascend beyond the Possible realm. Since, according to Shaykhí thought, the Prophet had come from the “First Manifestation” (*tajallí-i-awwal*) or the “Divine Soul” (*nafs-i-raḥmání*), the destination of his Ascension was this same source, which is located within the realm of Possible.<sup>28</sup> The Shaykhís believe that the “measure of two bows” (*qába qawsayn*) and the station of “closer still” (*aw adná*), the highest point of the Ascension, are still within the Possible realm.<sup>29</sup> Shaykh Aḥmad, in contrast with the popular Muslim theologians’ view, maintains that the Ascension took place not with the physical body of the Prophet, but with his subtle body.

Regarding Hell and Paradise, Shaykhís hold that there are two paradises: a worldly paradise (*behesht-i-dunyá*) and a Paradise in the hereafter (*behesht-i-ákhírat*). After

separation from the body, the spirits of the believers, it is believed, will remain in the first, worldly paradise until the blast of the trumpet. This paradise is described in the *Qur'án* as, "the gardens (*jannát*) of perpetuity, which the Beneficent God has promised to His servants while unseen; surely His promise shall come to pass. They shall not hear therein any vain discourse, but only 'Peace', and they shall have their sustenance therein morning and evening." (19:61-62) This verse, Shaykh Aḥmad believes, refers to the world's paradise, because "morning" and "evening", which are mentioned in this verse, are found in this world and not in the hereafter, which is timeless. Following the above verse, the *Qur'án* reads, "This is the garden [*al-jannat*]\* which We cause those of Our servants to inherit who guard (against evil)." (19:63) This verse, according to Shaykh Aḥmad, refers to the paradise of the hereafter.<sup>30</sup>

According to Shaykhí eschatological views, hell is also of two kinds: there is a hell both in this world and in the hereafter. The *Qur'án* refers to the world's hell in verses such as: "So Allah protected him from the evil (consequences) of what they planned, and the most evil chastisement overtook Pharaoh's people: The fire; they shall be brought before it (every) morning and evening ...." (40:45-46)

The sane argument is applied here that this verse refers to this world's hell because time is not applicable

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\* *janna(t)*, pl. *jannát*.

in the hereafter. The rest of the verse, however, refers to the hereafter's hell; it reads, "And on the day when the hour shall come to pass: Make Pharaoh's people enter the severest chastisement." (40:46) This verse refers to the severest chastisement of the fire in the hell of the hereafter.<sup>31</sup>

A common Muslim belief is that on the Day of Judgment man will see or meet with God. This concept is found in many verses of the *Qur'án*. For example: "They are losers indeed who reject the meeting of Allah: until when the hour comes upon them all of a sudden they shall say; 'Our grief for our neglecting it.'" (6:31) Another verse says, "They will perish indeed who called the meeting with Allah to be a lie, and they are not followers of the right direction." (10:45) And also it says, "He regulates the affair, making clear the communications that you may be certain of meeting your Lord." (13:2)

The concept of a meeting with God is one of the most controversial issues in Islamic theology. On the basis of the Quranic verse which reads, "Vision comprehends Him not, and He comprehends (all) vision ..." (6:104), some scholars believe that a meeting with God is impossible for man. They, therefore, take the verses which refer to meeting God allegorically, not literally. Another group of scholars believe that a meeting with God will surely occur. They assert that if such a meeting were impossible, Moses would not have asked for it. According to the *Qur'án*, Moses said

to God, "My Lords show me (Thyself), so that I may look upon Thee." (7:143) Although God replied, "You cannot (bear to) see Me" (7:143), the fact that Moses made this request indicates the possibility of such a meeting. In addition, although it was not possible for Moses to see God at that time, according to the Quranic verses, God will show Himself on the Day of Judgment. Thus, the negative answer that Moses received was for that time only, not forever.

Shaykh Aḥmad, however, rejects the traditional, literal interpretation of such a meeting with God on the basis of his ontological principle that the Essence of God is beyond the reach of Possible Being. He interprets the meeting with God described in the *Qur'án* as "seeing" God with the heart. Seeing God would not be visually beholding God's Essence, but rather seeing God's manifestation. This is possible when man's heart has faith in Him, His actions, works, and teachings. If one obeys the commands of God and observes His prohibitions, God will remove the veil from his eyes and then he will be able to recognize God's will at work.<sup>32</sup>

As for seeing God on the Day of Judgment, Shaykh Aḥmad has another interpretation. As previously stated, on the basis of Islamic Traditions, Shaykh Aḥmad interprets the Day of Judgment as the Day of the advent of the expected Qá'im. This interpretation, although based on Traditions, is radically different from the common Muslim belief. In the usual Muslim concept of the Day of Judgment, this Day is expected to alter the entire universe, bringing drastic

revolutions, changes, and the transformation of the very phenomenon of life on earth. In the Day of Judgment as understood by Shaykh Aḥmad, revolutions, changes, and transformations will take place, but not in the way that people literally understand from the text.

In this interpretation of the Day of Judgment, Shaykh Aḥmad attempts to reconcile intellect and revelation. The universe will not come to an end on the Day of Judgment; it has always existed and will continue to exist forever. What the Day of Judgment truly means is the Day of advent of a new manifestation of God which puts an end to the course of its previous dispensation and opens a new cycle for human beings. As the Day of the advent of the expected Qá'im, the Day of Judgment will bring about changes in the social, moral, and religious life of the people; the values that have been applied for centuries will change, the principles and teachings of the previous religion will change, and a profound revolution will take place in all the various aspects of man's activities.

Shaykh Aḥmad's interpretation of the Day of Judgment is founded on the many Traditions on the authority of Shí'í *imáms* which interpret the Quranic verses on this subject as referring to the day of the advent of the Qá'im.<sup>33</sup> For example, one Quranic verse says, "The hour [the Day of Judgment] drew nigh". (54:1) A Tradition interprets the verse as the advent of the Qá'im.<sup>34</sup> Another Quranic verse refers to one of the signs of the Day of Judgment by saying

“For when the trumpet is sounded ....” (74:8) A Tradition regards the verse as referring to the Hidden Imám, i.e., the Qá'im.<sup>35</sup> Another verse in the *Qur'án* reads, “And certainly We sent Moses with Our communications, saying: Bring forth *your* people from utter darkness into light and remind them of the days of Allah.” (14:5) A Tradition tells us that “the days of Allah” is not only the Day of Judgment, but can also be thought of as the day of the Qá'im (*yaum al-qá'im*) and also the day of death (*yaum al-mawt*).<sup>\*36</sup> These few Traditions, the essence of which is found in numerous others, provide the basis for interpreting the Quranic verses on the Day of Judgment as indicating the advent of the Qá'im. This is exactly what Shaykh Aḥmad has done.

As reward or punishment is expected to be meted out on the traditional Day of Judgment, according to Shaykhí interpretation, reward and punishment will be given to people on the Day of the advent of the Qá'im. For those who succeed in recognizing him, that act of recognition itself will be their reward; and for those who fail to recognize him, that failure shall be their punishment. Therefore, to recognize the expected Qá'im is to enter paradise, and to be deprived of his recognition is hell. Moreover, the bridge (*Şirát*) referred to in the texts will not be the familiar bridge between hell and paradise, but is a symbol of the Qá'im's teachings, principles, and doctrines. Shaykh Aḥmad, in a treatise known as *Qaṭiffiya*, says that *Şirát* is the way from God to His creation and His creation's way to Him. The

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\* *yaum al-mawt*.

“way” is a symbol which stands for the *imám*, his friendship, his teachings, and the recognition of himself.<sup>37</sup>

Sayyid Kázim, in a treatise written for a certain Mullá Ḥusayn ‘Alí, says that the *Şirát* is of two kinds; one is in this world and one is in the hereafter. The *Şirát* is a way which God has provided to assist His creation and is a way through which God can answer His creation’s request for assistance. The *Şirát* is a channel which connects God with His creation, and vice versa. This way is the way of Religion, which is the way between His action and His creation.<sup>38</sup> The *Şirát* is also those deeds which are the result of man’s recognition of the Prophet and obedience to His teachings, and by which he can enter Paradise.<sup>39</sup>

Shaykh Aḥmad’s approach towards the basic Islamic eschatological doctrines focuses on reconciliation between reason and revelation. To achieve this goal, he uses two tactics. First, he appeals to his ontological base which holds that no connection can be conceived between the realm of Possible Being and the realm of the Necessary Being, and consequently, any eschatological doctrine that, in the orthodox Shí’í view, ends up with God, should, in his view, end up with the Will. Second, he maintains that if the Resurrection and Return are going to occur, they will happen with the subtle body and not with the physical body, contrary to popular doctrine. Finally, he suggests that the Day of Judgment can be thought of as the Day of the advent of the Qá’im, on which all signs of the Day of Judgment

would be fulfilled allegorically.

## Notes

- 1 This term refers to allegorical verses in the *Qur'án*. See *Qur'án* 3:7 and 39:23.
- 2 The *Qur'án* reads, "He it is who has revealed the Book to you: some of its verses are decisive, they are the basis of the Book, and others are allegorical; then as for those in whose hearts there is perversity, they follow the part of it which is allegorical, seeking to mislead, and seeking to give it (their own) interpretation; but none knows its interpretation except Allah, and those who are firmly rooted in knowledge." (3:6)
- 3 Sayyid Kázim Rašhtí, *The Treatise for Mírzá Muḥammad Ḥasan* (see chapter 3, n. 2), pp. 266–263.
- 4 See the following verses of the *Qur'án* on the Day of Judgment: 101:1–11; 82:1–19; 69:13–37; 56:1–56.
- 5 The term means false or lying. It is given in Islamic Traditions to religious impostors.
- 6 Gog and Magog, in Arabic, *Yájúj wa Májúj* or *Y'ajúj wa M'ajúj*, are mentioned in the *Qur'án*. See 18:93–97.
- 7 Sayyid Kázim Rašhtí, *Uşúl-i-'Aqá'id* (see chapter 3, n. 2), p. 188.
- 8 Muḥammad Mu'ín, "Havarqalyá", *Majalla-i-Dáneşhkada-i-Adabíyát*, vol. 1, no. 3, p. 34.
- 9 Muḥammad Tonekáboní, *Qişaş al-'Ulamá*, p. 44.
- 10 The most famous philosopher in nineteenth century Iran. Particularly well known for his commentaries on Mullá Şadrá's works.
- 11 A great philosopher of his time and the teacher of Ḥájj Mullá Hádí Sabzavári.
- 12 Tonekáboní, *Qişaş al-'Ulamá*, pp. 45–46.
- 13 Mu'ín, *Majalla-i-Dáneşhkada-i-Adabíyát*, p. 84.
- 14 *ibid.*, p. 85.
- 15 Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, *Jawámi' al-kilam* (see chapter 3, n. 2), vol. 1, part 2, p. 124.
- 16 Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, *Şarḥ al-'Arşíya*, p. 119.
- 17 Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, *Jawámi' al-Kilam*, vol. 1, part 1, p. 123. Shaykh Aḥmad's doctrine on this subject is not original. However, an examination of the origins of his doctrine, and of the sources which may have influenced his ideas, and of the similarities between his doctrine and other religious and philosophical systems, is beyond the scope of this work.
- 18 *ibid.*
- 19 *ibid.*, p. 122.
- 20 Sayyid Kázim Rašhtí, untitled collection of treatises, p. 61, published in 1276/1859 in Tabríz. This work contains mostly

treatises written by Sayyid Kázim Rashtí at the request of individual questioners. A lithography of this collection, bound along with Shaykh Aḥmad's Sharḥ al-Fawá'id bears the call number 2019-F in the National Bahá'í Archive of Iran. This collection will hereafter be referred to as *Collection of Treatises*.

- 21 Nafs-i-nátiqa, "the reasoning soul", is unique to human beings. While it possesses the faculties of vegetable and animal souls it also has the faculty of reasoning, which distinguishes man from plants and animals. Nafs-i-nátiqa is the manifestation of man's spirit.
- 22 Sayyid Kázim Rashtí, *Collection of Treatises*, p. 361.
- 23 Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, Davázdah Risála az Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, p. 33. This collection of twelve short treatises by Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í was copied by Ya'qúb b. Muqím b. Sharíf al-Bárforoshi in 1263/1846; the manuscript is in the National Bahá'í Archive of Iran and has the call number 2022-F. This collection will hereafter be referred to as the Davázdah Risála.
- 24 Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, Sharḥ al-Fawá'id (see chapter 3, n. 2), pp. 160–161.
- 25 Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, Davázdah Risála, p. 37.
- 26 Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, Jawámi' al-Kilam, vol. 1, part 2, p. 119.
- 27 See the Qur'án, 17:1; 53:7–14.
- 28 Sayyid Kázim Rashtí, *The Treatise for Mírzá Muḥammad Ḥasan*, p. 272.
- 29 *ibid.*, p. 268.
- 30 Sayyid Kázim Rashtí, Uṣúl-i-'Aqá'id, pp. 197–198.
- 31 *ibid.*, p. 200.
- 32 Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, Davázdah Risála, p. 107.
- 33 See the Traditions in Muḥammad Báqir Majlisí, Bihár al-Anwár, vol. 13, part 51, pp. 44–64.
- 34 *ibid.*, p. 49.
- 35 *ibid.*, p. 53.
- 36 *ibid.*, p. 45.
- 37 Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, Jawámi' al-Kilam, vol. 1, part 2, p. 139.
- 38 Sayyid Kázim Rashtí, *Collection of Treatises*, p. 271.
- 39 *ibid.*, p. 272.



## V

### Developments in the Shaykhí school after the death of Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í

The death of Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í in 1241/1827 did not result in a struggle for succession, for it was widely known within his circle as well as outside that Sayyid Kázim Raṣhtí was to be his successor. Once when Shaykh Aḥmad had been asked who should be the authority after him, he replied that Sayyid Kázim was the one.<sup>1</sup> Shaykh Aḥmad called Sayyid Rázim "My Son" (*waladí*).<sup>2</sup> Indeed, one commentator has gone so far as to describe Sayyid Kázim as the shining apple of his [Shaykh Aḥmad's] eye and the splendid bright strength of his heart, his companion in his hardships and troubles, and he who was like the shirt on his back."<sup>3</sup>

Sayyid Kázim's intellectual and scholastic relationship with Shaykh Aḥmad, his indisputable authority in Islamic literature in general and Shaykh Aḥmad's writings and thoughts in particular, and his piety and faithfulness made him the only one intellectually worthy and scholastically capable to lead the Shaykhí school.

Sayyid Kázim Raṣhtí b. Qásim b. Aḥmad b. Ḥabíb was born in 1212/1798<sup>4</sup> in Raṣht in the Province of Gílán. His family was reputed to have been descended from the Prophet and traced its origin to Medina. After Sayyid Ḥabíb's death, his son, Sayyid Aḥmad, emigrated to Raṣht, where his son Qásim, and then Sayyid Kázim, were born.<sup>5</sup>

Little is known about Sayyid Kázim's childhood except that in his early years, in his home town, he received a traditional religious education. He studied Islamic sciences and memorized the *Qur'án*.

When he was a young man he had a dream in which Fáṭima, the daughter of the Prophet, advised him to go to Yazd to meet with Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, who was residing there at the time. Acting upon this vision, Sayyid Kázim went to Yazd in 1231/1815 when he was about 20 years old and met with Shaykh Aḥmad. This was the beginning of his scholastic career. For about ten years, until Shaykh Aḥmad's death in 1241/1825, Sayyid Kim studied with him, accompanied him on his journeys, and was his closest assistant. Although Shaykh Aḥmad was his main teacher, Sayyid Kázim had the opportunity to study with several other learned men of his time such as Sayyid 'Abd Alláh Shubbar (d. 1242/1826), Mullá 'Alí Rashtí, and Shaykh Músá Najafí (d. 1241/1825).<sup>6</sup> Of his teachers, however, he most respected and admired Shaykh Aḥmad. To Sayyid Kázim, Shaykh Aḥmad was not merely a teacher but a spiritual leader, a sympathetic companion, and a kind guardian who looked after him with tender care. Through this relationship, Sayyid Kázim not only acquired the doctrinal beliefs of Shaykh Aḥmad, but also the Shaykh's attitudes and world view.

The ministry of Sayyid Kázim, which officially began in 1241/1825, was in fact an extension of Shaykh Aḥmad's authority and influence. By this it is not implied that

Sayyid Kázim's contribution was any the less, for it was Sayyid Kázim's creativity that brought Shaykh Aḥmad's thought into its full measure of elaboration.

During Sayyid Kázim's ministry, the Shaykhís developed an increasing sense of solidarity. Although the Shaykhí school did not operate independently of the Shí'a, its unique features, which were only partly evident toward the end of the time of Shaykh Aḥmad, were becoming crystallized. It was at this time, too, that Shaykh Aḥmad's doctrines received full elaboration and further explanation in the works of Sayyid Kázim, which occurred partly as a result of several scholastic-confrontations that Sayyid Kázim had in Karbalá with some of the leading religious authorities of the time. These confrontations brought out the unique characteristics of Shaykhí doctrines and the points of disagreement with other trends of thought.

Sayyid Kázim's most important confrontation took place in Karbalá at a meeting with three distinguished Uṣúli scholars: Sayyid Mahdí b. Sayyid 'Alí Ṭabáṭabá'í (d. 1260/1844), Muḥammad Ja'far Astarábádí (d. 1263/1847), and Muḥammad Sharíf b. Mullá Ḥasan 'Alí Mázandarání, known as Sharíf al-'Ulamá (d. 1245/1829).<sup>7</sup> The meeting, held at the request of Sayyid Mahdí Ṭabáṭabá'í, was called to examine the Shaykhí views on theological questions such as the Return, the Ascension of the Prophet, and the status of the *imáms*.<sup>8</sup> In this meeting, Sayyid Kázim admitted that some of Shaykh Aḥmad's writings appeared to contradict popular Shí'í

beliefs. Upon this admission, Ṭabáṭabá'í, with the cooperation of his colleagues, issued a *takfír* to the effect that Shaykhís were heretics. Later, Mullá Muḥammad Ja'far Astarábádí, one of the participants in that meeting, wrote a book rejecting the Shaykhí ideology.<sup>9</sup> This *takfír* was followed by others issued by authorities such as Mullá Áqá Darbandí (d. 1286/1869); Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad Raḥím (d. 1250/1834), the author of *al-Fuṣúl al-Gharawíya fi al-Uṣúl al-Fiqhíya*; and Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥasan b. Báqir Najafí (d. 1266 or 1268/1844), author of the *Jawáhir al-Kalám fi Sharḥ Sharáyi' al-Islám*.<sup>10</sup>

On another occasion in Karablá, a confrontation took place with Mírzá Muḥammad Ḥasan, the son of the well-known philosopher and student of Mullá Ṣadrá's philosophy, Mullá 'Alí Núrí (d. 1246/1830). The subject was the concept of *basít al-ḥaqíqa*, to which the opposition of Shaykh Aḥmad was well known. Although the concept was a major point of disagreement between the Shaykh and Mullá Ṣadrá, it is reported that when Muḥammad Ḥasan, who was a representative of Mullá Ṣadrá's school, explained Ṣadrá's stand on the subject, Sayyid Kázim did not have any objection.<sup>11</sup>

The outcome of such frequent confrontations with representatives of different trends of thought was not, of course, always favorable for the Shaykhís, but the effect of such confrontations was to increase solidarity and to advance a sense of identity among the Shaykhís, who came to see themselves as distinct from the rest of the Shí'a in

thought, approach, and behavior. The confrontations intensified the enmity and hatred between the two parties. They also brought the Shaykhí school wider recognition and attracted to it students who were seeking a new approach toward religious questions. Confrontations also demonstrated that the Shaykhí ideology was a threat to the authority and power of the *'ulamá* and the popularly held beliefs of the Shí'a.

