

The Bābī-Bahā'ī transcendence of khātām al-nabiyyīn (Qur'ān 33:40) as the 'finality of prophethood'.¹

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مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِّن رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِن رَّسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ
النَّبِيِّينَ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا ﴿٤٠﴾

Muhammad is not the father of any man among you but he is the rasūl-Allāh (Messenger of God) and the khātām al-nabiyyīn, the 'seal' ("last", 'best' 'acme') of the prophets (Qur'ān 33: 40).

Lost indeed are they that cried lies to the encounter with God (liqā' Allāh) so that when the [eschatological] Hour comes to them suddenly they shall say, 'Alas for us, that we neglected it!' (Qur'ān 6: 31).

Then We gave Moses the Book, complete for him who does good, and distinguishing every thing, and as a guidance and a mercy; haply they would believe in encounter (liqā') with their Lord (rabb) (Qur'ān 6:155).

Whoso looks to encounter God (liqā' Allāh), God's term (ajal) is assuredly coming (Qur'ān 29: 5).²

This paper consists of interrelated notes upon the Bābī-Bahā'ī theological transcendence of khātamiyya or the khātām al-nabiyyīn (loosely, "seal of the prophets", Qur'ān 33:40) when understood as the 'finality of prophethood'. It also surveys select qur'ānic texts and Islamic traditions about a predicted future or

¹ This paper is a slightly modified and expanded version of a few pages of my unpublished, early 1980s / 2002, University of Newcastle upon Tyne (UK), doctoral thesis (see bib. below). The English language versions set down here (on this website) will gradually be corrected, updated and expanded. A French translation by Louis Henuzet of a version dating to early November 2017 is forthcoming in a book compiled, edited and introduced by him, entitled 'Exclusivisme ou pluralisme Un défi pour la conciliation des doctrines religieuses Traduction de travaux bahá'ís par Louis Henuzet'...

² Most of the translations of verses of the Qur'ān cited here are those of A. J. Arberry (d. Cambridge, 1969) with occasional modifications and / or added transliteration. He often translated liqā' as "encounter".

eschatological “Encounter with God” (liqā’ Allāh) understood as an elevated messianic theophany. Often understanding the khātam in Qur’ān 33:40b to mean “last”, most Muslims came to consider this verse as foundational for the post-qur’ānic doctrine of the ‘finality of prophethood’; that no nabī (prophet) or rasūl / mursal (sent messenger) would appear after Muhammad, the allegedly final nabī and rasūl Allāh (Messenger of God).

“Not the father of any man among you” (Q. 33:40a).

The following paragraphs should be prefaced with a few notes about the first half of Qur’ān 33:40, with its reference to the prophet Muhammad not being the paternal “father of any man among you”, of any contemporary male individual. The numerous Islamic Tafsīr works usually deal with the “not the father of any man among you”, by explaining its *Sitz im Leben* (“setting in life”) or circumstances of qur’ānic revelation (asbāb al-nuzūl) on historical lines. The cessation of prophethood has to do with the position of the very early, and very prominent Muslim, Zayd ibn Ḥāritha al-Kalbī whom Muhammad had adopted a few years before his call to prophethood around 610 CE.

The aforementioned one-time slave, named Zayd was adopted by Muhammad when he was around 25 years old (or a little older) and a decade or so younger than the Prophet himself. He was renamed Zayd ibn Muhammad al-Hāshimī (see Qur’an 33:37). This cherished, adopted son (ibn) was reckoned - like `Alī ibn Abi Ṭalib (the first Imam and son-in-law of Muhammad) - among the very first Muslim believers in the new prophethood of Muhammad (called around 610 CE).³ Yet, as Qur’ān at 33:40 stipulates, Zayd had no right to any position as the successor to the Arabian prophet Muhammad, the “seal of the prophets”, or to any forthcoming role as a new nabī (prophet) (for details see Powers, 2009, esp. Ch. 2; 2014)

³ Muhammad came to marry his step son’s wife Zaynab. For details about this union and its allusive treatment in Qur’an 33, the Surat al-Aḥzāb (“The Confederates”), see Powers’ important 2014 book about Zayd (and the many sources consulted by him). For Powers “Zayd played a central role in securing the theological doctrine of the finality of prophecy” (2014. p.X).

Islamic Nubuwwa (Prophethood / Prophetology) and the Nabī (Prophet).

Islamic literatures contain numerous and divergent attempts to define, clarify and expound the non-systematic, qur'ānic prophetological terminology. The term nubuwwa (prophecy, prophethood) occurs only five times in the Qur'ān (3:79; 6:89; 29:27; 45:16; 57:26). It has no detailed explanation beyond the fact that nubuwwa was bestowed upon the progeny of Abraham and the "children of Israel" (Q. 29:27; 45:16). References in the ḥadīth literatures highlight the importance of nubuwwa. Muhammad, for example, is reckoned to have stated that, "The genesis of your religion is nubuwwa (Prophethood) and raḥma (Divine mercy)" (Al-Dārimī, Sunan IX). In the Qur'ān, the early Islamic 'creeds', and later doctrinal treatises, belief in the prophets and the power of prophethood are regarded as central to Muslim faith (Wensinck, 1938). Both Sunnī and Shī'ī Muslims consider nubuwwa (prophethood) a fundamental element of the religion of Islam. In Shī'ī Islam its importance is such that it often follows tawhīd (the Divine Unity) among the five "pillars" of Islam. The closely related walāya concept has been regarded as a "sixth" pillar of twelver Shīism (see below).

In Q. 33:40 (cited above) Muhammad is referred to as both a rasūl Allāh (Messenger of God) and a prophet (nabī, pl. anbiyā') or as the "seal of the prophets" (khātam al-nabiyyīn). In the Qur'ān itself around 27 male figures are referred to as prophets; they form a stream of prophets between Adam and Muhammad... (See further Appendix 1)

Possible pre-Islamic, Abrahamic and related backgrounds to the Qur'ānic "Seal of the prophets".

The title "seal of the prophets" presupposes that before the Prophet Muhammad (d. 632 CE), there existed a succession of prophets or individual religious worthies of an important kind. Since the 19th century numerous western academics have variously sought the Abrahamic religious roots of the qur'ānic khātam al-nabiyyīn ("seal of the prophets") title within Qur'ām 33:40. Its roots have been thought to exist in, for example, the Hebrew Bible, Samaritan texts, Jewish literatures, Rabbinic writings, the New Testament, Patristic and earlier Christian writers, Manichaean documents and other related sources too numerous to mention or examine thoroughly here.

Israelite-Samaritan sacred writings.

The 'seal of the prophets / prophethood' title is also found in pre-Islamic Samaritan sacred writings. The probably 4th cent. CE., Memar Marqeh ('The Teaching of Marqeh') refers to Moses as the **מחתם נבייה** M-H-T-M N-V-Y-Y-H ("The seal of the prophets")⁴

Jesus as a Prophet and the "Seal of the Prophets.

In a 1980s article and 1989 book Carsten Colpe (see bib. below) has traced the Islamic 'seal of the prophets' (as the *signaculum*, loosely 'seal-stamp') title back to Jesus as registered by the Latin Christian author Tertullian of Carthage (d. c.. 220). This via an exegesis of Daniel 9:24b⁵ contained in his *Adversus Judaeos* ('Treatise Against the Jews', c. 197 CE). In section VIII of this work ('Of the Times of Christ's Birth and Passion, and of Jerusalem's Destruction', 12f) we read (select Latin text inserted) :

12. And (then) "righteousness eternal" was manifested, and "an Holy One of holy ones was anointed" -- that is, Christ--and "sealed was vision and prophet," [Lat. "et signata est visio et prophetes" Daniel 9:24] and "sins" were remitted, which, through faith in the name of Christ, are washed away for all who believe on Him. But what does he [Daniel] mean by saying that "vision and prophecy are sealed?" [Latin. signari visum et prophetiam], Daniel 9:24b cf. 12:4, 9] That all prophets ever announced of Him that He was to come and had to suffer. Therefore, since the prophecy was fulfilled through His [Christ's] advent, for that reason he said that "vision and prophecy were sealed;"

⁴ See MacDonald: 1963; text vol. I sect. V. 3, 35, p.123; trans. vol. II sect. V. 2-3 p. 201; Meeks, 1967: 221, 287 cf. p. 281-2; Stroumsa, 1976).

⁵ In the Authorized / King James (1611) version Daniel 9:24 reads, "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy". The key concluding words are **וְלִחְתֵּם הַזִּיּוֹן וְנִבְיָא** , "and to seal up (w^e laḥtom, cf. Ar. khatm / khātam) the vision (ḥā-zōwn) and the prophecy (w^e-nābî)". Pre-Islamic eastern, Syriac Christian interpretations of this phrase in Daniel 9:24 invites investigation in the search for possible Christian roots of Qut'ān 33:49b.

inasmuch as He is the (Latin. *signaculum omnium prophetarum*) signet of all prophets, fulfilling all things which in days bygone they had announced of Him. [13] For after the advent of Christ and His passion there is no longer "vision or prophet" to announce Him as to come (Latin text Tränkle, 1964; trans, Thelwall).⁶

For Tertullian, Jesus Christ was the "signet of all prophets" because after him there was no need for future prophets to announce or predict anything. Through him all prophecy had been perfectly fulfilled. If the above text were viewed as echoing these exegetical statements of Tertullian, the Qur'ānic khātam al-nabiyyīn might be thought to indicate that all prophecy was fulfilled in Muhammad, the acme of the prophets. This need not presuppose his being the 'last of the prophets' if the eschaton is seen as a period beyond current history or marked by a theophanic second-coming and a "return" of past prophet figures.

Helmut Bobzin has similarly noted that the Syrian Christian theologian Aphraates (d. after 345) in his *Homilies*, applied the title 'seal of the prophets' to Jesus (Bobzin, in Neuwirth, 2011, p, 566 and fn.4).

That Muhammad is pictured in the Qur'ān and other early Islamic sources as the "seal of the prophets", may well imply an attempt to transcend Jewish-Christian or Jewish and/or Christian and other claims to Moses and Jesus being the "seal of the prophets" and more besides. If the elevated or divine Moses and Jesus were the "seal of the prophets", so too was Muhammad. This as we shall see, was even thought to be indicated on his physical body (see below).

Manī (d. c. 277) as the "Seal of the Prophets".

In various Islamic sources Manī is said to have claimed to be the "seal of the prophets".⁷

⁶ For the Latin text of the *Adversus Iudaeos* of Tertullian as edited by Herman Tränkle in 1964 refer : http://www.tertullian.org/latin/adversus_iudaeos.htm and for the Rev. Sydney Thelwall (1834-1922) English translation (cited above) see : <http://www.tertullian.org/anf/anf03/anf03-19.htm>

⁷ al-Bīrūnī, Sachau, 1879:190; Widengren, 1955: 12f; Ort, L. 1967:123ff; Stroumsa, 1986; Reeves, 1996: 11, 25 fns. 52-4.

“Between his shoulders”: The “Seal of Prophethood” as a bodily sign or corporeal feature.

Transmitted from Muhammad ibn `Ubayd Allāh ... through Ju`ayd ibn `Abd al-Raḥman. He said, I heard al-Sā'ib bin Yazīd state `My aunt took me to the Messenger of God (rasūl Allāh [Muhammad]) and I said, "O Messenger of God! My nephew is injured" [Hearing this] He stroked my head and invoked blessing upon me. He [Muhammad] then performed ritual ablution and I drank from its [residual] water. Then I stood up behind his back and I glanced and perceived the khātam al-nubuwwa (“seal of prophethood”) between his shoulders (bayn katifayyihī). Additionally, Ibn `Ubayd Allāh said: `It is a protusian like the forelock of the horse (al-ḥujala min ḥujil al-faras) which is between its two eyes. Ibrahim ibn Ḥamza further stated that it had the likeness of the [button-shaped] egg of the partridge / mountain quail (zirr al-ḥajala)” (Lambden, trans. Arabic Bukharī, 1997, al-Sahih, vol. 4, Kitāb al-Munāqib, Bk. 22, No. 3541, p, 456).

A fascinating aspect of “seal of the prophets” and related motifs in emergent Islam, was the idea of the presence of the khatm/ khatam al-nubuwwa (“seal of prophethood”) on the physical body, sometimes “between the shoulders”, of the Prophet Muhammad (see the ḥadīth cited below).⁸ It was supposed to be a special, concrete “sign”, a physical, egg or apple-like protruding “token” of his true chosenness and legitimate prophethood. Early Islamic tradition has it that this “seal” was thought (when Muhammad was but a youth) by the monk Christian Baḥīrā (“the Chosen”), to be a token of the true prophethood of the youthful Muhammad (see Appendix 2).

It is difficult to know what the roots of this physical “seal” motif are but it would seem to have nothing whatsoever to do with the finality of prophethood. Rather, it

⁸ In addition to the materials in the six major and supplementary Sunnī ḥadīth collections containing traditions about the physical “seal of prophethood” on the body of Muhammad, see further such texts as are cited and commented upon in the massive *Tarikh* and *Tafsīr* works of the great historian and commentator Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923). Note also the physiognomic characteristics of the Islamic Jesus and of the expected eschatological anti-Christ or Dajjāl (Deceiver) who is often portrayed as having one-eye, damaged like a “floating grape”. See further Appendix 1.

would appear to be a clear, concrete, current sign of the Arabian prophet's true prophethood. It matched that of earlier chosen ones of God and confirmed his prophetic status. It was evidently believed that there were clear physiognomic characteristics of the body of the chosen Prophet Muhammad that confirmed his religious legitimacy. His being the concrete bearer of the "seal" of prophethood and other physical characteristics, would appear to have been important for Muslim apologists in debate with possibly sectarian Jews, Christians and/or Manichaeans. Prophets were not like ordinary men. Prophet figures in antiquity and later were expected to exhibit "perfect" bodily features, They exhibited the concrete hallmarks or "signs" of prophetological veracity. Of considerable interest in this connection is the following tradition relayed from `Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661), the first Imam and fourth Caliph, as contained in the Sunnī ḥadīth collection, the al-Jamī` as-Sahīḥ ('The Sound Collection') of Muhammad al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892). It contains a detailed description of the bodily characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad, including the following lines:

When [Imam/Caliph] Alī described the Prophet ... he said: He was neither very tall nor excessively short, but was a man of medium size. He had neither very curly nor flowing hair but a mixture of both... **Between his shoulders was the seal of prophethood (khatam al-nubuwwa) for he was the Seal of the prophets (khātam al-nabiyūn) [Q, 33:40]** ... Those who described him said they had never seen anyone like him before or since. (Hadith 3638 in Tirmidhi vol. 5 p, 333; see further Appendix 2).

Muhammad (c. 570-632 CE), the "seal of the prophets".

Perhaps echoing such titles as are referred to above or claims of Manī (d. c. 277), the son of a Parthian prince and messianic claimant, the probably Aramaic qur'ānic Arabic loanword khātam came, throughout most of the Muslim world, to indicate that the succession of pre-Islamic prophets was "sealed up" or "ended" in uhammad. This just as it had previously been in Moses, Jesus, Manī or other pre-Islamic notables and claimants to prophethood.

It came to be accepted that after Muhammad, sometimes even after the eschatological consummation, no future prophet would appear to found a new or

renewed religion. Many commentators on Q. 33:40 have it that the Islamic belief in the second coming of Jesus indicates his reappearance as a nabī (a prophet and not a Divine figure) but in a role subservient to Muhammad and Islamic law on the Day of resurrection (Zamaksharī, *al-Kashshāf*, III: 544-5). We shall yet see below that some Islamic thinkers give a very exalted eschatological role to Jesus.

Within a few centuries, the alleged ‘finality of prophethood’ (*khatm al-nubuwwa*) after Muhammad became a firmly accepted Islamic dogma. One of the traditionally 313 (or more) ‘sent Messengers’ (*al-rasūl / mursal*), the Arabian prophet is said to have completed the chain of numerous, (traditionally 124,000 or more) pre-Christian (BCE) Israelite prophets.⁹ Muhammad was the “last-termination-finality” of the never to be succeeded prophets up until the Day of Resurrection. Such was variously affirmed in thousands of Sunnī and Shī‘ī traditions or ḥadīth sources, as well as in numerous expository and secondary post-qur’ānic literatures (see al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr* on Q, 33:40).

Even though it is not at all clear that the absolute finality of prophethood was the original intention of Q. 33:40, this finality is today something firmly entrenched in both Sunnī and Shī‘ī orthodoxy (Friedmann, 1986; 1989: 49ff, 64). Any hint of another post-Islamic prophetic claim or a challenge to the inimitability of the Qur’ān (*i’jāz al-Qur’ān*) has generally met with dire consequences, including theological castigation, the accusation of heresy, imprisonment, exile or execution. It is yet indisputably the case, as several respected academics and others have maintained in the light of early Islamic traditions and philological commentary and analysis, that the post-qur’ānic Islamic doctrine of the ‘finality of prophethood’ was not originally so clearly implied in Q. 33:40. For some early champions of emergent Islam, as well as modern academics, prophethood need not have terminated or be seen to have ended for all time with the prophet. As noted by Friedman and others, this is to some

⁹ On occasion Islamic tradition reckoned Moses the first of the “prophets of the children of Israel (*anbiyā’ banī Isrā’īl*), the “last” (*ākhir*) of them being Jesus! (so a tradition from Ibn ‘Abbās cited Majlisī, *Bihar*² 11:43; cf. 15:240 and cf. below on the Jesus related *khatm/ khātam* speculations of Ibn al-‘Arabi.

extent illustrated in the following statement narrated by one of the wives of the Prophet Muhammad. ¹⁰

An observation of `Ā'isha daughter of Abu Bakr (d. Medina c. 58/678 CE) on the non-finality of Prophethood.

There exists an interesting record of an observation made by `Ā'isha, daughter of the first Sunnī Caliph Abū Bakr and wife of the Prophet Muhammad. It has it that Muslims should openly proclaim that Muhammad was the *khātam al-anbiyā'* (= *khātam al-nabiyyīn*) but not state that he is the 'last of the prophets'; or "one after whom there would be no prophet" (Ar. *lā nabīyy ba`dahu*). This ḥadīth is cited by the Sunnī Muslim Abd Allāh Abu Muhammad Abd Allāh ibn Muslim Ibn Qutayba al-Dīnawarī [Daynavarī] (b. Kufa, 213/828 - d. 276/889) in his *Ta'wīl mukhtalaf al-ḥadīth* (The Exposition by means of diverse Ḥadīth texts). It is also quoted (among others) by the highly respected polymathic scholar Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d.905/1506) in his *Kitāb al-durr al-manthūr fī al-tafsīr bi-al-ma'thur* (The Book of the Pearls of the tradition of Qur'ān Commentary by means of materials transmitted). ¹¹ Friedmann, who noted these references, well summed up the status and implications of this early `Ā'isha related observation questioning the alleged finality of the *khātam al-nabiyyīn* as implying the finality of prophethood:

An explicit tradition that seems irreconcilable with the [finality] dogma under discussion is attributed to `Ā'isha, who said; "Say [that the Prophet is] the seal of the prophets and do not say that there is no prophet after him" (*qūlū khātam al-nabiyyīn wa la ta'qūlū lā nabīyya ba'dahu*). This utterance is not as widely quoted as the traditions dealt with above, yet it is also an early one: this is attested by its occurrence in Ibn Qutayba's *Ta'wīl mukhtalaf al-ḥadīth*.