The very fact that these discussions took place, regardless of the outcome, reveals that in Karbalá the Shí'í *'ulamá* regarded the Shaykhís as a group against which they had to take measures in the name of protection of the Sharí'a. There is no doubt that they recognized in Shaykhí ideas a potential threat to their own authority and position.

The Shaykhí school at the time of Sayyid Kázim became an active force for anti-traditionalists, who regarded it as a revolutionary movement against the religious authorities and their dogmas. The revolutionary force of the movement, now only in its religious embryonic form, would develop in later decades into a mature religious and socio-political revolution.

The intellectual result of the confrontations appeared in several apologetical and polemical works issuing from both parties.

### Sayyid Kázim's works

Sayyid Kázim's works were primarily written in the form of a *risála* (treatise) in answer to the religious questions of his students, followers, religious authorities, and statesmen. The questions they asked were numerous and touched on a vast range of subjects, from daily juridical problems to theology and philosophy, and even Freemasonry in the west. A single treatise might cover a few or as many as eighty questions in different fields.<sup>12</sup>

Sayyid Kázim also wrote commentaries on Quranic verses or phrases, on Traditions on the authority of the Prophet and the *imáms*, and on the works of his predecessors, such as Mullá Muḥsin Fayḍ or Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í. Besides writing commentaries on Shaykh Aḥmad's works, Sayyid Kázim translated Shaykh Aḥmad's *Ḥayát al-Nafs* and *Risála-i-Ḥaydaríya* into Persian as well as a few sections of the *Sharḥ al-Ziyára*.

Sayyid Kázim states clearly that his ideology derives from Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í's and his knowledge comes from him as well.<sup>13</sup> Although this statement may have traces of humility, it is nonetheless a fact that his writings are an obvious extension of those of Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í. Even a glance at Sayyid Kázim's works reveals that he was deeply influenced by the methodology, terminology, and general approach of Shaykh Aḥmad.

Sayyid Kázim wrote extensively. He himself gives a

list of 138 works at the end of his *Dalíl al-Mutaḥayyirín*.<sup>14</sup> Nicolas, in *Essai Sur Le Chéikhisme*, lists 135 works;<sup>15</sup> Habíbábádí, in the *Makárim al-Áthár*, lists 60;<sup>16</sup> and Mudarris, in *Rayḥánat al-Adab*, mentions that Sayyid Kázim wrote 150 works.<sup>17</sup> The most complete and comprehensive list of Sayyid Kázim's works, however, is provided by Ibráhímí, who devotes the second chapter of the second volume of the *Fihrist*<sup>18</sup> entirely to them. In this chapter, he lists about 170 works under the following headings:

1. Works on divine theology and virtues
2. Works on doctrines and rejection of his opponents' views
3. Works on mysticism
4. Works on principles of *fiqh*
5. Works on *fiqh*
6. Commentaries
7. Works answering various questions<sup>19</sup>

The language of Sayyid Kázim, like that of his teacher Shaykh Aḥmad, is not easy to understand. Technical terms, allegorical expressions, and extensive gnostic terminology contribute to this difficulty. Indeed, the author of the *Aḥsan al-Wadí'a*, Muḥammad Mahdi Músawí, remarks that no one can understand his works. He goes on to state sarcastically that Sayyid Kázim has written in Hindi.<sup>20</sup>

While Shaykh Aḥmad wrote exclusively in Arabic, Sayyid Kázim wrote some works in Persian, although his major books are entirely in Arabic. Three of his most important books

are considered in greater detail.

### 1. ***Sharḥ al-Khuṭbat al-Ṭutunjíya***

This is a commentary on a sermon delivered by 'Alí b. Abí Ṭálib between Kufa and Medina. *Nahj al-Balágha* does not contain this sermon, but it is recorded in *al-Majmú' al-Rá'iq*<sup>21</sup> and Shaykh Rajab al-Ḥáfiz al-Bursí's *Masháriq Anwár al-Yaqín*.<sup>22</sup> Sayyid Kázim wrote the commentary, which exceeds 350 pages, in 1232/1816 at the request of certain 'ulamá, whose names are not mentioned. Sayyid Kázim in his *Dalíl al-Mutaḥayyirín* states that his commentary on *Ṭutunjíya* contains divine secrets that only a pure-hearted and enlightened person could bear to understand.<sup>23</sup> The version of 'Alí's sermon he has used is that quoted by Shaykh Rajab al-Ḥáfiz al-Bursí.<sup>24</sup> In his commentary, Sayyid Kázim quotes the sermon phrase by phrase and follows each quotation with an elaborate interpretation. The commentary contains detailed a discussion of eschatological and ontological issues as treated by Muslim scholars.

### 2. ***Sharḥ al-Qaṣídat al-Lámíya***

The *Qaṣídat al-Lámíya* was written by 'Abd al-Báqí Afandí al-Múṣilí<sup>25</sup> in praise of Imám Músá al-Kázim.<sup>26</sup> Sayyid Kázim wrote his commentary on the *Qaṣída* in 1258/1842 at the request of 'Alí Ridá Paṣhá, the governor of Baghdád. *Sharḥ al-Qaṣída* is Sayyid Kázim's major work on broad Islamic theological perspectives.<sup>27</sup>

### 3. ***Dalíl al-Mutaḥayyirín***

This work was written to explain Shaykhí views and to defend

Shaykhí ideology against the attacks of the *'ulamá*. The book contains a biography of Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, excerpts from his *ijázas*, and comments on his character, his achievements, and the hardships he suffered during his life. Sayyid Kázim explains points of dispute between the Shaykhís and the Shí'a and records in detail his confrontations with the *'ulamá*. At the end of the book, he lists the works of the Shaykh and then his own works, with a few words of description about each.

Sayyid Kázim, in addition to writing religious treatises, educated hundreds of students, many of whom became leading authorities on religion and participated actively in social and religious struggles after he died. The *Makárim al-Áthár* gives the names of several of Sayyid Kázim's students,<sup>28</sup> among whom are Ḥájj Muḥammad Karím Khán Kermání, the great Persian poetess Qurrat al-'Ain, Mullá Ḥusayn Boshro'í, and Shaykh 'Alí Torshízí.\* All became influential and distinguished leaders in the later developments of the Shaykhí school.

Unfortunately, Sayyid Kázim did not live long enough to witness the results of his achievements. He was forty-seven years old when he became ill, or was poisoned,<sup>29</sup> and died on 11 Dhí al-Ḥijja 1259/1843<sup>30</sup> in Karbalá.

He was survived by three children, a girl and two boys. The most distinguished of them was Sayyid Aḥmad, who was killed in 1295/1878 in *'Atabát*.<sup>31</sup>

Inspired and energetic, Sayyid Kázim played such an

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\* Arabic Qurrat al-'Ayn, Persian Qurratu'l-'Ayn. Mullá Ḥusayn Boshro'í. Mullá Shaykh-'Aliy-i-Turshízí.

important role in the Shaykhí school that, when he died, the movement that Shaykh Aḥmad had initiated, and which Sayyid Kázim had organized, disintegrated almost immediately. His death, in fact, marked the beginning of a serious crisis among his followers. The crisis centered on the issue of successorship, for Sayyid Kázim had not appointed anyone as his successor, and this created disunity in his circle.

The disunity that appeared among the Shaykhís in this period not only prevented the movement from any further significant extension in size, but also weakened the solidarity of the school. This weakness, in turn, paved the way for serious attacks of the Shí'a on the Shaykhís.

The headquarters of the movement which had been established in Karbala at the time of Shaykh Aḥmad and had attracted hundreds of religious students at the time of Sayyid Kázim, now moved out of Karbalá and new centers were established in Kermán and Ádharbáyján. They attracted fewer students in general, and far fewer students from the Arab lands. The new centers also lacked the scholarly reputation that Karbalá had possessed at the time of Sayyid Kázim. As long as the Shaykhí school was based in Karbalá, the center for Shí'í scholarship, it had a direct connection with other Islamic trends of thought, but the relocation of the Shaykhís to Iran removed them from this direct contact with the mainstream. The Shí'a who considered the Shaykhís heretics, may well have viewed this move out of Karbala as a victory.

The transfer to Iran also brought about an important change in the literature of the school: while Shaykh Aḥmad had written his works entirely in Arabic and Sayyid Kázim wrote only a few books in Persian, the new Shaykhí leaders now gradually began to write primarily in Persian and for a largely non-Arab audience. The works of these leaders did little more than review the Shaykhí ideology as formulated in the works of Shaykh Aḥmad and elaborated in the works of Sayyid Kázim. There is nothing in their works to compare with the originality and significance of the writings of Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kázim.

The most important of the drastic changes which afflicted the school after the death of Sayyid Kázim was the lack of accepted leadership, which resulted in factionalism within the school. In his will,<sup>32</sup> Sayyid Kázim does not mention a successor. However, he repeatedly emphasizes two major points: the importance of unity among his followers and the advent of the one whom Sayyid Kázim terms the "Sign of God" (*Áyat Alláh*) and the "Proof of God" (*Ḥujjat Alláh*).<sup>33</sup> In addition, he advises his followers in these words:

To awaken from the sleep of ignorance. Today is the day of examination and clarification. In such a day, one should hold on to the firmest handle, and beseech God that all gather together on the Day of Gathering<sup>34</sup> [that is, the Day of Judgment] and disunity does not occur among you ....<sup>35</sup> Be careful not to take too much pride in your material possessions. On that day, he who is humble will be raised and he who is mighty will be lowered ....<sup>36</sup> In each period [*'aṣr*] here must be a Protector [*walí*] who carries out the

affairs of religion .... He [the *walí*] is the Sign of God and the Proof of God .... Earlier he came to you and taught you what you did not know ....<sup>37</sup> There, undoubtedly, must be the appearance of Sign after Sign in every period ....<sup>38</sup> Hold fast to the covenant of God and lay hold on the firmest handle,<sup>39</sup> ask for success and guidance from God .... I beseech you to avoid disunity, because disunity cuts the tree of unity; it uproots the word of harmony and accord; it destroys the foundations of prophethood [*nubuwwat*]; and it shakes the pillars of successorship [*wiláyat*].<sup>40</sup>

The fact that Sayyid Kázim did not appoint anyone as his successor, and the fact that he urged his followers to seek the *walí*, indicates that Sayyid Kázim believed that the advent of the *walí* was imminent, thus there was no need to appoint a successor. Without an appointed successor, and with no student who could win general acceptance within his circle, as had been the case after the death of Shaykh Aḥmad, disputes arose and various claimants to the succession appeared. Among them two distinguished students of Sayyid Kázim were most prominent: Ḥájj Muḥammad Karím Khán Kermání (d. 1288/1871) and Ḥájj Mirzá Shafí' Tabrízí.

It should be noted that the ideological viewpoint which resulted in the division of the followers of Sayyid Kázim into two groups had to do primarily with the type of leadership that each group sought. While Ḥájj Muḥammad Karím Khán Kermání believed in individual leadership, Ḥájj Mírzá Shafí' believed in *ijtihád*. This meant that Ḥájj Muḥammad Karím Khán claimed, and was accepted by his followers, to be the only individual leader of the Shaykhís whose ideas were legitimized, whereas Mírzá Shafí' believed

that the Shaykhís should follow the principles of Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kázim but for daily religious questions, should follow the examples of the Shí'í recognized *mujtahids* of their time.

It was about five months after the death of Sayyid Kázim, on 5 Jumádá al-Ulá 1260/1844, that Sayyid 'Alí Muḥammad Shirází declared himself to be the Báb (Gate) to the advent of the Qá'im. Sayyid 'Alí Muḥammad's claim was not connected with the crises of succession within the Shaykhí school, but since he had attended Sayyid Kázim's circle,<sup>41</sup> and the advent of the Qá'im was predicted in the Shaykhí writings,<sup>42</sup> the claim of the Báb attracted many students of the Shaykhí school, who became known as Bábís.<sup>43</sup>

The two groups of Shaykhís that emerged following the death of Sayyid Kázim, however, were to have a much different relationship with the Bábí movement, opposing the claims of the Báb and even actively participating in efforts to crush the nascent movement.

### **Ḥájj Muḥammad Karím Khán Kermání and the Shaykhís of Kermán**

The student of Sayyid Kázim who won the largest number of supporters was Ḥájj Muḥammad Karím Khán Kermání.<sup>44</sup> He was the son of Muḥammad Ibráhím Khán Ṣahír al-Dawla, the governor of Kermán and cousin of Fath 'Alí Sháh.

Muḥammad Karím Khán was born in 1225/1810 to a rich

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\* Endnote: *Qua*, Latin "in the capacity" or "character of". Why use it?

family in Kermán.<sup>45</sup> He received his elementary education in the city of his birth and was a young man when he met a certain Ḥájj Ismá'íl,<sup>46</sup> one of Sayyid Kázim's students. During this meeting, he learned about the Shaykhí school and became so attracted to it that he went to Karbalá and met Sayyid Kázim. He remained there for eight months<sup>47</sup> and attended Sayyid Kázim's circle. Then he returned to Kermán. After four years he made another trip to Karbalá, where he stayed for two years.<sup>48</sup> It was on his way back to Kermán that he claimed to be the successor of Sayyid Kázim and the leader of the school. Except for a few trips to Tehrán and Mashhad, he spent most of his time in Kermán teaching, preaching, and writing books. In 1288/1871, as he was on his way to Karbalá, he died in Tahrod, a village near Kermán. His body, after remaining in Langar for one and half years, was carried to Karbalá and buried there.

The majority of the Shaykhís in Kermán accepted Ḥájj Muḥammad Karím Khán as the legitimate leader of the school after Sayyid Kázim. He considered himself as an inspired leader who was acting in accordance with divine guidance,<sup>49</sup> but his authority was based on the loyalty of his followers, mainly the members of his family located in Kermán; he never attracted the loyalty of all the followers of Sayyid Kázim Rashtí.

The followers of Ḥájj Muḥammad Karím Khán became known as the Shaykhís of Kermán (Shaykhíya-i-Kermán or Shaykhíya-i-Ḥájj Karím Khání) in contrast with the groups of Shaykhís in

Tabríz and Hamadán. He was a traditionalist Shaykhí who remained loyal to the Shaykhí school. The school of Kermán never entered into active revolt against the established authorities. They were among the power elite of Kermán who conservatively limited themselves to religious activities mainly in that province. The Shaykhí leader of Kermán was, in fact, the head of his clan, and the leadership of the Shaykhís of Kermán has remained in the family of Hájj Muḥammad Karím Khán to the present day. The successors of Hájj Muḥammad Karím Khán were his son Muḥammad Khán (d. 1324/1906); Hájj Zayn al-'Ábidín Khán (d. 1360/1941), his other son; then Hájj Abú al-Qásim Khán (d. 1389/1969),<sup>50</sup> the son of Hájj Zayn al-'Ábidín Khán.<sup>51</sup> Presently 'Abd al-Riḍá Ibráhímí, the son of Hájj Abú al-Qásim Khán, is the leader of the school, and his headquarters are still in Kermán.

When Hájj Muḥammad Karím Khán appointed his son Muḥammad Khán as his successor, a great Shaykhí scholar, Mírzá Muḥammad Báqir Hamadání (d. 1319/1901), did not accept the latter's leadership. Mírzá Muḥammad Báqir b. Muḥammad Ja'far, originally from Iṣfahán but known as Hamadání because he had resided in Hamadán for about thirty years, was born in 1239/1823.<sup>52</sup> He received his elementary education in Iṣfahán and then joined Hájj Muḥammad Karím Khán's circle in Kermán. He studied with Hájj Muḥammad Karím Khán, and became his devoted follower and then his deputy in Hamadán.

Mírzá Muḥammad Báqir believed that successorship should be given to the most learned member of the Shaykhí community—i.e., himself!—not necessarily to a member of Ḥájj Muḥammad Karím Khán's family. This claim, which was supported by many Shaykhís, particularly outside Kermán, brought into being a new branch of Shaykhís under the leadership of Mírzá Muḥammad Báqir, who considered himself to be the most respected and learned Shaykhí after Ḥájj Muḥammad Karím Khán. His followers came to be known as the Báqirís, or the Shaykhís of Hamadán. Mehdí Bámdád, in the *Tárikh-iiRijál-i-Írán*, states that after the separation of the Báqirís, the followers of Ḥájj Muḥammad Khán became known as Naṭiqí (adjective form derived from the noun *nátiq* which literally means speaker) or *Nawátiq* (plural of *nátiq*).<sup>53</sup> This statement, however, is not supported by any other sources.

Mírzá Muḥammad Báqir wrote about 150 books and treatises.<sup>54</sup> His better known works are *al-Ijtináb*, written in Persian in 1307/1899 to answer the polemical questions 'Abd al-Ṣamad b. 'Abá Alláh al-Ḥusayní al Mázandarání (d. 1315/1897) had raised in his work, the *Tiryáq-i-Fáruq*;<sup>55</sup> and *al-Uṣúl al-Díniya*, a work written in Persian on Shí'í doctrines.<sup>56</sup>

In 1315/1897, there was an uprising against the Shaykhís of Hamadán, during which Mírzá Muḥammad Báqir fled to Náeín\* and subsequently made his residence in that area. He died in 1319/1901 in Jandaq† at the age of eighty.<sup>57</sup>

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\* Ná'ín ("Náeín" or "Naein") or sometimes Náyin, a city 135 km ENE of Iṣfahán.

† Jandaq is a city 178 km NE of Ná'ín.

### **Mírzá Shafí' Tabrízí and the Shaykhís of Tabríz**

Mírzá Shafí' was a student of Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í and Sayyid Kázim Rashtí. As soon as he returned to Tabríz after the death of Sayyid Kázim, he established a Shaykhí circle there, and members of his family and the nobility of Tabríz supported him.<sup>58</sup>

Mírzá Shafí' b. Mírzá Rafí' was born in 1218/1803 and lived for eighty-three years. He received the traditional elementary education in his home town and then went to 'Atabát to continue his education. In 'Atabát he studied with Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥasan Najafí, author of the *Jawáhir al-Kalám*, the most important work on jurisprudence written in this period, and then continued with Sayyid Kázim Rashtí, from whom he received his *ijáza*. Mírzá Shafí' was a respected man of his time, known for his piety and knowledge.<sup>59</sup> After his death, his son, Mírzá Músá, received his father's authority and led the school till 1319/1901, when he died.

Of the twenty-one children that Mírzá Músá left behind, Mírzá 'Alí became the most famous. Born in 1277/1860 and killed by the Russians in 1330/1912,<sup>60</sup> he became known as the Thiqat al-Islám-i-Shahíd. He received his elementary education from his grandfather Mírzá Shafí', and others, and went to 'Atabát for higher religious education.<sup>61</sup> Upon his return to Tabríz in 1308/1890 he became a respected,

learned man. With the death of his father, Mírzá Músá, in 1319/1901, he became the head of the Shaykhí school of Tabríz. Mírzá 'Alí was a distinguished scholar in religion and literature. He was interested in new sciences, social change and the socio-political issues of his time. His interests led him to participate in the social affairs of the country as a secular thinker.<sup>62</sup> He wrote several books such as the *Risála-i-Lálán*, on social issues, and the *Mir'át al-Kutub*, an immense biobibliography.<sup>63</sup>

Up to the time of Mírzá 'Alí, sources report that in Tabríz there was enmity between the Shaykhís and the Shí'a. Aḥmad Kasraví states that the bloody fighting which had occurred earlier between the Shí'a and the Shaykhís had lessened, but in the years before the Constitutional Movement, hatred still existed between them; they had separate mosques, they would not intermarry,<sup>64</sup> they considered each other as *najis* (religiously impure), and they would not use the same public baths.<sup>65</sup> Through the efforts of Mírzá 'Alí, the deeply rooted enmity between the Shaykhís and the Shí'a was reduced,<sup>66</sup> and later on, during the uprising of the masses for the Constitutional Movement, the two parties came together against despotism, and the gap was bridged.<sup>67</sup>

The Shaykhís of Tabríz never succeeded in obtaining hegemony over all the Shaykhís, but immediately following the death of Sayyid Kázim they attracted those students of his who held more anti-traditionalist views. In contrast

with the Shaykhís of Kermán, the Shaykhís of Tabríz were very much involved in the current socio-political issues of the province of Ádharbáyján, where they had a close relationship with the royal family residing there and engaged in the public affairs of the society. This involvement manifested itself most clearly at the time of Mírzá 'Alí, who came out publicly against the established authorities and institutions and received the support of his adherents. This developed into an active rebellion against the established order and ultimately led to the Constitutional Movement. In contrast with the leaders of the Shaykhís of Kermán, who claimed to enjoy the inspired leadership of their community, the leaders of the Shaykhís of Tabríz never, made such a claim. While the leadership of the Shaykhís of Kermán was centered in an acknowledged individual, the Shaykhís of Tabríz lacked a universally accepted individual leader.

In contrast with the Uşúlí '*ulamá* of Tabríz and the Shaykhís of Kermán, who were among the local notables with considerable landed property and other investments and lived in luxury, the Shaykhís of Tabríz lived a moderate life.<sup>68</sup>

### **Sayyid 'Alí Muḥammad Shirází, the Báb and the Bábís**

Within a short period after Sayyid Kázim's death,

Sayyid 'Alí Muḥammad declared himself to be the Báb (Gate) to the twelfth Imám for whom the Shí'a in general and the Shaykhís in particular had been waiting.

Sayyid 'Alí Muḥammad Shírází was born into a respected merchant family of Shíráz on the first of Muḥarram 1235/1819.<sup>69</sup> Orphaned at an early age, he was raised by his maternal uncle, Sayyid 'Alí. He received his formal elementary education in his home town and then, as a young man, went into business with his uncle, who was also a merchant. In 1257/1941, Sayyid 'Alí Muḥammad made a pilgrimage to 'Atabát where he stayed for 11 months.<sup>70</sup> There he met Sayyid Kázim Rashí and attended his circle. Upon his return to Shíráz, he proclaimed himself the Báb on (5 Jumádá al-Ulá 1260/23 of May 1844). He made his declaration to Mullá Ḥusayn Boshro'í, an eminent student in the Shaykhí circle, saying, "O thou who art the first to believe in Me! Verily I say, I am the Báb, the Gate of God, and thou art the Bábu'l-Báb, the gate of that Gate. Eighteen souls must, in the beginning, spontaneously and of their own accord, accept Me and recognize the truth of My Revelation."<sup>71</sup> Shortly after this event, seventeen other people became believers and, along with Mullá Ḥusayn Boshro'í, formed the Letters of the Living (Ḥurúf-i-Ḥayy; the numerical value of the word Ḥayy is 18). The Letters of the Living, most of whom were Shaykhís, as the first disciples of the Báb were given the task of proclaiming his advent throughout the country. Through the Báb's writings, which were addressed

to religious and secular leaders,<sup>72</sup> and through the efforts of his disciples, the Báb's message spread and within only six years reached every corner of Iran, attracted the attention of thousands, and became the main issue of the day. The *'ulamá*, threatened by the new message, the implication of which was nothing short of undermining the traditional order and the authority of the *mujtahids*, used all their resources to destroy the Báb and his followers. The state joined the *'ulamá* in its efforts. As a result, thousands of Bábí men, women, and children were murdered in the most horrible circumstances. Lord Curzon, in his *Persia and the Persian Question*, writes: "Tales of magnificent heroism illumine the bloodstained pages of Bábí history ... and the fires of Smithfield did not kindle a nobler courage than has met and defied the more refined torturemongers of Tehran."<sup>73</sup>

The Báb himself, subjected to imprisonment during his six years of ministry, was sentenced to death and executed in 1266/1849 by a firing squad in Tabríz.

The term "Báb" which Sayyid 'Alí Muḥammad applied to himself, was familiar to the people of his time. It had been used by Muslims of various sects for several centuries. As Huart points out,

Báb, an Arabic word signifying "gate", early received among the Ṣúfís the meaning of the "gate by which one enters, means of communication with that which is within" and was applied to prominent Shaikhs. Among the Ismá'ílís, this word is used symbolically for the Shaikh or spiritual leader, who initiates into the mysteries of religion, the

*asás*;<sup>\*</sup> among the Nuṣairís. Salmán al-Fárisí, who was entrusted with the Propaganda, is the Báb. The Druses call by this name the first spiritual minister, who embodies universal reason.<sup>74</sup>

Among the Shí'a the term Báb was assigned to Four Gates (*al-Abwáb al-Arba'a*), four people who claimed to be intermediaries between the Hidden Imám and the believers during the Lesser Occultation.<sup>75</sup> The term is used in almost the same sense in Shaykhí writings. On the basis of Shí'í Traditions, Shaykh Aḥmad in his *Sharḥ al-Ziyára* states that the Prophet Muḥammad—and the Prophet's knowledge—is like a house and that the *imáms* are like the doors (*al-abwáb*) to it.<sup>76</sup> Shaykh Aḥmad quotes a famous Tradition on the authority of the Prophet which reads, "I am the city of knowledge and 'Alí is its Gate."<sup>77</sup>

In his account of the concept of *ma'rifa* (knowledge), Shaykh Aḥmad states that it exists on six levels:

1. The knowledge of the oneness of God
2. The knowledge of *al-ma'ání* (the meanings)
3. The knowledge of *al-abwáb* (the gates)
4. The knowledge of *al-imám* (the *imáms*)
5. The knowledge of *al-arkán* (the pillars)
6. The knowledge of *al-nuqabá* (the guardians)<sup>†</sup>
7. The knowledge of *al-nujabá* (the helpers)<sup>78</sup>

Then, Shaykh Aḥmad provides details about each level, saying that in the terminology of the Illuminists (*Ahl al-Ishráq*) "gate" is equal to the First Intellect, and in the terminology of the religious scholars (*Ahl al-Shar'*) it is equal

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\* Foundation.

† *naqíb*, pl. *nuqabá'*.

to the Pen (*al-Qalam*) or the Muslim Intellect (*al-'Aql al-Muḥammadī*), which is the gate between God and His creation.<sup>79</sup>

Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kázim were known to their students as the gates. Qurrat al-'Ain, in her treatises, refers to them by the term "the two gates" (*al-bábayn*).<sup>80</sup> She also refers to Sayyid Kázim as "The earlier gate of God" (*báb Alláh al-muqaddam*)<sup>81</sup> in comparison to Sayyid 'Alí Muḥammad, who appeared later. Sayyid 'Alí Muḥammad also refers to Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kázim as "báb". In his *Qayyúm al-Asmá*, his first work, Sayyid 'Alí Muḥammad writes, "O ye peoples of the earth! During the time of My absence I sent down the Gates unto you. However the believers, except for a handful, obeyed them not. Formerly I sent forth unto you Aḥmad and more recently Kázim, but apart from the pure in heart amongst you no one followed them."<sup>82</sup>

The term "báb", however, became best known as the title for Sayyid 'Alí Muḥammad, who at the very beginning of his mission identified himself as the Gate through which men might attain to the knowledge of the Twelfth Imám,<sup>83</sup> the expected Qá'im. In his first work, the *Qayyúm al-Asmá*, however, he frequently referred to himself by the term "Gate of God". The Báb writes: "As to those who deny Him Who is the Sublime Gate of God, for them We have prepared, as justly decreed by God, a sore torment. And He, God, is the Mighty, the Wise."<sup>84</sup> And also, "I am the 'Gate of God' and I give you to drink, by the leave of God, the sovereign

Truth, of the crystal-pure waters of His Revelation ...”<sup>85</sup> The title of “Gate to the Twelfth Imám” was only employed in the very early period of his mission. Other titles such as the “Gate of God”, “Remembrance of God”,<sup>86</sup> and “The Point of the Bayán”,<sup>87</sup> however, are used more frequently throughout his works.

Although the Báb originally claimed to be the “Gate to the Twelfth Imám”, later, in his most important work, the *Persian Bayán*, he claimed to be the Twelfth Imám, the Qá'im, himself.<sup>88</sup> In his *Dalá'il al-Sab*<sup>89</sup> he explains the reason for this change:

Consider the manifold favours vouchsafed by the Promised One, and the effusions of His bounty which have pervaded the concourse of the followers of Islám to enable them to attain unto salvation. Indeed observe how He Who representeth the origin of creation, He Who is the Exponent of the verse, “I, in very truth, am God”, identified Himself as the Gate (Báb) for the advent of the promised Qá'im, a descendant of Muḥammad, and in His first Book enjoined the observance of the laws of the Qur'án, so that the people might not be seized with perturbation by reason of a new Book and a new Revelation and might regard His Faith as similar to their own, perchance they would not turn away from the Truth and ignore the thing for which they had been called into being.<sup>90</sup>

Although the titles are different, the essence of his message was that he was a new messenger with a new Revealed Book and a new order for a new day: his main concern was not the perpetuation or revival of Islam, but the birth of a new order.

The Bábí movement was a forward-looking religious ideology which sprang out of Shaykhí soil. Since Shaykhí

writings had prepared the ground for such a declaration, many of the early believers in the Báb were, like his first disciples the Letters of the Living, Shaykhís.

The earliest Shaykhís who accepted the Báb were those who had rejected Hájj Muḥammad Karím Khán and Mírzá Muḥammad Shafí' as leaders of the school on the grounds that they were not qualified to occupy such a position or because there was no indication in the writings of Sayyid Kázim regarding the successorship. They argued that, since the appearance of the Qá'im was at hand, Sayyid Kázim had not appointed anyone as his successor; rather, he had encouraged his students to seek for the Qá'im. If the Shaykhís were supposed to have a leader after Sayyid Kázim, he would have been wise enough to appoint one. This attitude was well supported in the writings of Sayyid Kázim himself.

The Shaykhís who believed in the Báb saw in him the fulfillment of Shaykh Aḥmad's and Siyyid Kázim's predictions and, thus, there remained no reason for them to reject him. This group of Shaykhís, who formed the nucleus of the Bábís, were among the most learned students of Sayyid Kázim. Among the early adherents of the Báb were such distinguished personalities as Qurrat al-'Ain, Mullá Ḥusayn Boshro'í, Shaykh Muḥammad Taqí Hashtrudí, and Mullá 'Alí Baraghání.

The Bábís traveled tirelessly throughout the country, meeting with religious authorities in various cities, in mosques, in *madrasas*, and in private gatherings, where they talked about the Báb and his new movement. They also wrote

books and treatises to demonstrate that the advent of the Báb was in accordance with the *Qur'án*, the Islamic Traditions, and particularly with Shaykhí predictions. Their energetic efforts to publicize the claims of the Báb attracted thousands of Persians to his movement. The early Bábís who actively participated in proclaiming the Báb's mission came from all levels of Iranian society: merchants, peasants, landowners, government employees, and the learned class. The number of Bábís from each group and their role, in relation to the others, in spreading the new faith requires further study. It is clear, however, that the leadership of the Bábís in their social organization and efforts to propagate their faith was in the hands of the newly converted '*ulamá*', particularly the Shaykhí '*ulamá*'.

Just as the basic reason for accepting the Báb's claim was religious, Shí'í attacks against the Bábís were also motivated by religion, for the appearance of the Báb did not fulfill the exoteric aspect of the prophecies recorded in the Shí'í texts. The Shí'a were expecting the Qá'im to return from the cold-chamber of Sámarrá, where he went for occultation, but now they were confronted instead with a young man from Shíráz who claimed to be the Qá'im. Indeed, none of the exoteric signs predicted for the advent of the Qá'im materialized in the appearance of Sayyid 'Alí Muḥammad, the Báb.

In addition, in his *Persian Bayán*, the Báb came out

against certain common Muslim practices either enjoined in the *Qur'án* or the Traditions, or based upon them. For example, he prohibited congregational prayer except in the case of prayers for the dead.<sup>91</sup> He also changed Islamic regulations on marriage, divorce, fasting, and inheritance.<sup>92</sup> Most important, he denied the validity of the Quranic law against usury,\* maintaining that interest on money may be taken.<sup>93</sup> These teachings of the Báb, completely different than those of the *Qur'án*, were too much for the ordinary Shí'í believers to accept. In addition, the Shí'í religious and secular authorities regarded them as an obvious threat to their position and mobilized their resources to destroy the Báb and his followers.

While a number of Shaykhís converted to the Báb and actively proclaimed his mission, the Shaykhís of Kermán and Tabríz rose against the Bábís. In fact, these two groups of Shaykhís, who had been ideologically in conflict with one another, joined in opposition to the Báb. The nature of their opposition, however, differed: while the Shaykhís of Kermán expressed their opposition mainly on an intellectual level in books and treatises directed against the Báb and his ideology, the Shaykhís of Tabríz actively cooperated with state authorities in the persecution of the Báb himself and his followers. Both groups of Shaykhís rejected the Báb's claim to be a new prophet with a new book of laws and regulations<sup>94</sup> and responded with hostility to his claim that he had received a direct revelation from God and that

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\* "Most important, he denied the validity of the generally accepted interpretation of the Quranic law against usury, maintaining that interest on money may be taken." **The Qur'án forbids usury, not reasonable interest.**

his word was the revealed word of God.<sup>95</sup>

The most important Shaykhí to raise objections against the Báb was his great antagonist, Ḥájj Muḥammad Karím Khán. He devoted at least four books entirely to this task, writing three of them within five years of the Báb's advent,<sup>96</sup> He also attacked the Báb in several other works. All these works are basic sources for understanding the intellectual opposition to the Báb and his ideology.

A comprehensive and convenient synopsis of the charges leveled against the Báb is Ḥájj Muḥammad Karím Khán's *Risála dar Radd-i-Báb-i-Murtáb*, which he wrote at the request of Náṣir al-Dín Sháh Qájár. In this book, written in 1283/1866, about two decades later than his other works in refutation of the Báb, Ḥájj Muḥammad Karím Khán accuses the Báb of several heresies. In summary, Ḥájj Karím Khán charges that,

1. The Báb claimed to be the deputy of the Hidden Imám; later he claimed to be the Hidden Imám himself. Still later he claimed to be a prophet with his own religion. Finally, he claimed to be God.
2. The Báb frequently claimed to have received a revelation as the Prophet Muḥammad did.
3. The Báb claimed that he was superior to the Prophet and that his book was superior to the *Qur'án*.
4. The Báb claimed to have a new *Qur'án*. He introduced innovations; he forbade what the *Qur'án* considered lawful and permitted what it considered unlawful. He instituted laws which contradicted Quranic laws.

5. The Báb considered himself as the only legitimate person, in whom everyone should believe. He ordered people to Holy War (*jihád*); he permitted the blood of his enemies to be shed; he requested that the Muslims who did not believe in him be executed.
6. The Báb stated that the Day of Resurrection had come and that the Return had passed. By this statement he meant that they had occurred with his appearance. (This was the most blatant statement of abrogation of the creed of his society and was an immediate line of demarcation between his followers and the Shí'í community.)
7. The Báb claimed that meeting with him was like meeting with God.
8. The Báb said that the realm of isthmus (*barzakh*) is the period before the appearance of a new prophet of God.

Hájj Muḥammad Karím Khán also states in his book that the Báb wrote a letter to him in his own handwriting and sent it to him by courier.<sup>97</sup> In the letter, Hájj Muḥammad Karím Khán says, the Báb solicited his support and requested him to ask the *mu'adhhdhins* to include his name in the *adhán*.<sup>98</sup> When the courier came, Hájj Muḥammad Karím Khán continues, he argued with him, giving him reasons for being unable to accept the Báb's request. Then, Hájj Muḥammad Karím Khán says, he sent him back disappointed and miserable.<sup>99</sup>

At the end of his book, Hájj Muḥammad Karím Khán states

that according to the Báb's writings the Shaykhís are enemies of the Bábís, and that the Báb has warned his followers not to make friends among the Shaykhís or to read Shaykhí writings. Ḥájj Muḥammad Karím Khán asserts that it should be clear that there is no similarity between the Bábís and the Shaykhís. The Shaykhís, he says, have always hated the Bábís and have written books to refute them. The Shaykhís have always been loyal to the government, to Muslims, and to the household of the Prophet.<sup>100</sup> The last statement of Ḥájj Muḥammad Karím Khán implies, of course, disloyalty on the part of the Bábís.

The opposition of the Shaykhís of Kermán to the Báb and his followers did not remain on an intellectual level. It is reported that Mullá Kázim b. Yúsuf, one of Muḥammad Karím Khán's learned followers, became a follower of the Báb and, in a mosque where Ḥájj Muḥammad Karím Khán and other Shaykhís were present, expressed his belief in the validity of the Báb's claim to be the Qá'im. Upon this expression, which was followed by words of praise for the Báb and his movement, Ḥájj Ghulám 'Alí Khán, the brother of Ḥájj Muḥammad Karím Khán, seized Mullá Kázim and beat him so severely that he died a few days later.<sup>101</sup>

The opposition of the Shaykhís of Tabríz to the Báb reflected their strong ties with the political authorities of the province in that period. In contrast to the opposition of the Shaykhís of Kermán, which was mostly intellectual, their opposition took the form of torturing

the Báb and his followers and finally of issuing a religious decree for the Báb's death. When the Báb was brought from his prison in Chehríq to Tabríz for trial, the 'ulamá in charge of the interrogation were Shaykhí leaders: Hájj Mullá Maḥmúd Tabrízí, known as Nizám al-'Ulamá (d. 1273/1856), Mullá Muḥammad Mamaqání (d. 1269/1852), and Mírzá 'Alí Aṣghar Shaykh al-Islám (d. 1278/1861).<sup>102</sup>

Nizám al-'Ulamá was the head of the court and the teacher of Náṣir al-Dín Sháh. He wrote about the trial, and his account was used by Riḍá Qolí Khán Hidáyat in his *Rawḍat al-Ṣafá* as well as by I'timád al-Saltána in his *al-Mutanabi'ín*.<sup>103</sup> Mullá Muḥammad Mamaqání was a leading Shaykhí authority in Tabríz and one of those who claimed to be the successor of Sayyid Kázim Rashtí. His sons later became the leaders of opposition to the Bábís. Under the pen name of Nayyir,<sup>104</sup> one of his sons, Mírzá Muḥammad Taqí (d. 1312/1894), wrote a book against the Bábís entitled *Ṣahífat al-Abrár*. Written in 1290/1873 and published in 1319/1901,<sup>105</sup> it contains the proceedings of the interrogation of the Báb.<sup>106</sup>

Mírzá 'Alí Aṣghar Shaykh al-Islám, another participant in the interrogation, was a Shaykhí leader in Ádharbáyján. It was he who took the Báb to his home after the trial and administered a beating to him. Mírzá 'Alí Aṣghar died in 1278/1861 at the age of ninety-six, but enmity against the Báb remained in his family and found an expression in a polemic against the Báb written by his son, Mírzá Abú

al-Qásim, entitled *Qal' al-Báb*.<sup>107</sup>

The Shaykhís were the first group in Persian society to react to the claims of the Báb. Some of them became his most important supporters, disseminated his teachings around the country, wrote works to prove that he was indeed the expected one, and tirelessly invited people to join the Bábí movement. They believed that the spirit of the *Qur'án* and the essence of Islam had been revealed again in the writings of the Báb and that the predictions concerning the appearance of the Qá'im had been fulfilled allegorically. For these Shaykhís, Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kázim were divinely guided figures who had paved the way for the Báb and enabled them to recognize the one for whom they had been waiting.