¹⁰ Refer, Goldziher, *Muslim Studies* vol. 2:103-4; Friedmann, 1989: 58ff, 70ff; Cecep Lukman Yasin, 2010:131ff.

¹¹ Refer Ibn Qutayba, *Ta'wīl mukhtalaf al-ḥadīth*... and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr fī l-tafsīr bi'l-ma'thūr*, vol. 5: 204. These latter refs, are noted by Friedmann, 1989 : 63 + fn. 56 and 57. The *Ta'wīl mukhtalaf al-ḥadīth* has been edited and translated into French by Gerard Lecomte as *Le traité des divergences du hadit d'Ibn Qutayba*. Damascus: Institut Français du Damas, 1962. More recently it has been annotated and translated into English by Che Amnah Bahari as *Ta'wīl mukhtalaf al-ḥadīth, An Annotated Translation*, IIUM [International Islamic University, Malaysia] Press, 2009.

The phrase *khātam al-nabiyyīn* cannot mean here “the last prophet.” We have few clues to gauge its original meaning with certainty, yet one is strongly tempted to understand it in the sense of the best prophet, following the view of Tha`lab mentioned above.¹² It is not surprising that the scholars of hadith attempted to bring this utterance into harmony with the accepted [finality] dogma. To do this, they took *khatam al-nabiyyīn* to mean “the last prophet,” and neutralized the second part of the tradition by saying that it was included to allow for the second coming of Jesus. According to their view, Jesus’ second coming does not contradict the dogma of *khatm al-nubuwwa* [the final sealing of prophethood], because Jesus is an “ancient prophet” (*nabī mutaqaḍḍim*), who had been sent before Muhammad, was raised to heaven by Allāh, and will not abrogate the law of Muhammad when he descends to earth again to herald the the Day of Judgment. The expression *lā nabiyya ba’dī*, [there shall be no prophet after me] such appears in numerous traditions, should be understood *lā nabiyya ba’dī yansakhu mā ji’tu bihi*: “there is no prophet after me who will abrogate [the law] which I brought”. A complex interpretation was thus imposed on fairly straightforward wording of `Ā’isha’s utterance in order to muffle the echoes of a struggle that seems to have been going on between two divergent interpretations of Muhammad’s standing among the prophets (Friedmann, 1989: 63-4).

A few Notes on the transformed *Khatm* (“Seal”) and *Khātam al-nabiyyīn* / *nubuwwa* (Seal of the Prophets / Prophethood).

Here we can only glance upon some aspects of the seal of the prophets motifs and its transformations within Sufism, Islamic mysticism and twelver Shī`ī Imamology and gnosis. The twelver Shī`ī and Sufi positions regarding pre-Islamic

¹² See Friedmann 1989: 58. Here it is noted that the grammarian al-Tha`lab al-Kūfa (d. 291/904): “held that *al-khātim* is the one who sealed the prophets and *al-khātam* is the best of prophets in character and physical constitution” (*al-khātim alladhī khatama al-anbiyā’ wa al-khātam aḥsan al-anbiyā’ khuluqan wa khalqan*) (ref. here is in fn. 33 = al-`Aynī, *Umdat al-qārī* 16:97). Muhammad is also said to be “the beauty of the prophets, like an ornamental ring” (*jamāl al-anbiyā’ ... ka-l-khātam alladhī yutajammalu bihi*) (ref. here is in fn. 33 = al-Shāmī, *Subul al-hudā* 1:559). For further details see Friedmann 1989: 64ff + bib.

prophethood and post-Muhammad divine guidance, is often complicated by virtue of their massively rich prophetological and diverse eschatological traditions.¹³ They not infrequently register future messianic-type roles occupied by Muhammad, Jesus, and the twelver Imams as well, most notably, as by Imam `Alī ibn Abi Ṭālib (d. 40/661), Imam Ḥusayn ibn `Alī (d. 61/680), the Mahdi (Rightly guided one) or the twelfth Imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi, also known as the Qā'im (messianic "Ariser"). The "seal of the prophets" stamp is hardly rigidly applicable throughout the millennium and more of Shī'ī history with its evolving prophetology, imamology and eschatology.

Nubuwwa (Prophethood) and Walāya (Universal Providence).

The twelver Shī'ī Imams are pictured as having a universal, pre-existent, and future role transcending nubuwwa (prophethood) and often centered on the related walāya (providential overseership, intimacy, friendship) phenomenon. As exalted vehicles of divine guidance they, along with the Prophet Muhammad, are accorded an all-enduring role. Twelver Shī'ī traditions have it that during eschatological times, there is to be a multiplicity of prophet related and imamological "returns" or second comings. Future divine guidance mediated by a cascade of exalted individuals is anticipated in hundreds of sacred, messianic traditions relayed through or attributed to the prophet Muhammad, the twelver Imams, and many others.

The Qur'ān rooted Arabic walāya (or the synonymous wilāya) and the related walī (plural, awliyā'), the 'friend, saint, overseer, leader, authority or guardian', etc, is often indicative of an aspect of spiritual or divine intimacy, of divine providence and its human locus or vehicle of expression (cf. Qur'ān Q. 42:28). Walāya has thus (among many other things) been regarded as an expression of special intimacy, friendship, saintliness, providence and overseership or the like. The human walī, for example, may be a special Intimate, Friend, Saint or Sage, etc. From the early Islamic centuries, walī became a significant human centered technical term within select Sufi circles. So too in the writings of those who sought to clarify dimensions of Shī'ī imamology. Shī'ī discussions of these matters often make much of the

¹³ I shall frequently use the word eschatology here in the sense of having to do with the 'last times' as this future apocalyptic era is detailed in numerous Abrahamic and related sacred writings

differences between nabī and rasūl relative to the position of the walī (locus of divine guidance) and the sanctified Imam. This can be seen, for example, in such works as the ʿIlm al-yaqīn (The Knowledge of Certainty) of Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ al-Kashānī (d.1090/1679) (ʿIlm 1:366f) and will be briefly examined below.¹⁴

al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (b. Tirmidh, near Balkh c. 204/820 - d. 320/932).

A profound theological and hagiographical mysticism surrounding the “seal” (khatm, khatam, khātim) motif in Islamic thought, theology and mysticism, can to some degree, be traced back to Muhammad ibn ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. 320/932). He was a famous Sunni ḥadīth scholar and jurist, who was subject to Shīʿi influence and to the tradition of esoteric gnosis. The great Ibn al-ʿArabi and numerous of his disciples, as well as many other Islamic mystical philosophers and theologians, were influenced by al-Tirmidhī’s ideas about nubuwwa (prophethood), the khātam al-nubuwwa (the seal of prophethood), as well as the related notions of khatm al-walāya (the Seal of Intimacy/ Friendship / Sainthood).

In several of his many influential writings, this great Sufi theologian spoke about an elevated ʿSeal of the Saints’ (or Friends). He even explicitly stated in his Khatm al-awliyāʾ (also known as the Sirat al-awliyāʾ, ʿThe Seal of the Friends’ or ʿLife of the Friends of God’), that there exists a great leader or chief in possession of the “seal of sainthood (friendship, intimacy) with God” (khātim al-walāya). Responding to a question about the Qurān-rooted expression khātam al-nubuwwa (ʿSeal of prophethood, cf. Q. 33:40b), al-Tirmidhī wrote:

و لخاتم النبوة بدءٌ وشأن عجيب عميق أعمق من أن تحتمله ...

¹⁴ For useful overviews of walāya / walī See Landolt, ʿWalayah’ in Enc.Rel. 1987; Chodkiewicz, 1993; Radtke, 1996; Renard, 2008, especially pp. 260-263; Kamada, 455ff in Lawson, ed., 2005; McGregor, ʿFriend of God’ in EI³ (Brill online version 2013); Alexandrin, 2017. On the walāya concept and the figure of the walī in the writings of the Bāb and Bahāʾ-Allāh see below and Appendix 7.

[58] For the “Seal of prophethood” (khātām al-nubuwwa) is an origin and a nature (bada’ sha`n) which is wondrous (‘ajīb) and profound (‘amīq), more profound (a`maq) than you can possibly conceive ... [61] God gathered together in Muhammad all the dimensions of prophethood (ajzā’ al-nubuwwa) and having thus perfected prophethood, He set His seal upon it (bi-khatm-ihī). And because of that seal (al-khatm) neither Muhammad's carnal soul, nor his enemy [Satan], found the means to penetrate the place of prophethood [within him]”.¹⁵

The focus of al-Tirmidhi’s hagiography was not upon any limited notion of the finality of prophethood or sainthood. In his elevated concepts surrounding the “seal”, he made room for a future hierarchy of Sufi saints, mystics and sages. As cosmic powers, certain among them (such as the later 40 or 356 *abdāl* or “substitutes”) were viewed as very elevated persons. Sometimes their leader (s) took on a messianic type persona, were subject to divine inspiration, and were thought to have a very important role in eschatological times. al-Tirmidhī even speaks of a special, chosen walī (Intimate of God, Friend of God, Saint) who will come forth on the Day of Judgement and be in perfect or complete possession of the khātīm al-walāya, the “seal of Friendship with God”:

Whenever one of them dies, another follows after him and occupies his station (maqām), and it will continue until their number is exhausted and the time comes for the world to end. Then God will send a Friend (walī) whom He has chosen and elected, whom He has drawn unto Him and made close, and He will bestow on him everything He bestowed upon the [other] Friends (al-awliyā’) but He will distinguish him with the seal of Friendship with God (bi-khatīm al-walāya). And he will be the Proof of God (Ḥujjat Allāh) on the Day of Resurrection (yawm al-qiyāna) above [against] all of the other Friends of God (awliyā’). By means of this seal he will possess the sincerity of Friendship with

¹⁵ Sirat al-awliyā’, ed. Radtke 1992 sect. 58 p. 40; sect 61 p. 41; trans. Lambden + O’Kane, 1996, 104, 106. cf. al-Tirmidhi, Khatm al-awliyā, ed. Yahya, 161ff

God (ṣidq al-walāya) the same way that Muhammad possessed the sincerity of prophethood (ṣidq al-nubuwwa).¹⁶

This special figure, distinguished in the *Sirat al-awliyā'* as the *khātim al-walāya* ("seal of Intimate Friendship with God"; sect 64.), was later referred to by some as *al-ghawth* ("the Helper, One who assists") and *al-quṭb* ("the Pole, Apex"). He is the supreme eschatological *Ḥujjat Allāh* (the "Proof of God") and one especially intimate with God as the *walī Allāh*. This title *Ḥujjat Allāh* was sometimes applied to the expected *Shī'ī* messianic twelfth Imam and was often utilized by the *Bāb* himself in his *Qayyūm al-asmā'* and many other writings.¹⁷

Muhammad Muḥyi al-Dīn Ibn al-`Arabī (b. Murcia, Spain c. 560/1165 - d. Damascus, Syria 638/1240).

The influential and prolific master of Islamic mysticism, Muhammad ibn `Alī Ibn al-`Arabī (d. 638/1240), with numerous of his commentators, made much of the related concepts of *nubuwwa* (prophethood) and *wilāya* ("human mediated providential guidance"). For the Great Shaykh, *walāya* is essentially the *bāṭin* (inner depth) of *nubuwwa*, itself of various kinds. It transcends legislative prophethood or the limited, time-bound *sharī'a* legalism of the divine messengers. Ibn al-`Arabī was much influenced by al-Tirmidhī on whose *Sirat al-awliyā'* he wrote a commentary entitled *Jawāb al-mustaqīm* (The Straight Reply), He likewise drew upon this work of al-Tirmidhi in chapter 73 of his encyclopedic *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (The Meccan Disclosures) (so Elmore 2001: 416). Only a few notes on key works of Ibn al-`Arabī at times centering on *khātm* (seal) concepts and on the major themes of *nubuwwa* (prophethood), *wilāya* and the supreme *walī* (Friend, Saint, Guide) can be set down here.

¹⁶ *Sirat al-awliyā'*, 64, ed. Radtke 1992, sect. 64 pp. 44-5, trans. O'Kane, 109f adapted Lambden.

¹⁷ *Ibid* and see further Abrahamov, 2014, 85-90; Elmore 1999, 2001, index.

Kitāb `Anqā mughrib fī ma`rifa khatm al-awliyā' wa shams al-maghrib (The book of the Fabulous Gryphon [Phoenix] on the Seal of the saints and the Sun of the West).

This complex medium length, early work of Ibn al-`Arabī, was written in Andalusia in c. 596/1200. As its title indicates, it contains some centrally important materials relating to Islamic eschatology and to the khatm al-awliyā, the Seal of the Walis, the Friends, Saints or persons closely intimate with God and capable of guiding humanity.

al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya (The Meccan Disclosures).

Begun in Mecca in 598/1201 Ibn al `Arabī's massive (560 chapter), encyclopedic compendium, al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya ('The Meccan Revelations'; spanning some 2,500 + pages) took more than thirty years to complete. The following (loosely translated) passages from the al-Futūḥāt revolve around khatm / khātam (seal) concepts touching upon modes of nubuwwa (prophethood) and of wilāya (providential guidance), and must suffice to illustrate a few aspects of these developments:

Walāya (Providential Intimacy, Friendship) is expressive of nubuwwa `amma (general or universal Prophethood) and that prophethood which is legalistic (al-tashrī) also known as nubuwwa khāṣṣa (specific, historical prophethood) ... Muhammad is the khātim al-nubuwwa (seal of prophethood) for there is no prophethood (nubuwwa) after him... Yet after him is the like of Jesus among the ūlū al-`azm, (major prophet figures characterized by steadfastness) among the Messengers (al-rusul) and certain specified Prophets (al-anbiyā') ... there will be disclosed a Walī ('Chosen Intimate', 'Friend', 'Saintly Leader') possessed of absolute Prophethood (nubuwwa al-muṭlaqa) ... (Futuhat, II: 24ff, 47ff; cf. I: 200, 429; Fusus, 134-6; 160, 191).¹⁸

¹⁸ For further details see al-Tirmidhi, Khatm al-Awliyā, ed. Osman Yahya, 1965; ed. Radtke, 1992; Abrahamov, 2014, Elmore 1999, 2001, Renard, 2008: 263ff,

The Fuṣuṣ al-Ḥikam (The Ringstones of Wisdom).

The terse yet profoundly deep Fuṣuṣ al-Ḥikam (Ringstones of Wisdom, c. 627/1230) of Ibn al-ʿArabī, is perhaps his best-known and the most widely commented upon of his late compositions. It is among the most influential and important of his religio-philosophical and mystical works. Though relatively brief (around 200 pages) it is yet "incomparably vast in content and philosophical significance" (Izutsu, Elr. 5:554). Its author claimed that each of its 27 chapters were handed to him in a vision of the Prophet Muhammad. Each section revolves around one of the (traditionally) 27 or so largely named qurʾānic prophets who are thought to enshrine a particular divine attribute, theological mode (maqām) or wisdom central to engagement with the Real (al-ḥaqq) (Chittick, VII:665).

The Fuṣuṣ al-ḥikam and the tradition of the final "brick".

It will be appropriate to preface the following summary of paragraphs and translations from Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam sections II (Seth) and XIV (Ezra), by citing a version of a prophetic tradition drawn upon and interpreted by Ibn al-ʿArabi. It is about Muhammad representing himself symbolically as the final "brick" in the "wall of prophethood" in connection with his being the "seal of the prophets" (Q. 33:40):

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ إِنَّ مَثَلِي وَمَثَلِ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ
مِنْ قَبْلِي كَمَثَلِ رَجُلٍ بَنَى بَيْتًا فَأَحْسَنَهُ وَأَجْمَلَهُ إِلَّا مَوْضِعَ لَبْنَةٍ مِنْ زَاوِيَةِ فَجَعَلَ النَّاسُ
يَطُوفُونَ بِهِ وَيَعْجَبُونَ لَهُ وَيَقُولُونَ هَلَّا وُضِعَتْ هَذِهِ اللَّبْنَةُ قَالَ فَأَنَا اللَّبْنَةُ وَأَنَا خَاتِمُ
النَّبِيِّينَ

From Abū Hurayrah [it is transmitted] that the Messenger of God [Muhammad] ... said: "My similitude] (mathalī) and the similitude of the prophets (mathal al-anbiyā) who preceded me, is even as the parable of a man (mathal al-rajul) who constructed a house. He improved it and beautified it save for the place of a single [absent] brick constituting the cornerstone (labinat min zāwiyya). The people circumambulate about it and are astonished by it. They say: `Why then is this brick (al-labina) not placed?' Yet, `I am indeed the brick (al-labina) and

I am the “seal of the prophets” (khātīm al-nabbiyīn)’! (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 3535; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2286, Lambden trans.)

This prophetic tradition illustrates the central position of Muhammad among the prophets. It illustrates his primacy as the “Seal of the prophets”. Like Christ in the New Testament, Muhammad is the “chief cornerstone” of the edifice of religion (Ephesians 2:19-21; cf. Isaiah 28:16-17; 1 Peter 2:6). For Ibn al-`Arabi this ḥadīth has interior and exterior levels of interpretation which extend any sense of finality.

In the second, Seth section of the Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam, Ibn al-`Arabi draws upon, interprets, and in various ways comes to transcend, the `finality` of the prophetic tradition in which Muhammad is pictured as the “last brick” thereby representing himself as the “last prophet”, within the “wall” of the edifice of prophethood (al-nubuwwa).¹⁹ For Ibn al-`Arabi, this tradition has inner and outer dimensions. The “wall” of prophethood leaves room for the khātīm al-wilāya (the `Seal of Divine Intimacy – Sainthood’). Its concluding “brick” can also be or include the figure of the supreme Walī (Intimate Friend). We glimpse here the possibility of future advent(s) of human instruments of walāya (Divine Intimacy), of the guiding Friend(s) or saintly Intimates of God. Suggestive of futurity the one “brick” of prophethood becomes two bricks or two “walls”, one of “silver” and the other of “gold” suggestive of future messengers or intimates of God (see Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam ed Affī, 1980: 63).

Some notes upon and translations from the second, Seth (Shīth) and fourteenth Ezra (Uzayr) sections of the Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikām.