In contrast, another group of Shaykhís rose against the Báb, led the opposition to him, and did their best to prevent the Bábí movement from spreading. They saw in the Báb's teachings new laws and regulations which were in many cases different from, or even contrary to, the teachings of the *Qur'án*. They maintained that none of the predictions regarding the Qá'im had been fulfilled literally in the coming of the Báb. Therefore, in their eyes the Báb was false and an enemy of Islam who had risen to establish an order different from the Quranic order. This, in their opinion, was an obvious "infidelity" (*kufr*), for they maintained that the *Qur'án* and Islam were to last for eternity.

## Notes

- 1 Hájj Muḥammad Karím Khán Kermání, *Hidáyat al-Ṭálibín*, p. 71.
- 2 Abú al-Qásim Ibráhímí, *Fihrist-i-Kutub-i-Masháyiikh-i-'Izám*, p. 116.
- 3 Muḥammad Báqir al-Músawí al-Iṣbahání, *Rawḍát al-Jannát fí Aḥwál al-'Ulamá wa al-Sádát*, vol. 1, p. 225.
- 4 Ibráhímí, *Fihrist*, p. 115.
- 5 *ibid.*
- 6 Muḥammad 'Alí Mu'allim Ḥabíbábádí, *Makárim al-Áthár*, vol. 1, p. 217.
- 7 Muḥammad Tonekáboní, *Qīṣaṣ al-'Ulamá*, pp. 43–44.
- 8 Sayyid Kázim Raṣhtí, in his *Dalíl al-Mutaḥayyirín*, gives a full report on the nature of the dispute. See page 46ff.
- 9 Tonekáboní, *Qīṣaṣ al-'Ulamá*, p. 100. Astarábádí's book, entitled *Ḥayát al-Arwáh*, was written in 1240/1824. Mírzá Ḥasan b. 'Alí Gauhar Qarácha Dághí, an outstanding student of the Shaykhí school, wrote *Sharḥ-i-Kitáb-i-Ḥayát al-Arwáh* in 1252/1836 to reject Astarábádí's views.
- 10 *ibid.*, p. 44.
- 11 *ibid.*, p. 55.
- 12 For example, the treatise written for Shaykh Muḥammad b. Shaykh Ḥusayn Baḥrání contains 80 questions. See Ibráhímí, *Fihrist*, p. 342.
- 13 Sayyid Kázim, *Dalíl al-Mutaḥayyirín*, p. 144.
- 14 *ibid.*, pp. 146–168.
- 15 A. L. M. Nicolas, *Essai Sur Le Chéikhisme*, pp. 32–36.
- 16 Mu'allim Ḥabíbábádí, *Makárim al-Áthár*, pp. 213–217.
- 17 Muḥammad 'Alí Mudarris, *Rayḥánat al-Adab*, 3d ed., vol. 2, pp. 308–309.
- 18 Ibráhímí, *Fihrist*, pp. 288–359.
- 19 *ibid.*, p. 286.
- 20 Músawí is quoted in Mudarris, *Rayḥánat al-Adab*, vol. 2, p. 309.
- 21 According to Áqá Bozorg al-Ṭehrání (*al-Dharí'a ilá Taṣáníf al-Shí'a*, vol. 20, p. 531, the complete title of the work is *al-Majmú' al-Rá'iq min Azhár al-Ḥadá'iq*. It contains prayers and Traditions on the authority of the Prophet and the *imáms* and several treatises by different authors on subjects such as religious beliefs, theology, and *fiqh*. The work was compiled by Sayyid Hibat Alláh b. Abí Muḥammad al-Ḥasan al-Músawí in 703/1303.
- 22 *Mashá'riq Anwár al-Yaqín fí Ḥaqá'iq (kashf) Asrár Amír al-Mu'mínín*, a major work of al-Bursí, written in 773/1371. See *al-Dharí'a*, vol. 21, p. 34.
- 23 Sayyid Kázim Raṣhtí, *Dalíl al-Mutaḥayyirín*, p. 146.
- 24 Sayyid Kázim Raṣhtí, *Sharḥ al-Khuṭba al-Ṭutunjíya*, p. 7.

- 25 'Abd al-Báqí b. Sulaymán b. Aḥmad Afandí al-Múṣilí was born in 1204/1789 in Múṣil but spent most of his life in Baghdád. He was a distinguished poet and the author of several books on poetry and biography. He died in 1278/1361 in Baghdád. See Mu'allim Ḥabíbábádí, *Makárim al-Áthár*, pp. 172-173.
- 26 Sayyid Kázim Raṣhtí, *Dalíl al-Mutaḥayyirín*, p. 147.
- 27 A lithograph of this work was published in Tabríz in 1272/1855.
- 28 Mu'allim Ḥabíbábádí, *Makárim al-Áthár*, pp. 217-220.
- 29 Ibráhimí, *Fihrist*, p. 122. Qurrat al-'Ain, the great Persian poetess and the famous student of Sayyid Kázim, in one of her treatises has called him "al-Qatíl" (the killed one). See Mírzá Asad Alláh Fáḍil Mázandarání, *Zuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 502.
- 30 Mu'allim Ḥabíbábádí, in *Makárim al-Áthár*, p. 220, gives the phrase *غاب بدر الهدى*, and Mudarris in *Rayḥánat al-Adab*, vol. 2, p. 309, gives the phrase *غاب نور*. The numerical values of both phrases are equal to 1259, the year Sayyid Kázim died.
- 31 Muḥammad Ma'šúm Shírází, known as Ma'šúm 'Alí Sháh and Náyib al-Šadr, *Ṭará'iq al-Ḥaqqá'iq*, vol. 3, p. 338.
- 32 Sayyid Kázim's will was dictated to Mírzá Muḥit̄ (Kermání), his close student and companion. A copy of the will, in manuscript form, is included (ms. no. 4) in the Shaykhí Manuscript Collection in the Near Eastern Collection, Special Collection Department, in the Research Library at the University of California, Los Angeles. The copy, which runs to 15 pages of 14 lines per page, is undated and does not bear the name of the scribe. It will hereafter be referred to as *Will*.
- 33 *ibid.*, p. 6.
- 34 The Day of Gathering (*yaum al-jam'*) is referred to in the *Qur'án* in the following verse: "And that you may give warning on the day of gathering together wherein is no doubt ...." (42:7).
- 35 Sayyid Kázim Raṣhtí, *Will*, p. 4.
- 36 *ibid.*, p. 5.
- 37 *ibid.*, p. 6.
- 38 *ibid.*
- 39 *ibid.* These phrases are derived from the following Quranic references: 2:256; 3:102; 31:22.
- 40 *ibid.*, p. 9.
- 41 Qurrat al-'Ain states that the Báb (*al-Dhikr al-Akbar*) stayed at 'Atabát for eleven months—eight months in Karbalá and three months in other cities. While he was in Karbala he would attend the circle once every two or three days but he would not attend the entire session; he would either come in at the beginning or in the middle or at the end of the session. (Mírzá Asad Alláh Fáḍil Mázandarání, *Zuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, p. 529.

- 42 The question is not the precise definitions and exclusive limits of each term (*qua* concept) but the fluid overlap and deliberate use of the “gray area” terminology.
- 43 The Báb states that those who, through the preparation of Sayyid Kázim, believed in him were all the most pious scholars to whose piety and knowledge Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kázim had testified. Mírzá Asad Alláh Fáql Mázandarání, *Žuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, p. 286).
- 44 For the biography of Ḥájj Muḥammad Karím Khán Kermání see the *Fihrist*, pp. 57–73 and Ni'mat Alláh al-Raḍawí al-Sharíf, *Tadhkirat al-Awalyá*, pp. 2–95.
- 45 Muḥammad Himmat, *Tárikh-i-Mufaṣṣal-i-Kermán*, pp. 252–256.
- 46 Ni'mat Alláh al-Raḍawí al-Sharíf, *Tadhkirat al-Awliyá*, p. 15.
- 47 Ibráhímí, *Fihrist*, p. 64. Ḥájj Muḥammad Karím Khán wrote a short autobiography in Arabic. This work was translated into Persian by Abú al-Qásim Ibráhímí and is included in his biography in the *Fihrist*, pp. 61–73.
- 48 Ibráhímí, *Fihrist*, p. 64. Ḥájj Muḥammad Karím Khán attended Sayyid Kázim's circle for a total of about three years.
- 49 Ibráhímí, *Fihrist*, pp. 66–67.
- 50 Muḥammad Himmat, *Tárikh-i-Mufaṣṣal-i-Kermán*, p. 256.
- 51 For the biography of the Shaykhí leaders of Kermán see the first volume of the *Fihrist*.
- 52 Mehdí Bámdád, *Tárikh-i-Rijál-i-Irán*, vol. 6, p. 209.
- 53 *ibid.*, p. 210. Bámdád explains that in Shí'a the term *nátiqí* indicates that there must always be a *nátiq*, i.e., a leader or *imám* in the community and that the other members must be silent.
- 54 *ibid.*, p. 211.
- 55 *Al-Dharí'a* (vol. 4, p. 171), and the *Rayḥánat al-Adab* (vol. 3, p. 273) state that the author of the *Tiryáq-i-Fárúq* is Muḥammad Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad 'Alí al-Ḥusayní al-Shahrestání. On the second page of the book, the author gives his name as 'Abd al-Šamad b. 'Abd Alláh al-Ḥusayní al-Mázandarání. The *Tiryáq-i-Fárúq* was written in 1301/1883 and published in lithography in Mashhad in 1309/1890.
- 56 Áqá Bozorg al-Ṭehrání, *al-Dharí'a*, vol. 8, p. 113.
- 57 Bámdád, *Tárikh-i-Rijál*, vol. 6, p. 211. According to Kayván, however, the uprising during which Mírzá Muḥammad Báqir was killed took place in 1314/1896 not in 1315/1997. See 'Abbás 'Alí Kayván, *Ḥájj Náma*, p. 128.
- 58 *ibid.*, p. 132.
- 59 Nušrat Alláh Fathí, *Zendegí Náma-i-Šahíd-i-Níknám Thiqaṭ al-Islám Tabrízí*, p. 17.
- 60 See *ibid.*, chapters 41 and 42.
- 61 *ibid.*, p. 22.

- 62 *ibid.*, p. 24.
- 63 *ibid.*, pp. 45–78. Fathí also published a collection of Thiqat al-Islám's treatises, letters, cables, and articles, entitled *Majmú'a-i-Áthár-i-Qalamí-i-Shádraván Thiqat al-Islám-i-Shahíd-i-Tabrízí*.
- 64 Aḥmad Kasraví, *Tárikh-i-Mashrúta-i-Irán*, p. 133.
- 65 Fathí, *Zendegí Náma-i-Shahíd*, pp. 40–41.
- 66 *ibid.*, p. 41.
- 67 *ibid.*
- 68 Bámdád, *Tárikh-i-Rijál*, vol. 6, p. 41.
- 69 Shoghi Effendi, *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabíl's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá'í Revelation*, p. 72.
- 70 This is according to Qurrat al-'Ain. See n. 41 above.
- 71 Shoghi Effendi, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 44.
- 72 Several extracts of these addresses are published in the following work: Sayyid 'Alí Muḥammad the Báb, *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, pp. 11–37.
- 73 George N. Curzon. *Persia and the Persian Question*, vol. 1, p. 501.
- 74 *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. "Báb", by C. Huart. For the history of this title and its employment see also, "Note D. The meaning of the Title 'Báb'" in *A Traveller's Narrative*, pp. 226–234.
- 75 In Shí'í history the period between the years 60/872–329/939 is the period of the Lesser Occultation. During these sixty-nine years the Imám communicated with his people through four gates: Abú 'Umar 'Uṭhmán b. Sa'íd; Abú Ja'far Muḥammad b. 'Uṭhmán, son of the above; Ḥusayn b. Rúh; and Abú al-Ḥasan 'Alí b. Muḥammad Símarí.
- 76 Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, *Sharḥ al-Ziyára*, p. 11.
- 77 *ibid.*
- 78 *ibid.*, p. 13.
- 79 *ibid.*, p. 15.
- 80 Mírzá Asad Alláh Fáḍil Mázandarání, *Zuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, p. 512.
- 81 *ibid.*, p. 502.
- 82 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 51.
- 83 Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, p. 227.
- 84 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 44.
- 85 *ibid.*, p. 50.
- 86 *ibid.*, p. 46.
- 87 *ibid.*, p. 80.
- 88 The Báb in his *Persian Bayán* writes, As thou hast heard, at the manifestation of the *Nuḳṭa-i-Furḳán* [i.e., Muḥammad, who was in his time the "Point of Revelation"] all those who were believers in the Gospel were expecting the promised Aḥmad, and thou hast heard what befell that Sun of Truth during the twenty-three years of his mission, so that he said, "No prophet hath been afflicted as I

have been afflicted." Yet all were entreating and craving his appearance, and in the words of Jesus, working for him. Praise be to God that in that day thou wast not! But thou vast in the manifestation of the *Nuḳṭa-i-Beyán* [i.e., the Báb, the "Point of Revelation"] when all believers in the Apostle of God were expecting the appearance of the promised Mahdí; for this tradition is from the Apostle of God, and all, simple and gentle, are agreed therein. Now there is no doubt that the substance of Faith was confined to the Shi'ites, and that the sect of Islám is this same outward sect whereof the adherents call themselves Shi'ites; while men avowedly call Fárs the "Abode of Knowledge": Yet, although the Tree of Truth arose, not one of the people recognized it [even] after perceiving it. The degree of their remoteness is evident, for this sufficeth unto their abasement; yet night and day they exclaim "speed! speed!" And also, Consider with due attention, for the matter is very strait, even while it is more spacious than the heavens and the earth and what is between them. For instance, if all those who were expecting [the fulfillment] of the saying of Jesus had been assured of the manifestation of Aḥmad [i.e. Muḥammad], not one would have turned aside from the saying of Jesus. So likewise in the manifestation of the *Nuḳṭa-i-Beyán* [i.e., the Báb] if all should be assured that this is that same Mahdí [whose coming was] promised, whom the Apostle of God foretold, not one of the believers in the *Ḳur'án* would have turned aside from the saying of the Apostle of God. So likewise in the manifestation of Him whom God shall manifest behold the same thing, for should all be assured that he is that same "He whom God shall manifest" whom the *Nuḳṭa-i-Beyán* foretold, not one would turn aside. (Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, pp. 293–295. The two passages above are Browne's translation.)

89 *Dalá'il al-Sab'*, one of the Báb's major works, was written for Mullá 'Abd al-Kháliq Yazdí while the Báb was in prison at Máko. In it the author gives seven reasons for his claim's validity.

90 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 119.

91 Sayyid 'Alí Muḥammad Báb, *Persian Bayán*, pp. 324–326.

92 *ibid.*, pp. 200–210; pp. 218–219; pp. 306–309; pp. 274–278.

93 *ibid.*, p. 181.

94 *ibid.*, pp. 29–30.

95 The Báb writes, "Say, O people of the world! Do ye dispute with Me about God by virtue of the names which ye and your fathers have adopted for Him at the promptings of the Evil One? God hath indeed sent down this Book unto Me with truth that ye may be enabled to recognize the true names of God, inasmuch as ye have strayed in error far from the Truth. Verily We have taken a

- covenant from every created thing upon its coming into being concerning the Remembrance of God, and there shall be none to avert the binding command of God for the purification of mankind, as ordained in the Book which is written by the hand of the Báb.” (*Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 65).
- 96 The main polemical works of Ḥájj Muḥammad Karím Khán are as follows: (1) *Izháq al-Báṭil dar Radd-i-Báb-i-Murtáb*, written in 1261/1845 and published in Kermán in 1351/1932; (2) *Tír-i-Shiháb dar Radd-i-Báb-i-Khusrán Ma'áb*, written at the request of Muḥammad Sharíf Kermání in 1262/1846. This work is a part of *Majma' al-Rasá'il*, no. 1, published in Kermán in 1386/1966; (3) *Shiháb-i-Tháqib*, written in 1265/1848 and published in Kermán in 1353/1934; (4) *Risála-i-Radd-i-Báb-i-Murtáb*, written at the request of Násir al-Dín Sháh, in 1283/1866. This work was published in 1384/1964 in Kermán and its translation into Arabic also appeared in the same year. About his attempts to refute the Báb, Ḥájj Karím Khán writes, “For a long time from the pulpit (*minbar*) and in my classes, I showed everyone that this man (the Báb) was wrong. I wrote many books and sent them to all parts of Iran, Ādharbáyján. Khorásán, Arabia, India, and so on, and with the help of God, I prevented a great number of people from falling victim to this plight.” (*Radd-i-Báb-i-Murtáb*, p. 24. This edition of *Radd-i-Báb-i-Murtáb* along with *Risála-i-Tazyil dar Radd-i-Háshim-i-Shámí* was published in one volume.)
- 97 Ḥájj Karím Khán Kermání, *Risála-i-Radd-i-Báb-i-Murtáb*, pp. 27–28, 58.
- 98 *ibid.*, p. 27. The *Adhán* is the “call to prayer” by which a crier (*mu'adhdhin*) summons the believers to the public prayer.
- 99 *ibid.*, pp. 28–58.
- 100 *ibid.*, pp. 45–47.
- 101 Fáḍil Mázandarání, *Zuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, pp. 399–400.
- 102 For a full account of the interrogation of the Báb see, “Examination of the Báb at Tabriz” in Shoghi Effendi, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 309–323; and “The First Examination of the Báb at Tabriz” in Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, pp. 277–290.
- 103 Bámdád, *Tárikh-i-Rijál*, vol. 4, pp. 59–60.
- 104 *ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 289–290.
- 105 Áqá Bozorg al-Ṭehrání, al-Dharí'a, vol. 15, p. 15.
- 106 Riyáḍ Ṭáhir, *Fihrist Taṣáníf al-'Alláma al-Shaykh* Ḥmad al-Ḥsá'í, p. 5.
- 107 Bámdád, *Tárikh-i-Rijál*, vol. 2, p. 452.



## VI

### **Shaykhí teachings that paved the way for the Báb**

The Shaykhí school provided the background for the Bábí movement and its doctrines prepared the way for those of the Báb. The social and intellectual relationship between the Shaykhí school and the Bábí movement is beyond dispute: the earliest and most learned followers of the Báb were Shaykhí students,<sup>1</sup> and the Báb himself, while a resident in Karbalá, attended the circle of Sayyid Kázim. Moreover, his works reveal a thorough understanding of Shaykhí literature, ideas, and terminology.

The Báb and Bábí historians in their writings represent Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kázim as forerunners of the Báb,<sup>2</sup> divinely inspired persons who prophesied the appearance of the Báb and prepared their students for the recognition of the expected Qá'im.<sup>3</sup>

While no one can doubt that the Shaykhí ideas created an intellectual atmosphere conducive to the acceptance of the Báb, it is necessary to examine the nature of the Shaykhí predisposition which ultimately resulted in the conversion of certain Shaykhís into Bábís. For the sake of historical perspective it is important to remember that Shaykhí patterns of belief were not the only cause of conversion. The charismatic personality of the Báb, as well as social, political, and cultural factors, played vital

roles in it. This chapter will focus on the theological and intellectual considerations that led a great number of Shaykhís to the Bábí movement. These factors are important not only for understanding the Shaykhí-Bábí relationship, but especially for revealing the strong links between Islam and the Bábí faith, the strongest of which is the Shaykhí school.

In his various works, Shaykh Aḥmad devoted much attention to the concept of the imamate, a subject on which he received numerous questions from his students. These dialogues indicate that this subject was the focal point of discussion and investigation in his circle. Such discussions of the imamate naturally led to the consideration of related issues: (1) the finality of the Prophet, (2) the Day of Judgment, and (3) predictions regarding the appearance of the Qá'im, which was expected to occur imminently.<sup>4</sup>

According to traditional Muslim belief, the Prophet Muḥammad is the last prophet: there will be none after him, and prophecy is sealed by his mission. The basis for this doctrine is found in the following verse of the *Qur'án*: "Muḥammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Apostle of Allah and the seal of the Prophets; and Allah is Cognizant of all things." (33:40) Although the Shaykhís do not entirely reject the concept of the finality of the Prophet Muḥammad, it appears that their understanding of this question led to a new approach toward the concept of

finality.

According to the Shaykhí theory, a prophetic cycle began with Adam and continued to the Prophet Muḥammad. During this Adamic cycle, six major prophets appeared: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muḥammad. While most Muslims believe that Muḥammad was the last Prophet, Shaykh Aḥmad maintains that he was the last Prophet only within this cycle. The Shaykh expresses his idea by making use of the cabalistic system: he explains that the letter *wáw* (و), when pronounced, consists of a consonant “و”, an “ا” (*alif*) and another “و”. The first “و”, which has a numerical value of six according to the abjad system,<sup>5</sup> stands for the six prophets in the Adamic cycle. The “ا” (*alif*), which stands between the two *wáws*, represents the Qá’im (literally, the word Qá’im means “standing”), and the second “و” represents the prophet who will follow the Qá’im and will be a new manifestation of God, identified as the Second Christ or the Return of Ḥusayn. The Qá’im, thus, stands between the six previous prophets and the one who will succeed him, like the “ا” (*alif*) which stands between the two *wáws*.<sup>6</sup>

Shaykh Aḥmad’s view of Muḥammad as the final only within the Adamic cycle implies a continuing divine revelation through a succession of prophets in a series of cycles; while each cycle has a beginning and an end, the cyclic process itself is progressive and continuous. This concept of continuity, as opposed to the traditional theory

of finality, is expressed most clearly in the sections of the Shaykhí works devoted to the concept of absolute correspondence between the realm of creation (*takwín*) and the realm of religion (*tashríf*).<sup>7</sup> According to this concept, the pattern of creation as a whole corresponds to the pattern of religion. The Shaykh offers an example of such correspondence in the development of an embryo, which must pass through various stages in the womb of its mother before it is born into this world. The *Qur'án* (23:13–14) tells us that the embryo develops through six stages, namely: (1) life-germ (*nutfa*), (2) clot (*'alaqa*), (3) a morsel of flesh (*mudgha*), (4) bones (*'izám*), (5) flesh (*lahm*), and (6) another creation (*khalqan ákhar*), during which stage the spirit enters the body. Just as the embryo develops through various stages, human spiritual progress is a developmental process, each stage of which corresponds to the appearance of a prophet whose divine revelation advances the spiritual condition of mankind. According to the Shaykhí view, the six stages of embryonic development corresponds to the six prophets who appeared in the Adamic cycle: the stage of the life-germ corresponds to Adam; the stage of the clot, to Noah; the stage of the morsel of flesh, to Abraham; the stage of the bones, to Moses; the stage of the flesh, to Jesus; and the stage of another creation, to Muḥammad.<sup>8</sup>

Following the analogy further, as the first five stages of embryonic development are prerequisite to the

entrance of the spirit into the body, the first five religions are perceived as performing a preparatory function for the religion of the Prophet Muḥammad.<sup>9</sup>

The last stage of the development of an embryo is final only in respect to its life in the womb, for the now completely developed embryo will be born into another world. Likewise, although the sixth stage of the Adamic cycle, i.e., the Prophet Muḥammad, is the last stage of its cycle, it is, at the same time, the beginning of a new phase in the spiritual development of mankind and marks the inception of a new cycle.

The Shaykhí concept of continuity as opposed to finality is also supported by a more general correspondence that Shaykh Aḥmad maintains exists between the realm of creation (*takwín*) and the realm of religion (*tashrí*). The *Qur'án* says that creation took place in six days: "And He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days ..." (11:7) Each one of these days, according to Shaykh Aḥmad, corresponds to a stage of embryonic development as well as to a stage in the formation of the universe.<sup>10</sup>

### **Table 2**

1	Sunday <i>yaum al-aḥad</i>	life germ <i>yaum al-nutfa</i>	The First Intellect <i>yaum al-'aql al-awwal</i>	Existence in the Universe <i>yaum al-wujúd fi al-'álam</i>
2	Monday <i>yaum al-ithnayn</i>	clot <i>yaum al-'alaqa</i>	The Universal Soul <i>yaum al-nafs al-Kullíya</i>	Quiddity <i>yaum al-máhiya</i>

3	Tuesday <i>yaum al-thulathá</i>	morsel of flesh <i>yaum al-mudqha</i>	The Universal Nature <i>yaum al-ṭabí'a al-Kullíya</i>	Spring <i>yaum faṣl al-rabí'</i>
4	Wednesday <i>yaum al-arbí'a</i>	bones <i>yaum al-'izám</i>	The Universal Matter <i>yaum al-mádda al-Kullíya</i>	Summer <i>yaum faṣl al-ṣayf</i>
5	Thursday <i>yaum al-Khamís</i>	flesh <i>lahm</i>	Subtle <i>yaum al-mithál</i>	Fall <i>yaum faṣl al-Kharif</i>
6	Friday <i>yaum al-Jum'a</i>	Another Creation <i>yaum yansháu Khalqan Ákhar</i>	Body <i>yaum al-jism</i>	Winter <i>yaum faṣl al-shitá*</i>

Although this schema may appear to suggest finality, continuity may easily be inferred from it, for the final stage of a cycle can also be seen as the beginning of a new cycle.

That the Prophet Muḥammad completed the Adamic cycle and began a new cycle is clearly expressed by Sayyid Kázim in his explanation of the two Arcs which he believes exist in the spiritual life of mankind: (1) the Arc of Ascent (*Ṣu'úd*) and (2) the Arc of Descent (*nuzúl*).<sup>11</sup> The Arc of Ascent begins with Adam and ends with the Prophet Muḥammad, who is also the opener (*fátiḥ*) of the Arc of Descent. According to this idea, Muḥammad occupies the highest level of the Arc of Ascent and, thus, is the most exalted one: Muḥammad was the Prophet with whom prophecy ended; he was the best Prophet among the prophets; and his religion abrogated all the previous religions. However, he was also

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\* *shitá'*, pl. *ashtiya*, *shutíy*.

the opener of the Arc of Descent, in which other prophets will come.

Any implication of finality in these explanations appears to refer to the perfection of the Prophet Muḥammad and his religion, in relation to other prophets and religions: that is, the process of the revelation of God's religion, which commenced with Adam, reached its most perfect form in the prophethood of Muḥammad and the revelation of the *Qur'án*. But this does not necessarily imply that Muḥammad would be the last prophet ever to appear. Thus, the Shaykhís' reinterpretation of the traditional Muslim concept of the finality of the Prophet may well have prepared many Shaykhís to accept the Báb as the founder of a new religion.

A second factor in creating intellectual readiness for accepting the Báb was the Shaykhí view that the day of the appearance of the Qá'im would be the Day of Judgment. Unlike the Shí'a, who believe that the advent of the Qá'im will simply be one among the numerous events which will take place on the Day of Judgment, the Shaykhís hold that the appearance of the Qá'im is the Day of Judgment.<sup>12</sup> Thus, to say that Islam will last until the Day of Judgment is true in the sense that Islam will last until the Qá'im appears.

The Shaykhí identification of the Day of Judgment with the coming of the Qá'im placed a great significance on this event. Belief in the Day of Judgment is one of the conditions for being a Muslim, and preparation for this day

is the goal of every believer. Since it is the day on which all shall be punished or rewarded according to their deeds, and shall be consigned to hell or to paradise, it is difficult to conceive of any event more crucial in the religious life of a Muslim. When the Day of Judgment was interpreted to be the day of the advent of the Qá'im, as the Shaykhís maintained, the attention of the adherents of the Shaykhí school was focused on the expectation of his coming, instead of on the traditional Day of Judgment.

Although the emphasis that Shaykh Aḥmad placed on the station of the *imáms*, along with his approach toward the concepts of the finality of the Prophet and the Day of Judgment, provided the background for the expectation of the Qá'im, his prophecies particularly directed the Shaykhís' attention to the recognition of the Báb. In fact, Shaykh Aḥmad's most important achievement in preparing his students for the advent of the Qá'im was his prophecies, which were elaborated in the works of Sayyid Kázim Raṣhtí. In this regard, Sayyid Kázim's *Will* is particularly important.<sup>13</sup> Although in his *Will* Sayyid Kázim uses the term Walí (Protector), not Qá'im, his description of the Walí is the name as his description of the Qá'im in other works. In his *Will* Sayyid Kázim does not go into detail to prophesy the name of the Walí or the exact date of his coming, but he clearly states that for every period (*'aṣr*) there is a Walí and the appearance of the Walí will never cease. The day of the advent of the Walí, in Sayyid Kázim's terminology,

will be the Day of Gathering together (*yaum al-jam'*),<sup>14</sup> another name for the Day of Judgment. The day of the advent will witness great changes and upheavals. The one who will appear is the Sign of God (*Áyat Alláh*), who will come with proofs. He will arise among people as did the Prophet Muḥammad. These statements indicate that Sayyid Kázim did not believe that the Twelfth Imám would return from occultation as the Qá'im; rather, he believed that the Qá'im was living among people and would appear as the Prophet Muḥammad did.

In his *Will*, Sayyid Kázim, after advising his students to be steadfast, pious, unified, and detached from material life, quotes a Quranic verse which reads, "It alters the mortal. Over it are nineteen angels." (74:29–30) Although Sayyid Kázim does not explicitly state his purpose in quoting the verse, it has been interpreted as an allusion to the Báb and his first eighteen followers, the Letters of the Living (*Hurúf-i-Ḥayy*), who formed the first unit (*wáhid-i-Awwal*) of the Bábís.

Before examining the Shaykhí prophecies in more detail, it is necessary to consider the conception of the advent of the Mahdí and the Second Christ in Islam in general, and in the Twelver Shí'a literature in particular.<sup>15</sup>

There is no mention of a Mahdí in the *Qur'án*, nor is there any mention in the earliest Traditions. Later Traditions say that the Mahdí will appear before the world comes to its end and will inaugurate a new era of prosperity

and salvation, functioning as a ruler, renewing all things, and establishing peace and justice on earth. The advent of the Mahdí is to be preceded or accompanied by various signs.

In Islam, the term Mahdí is a title for a Divinely Guided One, equivalent to the messiah, the deliverer. While for the Sunnís the Mahdí does not refer to any specific person, the Twelver Shí'a identify him with the Twelfth Imám, who went into occultation in 260/872.<sup>16</sup> For them, therefore, the return of the Twelfth Imám is identical with the advent of the Mahdí. Shí'í literature contains literally hundreds of Traditions on the authority of the Shí'í Imáms, concerning different aspects of the Mahdí's private and social life, character, and function. However, these Traditions are inconsistent regarding his name, his descent, the year of this appearance, and his physical and spiritual qualifications. For example, we find him given such varied titles as "*The Qá'im*"<sup>17</sup> (The one who rises), "*Baqíyat Alláh*"<sup>18</sup> (The Remnant of God), "*Şáhib al-Zamán*"<sup>19</sup> (The Lord of the Age), and "*al-Muntaẓar*"<sup>20</sup> (The Expected One).

Muḥammad Báqir Majlisí (d. 1111/1700), compiler of the *Bihár al-Anwár*, the lengthiest and most comprehensive collection of Shí'í Traditions, has denoted the thirteenth volume of this work to Traditions on the Mahdí. These Traditions almost unanimously affirm that the world will not end until a man from the family of the Prophet, in the line of 'Alí and Fátima, appears. He will rule according to the

example of the Prophet. The Qá'im will come at a time of great troubles when the world is approaching its end. There will be an increasing number of hard-hearted evildoers. The Qá'im will make efforts to establish justice and equity and repel tyranny and oppression. He will cause the strong and the weak to be as equals; he will bring salvation to earth. Through his efforts, Islam will spread throughout the world.

The Traditions declare that the Qá'im is the one through whom God will manifest His faith. He is the one whom God "will make victorious over the whole world until from every place the call to prayer will be heard, and all religion will be to Allah."<sup>21</sup> The Qá'im is described as the champion of the faith, who will strengthen God's religion. He is the means by which God proves His existence to His creation. Without the Qá'im the world cannot function. Such a Leader is needed, whether manifest and well known or hidden and obscure.

The Qá'im will fulfill God's promises. He is to be sent by God to prepare the way for the Return of Christ. The Twelver Shí'a believe in the Mahdí and his return as an essential element of their faith. In the Shí'í Traditions, a great number of Quranic verses are interpreted as references to the Qá'im.<sup>22</sup>

The Shaykhí prophecies are mostly based on the Shí'í Traditions. Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kázim, however, added to the prophecies of the Traditions by elaborating them. Shaykhí prophecies are the most abstruse parts of the

Shaykhí works, employing figurative concepts, the *abjad* system, and anagrams. Very rarely can a straightforward prophecy be found. The complexity and the equivocal nature of the prophecies suggest that only people familiar with Shaykhí terminology and doctrines could understand them; other people would be able to do so only through oral explanations. The complexity is due to the social and religious climate of the time, which did not allow the Shaykhí leaders to openly provide information in plain language about the Qá'im. It is reported that once Sayyid Kázim was asked by one of his students, "Why is it, that you neither reveal His [i.e., the Qá'im's] name nor identify His Person?" To this Siyyid replied by pointing with his finger to his own throat, implying that were he to divulge His name, they both would be put to death instantly."<sup>23</sup>

Shaykhí prophecies are so numerous, so repetitious, and so widespread throughout the Shaykhí works that it seems hopeless to try to put all of them into a system or present them in a form that encompasses all the details. The prophecies speak about two distinct persons who would appear one after another: the Qá'im and the Return of Ḥusayn. The prophecies concerning the Qá'im's name, characteristics, date of his advent, and the circumstances under which he will appear are by far more numerous than the prophecies concerning the Return of Ḥusayn.

As in Shí'í Traditions, the Qá'im is also referred to by other titles, such as *Ṣáhib al-Zamán* (The Lord of the

Age), *Ḥujjat Alláh* (Proof of God), *Baqíyat Alláh* (The Remnant of God), *Dhikr* (The Remembrance), and, more commonly, *Mahdí* (The Divinely Guided One).

Shaykhí prophecies on the Qá'im are of two kinds: prophecies which closely repeat the popular expectations of the Shí'a concerning the coming of the Qá'im and prophecies which are not literally in accordance with popular expectations. In the prophecies of the first kind, the Twelfth Imám is alive and present in the world, but invisible. He is the son of Ḥasan al-'Askarí (d. 260/872), the Eleventh Imám, from the family of the Prophet. The Qá'im, therefore, is identified as the Twelfth Imám. The advent of the Qá'im will be accompanied by the Return of the *imáms* as well as their enemies. In the year of the arrival of the Qá'im, the following events will occur: there will be a serious famine, heavy rain will fall from the twentieth day of the month of Jumádá to the beginning of Rajab. The Dajjál, or Antichrist—the False Messiah, who performs miracles and pretends that he is God—will appear in Iṣfahán in the month of Rajab, and the Sufyání, 'Uṭhmán b. 'Utba, will appear in Ramla in wádí Yábis. In the same month of Rajab, the body of 'Alí will be manifested in the disk of the sun and it will be possible for everyone to recognize him. There will be an eclipse of the moon at the end of the month of Ramaḍán. There will also be an eclipse of the sun on the fifth (or the middle) of Ramaḍán. It will be in the early morning of the twenty-third (of Ramaḍán) that Gabriel will

announce that 'Alí and his followers (Shí'at 'Alí) were on the right path, and at the end of the day Iblis will announce the rightfulness of the martyr 'Uthmán and his followers.<sup>24</sup>

On the twenty-fifth of Dhí al-Hijja, Nafs al-Zakíya Muḥammad b. al-Hasan<sup>25</sup> will be killed between the *Rukn* and the *Maqám*.<sup>26</sup> Friday, the tenth of Muḥarram, will be the day of the advent of the Greater Light of God (*Núr Alláh al-Akbar*), the Lord of the Age (*Ṣaḥib al-Zamán*), the Qá'im, who will go to the *Masjid al-Ḥarám*<sup>27</sup> and kill the preacher, and then will enter the Ka'ba. At night he will call upon his followers and 313 of them, from the east and the west, will be assembled around him, and the first believer in the Qá'im will be Gabriel.<sup>28</sup>

The Qá'im will remain at Mecca until ten thousand people have gathered around him. At this time the Sufyání<sup>29</sup> will send his armies to Kufa, Medina, and also to Mecca. This last army will be swallowed up by the earth, but two of its members will survive to convey the news to the Qá'im and to the Sufyání. The Qá'im will send troops around the world, will kill the Dajjál and the Sufyání, and will fill the earth with justice and righteousness, whereas before it had been filled with oppression and cruelty. He will make his residence at Kufa.<sup>30</sup>

The Qá'im will reign for seven years, but each of these years is equal to ten years of our time. Therefore, he will rule for seventy of our years.<sup>31</sup>

The second kind of Shaykhí predictions, which are peculiar to the Shaykhí works, but again are based on Traditions, prophesy the name, the date, and the characteristics of the Qá'im and the Second Ḥusayn. Only the most obvious prophecies in the Shaykhí works will be discussed here.

Shaykh Aḥmad, in one of his letters, foretold the year of the appearance of the Qá'im in mysterious language which employs the cabalistic system. According to this prophecy, the year 1260/1844 was the year in which the Qá'im would appear.<sup>32</sup> This prophecy is supported by Sayyid Kázim's statement that the Qá'im will appear in the thirteenth century.<sup>33</sup> Sayyid Kázim's prophecy, however, is elaborated in his *Risála* for Mullá Ḥusayn 'Alí,<sup>34</sup> where he says that the voice of God will be heard after a thousand years. Since according to the common Shí'í belief, the Twelfth Imám was God's voice among men until the year 260/872 when he went into occultation, the thousand-year period would end in 1260/1844, when the voice of God would be heard again.