The following, sometimes complex passages from the second Seth (Shīth, son of Adam) section of the Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikām, are well-worth citing in full translation here (see Appendix 3 below) though it must suffice at this point to attempt to sum up some of the main points made by Ibn al-`Arabi. Among many other things, these and related paragraphs, have it that, through the walāya (Divine providential Intimacy)

¹⁹ See above and refer al-Bukhārī, al-Sahih , 1997, Vol. 4, Kitāb al-manāqib, Bk. 61, section 18 `Khātām al-nabiyīn’, No. 3535, pp. 454-5. Also in Muslim, al-Sahih, Kitāb al-Faḍā’il and elsewhere.

centered in the person of the Walī (Friend, Saint, Guide), especially as the Seal of the Intimate Friends (khātim al-awliyā'), the boundary of the "Seal of the prophets" (khātim al-nabiyyīn) was transcended and extended for all-eternity.²⁰ The main points made by Ibn al-'Arabī in the second Seth related section may thus be summed up as follows:

- While the Seal of the Messengers (khātim al-rusul) and the Seal of the Friends (khātim al-awliyā') both have access to special knowledge [of God] (al-'ilm), Prophets (al-anbiyā') and Messengers (al-rusul) are dependent on the Niche of that Messenger [Muhammad] (mishhkat al-rasūl) who is their Seal (khātim). The Awliyā' (chosen, intimate Friends) likewise envision this special knowledge from the niche of the Walī (mishhkat al-walī) who is their Seal (khātim).
- The Messengers (al-rusul) only envision the special knowledge through the niche of the Seal of the Intimate Ones [Friends, Saints] (mishkat khātim al-awliyā').
- The sent Message (al-risāla) of the messenger (rasūl) and prophethood (al-nubuwwa) have time-bound legalistic aspects (nubuwwat al-tashrī') and a specific message (risāla) they may come to be terminated.
- Wilāya (Divine Intimacy, Saintly Virtue) can never cease to be available to humanity.
- The sent Messengers (al-mursalūn) are awliyā' (intimate, chosen ones, Friends, Saints). They do not vision things save through the niche of the Seal of the Intimate Ones [Friends] (mishkat khātim al-awliyā').
- Although the Seal of the Intimate Ones [Friends, Saints] (khātim al-awliyā') follows the legal directives (sharī'a) of the Seal of the Messengers (khātim al-rusul), this does not compromise their particular stations.
- Every prophet (kull al-nabī), from Adam until the final Prophet (ākhir al-nabī), attained prophethood through the niche of the Seal of the Prophets (mishkat khātam al-nabiyyīn) [Muhammad]. Prophets (anbiyā') are, however, commissioned by God.

²⁰ Details cannot be commented upon here thought for greater clarity I have included a good deal of transliteration.

- The Seal of the Chosen Friends (khātim al-awliyā') was a special, primordial Walī (Sainly authority) when Adam was between water and clay (al-mā' wa'l-ṭīn). Some come to be a Walī (Intimate Ones, Friend, Saint) by attaining the qualities of wilāya (sharā'iṭ al-wilāya), by appropriating divine characteristics (al-akhlāq al-ilāhiyya) or assimilating (al-ittiṣāf) the modality of God (kawn Allāh), who is Himself entitled "the "Walī" ("the Protector/Friend", Q. 42:28).
- The Seal of the Messengers (khātim al-rusul), expresses His wilāya (Divine Intimacy, Sainly virtue) through the Seal of the Chosen Friends (khātim awliyā'). He is also connected with the Prophets (al-anbiyā') and the Messengers (al-rusul) as the Walī (the Intimate Friend of God), who represents the Messenger (al-rusūl), and the Prophet (al-nabī).
- The Seal of the Chosen Friends (khātim awliyā') is indeed the Walī (the Chosen Friend), who is the Inheritor (al-wārith) and one situated above a lower hierarchy.
- He [the Walī] is one perfect among the perfections (ḥasanat al-ḥasanāt) of the seal of the Messengers (khātim al-rusul), Muhammad... the Foremost of the community (muqaddam al-jama`a) and the Lordly Master of the children of Adam (sayyid walad adam) who opens up the gateway of intercession (bāb al-shifā`a). He is thus assigned a specific spiritual status (ḥāl) which is all-embracing (`amam). Relative thereto he [Muhammad / the Walī] has precedence over the Divine Names (al-asmā' al-ilāhī) ... (Fusūs al-hikam, 2nd printing, ed Afīfī, 1980: 62-4; trans. Lambden; see Appendix 1).²¹

Extracts from Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam, section XIV centered on `Uzayr-Ezra (Q. 9:30).

Know thou that wilāya (providential Intimacy) is a universal, all-encompassing firmament-sphere (al-fulk al-muḥīt al-`āmm) which can never be terminated/circumscribed/abstracted. Universal prophets (al-anbiyā' al-`āmm) channel it. As for legislative prophethood (nubuwwat al-tashrī) and the conveyors of the sent messenger [message] (al-risāla) this may come to be cut off [terminated]. This was the case with [the legalistic prophethood of] Muhammad (upon him

²¹ Cf. the translations of Burckhardt, 25-31; Austin 1980: 60-70; Dagli, 2004: 26-28; Bewley, 2013; etc.

be peace). This was indeed terminated for there can be no prophet (nabī) after him. Certainly not, in other words, one [a prophet] Law-generating, one subject to one Law-generating or even a Messenger (rasūl) given to legislation (Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam, 2nd printing, ed Affī, 1980: 134-137; trans. Lambden. cf. Chodkeiwicz, 50-51).

At this point in Fuṣūs XIV, Ibn al-ʿArabī states that the above position is a “mortal blow” (qasama) for the awliyāʾ, those intimate with God. This in that it restricts the possibility of expressing pious servitude (ʿubudiyya) centered in a prophet (nabī) or a Messenger (rasūl). Such designations are “created names”! which are transcended by the Divine Name al-Walī, the Intimate Friend (see Q. 42:28 and cf. above). General or universal prophethood' (nubuwwa 'amma), however, remains and is expressive of that walāya which may legitimately involve the interpretation of the religious Law. God, or an individual representative of Him such as Muhammad, is more perfect as a Walī, an 'Intimate Friend', than as a prophet or a Messenger. al-Walī (the Intimate Friend) is a perpetual Name of God. Human beings may to some degree assimilate this station by appropriating the Divine attributes (ṣifāt Allāh) manifested by God, the Walī (the Intimate Friend). The human agent(s) of walāya extend the prophethood of the “seal of the prophets” (see Fusūs al-hikam, ed Affī, 1980: 134ff. cf. Chodkeiwicz, 50-51).

We may conclude these often complex, innovative insights of Ibn al-ʿArabi relating to khātamiyya, nubuwwa and wilāya etc., by citing the refreshingly straightforward summary of central aspects of these matters by Chittick:

When God opened the door for him, Ibn 'Arabi found that he had inherited all the sciences of Muhammad. Among these sciences was the knowledge that no one after him – except Jesus at the end of time – would be Muhammad's plenary inheritor. It was this unveiling that allowed him to see himself as the Seal of Muhammadan Friendship, that is, the last person to actualize the specific mode of friendship that results from embodying the fullness of the paradigm established by Muhammad.

By no means does Ibn 'Arabi's claim to be the Muhammadan Seal imply that he was the last friend of God. Rather, it means that no one after him, with the

exception of Jesus, would inherit the totality of prophetic works, states, and knowledge – a totality that had been realized only by Muhammad among all the prophets (Chittick, 2005:16).

Some commentators on Ibn al-`Arabī and his many writings, thus reckon and cite passages to the effect that he himself was, or specifically claimed to be, the khātim al-walāya (The Seal of Friendship, Sainthood, Divine Intimacy). Many of his disciples certainly saw him in this light. His doctrine of wilāya expressed as universal, deep-level prophethood (nubuwwa) channelled through saintly individuals intimate with God, extended the modes of divine guidance and transcended the bounds set down by Islamic finality fundamentalists. Certain of his numerous Sunnī and Shī`ī disciples, as we shall inadequately illustrate here, linked his ideas with messianism, imamology and future theophanic manifestations of Divinity.²² Ibn al-`Arabī saw himself, Jesus and the future Mahdī as loci or "seals" of various modes of wilāya. Jesus, for example, is the seal of the general, absolute wilāya (khatm al-wilāya al-muṭlaqa) (Qayṣarī, Sh.Fusus, 255, 456, 460, 843).

Maḥmūd ibn `Abd al-Kaḥīm Shabistaḥī (b. Shahbistar, near Tabriz, c. 686/1287 - d. c. 720/1320).

Sufi insights and twelver Shī`ī perspectives surrounding the khātam al-nabiyyīn and associated matters touching upon finality and non-finality, cannot be comprehensively dealt with here. The following stanzas from the Persian *Gulshan-i rāz* (The Rose Garden of the Secrets) of the Ibn al-`Arabī influenced Maḥmūd ibn `Abd al-Kaḥīm Shabistaḥī, must suffice to give an indication of deeply profound khatm / khātam ("seal") related insights. They provide a glimpse into the fascinating universe of the mystical and messianic dimensions of doctrines inspired by the qur`ānic khātam ("seal") motif:

Prophethood (nubuwwat) came to be manifest in Adam, Its perfection (kamāl) was realized through the existence of the Khātam [Muhammad].

Wilāyat ("Sainthood") lingers behind while it makes a journey,

²² See further Ibn al-`Arabī, 'Anqd' mughrib fī ma'rifat khatm al-awliyā, trans. Elmore 1999; *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, sect II (Seth) summarized and translated below in Appendix 6; Chodkiewicz, 1993; Elmore, 2001).

As a [Prophetological] Point (nuqṭa) in the world, it scribes another cycle.
 Its theophany in its fullness (ḡuhūr-i kull-i ū) [through Him] will [erelong] be realized through the Khātām (Seal [of the Friends/Saints])’.
 For through him the cycle of Existence (‘ālam-i wujūd) will be completed.
 His chosen ones (awliyā’) are even as his bodily organs (‘aḡw).
 While he Himself is the Pleroma (kull), they constitute segments thereof.
 As one intimate with the Master (khwajah), his Providence complete,
 Through him will Universal Mercy (raḡmat-i ‘āmm) find realization.
 An Exemplar he shall be throughout both worlds, a Viceregent [Leader] (khalīfa) for the progeny of Adam (Gulshan, III. 2 , 1978: Per. 369-374 pp. 22-3, trans.Lambden).²³

In summary, as I understand these lines: The first man Adam initiated primordial prophethood (nubuwwa) which came to be perfectly fulfilled or realized in Muhammad, its “seal” (khātām). The potent, supra-prophetological force of walāya (“Divine Guidance”) as a “Point” or locus of Divine Reality, came to express itself through scribing, writing out, initiating or delineating, a new cycle or era. As a result the fullness of a Divine Theophany related to the Khātām (Seal) will come about. Through this evolution, by means of a future Exemplar and Leader, Universal Mercy (raḡmat-i ‘āmm) will find realization. Transcending finality, the “Seal” through its transcendent walāya (divine potentiality), becomes a future locus of universal, Divine Guidance.²⁴

Shams al-Dīn, Muhammad ibn Yaḡyá al-Lahījī (d. Shiraz 912/ 1506) on the Gulshan-i rāz.

There are important, detailed materials relating to the above matters in the Commentary of Muhammad ibn Yaḡyá al-Lahījī on the Gulshan-i rāz (The Rose Garden of Secrets), the Mafātīḡ al-i`jāz fī sharḡ Gulshan-i Rāz.

²³ For a recent translation of the Gulshan-i Rāz see Robert Abdul Hayy Darr, 2007, For his translation of the lines translated above see lines 367f, pp.77-78.

On Sufī aspects of the khātām al-nabiyyīn in Ibn al-‘Arabī etc., see further al-Futuḡat and the Fusus al-Hikam (indexes) as well as Friedmann, 1989: 71ff + index.

²⁴ There are important materials in the Commentary of Muhammad ibn Yaḡyá al-Lahījī on the Gulshan-i rāz (The Rose Garden of Secrets) pertinent to the matters discussed here.

Twelver Shīṭī Imamology, Prophethood and the Walāya phenomenon.

As previously indicated wilāya is of central importance within Shīṭī Islam especially as it is centered in and focused in the twelver Imams.²⁵ It is clear that the figure of the walī is often descriptive of a human authority figure; one possessed of a role and function seen in the lthnā `ashaṛī (twelver) Imam as religious leader and authority.

We may cite here the al-Ziyārat al-jami`a al-kabīra (The Greater Comprehensive Visitation Text) attributed to (and allegedly transmitted through) the tenth Imam `Alī al-Hādī Imam `Ali al-Hadi (d. 254/868). It at one point contains testimony to the elevated status of the Imams as conveyors of al-ḥaqq (Truth), as heirs of the prophets with eschatological purpose, and as loci of the intimate walāya of God. They are expressive of the divine walāya and of the walī of God :

The Truth (al-ḥaqq) is ever with you, within you, of you, and directed towards you (ma`akum wa fi-kum wa minkum wa ilaykum)! Thou are its devotees (ahlihi) and its very quintessence [treasury] (ma`din)! [6] The legacy of prophethood (mirath al-nubuwwa) is yours. With you is the destination [return] of all creation (`iyab al-khalq) for their ultimate reckoning (ḥisab) revolves around you! ... His Light (nūr) and His Proof (burhān) are of you. [13] His command (amr) revolves around you! [14] Whosoever is your intimate (walī) in indeed an intimate of God (walī Allāh)! (al-Ziyāra al-jami`a al-kabīra in XXX, full trans. Lambden, Hurqalya website).

Ḥaydar al-Āmulī (b. Āmul 719–787 / 1319–1385).

This learned twelver Shīṭī scholar and mystic was much influenced by Ibn al`Arabī upon whose seminal Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam (The Bezels of Wisdom) he wrote a commentary entitled Naṣṣ al-nuṣūṣ (The Text of Texts). His position on the matters of interest here have been well summed up by Kohlberg in his Encyclopedia Iranica article on al-Āmulī :

²⁵ For some details see Walker, "Wilaya," in Shi'ism, E1², 10: 208-9; Amir-Moezzi, Spirituality, 2003 and 2011 esp. chapter 7 (Notes on Imami Walāya) and Alexandrin, 2017.

In accordance with Āmolī's system, the Mahdī must be a walī, not a prophet; indeed, Āmolī follows Saʿd-al-dīn Ḥammūya (d. 650/1252) (in his al-Maḥbūb) and ʿAbd-al-Razzāq Kāshānī (d. 730/1330) in maintaining that the seal of the universal (moṭlaq) walāya is ʿAlī and the seal of the particular (moqayyad, Mohammadan walāya) is the Mahdī (who for Āmolī is identical with the Twelfth Imam). On this issue Āmolī differs from Ebn al-ʿArabī, who identified the k̄ātam al-walāyat al-moṭlaqa with Jesus and who was himself regarded by some of his disciples as the k̄ātam al-walāyat al-moqayyada (Jāmeʿ al-asrār, pp. 385, 395-448). (Kohlberg Elr. 1: 983-985).

Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ al-Kashānī (d.1090/1679)

The ʿIlm al-yaqīn (The Knowledge of Certainty) of Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ al-Kashānī
ADD HERE (ʿIlm 1:366f)

A few notes based on passages from the Kalimāt-i maknūnih (Hidden Words) of Fayḍ al-Kāshānī (d.1007/1680-81) must suffice to illustrate key themes of interest here. This work contains an interesting discussion of the senses in which al-insān al-kāmil (The Perfect Man/Human) could be considered a nabī (Prophet) or a walī a bearer of wilāya, Kāshānī states that al-nubuwwa al-muṭlaqa is the "ultimately real prophethood" (al-nubūwwa al-ḥaqīqa), an eternally existing reality like al-nubūwa al-ʿamma (general prophethood). This transcendent prophetological power expressing walāya of the Walī is the force through which Muhammad infuses all existence and is the locus of all Ḥaqq (Ultimate Reality). Its bearers are variously entitled al-khalifa al-aḥam (Most Great Khalifa), quṭb al-aqṭāb (Pivot of Pivots) al-insān al-kabīr (The Great Human) and Ādam al-ḥaqīqa (The Adam of Reality). Therefrom the "Supreme Pen" (al-qalam al-aʿlā) inscribes reality as the al-ʿaql al-awwāl the First Intellect and the al-rūḥ al-aḥam (Most Great Spirit). This al-nubuwwat al-muṭlaqa (absolute prophethood) is alluded to as the first creation of God, the "Light" (nūr) of Muhammad and the locus of his being a nabī (Prophet) when "Adam was betwixt water and clay".

This same writer further maintains that the bāṭin (inter depth) of absolute nubuwwa is the "absolute walāya" (bāṭin al-walāyah hiya al-walāyah al-muṭlaqa). It is related to the supernal "Light" of Imam ʿAlī's utterance "I was a walī (bearer of

walāya), when Adam was betwixt water and clay". The prophethood of all prophets results from their being channels of al-nubuwwat al-muṭlaqa (absolute prophethood) (Fayḍ Kāshānī, Kalimat, 186-7).

Such elevated transformations of nubuwwa and walāya left ample room for the continuation of prophethood and for the setting forth of a transcendent imamology with messianic and theophanological implications. In many Sufi circles and within streams of Twelver Shī'ism, the personified walāya expressed through the walī as Friend, Saint, Intimate or messianic Imam, all but exploded the constraints of the finality of prophethood. For some the Islamic universe came to embrace or expect a future supreme walī, Guide-Mahdī or 'Perfect Human' (al-insān al-kāmil). For many deep thinkers the finality of providential divine guidance failed to be utterly finalized.²⁶

Transcendent walāya concepts in Shaykhism

Walāya and associated doctrines are expounded in the works of the first two Shaykhī leaders, Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Zayn al-Dīn al-Aḥsā'ī (d. near Medina, 11XX/1826) who composed a lengthy (1,500 or so page) commentary on the (The Greater Comprehensive Visitation Text) cited above. The equally prolific Persian born Sayyid Kāzīm al-Ḥusaynī al-Rashfī (d. 1259/1844) succeeded him. The walāya / walī theology was of tremendous importance within al-Shaykhiyya also known as al-Kashfiyya, indicative of a movement centered on Inspirational, Imamological Unveiling after the person and orientation of the Arab born Shaykh al-Aḥsā'ī.