Regarding the name of the Qá'im, Sayyid Kázim, at the beginning of his *Sharḥ al-Qaṣída*,<sup>35</sup> indicates that the numerical value of his name is equal to twice the numerical value of the letter "K—ك" when it is pronounced. The pronunciation of this letter is "Káf—كاف", which consists of three letters: "K—á—f—ك—ا—ف". The numerical value of the pronounced "Káf—كاف" is 101 (K=20, á=1, f=80), and its double is 202, which is equal to the numerical value of the

name of the Báb, 'Alí Muḥammad "الـي محمد": (ع = 70, ل = 30, ي = 10, م = 40, ح = 8, م = 40, د = 4).\*

The Báb, in a letter to one of his followers, Mullá Muḥammad Ja'far b. Muḥammad Kermání, indicates the fulfillment of this prophecy by his appearance.<sup>36</sup> Qurrat al-'Ain also states in one of her treatises that Sayyid Kázim's prediction about the name of the Qá'im is fulfilled in the Báb.<sup>37</sup>

Nabíl, the author of one of the earliest histories of the Bábí movement, relates that in the same year the Báb was born (that is, 1235/1819), Shaykh Aḥmad suffered the loss of his son, Shaykh 'Alí. Shaykh Aḥmad explained to his students, who mourned his loss, that he had offered his son as a sacrifice for 'Alí, whose appearance they were awaiting.<sup>38</sup> This, Nabíl says, indicates that the name of the Qá'im was to be 'Alí.

The Shaykhí works contain numerous indications regarding the characteristics of the Qá'im. To disciples who questioned him about this subject, Sayyid Kázim replied that he would be from a noble lineage, a descendant of Fátima of the family of Hášim. He would be young and possess knowledge which is not derived from schools but is given to him by God. He would be of medium height, and free from bodily defects. He would not smoke. He would be illustrious and an extreme devotee.<sup>39</sup>

In their works, on numerous occasions Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kázim predicted the signs, virtues, and character-

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\* i.e. the letters ' , l , í , m , ḥ , m , d .

istics of the Second Christ or Imám Ḥusayn. Like the Shaykhí predictions on the Qá'im, these are of two kinds: predictions that almost repeat the popular expectations of the Shí'a and predictions that are peculiar to the Shaykhís and are not found in Shí'í works.

In the first kind, Shaykhí sources specify that in the fifty-ninth year of the Qá'im's reign, Ḥusayn will appear. He will be accompanied by the seventy-two martyrs of Karbalá. After a seventy-year reign, the Qá'im will be killed, and Ḥusayn will give him burial.<sup>40</sup> Then Ḥusayn will take over the Qá'im's responsibilities and will kill Shimr, Yazíd,<sup>41</sup> and other enemies who will have returned. Finally, Ḥusayn will defeat all the enemies and will reign for fifty thousand years.<sup>42</sup>

Of the second kind of predictions, Shaykh Aḥmad, in a letter to Sayyid Kázim,<sup>43</sup> states, "For every prophecy is a term, and you will come to know, and most certainly you will come to know about it. After a Time (*Ba'da Ḥín*)."<sup>44</sup> In this statement, the Arabic word, "*Ḥín*—حين", according to the *Abjad* system, is equal to 68: (ح = 8, ي = 10, ن = 50). "After a time" (*ba'da ḥín*) means 69, i.e., *ḥín* is 68 and after the *ḥín* is 69. The Shaykhí view of the term "after a time" (*ba'da ḥín*) is based upon Imám Ṣádiq's interpretation of the Quranic verse: "And most certainly you will come to know about it after a time (*ba'da ḥínin*)."<sup>45</sup> (38:88) Imám Ṣádiq says that the Quranic term "*ba'da ḥín*" refers to the year in which the Qá'im will appear.<sup>45</sup>

It was in the year 69 (1269/1852) that Bahá'u'lláh, while in the prison of Siyáh Chál in Tehrán, claimed to have received his revelation. Although the term Qá'im was understood by the Bábís to refer to the Báb and not to Bahá'u'lláh, Imám Şádiq says that the Qá'im will appear in the year 69. It seems, therefore, that the term Qá'im in this Tradition has been used by the Shaykhís who became Bábís as a general term referring to the "one who will rise", which could be a reference to Bahá'u'lláh as well as to the Báb.

The Báb, in a letter to Muḥammad Sháh Qájár, mentions the words "after Hín" (*ba'da hín*) as a reference to the person who will arise in the year 1269/1852, i.e., the Second Christ (later understood by many Bábís to be Bahá'u'lláh). In his letter the Báb says, "Praise be unto Him Who at this very moment perceiveth in this remote prison the goal of My desire. He is the One Who beareth witness unto Me at all times and beholdeth Me ere the inception of 'after Hín'."<sup>46</sup>

Cryptic language in the introductory pages of Sayyid Kázim's major book, Sharḥ al-Qaşıda,<sup>47</sup> was understood later by the Bábís as a reference to the name of Bahá'u'lláh.

It is important to remember that those Shaykhís who believed that the Báb was the Qá'im were still expecting the advent of the Second Christ or the Return of Ḥusayn in the year 69 (1269) as Shaykhí works had predicted. A good example of such an expectation is found in a short treatise

written by Mullá Muḥammad ‘Alí Baraghání,<sup>48</sup> the brother of the famous Mullá Muḥammad Taqí, known as Shahíd-i-Thálith, who issued the takfír against Shaykh Aḥmad. This expectation was based primarily on the Shaykhí prophecies which the Báb reaffirmed in his letter to Muḥammad Sháh as well as on numerous other occasions in his writings, particularly in his major work the *Persian Bayán*.<sup>49</sup> In these instances, the Báb refers to the year 9 after the commencement of his ministry, that is, 1269/1852, as the year in which the Second Christ would appear.<sup>50</sup> The year 9 in the Báb’s writings corresponds with the “*ba’da ḥín*” in Shaykh Aḥmad’s works; both refer to 1269/1852, the year in which Bahá’u’lláh received his first revelation in the prison of the Siyáh Chál.

The Shaykhí doctrines, particularly those concerning the concept of finality and the Day of Judgment, along with Shaykh Aḥmad’s and Sayyid Kázim’s predictions regarding the Qá’im, created among adherents of the school a predisposition for the recognition of the Báb. But these were not the only factors that led some of the Shaykhís to believe in the Báb. Those Shaykhís who became Bábís were not only intellectually ready to accept him, but they saw in the Báb and in his writings the continuation of the revolutionary spirit which had been initiated in the Shaykhí school. And they could also put it into practice, for the Bábí movement not only released them from obedience to the religious authorities and their dogma, it urged them to express

fearlessly the principles of the new movement.

While the Shaykhí school strongly opposed the views and practices of the Shí'í *'ulamá*, it was still sympathetic and loyal to the popular beliefs of the Shí'a. The Bábí movement, however, was more aggressive and far-reaching in its social impact although less Shí'í-oriented than the Shaykhí school. As time went on, the Bábí movement developed into an independent religion with its own books and principles.

Although the hopes of the Shaykhís for a restoration and revitalization of Shí'a were not completely fulfilled, the doctrines of the Shaykhí school paved the way and prepared some of its adherents to find the fulfillment of their hopes in the Bábí movement—a movement which was to be more comprehensive, more reformist, and more future-oriented than that of the Shaykhís.

## Notes

- 1 For the names of some of the Shaykhí scholars who became Bábís see Mehdí Bámdád, *Tárikh-i-Rijál-i-Irán*, vol. 2, pp. 471–472.
- 2 Nabil Zarandí, one of the earliest historians of the Bábí movement, devoted the first two chapters of his history to the biographies of Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í and Sayyid Kázim Raṣhtí, showing how through their teachings Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kázim prepared their students for the acceptance of the Báb. Nabil opens his first chapter thus: “At a time when the shining reality of the Faith of Muḥammad had been obscured by the ignorance, the fanaticism, and perversity of the contending sects into which it had fallen, there appeared above the horizon of the East that luminous Star of Divine guidance, Shaykh Aḥmad-i-Aḥsá'í. ... Aglow with zeal and conscious of the sublimity of his calling, he vehemently appealed not only to shí'ah Islám but to all the followers of Muḥammad throughout the East, to awaken from the slumber of negligence and to prepare the way for Him who must needs be made manifest in the fulness of time, whose light alone could dissipate the mists of prejudice and ignorance which had enveloped that Faith.” Shoghi Effendi, *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabil's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá'í Revelation*, pp. 1–2. For the Báb and the Bábís, Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kázim resembled John the Baptist, who prophesied the coming of Jesus.
- 3 Bausani writes, ‘Before his [Sayyid Kázim's] death (1259/1843) he had sent disciples to all parts of Persia in search of the awaited *Mahdí*, the *Ṣāḥib al-Zamán*, who, according to his prophecies, would not be long before manifesting himself.’ (*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. “Báb”).
- 4 The writings of Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kázim on the Qá'im are too numerous to list in full. For a list of the main passages, sections, and chapters dealing with this subject and related issues see Appendix A.
- 5 The *abjad* system is a title for an arithmetical arrangement in which each letter of the alphabet has a numerical value from one to one thousand. For a list of the letters with their equivalent numerical values see Appendix B.
- 6 Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, *Jawámi' al-Kilam*, vol. 1, part 2, p. 103. Sayyid Kázim Raṣhtí elaborates the idea in his *Sharḥ al-Khuṭba al-Ṭutunjíya*, p. 180.
- 7 Sayyid Kázim Raṣhtí, *Uṣúl-i-'Aqá'id*, p. 157.
- 8 *ibid.*, p. 157.
- 9 *ibid.*
- 10 Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, *Jawámi' al-Kilam*, vol. 1, part 2, p. 153.

- 11 Sayyid Kázim Rashtí, *Uşúl-i-'Aqá'id*, p. 158.
- 12 This is based on the Traditions on the authority of the Shí'í Imáms. Muḥammad Báqir Majlisí quotes several of them in his *Biḥār al-Anwár*, vol. 13, part 51, pp. 44–64.
- 13 See chapter 5, n. 32.
- 14 The *Qur'án* reads, “And that you may give warning of the day of gathering together wherein is no doubt ....” (42:7)
- 15 For the conception of the Mahdí see “The Expected Deliverer” in John Alden Williams, ed., *Themes of Islamic Civilization*, pp. 191–251. The excerpts of the primary sources in translation are given in those pages.
- 16 According to Shí'í sources, the Twelfth Imám, Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. 'Alí al-'Askarí, went into occultation in 260/872. For sixty-nine years, until 329/939, a period referred to as the Lesser Occultation, he communicated with his believers through the Four Gates. In 329/939, with the death of the Fourth Gate, the period known as the Greater Occultation began. During this period, which will last as long as God wills, the Imám has no temporal communication with his followers. One day, however, God will grant him permission to manifest himself again.
- 17 Majlisí, *Biḥār al-Anwár*, vol. 13, part 51, p. 30.
- 18 *ibid.*, p. 36.
- 19 *ibid.*, p. 43.
- 20 *ibid.*, p. 30.
- 21 Williams, *Themes of Islamic Civilization*, p. 207.
- 22 Majlisí, *Biḥār al-Anwar*, vol. 13, part 51, pp. 44–64.
- 23 Shoghi Effendi, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 27–28.
- 24 Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, *Ḥayát al-Nafs*, trans. Sayyid Kázim Rashtí, p. 90.
- 25 Muḥammad b. 'Abd Alláh b. Ḥasan b. 'Alí b. Abí Ṭálib, known as Nafs al-Zakíya, originally from Medina, was one of the companions of Imám Şádiq. He claimed to be an Imám and was killed in 145/762.
- 26 The *Rukn* is the corner on the cubic-shaped Ka'ba in which the Black Stone is located. The *Maqám* is a separate structure, *Maqám Ibráhím*, to the north of the Ka'ba.
- 27 The Sacred Mosque (*Masjid al-Ḥarám*) is in Mecca and contains the Ka'ba.
- 28 Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, *Ḥayát al-Nafs*, p. 91.
- 29 The Sufyání, according to the Shí'í sources, is an ugly man from the descendants of Yazid b. Mu'áwiya who will arise to fight with the Mahdí. See *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, first ed., by D. B. Macdonald, s.v. “al-Mahdí”.
- 30 Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, *Ḥayát al-Nafs*, p. 92.

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- 31 *ibid.*
- 32 ‘Abd al-Ḥamíd Ishráq Khávarí, *Rahíq-i-Makhtúm*, vol. 1, pp. 679–680.
- 33 Sayyid Kázim Rashtí, *Sharḥ al-Qaṣída*, p. 298.
- 34 Sayyid Kázim Rashtí, *Collection of Treatises*, p. 272 (see chapter 4, n. 20).
- 35 Sayyid Kázim Rashtí, *Sharḥ al-Qaṣída*, p. 2.
- 36 Mírzá Asad Alláh Faḍíl Mázandarání, *Zuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 402.
- 37 *ibid.*, p. 509.
- 38 Shoghi Effendi, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 14.
- 39 *ibid.*, pp. 25, 38.
- 40 Sayyid Kázim Rashtí, *Uṣúl-i-‘Aqá’id*, p. 207.
- 41 Shimr b. Dhi al-Jawshan was the head of Yazíd’s army. which fought with Ḥusayn b. ‘Alí. Shimr carried the head of Ḥusayn to Yazíd in Damascus. He was killed fighting the army of Mukhtár b. Abú ‘Ubaydah Thaqafí. Yazíd b. Mu‘áwíya b. Abí Sufyán was the second Caliph of the Umayyad Dynasty, who sent his army to fight with Ḥusayn b. ‘Alí. He died in 64/683 at the age of 38.
- 42 Sayyid Kázim Rashtí, *Uṣúl-i-‘Aqá’id*, p. 208.
- 43 Ibráhímí, *Fihrist*, pp. 120–122.
- 44 *ibid.*, p. 122.
- 45 Majlisí, *Biḥár al-Anwár*, vol. 13, part 51, p. 62.
- 46 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 19.
- 47 Sayyid Kázim Rashtí, *Sharḥ al-Qaṣída*, p. 2.
- 48 Mírzá Asad Alláh Faḍíl Mázandarání, *Zuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, pp. 309–310.
- 49 The Báb’s prophesies of Bahá’u’lláh are very often made under the title “Him Whom God Shall Manifest”. See “Note V. Texts from the Persian Beyan Illustrating the Báb’s view of His Relation to ‘Him Whom God Shall Manifest’” in Browne, *Traveller’s Narrative*, pp. 347–349.
- 50 The Báb writes, “*Today the Bayán is in the stage of seed: at the beginning of the manifestation of Him Whom God Shall make manifest its ultimate perfection will become apparent.*” “*Ere nine will have elapsed from the inception of this Cause the realities of the created things will not be made manifest. All that thou hest as yet seen is but the stage from the moist-germ until We clothed it with flesh. Be patient until thou beholdest a new creation. Say: Blessed, therefore, be God, the Most Excellent of makers!*” Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 98).



## VII

### The relationship of Shaykhí doctrines to the religious thought of the Báb

Shaykh Aḥmad won a wide following among various groups in Persian society, a popularity which can be attributed to several factors. Shaykh Aḥmad traveled widely and enjoyed the respect of the Sháh and some members of the royal family. He spoke repeatedly of his spiritual communion, in his dreams, with the Shí'í imams; this spiritual communion, traditionally a sign of holiness and inspired knowledge in the Shí'í society, added to his charismatic character and, consequently, brought him respect and popularity, particularly among the masses. Shaykh Aḥmad's knowledge in all branches of Islamic sciences, his indisputable piety, and his love and extraordinary respect for the Shí'í imams brought him great popularity among the religious Persians. Unlike the fundamentalist religious writers, his discussions of religious matters had a rationalistic flavor, which attracted religious people as well as intellectuals seeking such an approach toward religious problems, Shaykh Aḥmad's opposition to the dominant religious and philosophical authorities provided an opportunity for those who did not have learning and gave them the encouragement to express their opposition. They found Shaykh Aḥmad an outspoken, learned leader who was capable of combatting dogmas and authority of those leading figures.

While many Persians were attracted to Shaykh Aḥmad, several leading authorities rose against him,<sup>1</sup> and, naturally, most Persians remained indifferent. The causes of religious leaders' opposition to Shaykh Aḥmad were diverse but not difficult to surmise. Many of his opponents did not thoroughly understand his ideology; thus, their opposition was based on misinterpretation of Shaykh Aḥmad's teachings. Those who opposed him did not do so merely because of his doctrine, but because of the popularity and power he had won among the masses and the ruling class, which aroused the jealousy of the *'ulamá*. Opposition also derived from the *'ulamá's* general attitude toward anyone who denied the traditional dogmas. It was obvious to them that some of Shaykh Aḥmad's teachings diverged from those of the Shí'a, and this was sufficient reason for the *'ulamá* to charge him with introducing innovations into religion.

The opposition of the *'ulamá* found expression in a number of polemical works written to refute Shaykh Aḥmad and his ideology.<sup>2</sup> These works are also important sources for the intellectual history of nineteenth century Iran. A mirror of the psychological and religious reaction of the *'ulamá* toward Shaykh Aḥmad, they also reveal how the *'ulamá* attempted to protect the Sharí'a from innovations.

The most famous opponents of Shaykh Aḥmad during his lifetime were the eminent Uṣúli *'ulamá* of *'Atabát* and Iran, including Mullá Muḥammad Ja'far Astarábádí,<sup>3</sup> Mullá Áqá Darbandí, Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn Najafí,<sup>4</sup> and Sayyid Ibráhím

Qazvíní. A leading figure in the intellectual opposition to Shaykh Aḥmad, and to the Shaykhís in general, was ‘Abd al-Ṣamad b. ‘Abd Alláh al-Ḥusaynî al-Mázandarání,<sup>5</sup> who was born in 1255/1839 in Kermánsháh. His mother was the daughter of Sayyid Aḥmad b. Muḥammad ‘Alí Kermánsháhí, a well-known Uṣúlí scholar.<sup>6</sup> A typical opponent of the Shaykhís, Ḥusaynî is important because he not only criticized the views of Shaykh Aḥmad, but also those of Sayyid Kázim Rashtí and Hájj Muḥammad Karím Khán Kermání.

To protect the Sharí‘a, he wrote three polemical works refuting Shaykhí ideology. The first was *al-Maráṣid ‘Alá Sharḥ al-Fawá‘id*, which was written to refute the *Sharḥ al-Fawá‘id* of Shaykh Aḥmad. The second was the *Tanbíh al-Anám*, written in 1293/1876 to refute Hájj Muḥammad Karím Khán’s best known work, the *Irshád al-‘Awám*.<sup>7</sup> In the *Tanbíh*, Ḥusaynî levels one hundred charges against Hájj Muḥammad Karím Khán’s views as expressed in his *Irshád*.<sup>8</sup> The third work of Ḥusaynî which deserves attention is the *Tiryáq-i-Fárúq*, written in 1301/1883. The *Tiryáq* is a convenient synopsis of the most important charges that Shí‘í scholars have leveled against the Shaykhís. Unlike the other two polemical books by Ḥusaynî, which were written to criticize specific Shaykhí works, the *Tiryáq* attacks the entire Shaykhí ideology, and, since it was written after them, it is more comprehensive.

In his book, Ḥusaynî criticizes the most important works of Shaykh Aḥmad. Sayyid Kázim, and Hájj Muḥammad Karím

Khán. His main sources are the *Sharḥ al-Ziyára* and the *Sharḥ al-Fawá'id* of Shaykh Aḥmad, *Sharḥ al-Khuṭba al-Ṭutunjíya* of Sayyid Kázim, and the *Irshád al-'Awám* of Ḥájj Muḥammad Karím Khán.

To demonstrate the innovations of the Shaykhís, Ḥusayní frequently refers to the works of several leading Shí'í authorities such as Mufíd, Ṣadúq, 'Alláma-i-Ḥillí, and Majlisí. Ḥusayní contends that the original Shí'í ideology is expressed in the works of these scholars, and that the Shaykhí doctrines which contradict this ideology are innovations.

In the *Tiryáq*, Ḥusayní enumerates forty-three ideological differences between the Shaykhís and the Shí'a. The differences can be summarized under three main headings: the *imáms*, ontology, and eschatology.