Commenting on the world maṭla` (Dawning Point), for example, in his Sharḥ al-Qaṣīda al-lāmiyya (Commentary on the Ode rhyming in the letter "L") of `Abd al-Baqī Effendī Mawṣūlī, Sayyid Kāzīm Rashfī (the successor of Shaykh Aḥmad) states that this indicates walāya. This he defines as an eternally elevated phenomenon without beginning. It is "the Eternal Light (al-nūr al-azal), the Primordial Designation (al-ta`yīn al-awwāl), the secondary Eternality (al-azaliyya al-thāniyya), the Bearer of

²⁶ Full details of the many twelver Shī'ī messianic and other dimensions of the "seal" and walāya and related matters cannot possibly be set forth here. It may simply be noted that there is much of interest in the writings of the important Safavid Akhbarī Shī'ī and Sufi thinker, Muhammad Muhsin Fayḍ al-Kashānī (d. Isfahan 1091/1680). See, for example, the bibliography below under al-Kāshānī and the 2006 article of Shigeru Kamada.

Eternality upon Eternity without Beginning (ṣāḥīb al-azaliyya al-azaliyya) and the sanctified, most holy Emanation (al-fayḍ al-aqdas al-muqaddas)". Indeed, it is of such elevated sanctity that it is something closely associated with the divine Essence (hiya ḥaqīqa al-dhāt aḥad). Walāya, furthermore, has the station of the Primal Dhikr (Remembrance of God) (al-dhikr al-awwāl) and is the genesis of the divine Names and Attributes (mabdā' al-asmā' wa'l-ṣifāt). Its magnitude can hardly be overestimated (Rashī, al-Qaṣīda, 6).²⁷ It is hardly surprising that persons claiming to be embodiments of walāya claimed to transcend the limitations of ordinary prophethood and challenged the constraints of the khatamiyya (prophetological sealedness) as the finality of prophethood thought to be indicated in Qur'ān 33:40.

There are likewise sometimes messianically charged references to wilāya / walī in the writings of the Bāb and Bahā'-Allāh. The former titled Surah LXII (62) of his important Qayyum al-asma', the Surah of the Chosen Friends (al-Awliyā') and made much of walāya concepts in his Tafsir Surah 'By the Declining Day' (wa'l-asr) Qur'an 102 and elsewhere (for further details see Appendix 7).

Qur'an 33: 40, the Bāb, Messianic Hopes and the Eschatological Theophany.²⁸

From the outset of his six year messianic career (1844-50), Sayyid `Alī Muhammad Shirazi, the Bāb ("Gate", 1819-1850), in his neo-qur'ānic Qayyūm al-asmā' ("The Deity Self-Subsisting through the Divine Names"; henceforth = QA.) dating to mid. 1260/1844, and in other early writings (see INBMC 91), challenged both the finality of prophethood and the inimitability of the Qur'ān. In complex interpretations of the qur'ānic surah of Joseph (= Q. 12), he regularly exegetically rewrote or 're-revealed' verses of the Qur'ān, thus opening up new bāṭinī ("deep interior") depths, new vistas of messianic hope and eschatological meaning. In the light of his eschatologically charged, high Shī'ī-Shaykhī imamology in other words, he modified the standard understanding of the 'finality of prophethood' by incorporating rewritten forms and new contextualizations of the khātām al-nabiyyīn (Q.

²⁷ For some notes on walāya and the title walī in Bābī and Baha'i sacred writ see Appendix 7 below.

²⁸ In this paper the word theophany indicates an indirect appearance or manifestation of the Godhead. The related words theophanic and theophanological, are descriptive of something that has to do with such a divine theophany.

33:40b) verse into his first major work, the Tafsīr Sūrat Yūsuf (Q. 12) or Qayyūm al-asmā'.

Khātām al-nabbiyīn in the Qayyūm al-asmā'.

In his QA the Bāb frequently underlined an immanent yet partially realized messianism as well as the hope for the great Theophany. Qur'ān 33:40, as the following notes must suffice to illustrate, is re-contextualized and transcended:

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

Here the Bāb rewrites Qur'ān 33:40 so as to modify or pass over the note of finality which most Muslims read into the last phrase of this qur'ānic verse. Through his supernatural link with the heavenly Dhikr (messianic Remembrance) and/or the occulted twelfth Imām, the Ḥujjat-Allāh (messianic `Proof of God'), he several times radically modified any straightforward notion of the finality of prophethood and associated the Dhikr (Remembrance) with the immanent or actual liqā' Allāh/ al-Rabb, the eschatological `Encounter with God' (see further below).²⁹

In QA IV [4] the Bāb addresses the ahl al-madīna ("people of the city", of Shiraz?). He accuses them of polytheism if they acknowledge Muhammad as the "seal of the Prophets" and affirm his book (the Qur'ān), yet fail to bear witness to the fact that God also revealed "the like of it" (the Qur'ān) in the form of the QA of the Bāb ("Our servant"; cf. Q. 2:23). In QA LXIV [64], the Bāb similarly sets down a messianic rewrite of Q.12:63 in the light of Q. 33:40. He exhorts believing Muslims gathered before Muhammad, the khātām al-nabiyyīn, to utter the following words:

O our father [Muhammad], the Dhikr (messianic "Remembrance"), is a "further Measure" (al-kail) [Q.12:53] which has been denied to us. So dispatch with us, the sign of the Dhikr for the greater magnification (li'l-takbīr al-akbar)... (QA LXIV [64]: 260).

²⁹ In two of his six or so uses of the word liqā' for the eschatological encounter with God in his early Qayyūm al-asmā', the messianic Dhikr (Remembrance) is closely related to the expected Divine Theophany, the liqā' Allāh / al-Rabb. See QA XX [20] p.33; XXIX [29] p. 52; XXXVI [36] p. 65; LIII [53] p.103 and especially QA LVII [57] p. 114 and LXXIV [74] p. 169.

The finality of prophethood is here transcended through the messianic Dhikr (personified Remembrance of God) who as a new Joseph type figure represents and offers a "greater measure" (al-kail) of divine guidance. A few sūras later in QA LXVI [66], the Bāb speaks of a "Book" (= QA) sent down to inform the people that the messianic Ḥujjat-Allāh ('Proof of God' = the 12th Imam) is closely associated with the messianic Dhikr, even as the likeness of the Ḥujjat (Proof) nigh Muhammad, the khātam al-nabiyyīn. It seems to be implied that the messianic "Hour" is about to be realized through the close relationship between the Dhikr (Remembrance) and the twelfth Imam or Ḥujjat-Allāh, the messianic Proof of God. In translation, this passage within QA LXVI [66], reads as follows:

“O Thou Jet-Black Tree (shajarat al-sawdā’)! ...This is a Book which We revealed, in very truth, blessed and confirmatory of the Truth (al-ḥaqq). This that the people might be informed that the [messianic] Ḥujjat of God (“Proof of God”), in the mode of the Dhikr (Remembrance), is even as the likeness of His Ḥujjat (messianic “Proof”), nigh Muhammad, the khātam al-nabbiyyīn (the ‘Seal of the Prophets’). In the Archetypal [Mother] Book (umm al-kitāb) this [eschatological] matter was mighty indeed (QA ., LXVI [66] Sūrat al-aḥadiyya, p.132).

In subsequent years (1848-50) the sometimes thinly veiled ‘messianic secret’ of the Bāb’s claim to be the Dhikr - Qā’im / Mahdī and maẓhar-i ilāhī (Manifestation of God), was publicly broadcast and his more exalted claims openly promulgated (see Persian Bayān, Kitāb-i panj sha`n, etc). Through his bold claims and thousands of allegedly revealed Arabic and Persian verses, he strove to outwardly exemplify the transcendence of the narrow understanding of the khatam al-nabiyyīn of the Qur’an.

Early on in his trenchant Arabic *Izhāq al-bāṭil* (The Crushing of Falsehood, 1845) on the basis of his analysis of the abovementioned Qayyūm al-asmā’, the Persian Shaykhī leader Karīm Khān Kirmānī (d. 1871) not surprisingly accused the

Bāb of such heresy as went well beyond the constraints of Islamic Shī'ī piety.³⁰ In more recent times, hundreds of Sunnī and Shī'ī anti-Bābī and Bahā'ī tracts citing and centering around Q. 33:40, have been penned by Muslims bent on crushing out the need for messianic reform, renewal and revolution (see for example, Yahya Noori, *Khātamiyyat*, many 20th and 21st cent. printings). Messianic claimants (like the Bāb, Mirza Ghulām Aḥmad and Bahā'-Allāh) have often been mercilessly condemned in the light of Qur'ān 33:40. Pious religionists have been shunned and consigned to oblivion. Any proposed eschatological plan of God has been eclipsed by 'finality fundamentalists' objecting to divinely inspired human messengers with their new hopes for humankind.

In their writings, the Bāb and Bahā'-Allāh never ceased referring to Muhammad as the *khātam al-nabbiyīn* (Qur'ān 33:40b).³¹ For them it did not necessitate the finality of prophethood nor outrule eschatological messianism. The Qur'ān-rooted and repeated hope for an eschatological theophany precipitating judgement, guidance, justice and millennial peace, was not compromised. Though there are numerous hadith texts interpreting Qur'ān 33:40b with implications of finality, there are repeated injunctions in the Qur'ān against doubting the *liqā'-Allāh*, the eschatological encounter or meeting with God through his messianic or theophanic representative. We shall see below that according to the writings of the Bāb and Bahā'-Allāh, God, in His Essence (*dhāt*), cannot be seen or encountered.³² Early on in his ministry (c. 1845 CE) in a 'Letter to Salmān' (perhaps written from Musqat), the Bāb had already confirmed that the eschaton, "The [eschatological] "Hour" (*al-sa`at*) had "come to pass" and that the "signs" associated with this time were being realized in a literal and/ or symbolic manner:

³⁰ The full title of this Arabic work is *Izhāq al-bāṭil dar radd al-Bābiyya* ("The Crushing of Falsehood in refutation of the Bābī phenomenon"). It was completed on the 12th Rajab 1261/17th July 1845 or just a year after the prophetic declaration of the Bāb on May 22 [23], 1844.

³¹ The XXV/25th sūrah of the QA of the Bāb is entitled *Sūrat al-khāta'im*, the 'Surah of the Seal / Ringstone' which is distinctly eschatological with repeated references to the messianic *Dhikr Allāh* (Remembrance of God), thus transcending any finality read into Q. 33:40. For further references of the Bāb and Bahā'-Allāh to the qur'ānic *khātam al-nabiyyīn* and related matters see below Appendix One.

³² See esp. Q. 6:30, 130; 7:51, 145; 10:7,12, 15, 46; 13:2; 18:105; 23:33; 25:23; 30:8, 15; 32:10, 14; 39:71; 40:15; 41:54 and 45:34.

... these are the verses of the Tablet (al-lawḥ) which were revealed by God according to the levels of the deep inner sense of the Qur'ān (ḥukm bāṭin al-Qur'ān) perchance the people may come to faith in the [newly revealed] verses of God.

Say: O thou concourse of the people of the Qur'ān! ... There hath indeed come unto thee the Dhikr (messianic Remembrance) from the Baqiyyat-Allāh (occulted, messianic "Remembrance of God")³³ (L-Salman, INBMC 91: 52-55. Cf. Ibid p.89).

We may now pass on to examine a few Qur'ānic and other Islamic testimonies to an eschatological theophany or vision of God, the Lord, since they too are often held by the Bāb and Bahā'-Allāh to transcend the finality of prophethood.

The Islamic Vision of the "Lord" (al-rabb) on the Day of Resurrection.

"God is He who raised up the heavens without pillars you can see, then He sat Himself upon the Throne... He distinguishes the signs; haply you will have faith in the encounter with your Lord (liqā' rabbika)" (Qur'ān 13: 2).

"No indeed! When the earth is ground to powder, and thy Lord comes forth (wa jā` rabbuka), and the angels rank on rank" (Qur'ān 89: 21-22).

"Faces [of believers] shall shine brightly (nāḍira) on that Day [of Resurrection] gazing upon their Lord (rabb)" (Qur'ān 75: 22-3).

The Islamic implications of such Qur'ānic verses as have been cited above, have been well summed up in the following succinct manner by Murata and Chittick:

"We have seen that the Koran promises in no uncertain terms that people will encounter their Lord. One of the questions that theologians often debated was whether or not this encounter implied the vision of God. Most thought that it did, and they had Koranic verses and hadiths to support them. The general picture, in fact, is that the vision of God is the greatest possible bliss, and that all those taken to paradise will achieve it. However, those who remain in hell

³³ In messianic twelver Shi'ism, the title Baqiyyat Allāh (Remnant of [the true religion of] God) can refer to an eschatological figure whose advent in the latter-days was expected.

will be barred from this vision, and this will amount to the worst possible chastisement” (Murata and Chittick, 1994: 177).

In line with those Qur’ānic passages which speak of the eschatological therophany, the encounter or meeting (liqā’) with the Lord (rabb) (see Q. 13:2) and of the eschatological vision of the Lord (rabb), there are traditions ascribed to Muhammad about a latter-day vision of God as the resplendent and luminous “Lord” (rabb).³⁴ One such frequently recorded Sunnī tradition, is registered in slightly variant forms in the Ṣaḥīḥ (the Reliable/Sound) of Muhammad ibn Ismā’īl al-Bukhārī (d.256/870), Within, for example, the Kitāb al-Tafsīr (Book of Qur’ān Commentary) the following tradition narrated from Abū Sa’īd al-Khudrī (c/ 65/584) is found:

During the lifetime of the Prophet [Muhammad] it was said, ‘O Messenger of God! Shall we see our Lord (rabb) on the Day of Resurrection (yawm al-qiyyāma)?’ The Prophet said, ‘Yes!’ (na`am); do you have any difficulty in seeing the sun (al-shams) at midday when it is bright (ḍaw’) and there is no cloud (al-saḥāb) [in the sky]?’ They replied, “No.” He said, “Do you have any difficulty in seeing the moon (al-qamar) on the night of the full moon (laylat al-badr) when it is bright (ḍaw’) and there is no cloud (al-saḥāb) [in the sky]?’ They replied, “No.” The Prophet said, Likewise will you have no difficulty in seeing God (Allāh) on the Day of Resurrection as you have no difficulty in seeing either of them [the sun or the moon]... (Lambden, trans. Arabic Bukhārī, 1997, al-Sahih, vol. 6, Bk. 65 No. 4581, pp. 90-92).

This above ḥadīth from the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī, further has it that “On the Day of Resurrection ... the Lord of the worlds (rabb al-`ālamīn)” will come to various ummat (religious communities) in a “form”, “shape” or mode closest (adnā sūrat) to the vision of Him expected or “generated by the people themselves”. It then adds that the true eschatological vision of God will be a universal, personal vision of the Qur’ānic God.

³⁴ There exist many ḥadīth about the eschatological vision of God, the resplendent Lord, in numerous respected Sunnī and Shī’ī Islamic sources. These include Islamic Tafsīr literatures and, for example, the ḥadīth collections of al-Bukhārī, Muslim (d. 875 CE), Ibn Mājah (d. 886 CE), al-Tirmidhī (d. 815 CE), Abū Dāwūd (d. 888 CE) and al-Nasā’ī (d. 915 CE), as well as in the early al-Muwattā’ (“The Approved”) of Imam Mālik ibn Anas (d.179/795) (see further fn. 35 and Appendix 6 below).

Several Sunnī traditions about the vision of the Lord on the Day of Resurrection are also found in the *Kitāb al-Tawhīd* (Book of the Divine Unity) within the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī where they are considered expository of Qur'ān 75:22-23 (cited above), including the following narration from a certain Jarīr ibn 'Abd-Allāh al-Bajalī (d. ca. 51/671),

We were sitting with the Prophet [Muhammad] and he looked at the moon (al-qamar) on the night of the full moon (laylat al-badr) and said, "You shall see your Lord (rabb) just as you see this [full] moon (al-qamar), and you will have no difficulty or trouble in observing Him (ru'yatihi)... (Lambden, trans Arabic Bukhārī, 1997, al-Sahih, vol.9, Bk. 97 No. 7434. p. 318).

More categorically, Jarīr ibn 'Abd-Allāh al-Bajalī is again cited by al-Bukhārī as narrating that the Prophet said:

"You will indeed see your Lord (rabb) with your own eyes" (satrūna rabbakum 'iyyān^{an}) (Lambden, trans Arabic Bukhārī, 1997, al-Sahih, vol. 9, Bk. 97 No. 7435. p. 318).³⁵

In certain of these and other early, related traditions, the expected normally formless Lord (rabb) is to appear on the Day of Resurrection in human-like ("anthropomorphic") "form" (*ṣūrat*). In some texts this has messianic and theophanological implications. Within Islamic theological writings, it is admitted that God may manifest Himself in whatever manner he pleases; as, for example, a human-like Deity (human beings are in "His image" Gen. 1:27) redolent of divine, supernatural beauty (al-jamāl). In some traditions God, the latter-day Lord, is pictured as taking on beautiful bodily forms, like that of the youthful prophet Jesus or Muhammad. Even the archangel Gabriel is said to have assumed the stunningly beautiful form of the merchant Dihya al-Kalbī (d. c. 45/618; see Lammens and Pellat, "Dihya", in EI²). According to Islamic sources, God, the Lord, may thus exhibit outstandingly beautiful

³⁵ Refer, additionally, to the similar traditions about the vision of the Lord on the Day of Resurrection recorded by al-Bukhārī in the *Kitāb al-Tawhīd* (Book of the Divine Unity) and elsewhere ; e.g. from Jarīr (No. 7436, pp. 318-9), from 'Ata' ibn Yazid al-Laithi as narrated from Abū Hurayrah (No. 7437, p. 319-322), from 'Aṭā' bin Yazid and several times from Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī (No. 7438, p. 322+ No. 7438, p. 322), etc. See also Appendix 6 below.

features, appearing at times as an adolescent “beardless youth” (al-shābb / amrad)³⁶ or as an “Ancient of Days”, old man or Shaykh. According to Anas ibn Mālik (d. 91-93 /708-10), Muhammad himself is said to have stated,

I saw my Lord (rabbi) in the most beautiful form (aḥsan sūrat) like a youth with abundant hair (ka'l-shābb al-mūfiri) on the throne of grace (kursī karāmat), with a golden rug (firāshun min dhahab) spread out around Him... (cited Ritter 2003: 459).³⁷

Bābī and Bahāī sacred writings often underline the fact that God can never be directly seen, or incarnated as a human being (Q. 6:103, Q. 112). Yet, He can be visioned or “seen”, after the “image” of his divine Manifestation, who is often pictured in human, super-human or in diverse symbolic and supernatural terms. Without incarnation, the formless, yet imaged divine “Beauty” according to Abrahamic religious sources, suffuses the whole of creation and may be visioned. Bahā’-Allāh and his successors taught that past prophets visioned the eschatological Lord as the human-like “Glory” (kavod) or the divine Splendour of God (see Ezekiel 1:26f and 10; Revelation 1:12ff), as an archangelic being such as Michael (Heb. = “One like unto God”), or as the Danielic “Ancient of Days” (Dan. 7 : 7, 9, 22; 1 Enoch 46:1; 71:10). The symbolic language of Abrahamic sacred scripture and numerous post-biblical Jewish writings, have the great Messenger founders and expected manifestation of Divinity, as being portrayed in elevated human and/or Divine terms. Though never to be taken literally, the sacred writings of the world’s religions, including Islamic ḥadīth texts, sometimes picture God in elevated “human” terms.