Regarding the *imáms*, Ḥusayní states that the Shaykhís differ from the Shí'a by maintaining that:

1. The *imáms* are the Four Causes:\* the notional cause (*'illat-i-fá'ilí*), the material cause (*'illat-i-máddí*), the formal cause (*'illat-i-ṣúrí*), and the final cause (*'illat-i-ghá'í*)<sup>9</sup>
2. The *imáms'* knowledge is inspired (*ḥuḍúrí*)<sup>†</sup> knowledge, derived from the presence of God<sup>10</sup>
3. The *imáms* are lords, and the people are their slaves<sup>11</sup>
4. The *imáms'* physical bodies do not crumble to dust<sup>12</sup>

Ḥusayní's conclusions with regard to the Shaykhís' view of the *imáms* is that the Shaykhís have exaggerated the

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\* Aristotle claimed that there are four causes (or explanations) needed to explain change in the world: material, formal, efficient (notional) and final.

† Inspired since the knowledge is obtained "in the presence" (*ḥuḍúrí*) of God.

position of the *imáms*, and, therefore, they are infidels just like the Mufawwiḍa and the Ghálíya.<sup>13</sup>

Regarding ontology, Ḥusaynī states that the Shaykhís differ from the Shí'a by maintaining that:

1. God's knowledge is essential and it is identical with His essence<sup>14</sup>
2. Existence is created, limitless, and new<sup>15</sup>
3. Existence is eternal in time, but created in its substance<sup>16</sup> and
4. Angels are not temporal, but they are spiritual beings<sup>17</sup>

Regarding eschatology, Ḥusaynī states that the Shaykhís differ from the Shí'a by maintaining that:

1. Subtle bodies, not physical bodies, will be resurrected<sup>18</sup>
2. Paradise is the love of the *imáms*<sup>19</sup>
3. Paradise and hell do not have identity by themselves but are the result of man's own conduct<sup>20</sup>
4. The Ascension of the Prophet was not with his physical body, but rather with his spirit. By his Ascension, the Prophet reached the highest level of his knowledge but never reached God<sup>21</sup>
5. The rank of the Qá'im is the fifth, after Muḥammad, 'Alí, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn, and not the twelfth<sup>22</sup>
6. The Twelfth Imám will return in his subtle, not his physical body<sup>23</sup>
7. The six days of creation stand for (1) intellect, (2) soul, (3) nature, (4) matter, (5) subtle, and (6)

body;<sup>24</sup> the concept that the world was created in six days is not literally correct

Ḥusaynī accuses the Shaykhís of misinterpreting several verses of the *Qur'án*. He mentions cases such as the Shaykhí belief that Mount Sinai is a symbol for the heart of a believer,<sup>25</sup> and that the “manifestation of the light upon the Mountain”<sup>26</sup> stands for the manifestation of the light of Moses' essence upon his heart. The Shaykhís, Ḥusaynī states, believe that the “Barrier of *Dhulqarnayn*”<sup>27</sup> stands for “dissimulation” (*taqíya*),<sup>28</sup> and that Gog and Magog in the *Qur'án*<sup>29</sup> have an allegorical meaning and refer to the enemies of Shí'a.<sup>30</sup> In another case. Ḥusaynī states that by “Children of Israel” (*baní Isrá'íl*),<sup>31</sup> the Shaykhís mean the Prophet and his children, because, according to the Shaykhís *Isrá'íl* literally means the Slave of God (*'Abd Alláh*) and 'Abd Alláh was the name of the Prophet's father.<sup>32</sup>

At the end of his book Ḥusaynī accuses Shaykh Aḥmad of having claimed to receive Revelation (*wahy*) from God and also of knowing the occult sciences.<sup>33</sup>

The opposition of Shí'í *'ulamá* to the Shaykhís did not, however, remain on an intellectual level. In several cities serious clashes occurred between the Shí'a and the Shaykhís during which members of both parties were killed and property was destroyed. One such clash occurred when Ḥájj Mírzá Aḥmad Khoeí† of Tabríz,<sup>34</sup> a leading *mujtahid* of Ádharbáyján, issued a takfír against the Shaykhís of that city. A massive uprising against the Shaykhís followed, in

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\* Dhu'l-Qarnayn: A prophet in *Qur'án* 18:83–101—“the one with two horns” or “He of the Two Ages”.

† Khú'í.

which many were killed.<sup>35</sup>

In another clash, in 1314/1896, the Uṣúlís of Hamadán attacked and burned Shaykhí houses and killed Mírzá Muḥammad Báqir Hamadání, the leader of the Shaykhís of Hamadán, as well as a certain Mírzá Muḥammad, a distinguished Shaykhí of that city.<sup>36</sup>

The serious intellectual opposition of the Uṣúlí *'ulamá* and their attacks against the Shaykhís prevented the Shaykhís from gaining a following or even considerable recognition in Persian society.

As time went on, most of the Shaykhís lost their group identity and became reassimilated into Shí'a. But those Shaykhís who remained loyal to the leadership of the Shaykhís of Kermán continued to function as a group.

While Shaykh Aḥmad's ideology survived only to a limited extent among his own followers, it had its greatest impact upon the religious life of the Persians through the Bábí movement. However, the Bábí ideology cannot, by any means, be considered an extension of the Shaykhí school, because of several radical differences between the two. Shaykh Aḥmad never claimed to be a prophet, as the Báb did;<sup>37</sup> Shaykh Aḥmad never claimed to have received Revelation or a revealed book from God, as the Báb did;<sup>38</sup> Shaykh Aḥmad never claimed to have brought a *Qur'án*, as the Báb did.<sup>39</sup>

Nevertheless, Shaykhí thought had a great impact upon Bábí ideology: there is no doubt that Bábí doctrines have

closer ties to Shaykhí thought than to any other branch of Islamic belief.<sup>40</sup>

It is impossible at this stage to fully discuss the depth and scope of Shaykhí influence upon Bábí doctrines, partly because most of the Báb's main works are still in manuscript form and partly because social and religious circumstances have hindered the study of them.

On the basis of better-known, published Bábí sources, however, it is possible to examine some of the basic areas in which Shaykhí thought had an impact upon Bábí ideology.

Of all the Islamic sects, the Shí'a are best known for their allegorical interpretation of the *Qur'án*. This feature of Shí'í thought developed even further in the Shaykhí approach toward the *Qur'án*, which Shaykh Aḥmad interpreted allegorically rather than literally, in order to reconcile revelation with reason. This allegorical approach toward the *Qur'án* reached its full development in the writings of the Báb.

Another major area was the Shaykhí attitude toward the *imáms*. As discussed earlier, Shaykh Aḥmad, in all of his works, emphasized the vital role of the *imáms* in the religious life of the believers and, in fact, often mentioned his personal contact with them. In contrast with the general view of the Shí'a, who believed that during the occultation period,<sup>41</sup> the *'ulamá* were to be the intermediaries between the believers and the *imán*, which made them the center of attention in Shí'í society, Shaykh Aḥmad

shifted the attention of his followers to the *imáms*. Shaykh Aḥmad's view was accepted by the Báb and resulted in the complete elimination of the clergy in the Bábí religious system.

The third main area in which Shaykh Aḥmad's ideas had an impact in Bábí doctrines was his attitude toward the Ṣúfís, theologians, and philosophers whose views contradict the *imáms'* views thereby misleading people. The Báb, in his writings, carried these views even further by blaming the learned for preventing people from recognizing the truth. The Báb expresses his view in regard to the Christian learned in the following passage:

It is recorded in a tradition that of the entire concourse of the Christians no more than seventy people embraced the Faith of the Apostle of God. The blame falleth upon their doctors, for if these had believed, they would have been followed by the mass of their countrymen. Behold, then, that which hath come to pass! The learned men of Christendom are held to be learned by virtue of their safeguarding the teaching of Christ, and yet consider how they themselves have been the cause of men's failure to accept the Faith and attain unto salvation! Is it still thy wish to follow in their footsteps? The followers of Jesus submitted to their clerics to be saved on the Day of Resurrection, and as a result of this obedience they eventually entered into the fire, and on the Day when the Apostle of God appeared they shut themselves out from the recognition of His exalted Person. Dost thou desire to follow such divines?

Nay, by God, be thou neither a divine without discernment nor a follower without discernment, for both of these shall perish on the Day of Resurrection. Rather it behooveth thee to be a discerning divine, or to walk with insight in the way of God by obeying a true leader of religion.

In every nation thou beholdest unnumbered spiritual leaders who are bereft of true discern-

ment, and among every people thou dost encounter myriads of adherents who are devoid of the same characteristic. Ponder for a while in thy heart, have pity on thyself and turn not aside thine attention from proofs and evidences. However, seek not proofs and evidences after thine idle fancy; but rather base thy proofs upon what God hath appointed. Moreover, know thou that neither being a man of learning nor being a follower is in itself a source of glory. If thou art a man of learning, thy knowledge becometh an honour, and if thou art a follower, thine adherence unto leadership becometh an honour, only when these conform to the good-pleasure of God. And beware lest thou regard as an idle fancy the good-pleasure of God; it is the same as the good-pleasure of His Messenger. Consider the followers of Jesus. They were eagerly seeking the good-pleasure of God, yet none of them attained the good-pleasure of His Apostle which is identical with God's good-pleasure, except such as embraced His Faith.<sup>42</sup>

The Báb states that man's highest station is attained through faith in God and by acceptance of what has been revealed by Him, and not through the speculations of the learned. Then he says, "True knowledge, therefore, is the knowledge of God, and this is none other than the recognition of His Manifestation in each Dispensation."<sup>43</sup> This true knowledge, the Báb asserts, is the most noble of created things.<sup>44</sup>

Like Shaykh Aḥmad, the Báb maintains that truth is contained within the writings of the prophet of God, and that man should seek the truth in those writings. He writes,

Ponder a while and observe that everything in Islam hath its ultimate and eventual beginning in the Book of God. Consider likewise the Day of the Revelation of Him Whom God shall make manifest,<sup>45</sup> He in Whose grasp lieth the source of proofs, and let not erroneous considerations shut thee out from Him, for He is immeasurably exalted

above them, inasmuch as every proof proceedeth from the Book of God which is itself the supreme testimony, as all men are powerless to produce its like. Should myriads of men of learning, versed in logic, in the science of grammar, in law, in jurisprudence and the like, turn away from the Book of God, they would still be pronounced unbelievers. Thus the fruit is within the supreme testimony itself, not in the things derived therefrom.<sup>46</sup>

While Shaykh Aḥmad never went so far as to forbid the study of logic, philosophy, and jurisprudence,<sup>47</sup> the Báb did so, maintaining that they were unprofitable pursuits and an obstacle to the recognition of the truth.

The fourth area in which Shaykh Aḥmad's ideas affected Bábí thought concerned the understanding of the concept of finality of the Prophet. Shaykh Aḥmad maintained that the appearance of the prophets follows a cyclical pattern. The Báb reaffirms this concept in the following words:

It is clear and evident that the object of all preceding Dispensations hath been to pave the way for the advent of Muḥammad, the Apostle of God. These, including the Muḥammadan Dispensation, have had, in their turn, as their objective the Revelation proclaimed by the Qá'im. The purpose underlying this Revelation, as well as those that preceded it, has in like manner, been to announce the advent of the Faith of Him Whom God will make manifest. And this Faith—the Faith of Him Whom God will make manifest—in its turn, together with all the Revelations gone before it, have as their object the Manifestation destined to succeed it. And the latter, no less than all the Revelations preceding it, prepare the way for the Revelation which is yet to follow. The process of the rise and setting of the Sun of Truth will thus indefinitely continue—a process that hath no beginning and will have no end.<sup>48</sup>

Like Shaykh Aḥmad, the Báb compares the successive appearance of the prophets and their increasing perfection

to a body in successive stages of growth.<sup>49</sup> As an individual develops toward perfection during the various stages of his growth in the womb, so mankind as a whole improves in successive cycles in the world.<sup>50</sup> The Báb writes:

For had the embryo not existed, how could he have reached his present state? Likewise had the religion taught by Adam not existed, this Faith would not have attained its present stage. Thus consider thou the development of God's Faith until the and that hath no end.<sup>51</sup>

And also:

Likewise continue thou to ascend through one revelation after another, knowing that thy progress in the knowledge of God shall never come to an end, even as it can have no beginning.<sup>52</sup>

He also states that

The process of His creation hath had no beginning and can have no end, otherwise it would necessitate the cessation of His celestial grace. God hath raised up Prophets and revealed Books as numerous as the creatures of the world, and will continue to do so to everlasting.<sup>53</sup>

Shaykh Aḥmad's doctrines on Islamic ontology and eschatology had a strong impact on the Báb's approach toward these questions.<sup>54</sup> The basic issues of these two fields, discussed in the Shaykhí and Bábí works, appear to constitute the closest intellectual tie between the two systems.

In his discussion of the basic ontological questions, of the nature and attributes of God, the Báb asserts that God will "dwell within the mystery of His Own divine Essence"<sup>55</sup> and is "exalted above the reach and ken of all created beings."<sup>56</sup> As Shaykh Aḥmad substituted the recognition of the *imám* for the recognition of God, the Báb

also states, "Know thou that in this world of being the knowledge of God can never be attained save through the knowledge of Him Who is the Dayspring of divine Reality [i.e., the prophet]."57 Thus, although for Shaykh Aḥmad and the Báb man cannot know God, take refuge in Him, or meet with Him, he can achieve the equivalent with His prophet.

Similar to Shaykh Aḥmad's doctrine, the Báb maintains that God created all things by His will and the will by itself.<sup>58</sup> The relationship between the will and the universe is compared to the relationship between fire and heat.<sup>59</sup>

Although in Shaykh Aḥmad's writings paradise and hell are interpreted literally, in accordance with the traditional belief, as well as allegorically, in the writings of the Báb they only receive an allegorical interpretation.

The Báb writes:

There is no paradise, in the estimation of the believers in the Divine Unity, more exalted than to obey God's commandments, and there is no fire in the eyes of those who have known God and His signs, fiercer than to transgress His laws and to oppress another soul, even to the extent of a mustard seed.<sup>60</sup>

Elsewhere he writes:

There is no paradise more wondrous for any soul than to be exposed to God's Manifestation in His Day, to hear His verses and believe in them, to attain His presence, which is naught but the presence of God, to sail upon the sea of the heavenly kingdom of His good-pleasure, and to partake of the choice fruits of the paradise of His divine Oneness.<sup>61</sup>

In the Báb's writings paradise and hell are given

different allegorical interpretations. In one place the Báb maintains that paradise refers to those who believe in the *Bayán*,<sup>62</sup> i.e., the Báb's Book; in another place, paradise is the *Bayán* itself;<sup>63</sup> whoever accepts it is in paradise, and whoever denies it is in hell. In several cases the Báb refers to paradise as being wherever the believers have been or are.<sup>64</sup> He states that no hell is worse than unbelief or the denial of a prophet.<sup>65</sup> Whoever denies the Báb and refuses to take refuge in him shall not escape hell, and whoever has rejected the *Bayán* is already in hell.<sup>66</sup>

Shaykh Aḥmad regarded Resurrection as the day of the advent of the Qá'im. Although he also interpreted Resurrection in accordance with the traditional belief of the Shí'a, the Báb only interprets it as the day of the appearance of a new prophet. This interpretation is radically different from what the Shí'a understand in a purely material sense. The Báb's most comprehensive explanation of his views on the Resurrection occurs in his main book, the *Persian Bayán*.

It reads,

The substance of this chapter is this, that what is intended by the Day of Resurrection is the Day of the appearance of the Tree of divine Reality,<sup>67</sup> but it is not seen that any one of the followers of Shí'ih Islám hath understood the meaning of the Day of Resurrection; rather have they fancifully imagined a thing which with God hath no reality. In the estimation of God and according to the usage of such as are initiated into divine mysteries, what is meant by the Day of Resurrection is this, that from the time of the appearance of Him Who is the Tree of divine Reality, at whatever period and under whatever name, until the moment of His disappearance, is the Day of Resurrection.

For example, from the inception of the mission of Jesus—may peace be upon Him—till the day of His ascension was the Resurrection of Moses. For during that period the Revelation of God shone forth through the appearance of that divine Reality, Who rewarded by His Word everyone who believed in Moses, and punished by His Word everyone who did not believe; inasmuch as God's Testimony for that Day was that which He had solemnly affirmed in the Gospel. And from the inception of the Revelation of the Apostle of God—may the blessings of God be upon Him—till the day of His ascension was the Resurrection of Jesus—peace be upon Him—wherein the Tree of divine Reality appeared in the person of Muḥammad, rewarding by His Word everyone who was not a believer in Jesus, and punishing by His Word everyone who was not a believer in Him. And from the moment when the Tree of the Bayán appeared until it disappeareth is the Resurrection of the Apostle of God, as is divinely foretold in the Qur'án; the beginning of which was when two hours and eleven minutes had passed on the eve of the fifth of Jamádívu'l-Avval, AH 1260 (22 May 1844), which is the year 1270 of the Declaration of the Mission of Muḥammad. This was the beginning of the Day of Resurrection of the Qur'án, and until the disappearance of the Tree of divine Reality is the Resurrection of the Qur'án.<sup>68</sup>

Later in the same chapter, he continues,

This notwithstanding that in the Qur'án the advent of the Day of Resurrection hath been promised unto all by God. For on that Day all men will be brought before God and will attain His Presence; which meaneth appearance before Him Who is the Tree of divine Reality and attainment unto His presence; inasmuch as it is not possible to appear before the Most Holy Essence of God, nor is it conceivable to seek reunion with Him. That which is feasible in the matter of appearance before Him and of meeting Him is attainment unto the Primal Tree.<sup>69</sup>

And elsewhere in the same book he writes.

The Day of Resurrection is a day on which the sun riseth and setteth like unto any other day. How oft hath the Day of Resurrection dawned, and the people of the land where it occurred did not learn of the event. Had they heard, they would not have believed, and thus they were not told!<sup>70</sup>

The impact of Shaykhí teachings manifested itself not only in Bábí ideology but also in the conduct of those Shaykhís who became followers of the Báb. In the Báb, these Shaykhís found the person Shaykh Aḥmad had written about and with whom he had had a close relationship in his dreams. These Shaykhís were now able to express to a human being who actually lived among them the love and gratitude that their teacher had expressed to the Hidden Imám. No wonder, then, that thousands of Bábís, of whom the most distinguished had come from a Shaykhí background, willingly endured the most horrible tortures and persecutions and sacrificed their lives for the Báb.

## Notes

- 1 Mudarris, in his *Rayḥānat al-Adab*, vol. 1, p. 81), states that when Shaykh Aḥmad's works and approach (*maslak*) became widely known, he became subject to the curses and censure of the people. They changed their attitude toward him and even his son, Shaykh Muḥammad, openly rose against him. Then, Mudarris gives the names of the most distinguished 'ulamá who opposed Shaykh Aḥmad, namely, Muḥammad Ḥasan (the author of *Jawáhir al-Kalám*, Áqá Sayyid Ibráhím (Qazvíní) (the author of *Ḍawábiṭ*), Sharíf al-'Ulamá, and Muḥammad Ḥusayn (the author of *Fuṣúl*). Mudarris continues that the majority of the theologians (*fuqahá'*) of the period did not decline to curse him; even the divine philosopher, Hájj Mullá 'Alí Núri, in spite of his respect for the Shaykh, denied his scholarship (*faḍl*), and Khánsári, also, cursed him, in his *Rawḍát al-Jannát*, in which he wrote the biography of Shaykh Rajab Bursí.