³⁶ The prophetic tradition relayed from `Ikrima picturing the “Lord” as a “beardless Youth” (al-shābb) can be found in various hadith collections and in numerous Sufi and other sources including the writings of the great mystic Ibn al-`Arabī (d. 1240). See his al-Futuḥāt al-makkiyya (“The Meccan Disclosures”) vol. I: 97, 755; II: 377, 426; III: 111, 330, IV: 182, 474 etc. For further details and references in early Islamic literatures, Ritter, 2003 esp. Ch. 26 p. 460f.

³⁷ Traditions relayed from Ibn `Abbas (d. c. 68/687), the `Father of Tafsir`, have it that on the night of his Mi`rāj (ascent through the heavens), Muhammad saw Jesus as a snow-white (bayḍā') shābb (youth) with curly or long hair. Also worth noting here, are the observations of the 8th Imam `Alī al-Ridā' (d. 201/818). This on a possibly originally Sunnī registered tradition (summed up by Hisham ibn Salim, Salīḥ al-Taḥiq and al-Maythamī), about an alleged vision of Muhammad picturing God as a youth of thirty years but `hollow` down to the navel, then of solid form, apparently for standing upright (see al-Kulaynī, al-Kafi, Pt. II. Sect. 10, Hadīth 266).

Eschatological portraits of Divinity with messianic implications are sometimes viewed by Bahā'īs as glimpses of the “Glory-Beauty” (Bahā') of the person of Bahā'-Allāh. The eschatological ‘coming of God’, the Lord, is demythologized in Bābī-Bahā'ī texts relative to messianic, prophetic fulfilment (see further below).

The Eschatological Encounter / Meeting with God, the Lord. ³⁸

رَفِيعُ الدَّرَجَاتِ ذُو الْعَرْشِ يُلْقِي الرُّوحَ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ
عِبَادِهِ لِيُنذِرَ يَوْمَ التَّلَاقِ ﴿١٥﴾

“He [God] is elevated above all levels, the Possessor of the celestial Throne (al-`arsh), The Spirit (al-rūḥ) is cast forth at His command upon whomsoever He willeth among His servants, as a warning about the Day of the Encounter (yawm al-talāq)” (Surat Ghāfir, ‘The Forgiver’, 40:15).

Great messianic, theophanological importance was given by the Bāb and Bahā'u'llāh to the qur'ānic references to liqā'- Allāh, the latter-day meeting or encounter with God (including Q. 6:31; 130, 154; 7:51,147; 10:7ff; 13:2 etc.).³⁹ In the Qur'ān itself the eschatological Day of Judgement or Resurrection (yawm al-qiyyāma), is referred to as the yawm al-talāq, the “Day of the the Encounter” with God (see above, Q. 40:15). This future era of the interface, beatific vision, or meeting with the Divine is referred to around twenty-four times in thirteen different surahs (chapters) of the Qur'ān (see above, the Kassis, Concordance, 744 and Appendix 5 below). In the Bābī-Bahā'ī viewpoint, the Qur'ānic liqā'-Allāh is not simply an individual post-death or afterlife beautiful experience, but an individual and/or collective end-time experience of God through His outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the coming his latest Messenger, the eschatological Manifestation of God who represents the Godhead in the worlds of creation.

³⁸ While numerous other translations are possible, the centrally important qur'ānic Arabic phrase liqā' Allah will usually be translated here with the suitably neutral “encounter” / “the encounter with God” (so Arberry). Among other possibilities, the translation “the meeting with God/ the Lord” is especially appropriate to its Bābī-Bahā'ī historical and theological senses.

³⁹ For a complete list of references for the qur'ānic liqā' Allāh, including nominal and verbal uses of the root letters (l-q-w) see Kassis, Concordance, 744f.

The Persian and Arabic Bayāns (Expositions).

Though present in earlier writings dating prior to 1848 (after 1260 AH/1844 CE), the Bāb gave clear elucidation to the meaning of the Qur'ānic promise of the liqā' Allāh (the Encounter / Meeting with God) in his Persian and Arabic Bayāns or scriptural 'Expositions' set down around 1848. The encounter or meeting with God/the Lord is the specific subject of Bayāns III.7 (cf. II.7; VI.13 VIII.5). In the Persian Bayān, the Arabic-Persian word liqā' encounter meeting, etc., occurs more than fifty times. Aside from God himself this key term (or other verbal and nominal forms of the Arabic) is most frequently linked with Muhammad, the Bāb and the messianic man yuzhīru-hu Allāh (Him whom God shall make manifest). Having theophanic import, it is often associated with the Manifestation of God (maẓhar-i ilāhī) or with his many associated titles such as mashiyyat (the Divine Will) or the shajarat-i ḥaqīqa (Tree of Truth). In the writings of the Bāb references to the encounter with God are often found in theologically complex contexts. They often express sentiments summed up in the following beatitude of the Bāb found in Persian Bayān VIII.6, "Blessed be whomsoever comprehends the liqā'-Allāh (Encounter with God) on the Day of His theophany (ẓuhūr)" (printed ed., 287).⁴⁰ The following few paragraphs sum up and comment upon a select number of key references of the Bāb to the subject of the Encounter with God (liqā' Allāh), the Lord in his Bayāns. They have to do with past divine manifestations and with a coming, realized or future eschatological theophany.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Note also the following beatitude in P. Bayan VIII.16, "Blessed be whomsoever maketh mention of Fatherhood (abuwiyya) relative to the Dhikr (messianic Remembrance) of His Lord!" (p. 301).

⁴¹ See especially Persian Bayan (with page refs. from the well-known printed edition) : I.1 (p.3); II.1 (pp. 3, 19, Qur'an 13:2 is cited here); II. 7 (pp. 30-33); II. 8 (p.36); II.16 (p. 58, 63); II.17 (p. 66, 71); II.18 (p. 73); III. 3 (p.78); III. 7 (pp. 81-82, around 18 refs. in this section); III.11 (p. 90); IV. 8 (p. 128); IV.17 (p. 146); VI.13 (219-228 Qur'an 13:2 [3] is again cited or paraphrased on p. 222 here); VI. 8 (p.213); VI.13 (p.222, 226); VII. 6 (p. 247); VII.6 (p.247); VII.17 (p. 263 = tilqā' al-shams; p. 265); VIII.1 (p. 274); VIII.2 (p. 277-8); VIII. 6 (p. 287, a Beatitude); VIII.16 (p. 301); VIII.17 (p.304); IX.3. (pp. 314, 317), etc.

Unlike its probably earlier Persian counterpart, the often terse Arabic Bayān only occasionally (less than seven times) directly refers to the liqā'-Allāh/ al-rabb.⁴² Arabic Bayān II: 7 on the Day of Resurrection, makes important passing reference to the liqā' Allāh, the Encounter with God. and may be loosely translated as follows:

The seventh gate [Unity II.7] concerns the Day of Resurrection (yawm al-qiyāma) just as you have come to understand. From the onset of its dawning forth through the Sun of Glory (shams al-bahā') until the time of its setting, is better in the Book of God than any period of "Night" (al-layl), as is evident to such as comprehend. Indeed! God did not create anything save for this Day of Resurrection, for thereon all are destined for the liqā' Allāh, the Encounter with God, consonant that is, with such action as accords with His good-pleasure.

On the Day of Resurrection this [liqā' Allāh] will be outwardly realized (ẓāhir^{an}) ... whosoever attains the Encounter with Him [God] (liqā'ihī) hath assuredly attained the Encounter with Me (liqā'ī) [the Bāb] though one should not be content with this if one has not had personal experience thereof. Wherefore, should thou be mindful of this quintessence of the [eschatological Day of the] Hereafter (ḥarf al-ākhir) and be conscious of thine own limitations (Ar-Bayān II: 7, text in al-Ḥasani, 84 cf. Nicolas 1905:103-4).

Here the yawm al-qiyāma (Day of resurrection) is identified by the Bāb with the "Day" of the liqā'-Allāh, the Encounter with God. It commences with the rising up of the manifestation of God as the radiant "Sun of Bahā'-Glory" which eclipses the phase or era of the "night time" of the darkness of unawareness or irreligiosity. The personalistic theological actualization of the liqā' Allāh (encounter with God) on the 'Day of Resurrection', is the faith-generating encounter or meeting with the Bāb himself, along with the practise of such deeds as are befitting of his new era and are acceptable to God.⁴³

⁴² See especially Arabic Bayān (with page refs. from the well-known al-Hasani printed edition) II.7 (p, 84); III.7 (p, 86); cf. VII.9 (p.94 tilqā'); X. 6 (p.101; expressed verbally; cf. Qur'ān, 43:83; 52:45; 70:42).

⁴³ As early as 1865, Gobineau (with the assistance of others) translated the Arabic Bayān which he entitled the 'Ketab-e-Hukkam' (sic. for the Arabic Bayān) in Les Religions... 2nd ed. 1866, pp.

Persian Bayan II:7 also describes itself as pertaining to the Day of Resurrection which is here defined as “the Day of the Manifestation of the “Tree of Reality (yawm-i zuhūr-i shajarat-i ḥaqīqat)”, something synonymous with the era of the theophany of the Messenger of God. Acting contrary to what should take place at the time of the eschatological liqā’ Allāh (Encounter with God), people exiled the Bāb from the heart of the Islamic world to a remote mountain in Ādhirbayjān (NW Persia) known as Mākū. Because God, the Most Sanctified Essence (dhāt-i aqdas), is ever beyond human approachability, people were destined to meet his representative, the Bāb as the ‘Tree of Reality. Meeting him as the Primordial Tree (shajarat-i awwaliyya) is the meeting with God promised in the Qur’ān. This encounter, however, in the light of his worldly occultation in Mākū, might be fulfilled by obtaining a token devotional portion of clay (ḥīn) from the vicinity of his Shiraz house (or perhaps the Meccan Ka’ba). Associated actions could then be viewed as tantamount to realizing the Encounter or Meeting with God in the face of the unavailability of the person of the Bāb (P Bayan II.7, printed ed, pp. 30-33).

Speaking with the voice of God in Arabic Bayān III: 7, the Bāb boldly opens this section by declaring that human beings, “my creation/creatures”, can never comprehend His Reality, let alone gain any direct vision of Him. It is thus the case that whatever was revealed in the Qur’ān about the liqā’ (Encounter / Meeting) with Him, forever has and will forever pertain to the one who represents Him. Knowledge of this is “Greatest of Paradises” (a`zam al- jannāt). This can be grasped by such as are capable of appropriating deep “gnosis” (‘irfān).⁴⁴

461-543. For Ar. Bayān II: 7 see p. 478. The French writer Nicholas also translated Arabic Bayān II: 7 pages 103-4 in his 1905 translation, *Le Bayan Arabe...* (see bib. below).

⁴⁴ For Ar. Bayān III.7, see Gobineau, ‘*Ketab-e-Hukkam*’ in *Les Religiones*, p. 484. Nicholas also translated Arabic Bayān III. 7 on page 114 of in his 1905 translation, *Le Bayan Arabe...*

The Arabic summary prefixed to Persian Bayān III: 7 places the messianic successor to the Bāb, man yuzhīru-hu Allāh (Him whom God will make manifest) at the centre of the eschatological Encounter/Meeting with God (liqā' Allāh):⁴⁵

The seventh gate of the third unity concerns that which God hath revealed concerning the meeting with Him (liqā') or the meeting with the Lord (liqā' al-rabb). This since the intention is the person of man yuzhīru-hu Allāh (Him whom God will make manifest) for God in his Essence (dhāt) cannot possibly be seen.

The subsequent, main text of Persian Bayān III: 7, continues by underling the incomprehensibility and indescribability of the Ultimate Divine Essence (dhāt-i azal), Godhead or the Real (ḥaqq).⁴⁶ The scriptural mention of His liqā' (the Encounter) is outwardly possible only through His Manifestation (zāhir bi-zuhūr-i ū) by which is intended the "Point of Reality" (nuḡṡat-i ḥaqīqa) which "hath ever been and will forever remain the Primal Will of God (mashiyyat-i avvaliyya)". The Qur'ān, the Bāb continues, makes mention of both the liqā' Allāh (the Encounter with God) and the liqā'-i Rabb (Encounter with the Lord). This through the aforementioned Primal Will of God (mashiyyat-i avvaliyya) centered in the Prophet Muhammad, the Messenger of God (rasūl Allāh). In stages, or little by little, there is a further descent of this primordial Reality (centred in Muhammad) until everything (har shay') is affected by the powers of the encounter; though, he adds, there is no obvious evidence for this, save what God himself discloses of the descending ramifications, the shadows of that Primordial Reality (ḥaqīqat-i avvaliyya). This divine phenomenon is evident in the Reality (ḥaqq) of the rightly-guided twelver Imams, for "whomsoever hath known them, hath indeed known God". The liqā' Reality of the encounter descended in a similar manner through the knowledge or gnosis ('ilm) of the Bāb as a "Gate" (bāb-i

⁴⁵ The messianic phrase man yuzhīru-hu Allāh (Him whom God will make manifest) was very frequently used by the Bāb in his later writings to designate his successor and/or future successors. This elevated figure is mentioned over 200 times in the Persian Bayān. For Baha'is it is a title referring to Bahā'u'llāh himself (see further below).

⁴⁶ I have consulted the original texts of Persian Bayan III: 7 in Minasian Coll. Ms. 741, pp. 165-168; INBMC 24: 161-2; Azalī ed. 81-82. cf. also Nicholas 1913, II: 28-31. See further, Browne, 'A Summary of the Contents of the Persian Bayān' (on Per. Bayan III: 7) in Momen ed. 1987.

maftūḥ) swung open. A new fullness of Divinity was made possible through the youthful Sayyid of Shiraz.

The “Pre-Existent Reality” also made possible the liqā’ Allāh (Encounter with God) relative to the Reality (ḥaqq) of the person of faith or believer (mu’min). The believing soul is able thereby to attain a state of “bliss” or “happiness” (surūr), which is described as the very bliss or happiness of Muhammad the Messenger of God, further said to be tantamount to the “bliss” or “happiness” of God Himself (surūr-i khudā). On the other hand, the believing soul may come to experience a state of “lamentation” or “sadness” (ḥuzn) which is again said to be tantamount to the “lamentation” or “sadness” (ḥuzn) of the Prophet Muhammad and thus of God Himself. The goal of the true believer is to attain to the “Primordial Divine Reality” through the persons of the Gates of imamological or eschatological guidance (ḥaqīqat-i avvaliyya-yi abwāb-i hudā). In this way every soul may attain their ultimate goal relative to the mystery of the liqā’-Allāh (the Encounter with God).

The case of the effect of these primordial liqā’-Allāh (Divine encounter) generating divine forces on the wayward unbeliever, is said to result in nothing but “hell-fire” (al-nār). The encounter with God becomes an act of eschatological judgement resulting in archetypal “happiness” (al-surūr) or deep “sadness” (al-huzn), the paradise of “heaven” or the depths of “hell”. Any person who attains to the post-Babi, messianic man yuzhiru-hu Allāh (Him whom God will make manifest), has truly experienced the great liqā’ Allāh / liqā’-i rabb, the fullness of the Encounter with God or the Presence of the Lord.⁴⁷

Persian and Arabic Bayāns VI.13 concern the number of the gates or entrances to the house of the Bāb; they should not exceed ninety-five (= 5 x 19). Perhaps because gateways can be openings to a place of spiritual encounter, the subject of the encounter/meeting with God (liqa’ Allāh), is several times raised. Mention is made of the duration of the Islamic dispensation (spanning 1270 years or up until 1260 AH = 1844 CE), then to a period of Ziyāra (sacred Visitation) for the purpose actualizing the “Encounter with God” (liqā’ Allāh). It is explicitly stated that

⁴⁷ A 1913 French translation by Nicolas de Perle. Bayān III: 7 can be found in volume 2 (pp. 28-31) of his 4 vol. translation of the Persian Bayān (see bib. below). An Azālī printed edition of the Persian Bayān was first printed in the 1960s (see bib. below).

“all were created” for this (p, 222). Linked with the ‘Encounter with God’ (liqā’ Allāh) or with the Lord, this Ziyārat (visitation) to the house of the Bāb, this matter is referenced in the key opening verse (verse 2 or 3) of the Sūrat al-Ra’d (‘Surah of Thunder’, Q, 13). The Divine encounter through a sacred journey is further related to visitation to the site of the bodies or tombs of the ‘Letters of the Living’ (ḥurūfāt al-ḥayy ; eighteen of the Bāb’s most important disciples). Towards the end of VI.13 (printed ed. p.226), the rising up of the Sun of Reality (shams-i ḥaqīqat) is associated with a state of preparedness for the Encounter with God (liqā’ Allāh) on the Day of Resurrection (yawm al-qiyāma) (printed Azali, ed. pp. 219-228). Finally, in this connection, it should be noted that Arabic Bayān VI.13 boldly relates the encounter with God (liqā’ Allāh) with a meeting with the Bāb himself. This is declared to be the “greatest of Paradises” (a`zam al-jannāt) (Ar, Bayan III.7, al-Hasani, p. 86).

The Persian Dalā'il-i sab`a (Seven Proofs).

The Bāb registers the theological centrality of the liqā’ Allāh (Encounter with God) in his Persian Dalā'il-i sab`a. After celebrating the exalted status of the Prophet Muhammad, he underlines the fact that all were created for the purpose of the eschatological liqā’ (Encounter/Meeting), though not for actualizing any direct relationship with God, the apophatic, Eternal Divine Essence (dhāt-i azal). Rather, it revolves around an interaction with His agent of communication, the Divine Manifestation of Reality (mazhar-i ḥaqīqat). On this level nothing can establish the depth of His gnosis (‘irfān) though this matter is known by virtue of His own Logos Self (bi-nafsihi). The rulers or kings of the Islamic domains during the Qajar period, in their wastefulness and self-centeredness, are said by the Bāb to have failed to appoint any agent to inform everybody about an immanent or actual fulfilment of the liqā’ (Encounter with God) for which all were created (Per. Dalā'il, 31ff).

The Futurity of Prophethood and Divine Guidance.

It is today a central Bābī-Bahā'ī teaching that future divine messengers (al-rusul) or mazhar-i ilāhī (divine manifestations) will, for many thousands of years, found and progressively renew the eternal religion of God. The Bāb’s claim to be the Sunni-Shī'ī messiah, the Qā'im/Mahdī and one in whom the liqā’ Allāh (Encounter /

Meeting with God) finds fulfilment, did not prevent or inhibit his also predicting numerous future messianic advents of the perhaps originally Sufi figure *man yuẓhiru-hu Allāh* (Him whom God shall make manifest). All these future theophanies are events expressive of the *liqā' Allāh* (Divine Encounter) which finds successive fulfilments (Goldziher, 1921 tr. Lambden & Walker 1992). This is indicated in a passage from the Bāb's late *Kitāb-i panj sha'n* ('Book of the Five Grades', 1850 CE) where the following words could be taken to indicate an infinite number¹ of future theophanies of the Bābī theophanic messiah, *man yuẓhiru-hu-Allāh*:

.. And after the Bayān comes [the theophany of] *man yuẓhiru-hu Allāh* (He whom God will make manifest) [1]. And after *man yuẓhiru-hu Allāh* [1] *man yuẓhiru-hu Allāh* [2]. And after *man yuẓhiru-hu Allāh* [2] *man yuẓhiru-hu Allāh* [3]. And after *man yuẓhiru-hu Allāh*, [3] *man yuẓhiru-hu Allāh* [4]. And after *man yuẓhiru-hu Allāh* [4] *man yuẓhiru-hu Allāh* [5]. And after *man yuẓhiru-hu Allāh* [5] *man yuẓhiru-hu Allāh* [6]. And after *man yuẓhiru-hu Allāh* [6] *man yuẓhiru-hu Allāh* [7]. And after *man yuẓhiru-hu Allāh* [7] *man yuẓhiru-hu Allāh* [8]. And after *man yuẓhiru-hu Allāh* [8] *man yuẓhiru-hu Allāh* [9] ... (K. Panj-Sha`n, 314-5, cf. 397).

There is a similar passage of the Bāb to the above, in his earlier Arabic *al-Dalā'il al-Sab`a* (Seven Proofs, c. 1849). Commenting on the Qur'ānic statement of Muhammad about past prophets (*al-nabiyyīn*; cf. the *khatam al-nabiyyīn* of Q. 33:40), he emphasizes that this indicates their essential oneness in promoting a single religion or Cause of God (*amr wāḥid*). This oneness continues from the Islamic era until that of the Bāb as the "Point of the Bayān. Thereafter from the Point of the Bayān it continues until the era of the first messianic *man yuẓhiru-hu Allāh* (Him whom God shall make manifest)" and subsequently to another *man yuẓhiru-hu Allāh* and yet another *man yuẓhiru-hu Allāh*. This messianic theophany, the Bāb then states, will continue on "unto the end (*ākhir*) which knoweth no end (*ākhir*)" (Ar. *Dalā'il*, p. y = 10).

The position of the Bāb is thus the exact opposite of the Islamic proponents of the doctrine of the finality of prophethood. The mention of nine or of an endless succession of theophanies of *man yuẓhiru-hu Allāh* (He whom God will make manifest), most likely indicates their endless future realization. Towards the end of his life in his *Haykal al-dīn* (Temple of Religion, 1266/1850), the Bāb made

increasing mention of "He whom God will make manifest". He variously indicated the time of his messianic advents at after nine (=1269/1852), nineteen (= 1279 =1862-3) or between 1511 (abjad of Ar. ghiyāth = 'the Assistance') and 2001 years (abjad of Ar. mustaghāth = 'The One Invoked for help') from 1260/1844. These latter figures were understood by Bahā'-Allāh as either numerically and/ or messianically suggestive Names of God, sometimes indicative of the nine (1844-1852-3 CE) or nineteen year period (1844-1863 CE), sometimes of non-chronological import. Certain of these diverse messianic datings are also viewed as allusions to the times of further future, post-Bābī-Bahā'ī era theophanies (see Bahā'-Allāh, Lawḥ-i Khalīl Ibrahim Muballigh Shirazi, pp.1-30; 'O Thou Creator', Hebrew Univ. ms.).

Khātamiyya and the Liqā' Allāh in the writings of Bahā'-Allāh

"The mystery of this theme (khātamiyya, "the sealedness of the prophets") hath in this Dispensation (ḡuhūr)... been a sore test (mumtaḥan) unto all mankind" (KI: ¶ 172-3, pp. 107-8 trans. 162).⁴⁸

It has been indicated above that the Arabic word khātam in khātam al-nabiyyīn (Q. 33:40) need not signify "seal" implying "last" of prophets. For Bahā'īs it more appropriately indicates Muhammad as the best, the supreme "acme of the prophets" during the era before the yawm al-qiyāma (Day of Resurrection) when the liqā' Allāh, through a messianic maḡhar-i ilāhī (Manifestation of God), would be realized. Like the Bāb, Baha'-Allāh in his Kitāb-i īqān ('The Book of Certitude) specifically deals with the issue of the khatam al-nabiyyīn (seal of the prophets) in the light of the liqā' Allāh (encounter with God).

The deep theological senses of the eschatological realization of the liqā' Allāh/al-Rabb and of the future vision of the Lord God, are central to the religion founded by Bahā'-Allāh. He proclaimed the depths of this subject in the light of his theophanological claims expressed in many of his major books and scriptural Tablets. He presented his Bahā'ī religion as being established on the Day of God, the era of the presence, meeting or encounter with God (liqā' Allāh). Bahā'-Allāh many times states that the era of the liqā' Allāh (Encounter with God) was and will be

⁴⁸ Note the following almost parallel passage in the Persian Seven Proofs (Dalā'il-i sab'a) of the Bāb : "The people of the Bayān ... will be sorely tested (mumtaḥan) in man yuḡhiru-hu Allāh (Him whom God shall make manifest) (Per. Dala'il, 45).

realized through the messianic Parousia (presence) of the theophanic *mazāhar-i ilāhī* (Divine Manifestations) who renew religion from age to age. Today the *liqā' Allāh* (Divine Encounter) is thought by Bahā'īs to have come about through the persons and religious teachings or missions of the Bāb and Bahā'-Allāh, They are both seen to represent the indirect theophany of the unknowable Godhead on the Day of God (*yawm Allāh*). Throughout the forty-year period of his prophetic mission (1852-1892), Bahā'-Allāh often referred to, and commented upon, the *liqā'-Allāh*, the Encounter-Meeting with God. Only a few scriptural texts dealing with this important subject can be surveyed here.

Rashḥ-i `amā' ("The Sprinkling of the Theophanic Cloud", 1852-3).

In the fourth couplet of his early poem, the *Rashḥ-i `amā'*, there is reference to "a Wave of the Ocean of the Meeting with God' (*mawj-i liqā'*)" through which "the Sea of Purity (*baḥr-i sifā'*)" cried out. This perhaps indicates the realization of the eschatological divine theophany through the *liqā' Allah* (Encounter with God) in the Bab and/ or Bahā'-Allāh himself.

Lawḥ al-Ḥurūfāt al-muqaṭṭa`āt (Tablet on the Isolated Letters, c. 1858).

Another early writing of Bahā'-Allāh dealing with the issue of the *khātām al-nabiyyīn* (Q. 33:40b) is his testimony to the theophanic mission of the Bāb in his *Lawḥ al-Ḥurūfāt al-muqaṭṭa`āt*. The Bāb, it is said, came with all manner of "dazzling proofs", though the people "waxed proud" in their denial. This despite the qur'ānic promise of the *liqā'- Allāh* (Meeting-Encounter with God). When God sealed prophethood (*khatama al-nubuwwa*) through Muhammad (Q. 33:40) "he gave the servants the glad-tidings of the encounter with Him [God]" and the matter was "definitively resolved" (*khatama al-makhtūm*). In the person of the Bāb, "God came [unto them] in the shadows of the clouds (*fī ḡhal al-ghamām*, Q.2:210), breathed into the Trumpet of the Cause (*nafakha fī ṣūr al-amr*; cf. Q.18:99; etc), split the Heaven asunder (*inshaqqat al-samā'* cf. Q.55:37; 69:16; 84:1) and crushed the mountains to dust (Q.56:5; 69:14, etc). At this, symbolically speaking, all "retreated back upon their heels" (cf. Q.3:144; 6:71) (*Ma'ida*, IV: 65). In the *Lawḥ-i Ḥurūfāt*, Bahā'-Allāh continues to argue that in spite of the theophany of the Bāb, the people acted like

Jews and Christians. They continued to await the realization of the promises and the eschatological liqā' Allāh (Divine advent).

The Sūrat al-ṣabr (Surah of Patience) or Lawḥ-i `Ayyūb (Tablet of Job), (1863 CE)

To be added ..

Tablet to `Alī Muhammad Sarrāj (c.1867 CE)

In his decade or so later and lengthy Persian Tablet to `Alī Muhammad Sarrāj (c.1867 CE), Bahā'-Allāh himself mentions the subject of the obscurity of eschatological prophecies in Abrahamic religious scripture. He highlights the supremely clear implications (aṣraḥ al-kalimāt) of finality in the khātam al-nabbiyyīn (Q. 33:40) but thinks it has become an unfortunate, unacceptable veil, inhibiting post-Islamic faith in another supreme agent of God. Despite its implications of finality, Baha'u'llah has it that pure-hearted persons still came to true faith in the Point of the Bayān (bi-irfān nuqṭa-yi bayān = the Bāb). Indeed, he adds, such pure-hearted persons so comprehended the matter of khātimiyyat ("sealedness") that they would happily acknowledge the appearance of a "prophet" (nabī) "from the beginning which has no beginning unto the end which has no end" (Lawḥ-i Sarrāj, Ma'ida, VII: 28ff).

For the Bāb and Bahā'-Allāh, the qur'ānic khātam al-nabiiyyīn in no way rules out the theophany of divinity on the eschatological "Day of God" (yawm Allāh). Even if it is taken to outrule the finality of the appearance of a post-Muhammad nabī (prophet) or even rasūl (sent one), it does not negate an eschatological theophany. Both the Bāb and Bahā'-Allāh claimed to be fully human yet fully divine maẓhar-i ilāhī (Manifestations of God) in a way that transcends issues revolving around the various limiting meanings of the khātam al-nabiiyyīn. In fact Bahā'-Allāh so transcended these matters that in numerous theophanological passages he presents himself as the divine figure who commissioned or sent out the nabī (Prophets) and rasūl (Messengers) of the pre-Islamic era. In an important untitled Arabic Tablet of the Acre period, the Lawḥ-i Ḥasan or Lawḥ-i Khātam (see below), Bahā'-Allāh defends himself against accusations that he has contradicted the Muslim understanding of Q. 33:40b by stating:

You have assuredly confirmed [the truth] by what you have announced [in citing Q. 33:40b]. We do indeed testify that through him [Muhammad]

messengership and prophethood (al-risāla wa'l-nubuwwa) were sealed up. Whomsoever after him [Muhammad] makes claim to such an elevated station is indeed in manifest error.... The carpet of prophethood (bisāt al-nubuwwa) has been rolled up and there has appeared the one who sent them out (arsal) [Bahā'-Allāh] in manifest sovereignty... (Untitled Tablet to Ḥasan or `Lawḥ-i Khātām al-nabbiyīn').

Jawahir al-asrār (“The Gems of the Mysteries” (c.1861)). ⁴⁹

The Arabic Jawāhir al-asrār (Gems of the Mysteries) of Bahā'-Allāh was written in Baghdad in c. 1277/1860-61 in response to questions posed by Sayyid Yūsuf Sidihi (Isfahanī), a pupil of the high-ranking Shīṭī cleric, the one-time marja` al-taqīd (supreme Shīṭī authority), Shaykh Murtaḍā al-Anṣārī (d. Najaf 1864). It contains ten or eleven references to liqā' (the encounter with God) and comments upon the theology of its end-time realization. The addressee is described as one “certain about the “Encounter with their Lord” (liqā' rabbiḥim) at a time when the wayward failed to attain unto faith in the Bāb as “His Beauty” (jamāl) on the “Day of His Encounter” (yawm liqā'ihī) (Jawahir, 7, 25, cf. trans. Gems, 7, 40).

Referring to Muhammad as the illustrious “Point of the Furqān [Qur'ān]” capable of enabling his followers to enter the jannat al-liqā, the “Paradise of the Divine Presence/ Encounter”, Bahā'-Allāh describes the subsequent “Paradise on the Day of God” (jannat fī yawm Allāh) as supreme or “greater than every other Paradise” (a`ẓam min kull al-jinān). This is indicated by the fact that, prior to it, God “sealed the station of prophethood” (khatama maqām al-nubuwwa) through Muhammad as indicated in Qur'ān 33:40. After specifically citing this Qur'ānic verse, Bahā'-Allāh straightway reminds his readers that God promised in the Qur'ān that they would all attain the liqā' (the Divine Encounter/Presence) on the Day of Resurrection” (yawm al-qiyāma). By this and by means of the Qur'ānic verses about liqā', the greatness of renewed eschatological religion (`aẓimat zuhūr al-ba`d) as the

⁴⁹ Here I shall cite the page numbers of the 2003 Arabic printing (2nd ed.) and the 2002 Gems translation (see bib.). References to liqā' (encounter) can be found on the following pages Ar. 7/Gems 7; Ar. 18/Gems 21; Ar. 34/Gems 40; Ar. 36/ Gems 42-3 (twice); Ar. 37/Gems 43-4 (twice); Ar. 39/ Gems 47; Ar. 40/Gems 48; Ar. 49/ Gems 58; Ar. 62/ Gems 73.

supreme “Paradise” is indicated. Having made this point, Bahā’-Allāh registers the following blissful clarificatory salutation:

“Blessed be he who knoweth of a certainty that he shall attain unto the presence of [encounter with] God (bi-liqā’ihi) on that Day when His Beauty (jamāl) shall be made manifest” (Jawahir, 36ff, trans. Gems, 42ff),

Holding back from citing all the numerous and elevated Qur’ānic references to the liqā’ Allāh/al-rabb, to which he assigns a tremendous importance, Bahā’-Allāh singles out Qur’ān 13:2 which he quotes in full. Finally, but not exhaustively in this connection, it should be noted that in the Jawāhir al-asrār Bahā’-Allāh several times associates the liqā’-Allāh with the coming “Day” of the “latter resurrection” (qiyāmat al-ukhrā). As in the Bayān, he closely associated this with the messianic figure man yuḏhiru-hu Allāh (“Him whom God shall make manifest” (see Jawahir, 49, 62. trans. Gems, 37, 73). In this connection a beatitude is pronounced upon the person who experiences the liqā’-Allāh through this Bābī messiah:

“So Blessed be (ṭūba) the one who experiences his presence and attains unto the Encounter/Meeting with Him” (liqā’!)” (ibid).

The Kitāb-i Īqān (Book of Certitude)

The around 1862 CE Persian Kitāb-i Īqān (Book of Certitude) of Bahā’-Allāh, contains many paragraphs clarifying theological issues, especially those surrounding the khātam al-nabiyyīn and the expected Qur’ānic liqā’ Allāh/al-Rabb, the encounter/meeting with God. Such as view the eschatological liqā’ (Encounter) as naught but a general or fully theophanic Divine tajallī (divine “Self-manifestation”, “effulgence”, “glorious theophany”, etc cf. Q. 7:143) are offered a messianic perspective. The Kitāb-i Īqān was written in reply to questions posed by a maternal uncle of the Bāb named Ḥajjī Mīrzā Sayyid Muhammad (d. 1293/1876’) and known as Khāl-i Akbar (The Greatest Uncle). He had specifically enquired about the traditional Islamic “signs” of the eschatological manifestation or theophany (zuhūr). This in the light of the messianic claims of the Bāb, including a clarification of khātam al-nabiyyīn and of the Qur’ānic liqā’ Allāh (Encounter with God).⁵⁰

⁵⁰ For some further details about the Kitāb-i Īqān see bibliography, Quinn + Lambden Elr. article.

This question of the theophany, the liqā' with God on the Day of Ressurrection, is mentioned around 37 times in the 'Book of Certitude'. Six or so of these references are found within cited qur'ānic verses, including Qur'an 2:188; Q, 29:23; Q, 2:46, 239; Q. 18:110 and Q. 13:2 (see esp. KI: ¶ 148-9; pp. 92-3, trans. 136f). In the Kitāb-i īqān, Bahā'-Allāh himself notes that there are references after Qur'ān 33:40b to the future promise of the liqā'-Allāh. He states that there is "nothing more exalted (a`ẓam) or more explicit (aṣraḥ)" than liqā' (the encounter with God/ attainment unto the divine Presence) in the Qur'ān (see esp. Q. 39:71; 40:15; 41:54, etc., Kassis Concordance, 743ff and refer KI: ¶ 181 p.112, trans. pp.169-70).

Numerous paragraphs in the Kitāb-i īqān deal directly or indirectly with the challenging subject of khātamiyya, the issue of the "seal of the prophets". Bahā'-Allāh states that people generally failed to understand the meaning of this subject. They were severely tested when this phrase obscured and challenged their understanding. This to the degree that many were deprived of the ever-unfolding providence of God through the coming of the Bāb. The exalted reality of the person of Muhammad, Bahā'-Allāh argues in the light of various Islamic traditions, was historically "timeless", both "first" and "last" and not at all something "sealed". The prophet is said to have declared his identity with all past prophets or messengers such as the first Adam, Noah, Moses and Jesus. Since Muhammad regarded himself as Adam, the "First of the Prophets", it is not at all suprising that he legitimately saw himself as the "Seal of the Prophets". This latter phrase was never meant to outrule the eternal succession of prophets who offered divine guidance. Like God Himself according to Qur'ān 57:3, the great Prophets are ever and always both the "First and the Last" (KI: ¶ 172ff., p.107ff., trans. p. 162ff).⁵¹

It is on these lines that Bahā'-Allāh in his Kitāb-i īqān and elsewhere, argues that khatām al-nabiyyīn was an important epithet of Muhammad. It underlines the

⁵¹ Bahā'-Allāh further counsels the followers of the Bāb not to be veiled by khātām al-nabiyyīn (seal of the prophets) type veils in the era of messianic fulfilment, the time of the mustaghāth ("He who is Invoked") which Baha'is regards as the person and dispensation of Bahā'-Allāh (KI: ¶ 256, p. 152 trans. 229-230). See also, furthermore, KI: ¶ 177-8, pp. 110-111, trans. 166-7 where the khātām al-nabiyyīn phrase is linked with the hubris of the wayward `ulamā' (divines) as the suhuḥāt al-jalāl ("veils of glory") mentioned within the ḥadīth of Kumayl ibn Ziyād al-Nakhaī (d. c. 81 / 701). Details cannot be given here.

elevated nature of the Arabian prophet but does not imply the absolute finality of prophethood. Understood with the sense of utter finality, Bahā'-Allāh states that khātām al-nabiyyīn degenerates into one of the hubristic subuḥāt al-jalāl ("veils of glory") which can severely hinder the realization of unfolding reality (KI: ¶ 175, p. 109, trans. 164-5).