Husayní, in his *Tiryáq-i-Fárúq*, p. 26), says that because Shaykh Aḥmad regarded the imáms as the Four Causes (see below) a group of 'ulamá rejected him. Then, Ḥusayní gives several names as examples, namely, Sayyid Mahdí b. Ṭabáṭabá'í, Mullá (Muḥammad) Taqí (known as Shahíd-i-Thálith), Mullá (Muḥammad) Ja'far Astarábádí, and Mullá Áqá Darbandí. As demonstrated previously, the opposition to Shaykh Aḥmad dates back to 1239 or 40/1824 when Hájj Muḥammad Taqí Baraghání (Shahíd-i-Thálith) issued a *takfír* against him. Then, at the time of Sayyid Kázim Raṣhtí, the *takfír* of Sayyid Mahdí Ṭabáṭabá'í was issued. This was followed by a series of attacks from several religious leaders whose names appear above.

- 2 The polemical works against the Shaykhís are too numerous to be fully listed here. Al-Ṭehrání, in his *al-Dharí'a ilá Ṭaşáníf al-Shí'a*, vol. 10, pp. 182, 203) describes several of them. Below, a typical polemical work, the *Tiryáq-i-Fárúq*, will be closely examined.
- 3 Mullá Muḥammad Ja'far Astarábádí was one of the participants in the interrogation of Sayyid Kázim Raṣhtí (see chapter 5). He wrote the *Ḥayát al-Arwáh*, a polemical work against the Shaykhís, in 1240/1824, apparently the earliest one (See chapter 5, n. 9).
- 4 Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥasan Najafí was the author of *Jawáhir al-Kalám*, the most comprehensive work of jurisprudence in the period.
- 5 The name is also recorded as Muḥammad Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad 'Alí al-Ḥusayní al-Shahrestání (see chapter 5, n. 553).
- 6 'Alí Davvání, *Ostád-i-Kull, Áqá Muḥammad Báqir b. Muḥammad*

*Akmal Ma'rif bi Wahíd Behbáhání*, p. 463.

- 7 *Irshád al-'Awám* is a major work of Hájj Muḥammad Karím Khán Kermání on theology written in Persian in about 1263–65/1346–48.
- 8 Áqá Bozorg al-Ṭehrání, *al-Dharí'a*, vol. 4, p. 441.
- 9 Ḥusayní has a lengthy discussion on this point which runs to 52 pages (pp. 6–58). He gives the Shaykhí doctrines on the subject and then quotes several statements from Mufid, 'Allama Híllí, Majlisí and Sayyid Murtaḏá to show that Shaykhí doctrines contradict these thinkers.
- 10 Ḥusayní, *Tiryáq-i-Fárúq*, p. 59.
- 11 *ibid.*, p. 179.
- 12 *ibid.*, p. 193.
- 13 Ḥusayní quotes Mufid who quotes Ṣadúq that, "In our belief the Qhulát and the Mufawwiḏa are infidels and are worse than the Jews, Christians, Majús, Qadaríya, Ḥarúríya, and Ḥarbíya, or any other group of innovators with misleading illusions." Then Mufid elaborates Ṣadúq's statement above in the following words, "The Ghulát are those who have related 'Alí and his descendants, the *imáms*, to God and prophethood, and have described their religious and secular virtues to an extreme. They are infidels whom the Amír al-Mu'nínín ('Alí) ordered to be killed and burned; the *imáms* also regarded them as infidels who have left Islam. The Mufawwiḏa were a branch of the Ghulát, but they believed that the *imáms* are non-eternal and created, and denied that they are eternal. In spite of this, the Mufawwiḏa regard the *imáms* as the creators and the distributors of sustenance (*rizq*). The Mufawwiḏa believe that God only created the *imáms* and He delegated (*tafwíḏ*) them to create the whole world and every thing and every action in it." (*Tiryáq-i-Fárúq*, pp. 44–45).
- 14 Ḥusayní, *Tiryáq-i-Fárúq*, p. 151.
- 15 *ibid.*, p. 154.
- 16 *ibid.*, p. 158.
- 17 *ibid.*, pp. 164–165.
- 18 *ibid.*, p. 119.
- 19 *ibid.*, p. 169.
- 20 *ibid.*, p. 170.
- 21 *ibid.*, p. 196.
- 22 *ibid.*, p. 174.
- 23 *ibid.*, p. 182.
- 24 *ibid.*, pp. 200–201.
- 25 The *Qur'án* reads, "And a tree that grows out of Mount Sinai which produces oil and a condiment for those who eat." (23:20) And also it reads, "Consider the fig and the olive, and Mount Sinai." (95:1–2)
- 26 The *Qur'án* reads, "And when Moses came at Our appointed time

- and his Lord spoke to him, he said: My Lords show me (Thyself), so that I may look upon Thee. He said: You cannot (bear to) see Me, but look at the mountain, if it remains firm in its place, then will you see Me; but when his Lord manifested His glory to the mountain He made it crumble and Moses fell down in swoon: then when he recovered, he said: Glory be to Thee, I turn to Thee, and I am the first of the believers.” (7:143)
- 27 The *Qur’án* reads, “They said: O Zulqarnain! surely Gog and Magog make mischief in the land. Shall we then pay you a tribute or condition that you should raise a barrier between us and them.” (18:94)
- 28 “Guarding oneself”. A Shí’ah doctrine. A pious fraud whereby the Shí’ah Muslim believes he is justified in either smoothing down or in denying the peculiarities of his religious belief, in order to save himself from religious persecution. A Shí’ah can, therefore, pass himself off as a Sunní to escape persecution ....” (Thomas Patrick Hughes, *Dictionary of Islam*, p. 628.
- 29 Mention of Gog and Magog is made in two places in the *Qur’án*: 21:96 and 18:94. The latter reference has to do with the discussion (Quoted in n. 27 above).
- 30 Ḥusaynī, *Tiryáq-i-Fárúq*, p. 202.
- 31 *ibid.*, p. 203.
- 32 Ḥusaynī regarded the “Ál Muḥammad” as the descendants of ‘Abd Alláh rather than of the Prophet Muḥammad.
- 33 Ḥusaynī, *Tiryáq-i-Fárúq*, p. 214.
- 34 According to Mehdí Bámdád, some people believe that the family of Mírzá Aḥmad were from Mughán and not from Khoy (*Sharḥ-i-Ḥál-i-Rijál-i-Irán*, vol. 1, p. 100).
- 35 *ibid.*, p. 100.
- 36 ‘Abbás ‘Alí Kayván, *Hájj Náma*, p. 128 (see chapter 5, n. 57).
- 37 The Báb writes, “Since thou hest faithfully obeyed the true religion of God in the past, it behooveth thee to follow His true religion hereafter, inasmuch as every religion proceedeth from God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.
- He Who hath revealed the *Qur’án* unto Muḥammad, the Apostle of God, ordaining in the Faith of Islám that which was pleasing unto Him, hath likewise revealed the Bayán, in the manner ye have been promised, unto Him. Who is your Qá’im [He Who ariseth], your Guide, your Mihdí [One Who is guided], your Lord, Him Whom ye acclaim as the manifestation of God’s most excellent titles.” (Sayyid ‘Alí Muḥammad, the Báb, *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 139.
- 38 The Báb writes, “God hath indeed sent down this Book unto Me with Truth that ye may be enabled to recognize the true names of

God, inasmuch as ye have strayed in error far from the Truth." (ibid., p. 65).

- 39 The Báb writes, "O ye concourse of the believers! Utter not words of denial against Me once the Truth is made manifest, for indeed the mandate of the Báb hath befittingly been proclaimed unto you in the Qur'án aforesaid. I swear by your Lord, this Book is verily the same Qur'án which was sent down in the past." (ibid., p. 67).
- 40 Professor Bausani suggests that, "The metaphysics of the Báb is similar in certain ways to that of the Ismá'ílís" (*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. "Báb"). Although this statement is correct, the similarities between the Shaykhís and the Bábís are even greater in respect to the Báb's approach, terminology, and his metaphysics. This matter still requires further investigation.
- 41 See Chapter 6, n. 16.
- 42 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, pp. 123–124.
- 43 ibid., p. 89.
- 44 Sayyid 'Alí Muḥammad, the Báb, *Persian Bayán*, p. 195.
- 45 Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest (*man yuzhíruhu Alláh*) is the title for the "expected one in the works of the Báb. See "Note V. "Texts From the Persian Beyán Concerning the High Estate of Him whom God Shall Manifest" in Browne, *A Traveller's Narrative* (see chapter 5, n. 74), pp. 347–549.
- 46 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 104.
- 47 *Persian Bayán*, p. 130.
- 48 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, pp. 105–106.
- 49 *Persian Bayán*, pp. 95–96, 98, 156.
- 50 ibid., pp. 235, 281.
- 51 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 89.
- 52 ibid., p. 91.
- 53 ibid., p. 125.
- 54 Professor Bausani, in his article "Báb" (*Encyclopaedia of Islam*), considers the contents of the *Bayán* under four fundamental points. In describing the second one he writes, "The spiritualistic interpretation of the eschatological terms which appear in the Qur'án and other sacred works, such as 'Paradise', 'Hell', 'Death', 'Resurrection', 'Return', 'Judgement', 'Bridge' (*Şirát*), 'Hour', etc., all of which allude not only to the end of the physical world but also to that of the prophetic cycle. From certain passages it seems that it must be understood that the true world being that of the spirit, of which the material world is nothing but an exteriorisation, God effectively destroys the world at the end of each prophetic cycle in order to re-create it by the Word of the subsequent prophet; the creative worth of the World is given great importance in the *Bayán*."

- 55 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 111.
- 56 *ibid.*, p. 111.
- 57 *ibid.*, p. 117.
- 58 *Persian Bayán*, p. 81.
- 59 *ibid.*, p. 167.
- 60 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 79.
- 61 *ibid.*, p. 78.
- 62 *Persian Bayán*, pp. 29–30.
- 63 *ibid.*, pp. 42, 50, 96.
- 64 *ibid.*, pp. 43, 46.
- 65 *ibid.*, pp. 15, 24.
- 66 *ibid.*, p. 29.
- 67 The phrase “the Tree of divine Reality” (*shajara-i-ḥaqíqat*) is used for any prophet of God.
- 68 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, pp. 106–107.
- 69 *ibid.*, p. 109. The phrase “the Primal Tree” (*shajara-i-awwalíya*) is used for any prophet of God.
- 70 *ibid.*, p. 78.



## Conclusion

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a time of general decline in the intellectual creativity of the Shí'í community in Iran, Iraq, and the Persian Gulf, Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í was determined to reform and revitalize the Shí'í society by direct inspiration from the words of the Prophet and the Shí'í imáms. This re-emphasis on the doctrine of the imamate formed the essence of his ideology. The doctrine of imamate, which distinguished the Shí'a from the Sunnís, states that the virtue and guidance of the Prophet continues through the *imáms* so that mankind will not be deprived of his divine guidance.

Of the various theological, philosophical, sociological and ritualistic aspects of the Shaykhí school, it was intended in this work to focus on the theological aspects, particularly those doctrines formulated by Shaykh Aḥmad on basic questions of Islamic ontology and eschatology, such as God, His attributes, and His will and its relationship with creation; resurrection; and return. Of course, the theological doctrines of Shaykh Aḥmad appeared within the intellectual horizons of Persian society and were influenced by its social, political and economic conditions. Further investigation is required to illuminate how and why the theological doctrines of Shaykh Aḥmad, an Arab scholar, achieved popularity and respect among some Persian groups and elites at first, only to arouse opposition and become the target of

attack by some of the eminent Shí'í *'ulamá*. Although in his ontological doctrines, Shaykh Aḥmad opposed some of his predecessors, such as Ibn al-'Arabí, Mullá Şadrá, and Mullá Muḥsin Fayḍ Káshání, he nevertheless was influenced by them and, particularly through Mullá Şadrá, by Ibn Síná. Shaykh Aḥmad's doctrines on the philosophical questions of creation, God's will, and His relationship with the universe manifest obvious similarities to those of the Ismá'ílís. Shaykh Aḥmad's understanding of the position of the *imáms* brings him close to the Ghálís and the Mufawwiḍa, while terminology and interpretation of the subtle body are reminiscent of Shiháb al-Dín Sohravardí and other Illuminists. His piety and detachment from the material affairs of daily life, his inspiration from the *imáms* in his dreams, and the love and annihilation of the will of the *imáms*, of which he speaks throughout his works, characterize him as a Şúfí, but, unlike other Şúfís, he rejects the possibility of union with God.

In spite of these similarities, to determine the exact areas of influence and the ways through which he was influenced requires further study. To what extent the socio-political conditions of the Persian Gulf, *'Atabát*, and Iran contributed to the intellectual development of the Shaykhí school, the social role of the Shaykhís in the political and intellectual changes that occurred in the second half of the nineteenth century, the social background of those who were attracted to the Shaykhí school, of those

Shaykhís who converted to the Báb and of those who rose against him, are all challenging questions for students of the nineteenth century intellectual history of Iran.

Shaykh Aḥmad's original contribution was his synthesis of the two main schools of Shí'í thought in the first half of the nineteenth century—the Akhbárís and the Uṣúlí. Neither the dogmatic speculations of the Akhbárís, nor the scholastic discussions of the Uṣúlís satisfied him; therefore, he took a position between these two groups.

The major task Shaykh Aḥmad undertook was to reconcile revelation and reason: the first represented by the Akhbárís, the second, by the Uṣúlís. In his attempt he did not give a preponderant weight to either side. He respected man's reason but never overlooked the importance of divine inspiration which man may receive through his prayers and ascetic practices. He strongly believed in the *Qur'án* and the Traditions of the *imáms*, but his belief in them did not prevent him from using his reason. In fact, he insisted that there must be an absolute harmony between revelation and reason. In his efforts to discover that harmony, however, he did not rely upon his reason whenever it could not comprehend the logic of the word of God.

Shaykh Aḥmad was not primarily concerned with establishing a new system of thought or a school different from Shí'a. But the way in which he approached the religious questions and presented them was new and original. His approach was an attempt to examine the Shí'í beliefs from a

new perspective, but its source was firmly grounded within the Shíí framework and was regarded by others as the Shaykhí school of thought within Shíí Islam.

While the ideology of Shaykh Aḥmad in its entirety was strongly rooted in the *Qur'án* and Islamic Traditions, it differed from that of other Shíí scholars. The difference derived primarily from the way in which Shaykh Aḥmad interpreted the *Qur'án* and the Islamic Traditions. It was also based on certain Traditions that were not widely accepted by the majority of Shíí thinkers.

Shaykh Aḥmad challenged the views of the Şúfí Ibn al-'Arabí, the theologian Mullá Muḥsin Fayḍ, and the philosopher Mullá Şadrá—three eminent scholars who dominated the Persian intellectual horizon in the nineteenth century. Shaykh Aḥmad's challenge was unique: unlike other writers on Shíí thought who had concentrated their attacks on only one of these groups, Shaykh Aḥmad challenged all three. Shaykh Aḥmad's primary purpose for focusing attention on the ideology of his predecessors was to draw the attention of those of his own generation who were sympathetic to them and also to prepare his followers for what he perceived to be a crucial event in the future: the appearance of the Qá'im. This, indeed, was the most important, constructive, and influential contribution that he made, the essence of his life's work.

In his efforts to prepare his followers for the appearance of the Qá'im, Shaykh Aḥmad laid the cornerstone

for a religious reform which was to appear after him in the form of the Bábí movement. Shaykh Aḥmad did not intend to produce a reform in Islamic law or the social order of Shí'í society, but to reshape the Shí'í attitude toward the advent of the Qá'im. For him the appearance of the Qá'im was the answer to all questions and, therefore, the people must be prepared for the day of his advent, which, when it occurred, would be the source of happiness, prosperity, and salvation.

Shaykh Aḥmad's intellectual contribution to the generations that followed him was much greater than that of his predecessors. In particular, he offered to the people of his own time more than he had received from his father's generation. Without Shaykh Aḥmad's intellectual contribution, the Báb could not have won the followers, popularity, and influence that he did.

## Appendices

### A: Writings of Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kázim on the Qá'im

The page numbers refer to the *Fihrist*, where a full description of each work will be found.

#### ***The works of Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í***

1. *Risála-i-Ja'faríya*, written for Mírzá Ja'far Nawwab. Question 7 (p. 222)
2. *Risála-i-'Išmat wa Raj'at*, written for Prince Muḥammad 'Alí Mírzá (p. 242)
3. *Fá'ida*, written for Shaykh Músá b. Muḥammad Šá'igh (p. 242)
4. *Risála-i-Músawíya*, written for Shaykh Músá Baḥrání (p. 244)
5. *Khuṭba*, a prayer of supplication for the Qá'im (p. 246)
6. *Khuṭba*, which contains a prayer of supplication for the Qá'im (p. 245)
7. *Risála*, written for Sayyid Ḥusayn b. 'Abd al-Qáhir. Question 2 (p. 259)
8. *Risála-i-Rašhtíya*, written for Mullá 'Alí b. Mírzá Ján Rašhtí. Questions 12 and 28 (p. 260)
9. *Risála-i-Šáliḥíya*, written for Shaykh Šáliḥ b. Ṭawq. Question 16 (p. 262)
10. *Risála-i-Qaṭífíya*, written for Shaykh Aḥmad b. Shaykh Šáliḥ Qaṭífí. Questions 39, 40 and 41 (p. 272)
11. *Risála-i-Qaṭífíya* (another work composed for the above person). Question 6 (p. 279)

#### ***The works of Sayyid Kázim Rašhtí***

His two main works, *Sharḥ al-Qašída al-lámíya* (Tabríz: lithography, 1272/1855) and *Sharḥ al-Khuṭba al-Ṭutunjíya* (Tabríz: lithography 1270/1853) are the major sources for the questions on the Qá'im. His other works on the subject are as follows:

1. *Risála*, written for Shaykh Muḥammad b. Shaykh 'Abd 'Alí

- Ál 'Abd al-Jabbár Qaṭífí (p. 314)
2. *Risála*, written for Ḥájj Makkí b. Ḥájj 'Abd Alláh Baḥrání. Question 2 (p. 315)
  3. *Risála*, written for Shaykh Muḥammad b. Shaykh Ḥusayn Baḥrání. Questions 8 and 9 (p. 342)
  4. *Risála*, written for Mírzá Muḥammad Ibráhím Tabrízí. Questions 1 and 2 (p. 348)
  5. *Risála*, written for an unknown questioner. Question 3 (page 349)
  6. *Risála*, written to answer several questions that he received from Iṣfahán. Question 3 (p. 353)
  7. *Risála*, written for an unknown questioner. Question 2 (p. 359)

## B: The abjad system

### *List of letters and their numerical values\**

ا	á	1	ى	í	10	ق	q	100
ب	b	2	ك	k	20	ر	r	200
ج	j	3	ل	l	30	ش	<u>sh</u>	300
د	d	4	م	m	40	ت	t	400
ه	h	5	ن	n	50	ث	<u>th</u>	500
و	w	6	س	s	60	خ	<u>kh</u>	600
ز	z	7	ع	‘	70	ذ	<u>dh</u>	700
ح	ḥ	8	ف	f	80	ض	ḍ	800
ط	ṭ	9	ص	ṣ	90	ظ	ẓ	900
						غ	<u>gh</u>	1000

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\* Transliterated letters have been added to this table. The author has ignored the effect of the sun letters (now marked in red) for the definite article.

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