Introducing the person of the Messengers or Manifestations of God and their ongoing rejection throughout history by their wayward contemporaries, Bahā'-Allāh refers to the eschatological liqā' ("the Divine Encounter" / "Presence") as "the very essence of the liqā' Allāh of God Himself". Clarifying the Persian text here, Shoghi Effendi had it that the Divine Messengers are "His Face (liqā')" (liqā'-i ū), the very "the Face of God Himself" (ʿayn liqā' Allāh) (KI ¶ 3 p. 2, trans. p. 3). The person of the Manifestation of God is presented as the quintessential embodiment of the liqā' Allāh (Encounter with God), the divine Theophany. The importance of this theological interface between God and his Messenger (traditionally between "Him/It" and the subordinate "Him/It"), is repeated throughout the Kitāb-i īqān as the following few notes much suffice to further illustrate.

Islamic and Pre-Islamic Liqā' (The Divine Encounter/Presence).

Observing the Jewish rejection of Jesus who is referred to as the "Beauty of Jesus" (jamāl-i ʿIsavi), Bahā'-Allāh states that the people failed to attain the liqā'-Allāh, the encounter with God, through this "youthful Nazarene" (javān-i nāṣiri). Worth noting in this connection, is the fact that various texts within the Gospels as well as many other New Testament writings and related apocryphal texts, apply prophecies of the Hebrew Bible about a Divine advent, the coming of of God, the Lord (Gk, kyrios) himself, to Jesus.⁵² For Bahā'īs the liqā' Allāh (encounter with God) was realized at the time of the advent of all pre-Bābī-Bahā'ī Manifestations of God including Moses, Jesus Muhammad and many others. They hold that the latter-Day liqā' Allāh through the Bāb and Bahā'-Allāh, was echoed in the past though more fully fulfilled in recent times when the promised "Day" is believed to have come to pass (KI: ¶ 17 pp. 11-12, trans. 17-19).

⁵². See below and, for example, Adams, 2006.

Within the sacred books of the past, all were promised the liqā' Allāh (Divine Encounter/Presence) and the ongoing receipt of deep knowledge `irfān (*gnosis") through Him, through the recognition of Him (KI: ¶ 148 p. 91 p. 136-9). Such has been fulfilled in the past and is expected again; like the first and the second advents of Jesus. Bahā'-Allāh explains that devout Muslims had attained the nobility of the encounter with God (liqā' Allāh) through the reviving, "sanctified breaths" (nafaḥāt-i qudsiyya) of Muhammad. They may now anticipate the challenge of the eschatological liqā' Allāh in the Babi-Bahā'ī era of the Day of Resurrection (KI: ¶ 170, p.106 trans. 159-60).

Though, from the Bābī-Bahā'ī point of view, most Muslims came to reject or misinterpret the meaning of the attainment to the liqā' Allāh ("encounter/ presence of God"), it is an encounter referred to in the `Book of Certitude' as "the utmost degree of ever-abiding grace" (fayḍ-i fayyāḍ-i qidam). It is the very "fullness of His absolute bounty" (kamāl-i faḍl-i muṭlaq) bestowed upon humankind (KI: ¶ 148, p. 91 trans. 136-7). Having said this Bahā'-Allāh cites five confirmatory qur'ānic `Liqa'Allāh verses' (Q. 29:23; 2:46, 49; 18:111 and 13:2) some touching upon its past rejection and/or its future realization. He comments that "No theme hath been more emphatically asserted in the holy scriptures (kutub-i samāwī)" (KI: ¶ 148-9, p.92 trans. 138f).

Bahā'-Allāh rejected the interpretation of liqā' Allāh as an eschatological tajallī Allāh ("the effulgence of God") on the qiyāmat or `Day of Resurrection'. Such an understanding of Divine Self-revelation is in fact only a general divine disclosure, something already evident within everything as a "Universal Revelation" (tajallī-yi `āmm). God is actually ever-present. On this level everything is actually a "locus" (maḥall) and manifestation (maẓhar) of the divine tajalli (Effulgence/ Theophany) of the "Sovereign of Reality" (sulṭān-i ḥaqīqī), expressing elements (āthār) deriving from the Sun of the divine Theophany, the "Source of all splendour" (shams-i mujalla).⁵³ On this general level these divine effulgences or reflections, originated with or are

⁵³ The tajallī (loosely, "theophanic effulgence") related verbal noun mujalla (`the manifest Theophany) – there are many possible translations - has profound theological significance in the writings of Bahā'-Allāh. It is found for example, in the opening basmala of one of his important `Riḍwān Tablets'. See for some details, Lambden Hurqalya website at : <http://hurqalya.ucmerced.edu/node/430>

centered within the elevated Deity-reflecting Messenger or `Manifestation of God (maẓhar-i ilāhī) (KI: ¶ 149, p.92 trans. 139-141).

To attempt to clarify this further, Bahā'-Allāh argues that the eschatological liqā' Allāh (the Divine Encounter/ Presence) cannot, as some Sufis have maintained, merely be an expression of the "Most Holy Outpouring" (fayḍ-i aqdas), a specific or direct Divine Self-revelation (tajallī-yi khāṣṣ) of the unknowable Essence of God Himself.⁵⁴ If the liqā'-Allāh, on the other hand, were to be considered to be an indirect or secondary Divine revelation (tajallī-i thānī), a "Holy outpouring" (fayḍ-i muqaddas), then this would not be expressive of the qur'ānic eschatological liqā' Allāh (encounter with God). This since it would be something that has long been realized within the realms of being, "in the realm of the primal and original manifestation of God (`ālam-i zuhūr avvaliyya)" through His Chosen Messengers.

This latter mode of tajallī (Divine effulgence) applies to the supremely elevated persons of the divinely inspired Manifestations of God, His Prophets (anbiyā') and chosen ones (awliyā') who reveal "the unchangeable attributes and names of God". They most perfectly represent God for humanity. It is thus the case that attaining the presence of these holy Luminaries (liqā'-i anvār-i muqaddasa), the liqā'-Allāh, the encounter or "Presence of God" Himself is attained. In its fullness, however, the Divine "encounter" or "presence (liqā')" is possible only on the Day of Resurrection (qiyāmat), which is the Day of the rise of the Personal representative of God Himself (qiyām nafs Allāh) through His all-embracing Revelation", His latest eschatological manifestation or theophany (KI: 150f, pp. 93-4 trans. 141f.). As the Bāb had frequently stated, the liqā' of the Divine Manifestation is the essence of the liqā' Allāh (KI: ¶ 170, p.106 trans, 159f.). The promise of the eschatological liqā', the encounter/presence of God is, in reality, attainment unto the jamāl ("Beauty") of the maẓhar-i ilāhī (Manifestation of God) in the person or temple of His theophanic Manifestation (dar haykal-i zuhūr-i ū) (KI: ¶ 182, p. 170, trans. 106).

⁵⁴ Examples of the kind of tajalli ("Theophanic") theology spoken about here, can be found in select writings of Ibn al-'Arabī (including the *al-Futuhat al-Makkiyya* and the *Fusus al-hikam*) and such of his disciples as Muhammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī (d. 1091 / 1680), (see the opening pages of his *Kalimāt-l maknūna*, "Hidden Words..." referenced in the bibliography below.

Kitāb-i Aqdas (“The Most Holy Book”).

A centrally important reference to the liqā’ Allāh/al-Rabb is found in the c. 1873 ‘Most Holy Book’ of Bahā’-Allāh. This encounter, it is stated, is possible on the eschatological “Day of God” being the cause of great rejoicing. We thus at one point read in this weighty Arabic text :

The Promised One (al-maw’ūd) hath appeared in this glorified Station, whereat all beings, both seen and unseen, have rejoiced. Take ye advantage of the Day of God (yawm Allāh). Verily, to meet Him (liqā’ihi) is better for you than all that whereon the sun shineth, could ye but know it” (Aqdas ¶ 88).

Lawḥ-i Jawhar-i Ḥamd (“Tablet of the Essence of Praise”),

In his late Acre period Lawḥ-i Jawhar-i Ḥamd (“Tablet of the Essence of Praise”), Baha’u’llah has much to say about Babi-Baha’i theology (see INBMC 35: 161-168). As in his Jawāhir al-asrār, he quotes Q. 13:2 and comments in some detail about the liqā’ al-rabb (“encounter with the Lord”) as the meeting with the eschatological maẓhar-i ilāhi (“Manifestation of God”). The Pre-Existent Divine Essence (dhāt-i qidam) has never nor will ever be attainable through His Hidden and Sanctified Attributes at the time of the liqā’ Allāh (Encounter with God). As in the Kitāb-i īqān, Bahā’-Allāh states that such as are unaware of deep truth (‘irfān) in their tafsīr (commentary upon this qur’ānic verse), inappropriately view the liqā’ (Divine encounter) as being indicative of a general Divine Effulgence (tajallī-yi ū) on the Day of Resurrection. The Day of Resurrection (qiyāmat) is actually the time of the rising up of the Manifestation of the Logos-Self of God (qiyām-i maẓhar-i nafs Allāh) who is both the Qā’im (the ‘Supportive’ messianic Ariser) and the Qayyūm or subordinate deity Self-Subsisting (Jawhar, 18-19).⁵⁵

⁵⁵ On the subject of the messianic Qā’im and the Divine Qayyūm see the Lambden Hurqalya webpage at : <http://hurqalya.ucmerced.edu/node/258/>

The Lawḥ-i Tajalliyāt (The Tablet of the Effulgences).

التَّجَلِّيَّاتُ

فَلَمَّا تَجَلَّى رَبُّهُ لِلْجَبَلِ جَعَلَهُ دَكًّا وَخَرَّ مُوسَىٰ صَعِقًا

So when his [Moses'] Lord divulged His Glory (tajalla) before the Mountain [Sinai] it was crushed to dust and Moses fell down, swooning away." (Qur'ān 7:143b).

Liqā', 'Meeting, Presence, Encounter' and related theological matters of central importance, are taken up by Bahā'-Allāh at various points within his mid. to late Acre period Arabic and Persian scriptural Tablet entitled Lawḥ-i Tajalliyāt (The Tablet of Effulgences). It is primarily addressed to the prominent Bahā'ī believer and 'Hand of the Cause', Mullā `Alī Akbar Shahmirzadī (or Ḥajjī Ākhund, d. Tehran 1910) who was several time imprisoned for his faith in Qazvīn. Tehran and elsewhere. It should be noted that this scriptural Tablet is titled after an Arabic-Persian word of great importance in expressing a theology of divine disclosure, emanation and spiritual effulgences. The word tajallī (plural tajalliyāt) is rooted in Qur'ānic 7:143 which verse is centered around the biblical account of Moses' request to see God and its consequences (see the citation above). This biblically rooted (see Exodus 33:18-23) account came to have profound theological meanings throughout Islamic history. The noun tajallī (cf. the qur'anic verb tajalla) can be translated 'self-disclosure, emanation, theophany or manifestation' and is frequently of great importance within the massive Bābī and Bahā'ī sacred writings.

Containing four doctrinally oriented tajallīs ("Effulgences") its very first "Effulgence" succinctly defends his claim to Divinity and responds to the "people of tyranny" who cannot grasp its real meaning. In particular, written in Persian, this first Tajallī is addressed to the "people of Persia". Making specific reference to the divine liqā', the encounter, meeting or presence of God in the latter-days through Him, it reads as follows:

The first Tajallī

which hath dawned from the Daystar of Truth is the knowledge of God — exalted be His glory. And the knowledge of the King of everlasting days can in no wise be attained save by recognizing Him Who is the Bearer of the Most Great Name (al-ism al-a`ẓam). He is, in truth, the Speaker on Sinai (mukallim al-ṭūr) Who is now seated upon the throne of Revelation (‘arsh al-zuhūr). He is the Hidden Mystery (al-ghayb al-maknūn) and the Treasured Symbol (al-sirr al-makhzūn). All the former and latter Books of God are adorned with His praise and extol His glory. Through Him the standard of knowledge hath been planted in the world and the ensign of the oneness of God hath been unfurled amidst all peoples. **Attainment unto the Divine Presence (liqā’ Allāh) can be realized solely by attaining His presence (liqā’ihi).** Through His potency everything that hath, from time immemorial, been veiled and hidden, is now revealed. He is made manifest through the power of Truth and hath uttered a Word (kalimat) [expressing his Divinity] ⁵⁶whereby all that are in the heavens and on the earth have been dumbfounded, except those whom the Almighty was pleased to exempt. (Arabic text, L- Tajalliyāt in Majmu`a 1980, 67; trans. BWC., 1978 [88] TBAA., XXX, transliteration and underlining added).

The Lawḥ-i Shaykh or `Epistle to the Son of the Wolf

In his c. 1890 Lawḥ-i Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī Mujtahid-i Iṣfahānī [Najafī] (or as Shoghi Effendi entitled this quite lengthy Persian work of Bahā’-Allāh, the `Epistle to the Son of the Wolf ‘), there is an important reference to Muhammad as the “seal of the Prophets” (khatam al-nabiyyīm). This along with the Prophet Muhammad’s prediction of the eschatological vision of the Lord (see the Qur’ānic refs. cited above):

“What explanation can they give concerning that which the Seal of the Prophets (Muhammad) ... hath said? : “Ye, verily, shall behold your Lord

⁵⁶ The nature of this “Word” (kalimat) expressive of the theophanic declaration, of Bahā’-Allāh’s disclosure of his subordinate “Divinity”, is clarified in a number of his Persian and Arabic scriptural Tablets (alwāḥ) including the Lawḥ-i jawhar-I ḥamd (see above).

(rabb) as ye behold the full moon (al-badr) on its fourteenth night” (ESW: 50/ trans. Shoghi Effendi, 41-2).⁵⁷

In later paragraphs of this ‘Epistle to the Son of the Wolf’, Bahā’-Allāh cites and succinctly interprets a cluster of fifteen qur’ānic verses (in Persian termed the āyat-i liqā’, ‘the verses of the Encounter’)⁵⁸ most of which contain a reference to the liqā’ (“encounter”. etc) with God. They are seen as expressive of the latter-day promise of the divine theophany or “Presence” of God/the Lord”,⁵⁹ a presence actualized on earth and the realms beyond through the divine Manifestation of God. God Himself cannot be literally seen. He states that the promise of the liqā’ (encounter / meeting / presence) of God, the Lord, is explicitly recorded in all past sacred scriptures or books. It has a personal, individualistic or Logos-centered interpretation (maqṣūd-i liqā’ liqā’ nafsī ast) closely related to the one who is the Qā’im-Maqām, the divine Messenger, His “Viceregent” amongst men (so Shoghi Effendi, see ESW: 139/ trans. 118).

The Biblical and Post-Biblical ‘Coming of God’.

Perhaps informing the above-cited qur’ānic verses and traditions about an eschatological advent of Divinity, the Hebrew Bible and many post-biblical Jewish literatures contains texts indicative of an eschatological theophany (“coming of God”) of the person of the Divine or as “God”, the “Lord” in his “Glory” (Heb. kavod Ar., Bahā’). Praying in Aramaic that Jesus Christ as the “Lord” might soon return or come again as a divine figure, early Christians uttered the exclamatory **μαράναθά**, maranatha (“Come, Lord!”) prayer (Aramaic Mar = Greek Kyrios = Lord ; see 1 Cor.

⁵⁷ As we have already observed, there are several versions of this and similar prophetic traditions (ḥadīth) in Sunnī canonical books of tradition as in a few related Shī‘ī writings. The full forms of several of them (see below) can be found in the Saḥīḥ (the reliable, ‘Sound’) Sunnī collections of al-Bukharī and Muslim.

⁵⁸ The fifteen Qur’ānic verses are (loosely referenced in the order in which they are cited) : Q. 13:2; Q. 29:5; Q. 29: 23; Q. 32:10; Q. 41:54’ Q. 10:7; Q. 10:15; Q. 6:154; Q. 18;105; Q. 20: 9-14a; Q. 30: 8; Q. 83:6; Q. 32:23; Q. 89:21-22; Q. 61:8; Q. 28:29-30.

⁵⁹ Shoghi Effendi often translated liqā’ as “Presence” in the KI and elsewhere. See ESW: 135-138; trans. pp. 115-118),

16:22; cf. Zech 14:5; Jude, 1 Enoch 1:9' Didache 10:6).⁶⁰ Some such biblical texts are cited by Bahā'-Allāh in many of his alwāḥ (scriptural writings or 'Tablets') as being predictive of himself as a divine Manifestation (not the essence of God Himself):

“Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. 3 Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence” (Psalm 50:2-3).

“... the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints [holy ones] with thee. (Zech 14:5b).

“And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it...

Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him” (Isaiah 40: 5, 10 cf. Rev 22:20).

“Behold, the Lord (Κύριος = Kyrios) is coming with holy ten thousands, to execute judgment on all, and to convict them concerning all the deeds of their impiety...” (from a Greek version of 1 Enoch 1:9 cited Jude 1:14-15a).⁶¹

“Yes! I am coming quickly. Amen. Come Lord (Κύριε = Kyrie) Jesus! (Rev. 22: 20).

Like Jesus Christ in the Gospels and Christianity, the Bāb and Baha'-Allāh have been regarded in Bahā'ī sacred writings, as manifestations of the “Lord”/“Lord of hosts” or “Lord God”,⁶² the latter as the master, owner or “Lord of the Vineyard” (refer Mark 12: 9; Matthew 21:40; Luke 20: 15b).⁶³ These end-time theophanoloical

⁶⁰ An important article touching upon aspects of this subject is Edward Adams, 'The "Coming of God" Tradition and its influence on New Testament Parousia Texts' (see bib.).

⁶¹ This is cited in a Greek version of 1 Enoch 1:9 in the New Testament 'Epistle of Jude' 1:14-15. Cf. also Deut. 33:2. The original Hebrew or Aramaic for “God” here is translated **Κύριος** = Kyrios (“Lord”) and is thus suggestive of Jesus Christ. The Greek unqualified past tense or aorist **ἦλθεν** (elthen, “came”), is translated or understood as a prophetic perfect/ future tense (“is coming”).

⁶² The Bāb in his writings identifies himself with the “Lord” (rabb) in the light of the eschatological theophany and the qur'ānic liqā' (“encounter / meeting”) verses. He noted that the numerical equivalence of his parentally bestowed name `Alī Muhammad (= abjad numerical value 202) with that of the Arabic “Lord” (Rabb: r =200 + b =2, total 202) (see Per. Dala'il, p. 54 etc.).

⁶³ See the New Testament references to the “Master/Owner/Lord of the Vineyard” in the synoptic versions of the 'Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen' and their Baha'ī interpretations at <http://hurqalya.ucmerced.edu/node/3071/>

predictions are of central interest as they provide important background to the Qur'ānic eschatological Liqā' Allāh, the Encounter/ Meeting with God.

The Universality of the Eschatological Theophany.

“Every eye shall see him” (Revelation XX:XX).

Not only does Abrahamic sacred writ predict the eschatological advent of Divinity but some biblical and other writings have it that this will be experienced or “seen” by all humanity. The Unapproachable becomes spiritually visible.

At this point it should be mentioned that there exists a theologically important, quite lengthy Arabic scriptural Tablet of the son and successor of Bahā'-Allāh entitled 'Abd al-Bahā' (1844-1921). It is a text which might be called the Lawḥ-i Liqā' Allāh or 'Tablet of the Divine Theophany'. It contains materials about the eschatological coming of God through his representative (as Baha'u'llah, the Manifestation of God), the fulfilment of the Qur'ānic liqā' Allāh predictions, and related Islamic ḥadīth texts (see 'Abdu'l-Bahā' Makātib 1: 102-108). There are clear references within it to the widespread Abrahamic religious texts about the eschatological theophany or 'Meeting with God':

Know that the aforementioned beatific vision on the Day of God (ru'yat fī yawm Allāh) is mentioned in all the scriptural scrolls (al-ṣaḥā'if) and sacred writ (al-zubr); in the tablets (al-alwāḥ) which have been sent down from heaven unto the prophets (al-anbiyā') throughout ancient times (ghābir al-azām), during bygone eras (al-`uṣūr al-khāliyya), and from the primordial centuries (al-qurūn al-awwaliyya). Every single prophet (nabīyy) among the prophets (al-anbiyā') announced unto his people the glad-tidings of the Day of the Theophany [Meeting with God] (yawm al-liqā'). Consider then the specific references found in the Gospels (al-injīl), the Psalms (al-zubūr), the Torah [Pentateuch] (al-tawrat) and the Qur'ān.

God Himself says in the Qur'ān: "Know ye that thou shall indeed meet Him (mulqū-hu)!" (Q.2:223b) on the Day of Resurrection (yawm al-qiyāma)". And also He says [in the Qur'ān], "Lost indeed are such as cried lies to the Meeting (liqā') with their Lord (rabb) [God]" (Q. 6:31; 10:45; 23:33; 30:8b;

32:10; 41:54, etc). And again He says [in the Qur'ān], "Perchance thou might be assured about the Meeting (liqā') with thy Lord (rabb)" (Q. 13:2b. cf. 6:154, etc). (ʿAbd al-Bahā', Makatib 1:103-4)

Having cited or paraphrased these Qur'ānic verses, ʿAbdu'l-Baha' quotes a summary version of the above mentioned Prophetic ḥadīth about a future vision of God, the Lord, like the sight of the full moon in the middle of the month. He continues to cite several passages from writings attributed to Imam ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d.40/661) expressive of the beatific or eschatological vision of God. They are understood to apply to the person of Bahā'-Allāh. Though details cannot be spelled out here, it must suffice to translate a few lines pertinent to the subject of liqā', the meeting or encounter with God and its Baha'ī exegesis:

Now as regards the essence of the enquiry [about the eschatological theophany] and the reality of the matter, it is that the Liqā' (Meeting with God) is a matter clearly proven, firmly established and specifically set down in the sacred scrolls (al-ṣuḥuf) and the scriptural Tablets (alwāḥ) of the Living One (al-ḥayy), al-Qayyūm (the Deity Self-Subsisting) [Bahā'u'llāh]. This is assuredly the sealed wine (al-raḥīq al-makhtūm) whose seal is of musk ... The Paradise of the Encounter with God (jannat al-liqā') is the Most Elevated [Bābī] Paradise and the All-Glorious [Bahā'ī] Kingdom (malakūt al-abhā)" (ʿAbd al-Bahā', Makatib 1:104-6).

The Lawḥ-i Liqā' ("Tablet of the Meeting with God") of Bahā'-Allāh.

In a volume of scriptural Tablets (alwāḥ) of Bahā'-Allāh compiled by the Persian Bahā'ī apologist ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Ishrāq Khāvarī (d. 1972), there exists an Arabic text provisionally entitled Lawḥ-i Liqā' ("Tablet of the Meeting with God"; see Mā'ida, VIII: 167-168). It opens with a prefixed "He is [God is] the Eternal (huwa al-baqī)" and continues:

This is a communication [book] which We [Bahā'-Allāh] made to be the Meeting with Us (liqā'ī-nā) for such as have drawn nigh unto God during these days in which countries (bilād) have been revitalized through attainment unto that which was revealed in this Tablet (al-lawḥ) before the Divine Throne. It was revealed for such as find themselves in doubt about the Meeting with

their Lord (liqā' rabbihi). Such persons are among those who have turned away from God, exalted be He, the Cleaver of Dawns [Dawn-Breaker] (fā'iq al-aṣḃāḥ).

There follows an address to Bahā'ī believers as "birds of Paradise" who, having heard "the Call of the Beloved One (nidā' al-maḥbūb)", travelled to attain his presence. Their proximity to the imprisoned Bahā'-Allāh in the Acre prison caused "the denizens of the Supreme Concourse" (ahl al-malā' al-a`lā) to rejoice, despite their being debarred from attaining unto the Meeting with God (al-liqā'). Their inability to meet him directly also caused "lamentation" or "weeping" (huzn) from the celestial inmates of "the Cities of Eternity" (madā'in al-baqā'). Yet, Bahā'-Allāh comments :

How wonderful is this happiness (al-surūr) and this sadness (al-ḥuzn) for the both of them have been realized on the Day of God (yawm Allāh), the Powerful, the Mighty, the Chosen" (L-Liqā', Ma'ida VIII:169; cf. Persian Bayān III:7).

Probably referring to the Azālī Bābīs who prevented the Bahā'īs from the union of liqā' (the Encounter with Bahā'-Allāh), they are referred to as persons who "delude themselves before My Self at both eventide (al-`ashiyy) and in the early morning (al-ibkār)". A comforting beatitude is uttered upon those that attain the Divine presence: "Blessed be unto thee in that thou hast entered into the city (al-madīna) [Acre] and have attained that which was intended by thy Lord, the Mighty, the Bestower."

The Bahā'ī debarred ones Bahā;-Allāh adds, will yet experience a divine epiphany by virtue of their spiritual joy generated by "proximity", their countenances manifesting "Glad-Tidings (al-bishārat) and Radiant-Joy (al-ibtihāj) (cf. Q, 75:22-3)". This such that every person among them will have their proximity accepted or be saluted (al-taslim) resulting in their spiritual contentment (al-riḏā'). Not only have these Bahā'ī pilgrims attained their goal, but they themselves have been circumambulated from on high. Bahā'-Allāh informs them that :

Thou art in the shadow of My Providence and the edifice of My Mercy (qibāb raḥmatī) since God hath circumambulated about thee! O ye possessors of insight!"

They did indeed, it is added, attain the liqā', the Meeting with Him [Bahā'-Allāh] and circumambulated about the Ka`ba of His religious Cause. They spiritually attained unto "His Countenance".

Bahā'-Allāh and Modes of the Eschatological Liqā'-Allāh

For 19th century Bābīs and Bahā'īs, travelling to meet the Bāb and/or Bahā'-Allāh was the fulfilment of their eschatological liqā' Allāh, their experience of the Divine Encounter/Presence. We may note here that the great British Persianist Edward G. Browne (d. 1926) was, to his astonishment, advised by certain of his Bābī-Bahā'ī contemporaries in Persia to “travel to `Akkā' (Acre) and “see God”.⁶⁴ After the execution or martyrdom of the Bāb (1850 CE) and the passing of Bahā'-Allāh in 1892 CE, it was obviously not possible to outwardly attain the liqā'-Allāh as the direct encounter with the founder prophets who claimed to be latter-day Manifestations of God. Yet, there are statements of Bahā'-Allah about other modes of attaining or precipitating the Presence or ‘meeting with God’ (liqā'-Allāh).

We have seen above that within the massive corpus of his Persian and Arabic writings, Bahā'-Allāh variously interprets the Qur'ānic liqā' (“encounter-meeting”). In his *Lawḥ-i Liqā'* (“Tablet of the Meeting with God”) he at one time (perhaps late 1860s or early 1870s) interpreted the fulfilment of this eschatological hope in ways other than through a personal encounter or meeting with him in his current place of confinement. Indeed, it is alleged that the liqā' Allāh promise can be fulfilled through experiencing the potency of inspired, revealed scriptural Tablets, and amongst other ways, through the individual receipt of such an item of revelation. There are likewise statements of Bahā'-Allah to the effect that his devotees should teach his religion and thereby precipitate the wider possibility of the liqā'-Allāh (Encounter with God) among humankind:

We decree in this Tablet that most of the [Babi-Baha'i] friends should write *Istidlaliyya* ('apologetic testimonia') tracts (lit. `tablets' *alwāḥ*) in establishment of this Cause and send them unto the [various] countries perchance thereby none should be veiled from attaining the Encounter-Meeting with God (liqā'-Allāh [through Bahā'-Allāh], the Mighty, the Beauteous" (Arab. text AQA 4:195, trans. Lambden).

⁶⁴ See Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians*, 1893: 492. Quinn. “Every Shade of Piety and Impiety”, forthcoming. Browne did indeed eventually travel to Acre in the rearly 1890s. Four or more times, he met the founder of the Bahā'ī religion and left for posterity his now very famous pen-portrait.

In one of his lengthy and important untitled writings communicated through his one-time amanuensis Mirza Khadim-Allāh, Mirza Āqa Jān (d. 1901) Bahā'-Allāh sums up key aspects of his 1863 Baghdad declaration. Supplementary to his interdicting (murtafi') jihād as "holy war", his setting the minimal era of his religions dispensation (zuhūr) as a millennium, and claiming to manifest (tajallī) all the Divine Names upon all things, he seems to refer to another mode of fulfilment of the anticipated liqā'-Allāh on the eschatological "Day of the Encounter" (yawm al-tilqā). He adds a further equally important directive. This fourth directive has it that whenever the name of anyone (asami), living or dead, is mentioned before the Person or Countenance of Bahā'-Allāh (tilqā'-i wajh), they have thereby attained the Presence of God,⁶⁵ the pre-existent King (mālik al-qidam = Bahā'-Allāh) (refer trans. in 'Days of Remembrance', Sect. 9. p. 49). Attaining his presence, the tilqā'-i wajh (lit. 'encountering his face') could be fulfilled through an individual being mentioned by name in his presence. Many could not encounter, meet or approach the imprisoned founder of the Bahā'ī religion, but individuals could (during his lifetime) have been mentioned before him.

The Lawḥ-i Ḥasan Shāhābadī / Lawḥ-i Khātām al-Nabiyyīn.⁶⁶

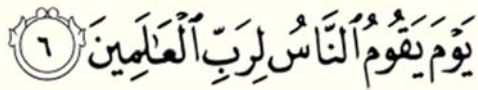
At this point it will be appropriate to mention an important, probably late Acre period (1880s – early 1890s), Arabic scriptural Tablet of Baha'u'llah to a Persian Bahā'ī named Ḥasan who was born in or lived at Shāhābad, a village in western Azerbaijan, not far from Mākū where the Bāb was imprisoned in the late 1840s. Responding to Muslim judgements about his bringing a new sharī'a (religious law), Bahā'u'llāh affirms the truth of Q. 33:40b which he explicitly cites. In so doing he

⁶⁵ The genitive Persian (or the Arabic equivalent) phrase tilqā'-i wajh, meaning before the Face/ Countenance' or 'in the Presence' is fairly common in the writings of the Bāb and Bahā'-Allāh. These phrases need not always have this theologically loaded liqā' (divine encounter) implied or rooted sense.

⁶⁶ This untitled, brief but important scriptural Tablet of Baha'u'llah was addressed to a certain Ḥasan-i Shāhābadī; I have called the Lawḥ-i khātām al-Nabiyyīn since Qur'an 33:40 is cited and commented upon within it. I am especially grateful to the learned UK based Bahā'ī scholar Khazeh Fananapazir for making a photocopy of a ms. of this text available to me in a personal communication dating to the 1980s or early 1990s (see also bib. below).

even goes on to affirm that both risālat implying the “sent Messengership” of the rasūl (the Messenger of God) and nubuwwat, the Prophethood of the nabī (Prophet) were “sealed” or consummated by Muhammad.

This qur’ānic khātām al-nabiyyīn in no way inhibits Baha’u’llah’s eschatological claims to divinity. For him, as we have attempted to demonstrate above, the somewhat ambiguous qur’ānic khātamiyya (“sealedness”) phrase (Q. 33:40b), in no way outrules the eschatological theophany on the “Day of God” (yawm Allāh). Even if it is taken to outrule the finality of the appearance of a post-Muhammad nabī (prophet) or even rasūl (sent Messengers), Qur’an 33:40b does not negate the symbolic realization of the encounter with the Lord on the ultimate “Day of God” or at the time of the final “Hour”. For Bahā’u’llāh such is clearly indicated in the Sūrat al-Muṭaffifīn (“The Surah of the Defrauders”), Qur’ān 83:6:



“The [eschatological] Day when the humankind [the people] (al-nās) will rise up before the Lord of the worlds (rabb al-`ālamīn)” (Q. 83:6).⁶⁷

Both the Bāb and Bahā’u’llāh claimed to be fully human yet fully divine maẓhar-i ilāhī (Manifestations of Divinity) in ways that transcended issues revolving around the meanings of the khātām al-nabiyyīn. In fact Bahā’u’llāh, it is claimed, so transcended these matters that in numerous theophanological revelations he presents himself as having sent out the nabī and rasūl of the past, the pre-Islamic era. In the Arabic ‘Lawḥ-i Khātām’ under consideration here and referred to above, Bahā’u’llāh defends himself against accusations that he has contradicted Qur’ān 33:40b by stating:

⁶⁷ It should be noted that when transcending the khātām al-nabiyyīn (seal of the prophets) phrase as a note of unending prophetological finality, Baha’u’llah often cited Qur’an 83:6. See the paragraphs above, for example, on the ‘Epistle to the Son of the Wolf’, as well as the Ziyārat-Nama Sayyid al-Shuhāda (Visitation Tablet for the Prince of Martyrs [Imam Ḥusayn]). Baha’u’llah states in this latter text, “This is the [eschatological] Day in which the verse of aforetime (Qur’ān 33:40b) hath itself been terminated (intihat) by virtue of the [Qur’ān 83 : 6] predicted “Day when the people will rise up before the Lord of the Throne and of the Elevated Pedestool (rabb al-`arsh wa’l-kursī al-marfū’)” (see cited Bakhtavārī, Risāla Istimrār, 102f).

You have assuredly confirmed [the truth] by what you have announced [in referring to Q. 33:40b]. We do indeed testify that through him [Muhammad] messengership and prophethood (al-risāla wa'l-nubuwwa) were sealed-up. Whomsoever after him [Muhammad] makes claim to such an elevated station (al-maqām al-a`la) is indeed in manifest error... Say: By God! There hath appeared the one whom the Messengers of the past gave the glad-tidings and about whom the All-Merciful sent down in the Furqān (Criterion = the Qur`ān) through His saying, exalted be He, “the Day when the people shall rise up before the Lord of the worlds” (Q. 83:6). The carpet of prophethood (bisāt al-nubuwwa) hath been rolled-up, and there hath appeared the one (“Divinity”) who sent them out (arsal) in manifest sovereignty (bi-sulṭān mubīn;= Bahā'u'llāh) ... (Tablet to Ḥasan Shāhābadī / L-Khatam, cited Bakhtāvar, Risāla-i Istimrār (The Treatise on Continuity), 104-5).

Modern Bahā'ī arguments against the absolute finality of prophethood sometimes operate on a somewhat lower level than the aforementioned, elevated theophanological challenges, involving theophanic claims to eschatological divinity. Such modern apologetics often propose a distinction between a future rasūl (sent Messenger of God) as a founding maẓhar-i ilāhī (Manifestation of God) and the role of the (lesser) nabī or secondary Prophet. Diverse lexical and Islamic understandings of khātam / khātim (form of the trilateral root kh-t-m) are commented upon in the light of the non-finality of prophethood. The Islamic understandings of Q. 33:40b might, it is sometimes held, outrule the further appearance of Israelite type nabiyyīn / anbiyā' (nabī, prophets) but not of sent Messengers as Manifestations of God (see further Appendix 1 below). Further future messengers of God, it has been argued, are indirectly hinted at in the `liqā' Allāh verses (cited above) and more directly in the following, thirty-fifth verse of the Sūrat al-A`rāf (“The Heights”):

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ إِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِنْكُمْ يَقُصُّونَ عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِي فَمَنْ
اتَّقَى وَأَصْلَحَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

O children of Adam! There shall come among you sent messengers (pl. rusul. sing. rasūl) from among yourselves who shall convey my messages [signs] (āyātī) then such as take heed and amend their ways, shall have nothing to fear or to regret (Q. 7:35).

Concluding Summary Notes

This paper has attempted to sum up and clarify a few aspects of the Bābī and Bahā'ī interpretations of Qur'ān 33:40 in the light of the expected Abrahamic eschatological theophany which, in the Qur'ān, is the liqā' Allāh/ al-rabb on the Day of Resurrection. Muhammad ibn Jarīr al-Tabarī and thousands of other Muslim exegetes, have restricted the khatāmiyya, the sealed nature or (for some) "finality" or prophethood, to the era preceding the end-time Day of Resurrection:

"the messenger of God and khātam al-nabiyyīn ("the seal of the prophets") [Q.33:40] was the one who sealed prophethood for he sealed up this matter. Thus, no one of you should open it up after him [Muhammad] until the [eschatological] onset of the "hour" (qiyām al-sa`at)" (Al-Tabarī, Tafsir on 33:40, initial exegetical paraphrase).

The Bāb and Bahā'u'llāh claimed that with their prophetic commissions, activities and declarations in the mid 19th century (1844-50 and 1863-92 CE), the long-awaited "Hour" of the Day of Resurrection and Judgement had been set in motion or come to pass, and that the era of Israelite-type prophets / prophethood had ended. The encounter or meeting with God/ the Lord through His divine representative was now possible in literal, allegorical and other senses. This initiated an age of fulfillment. Former notions of prophetological khātamiyya, or being "sealed up" in finality were bypassed or transcended. Muhammad was indeed the "last prophet" to come before the Bāb and Bahā'u'llāh who opened the long-rusting gates or renewal, thereby heralding millennial peace and justice. They proclaimed that many Abrahamic scriptural promises had been, or would ere long, be fulfilled, in an ongoing era of judgement and beatitude. They announced that God had once again visited his creation through his human yet superhuman messengers capable of communicating divine revelations (waḥy) and mystical insights (ʿirfān).

Bahā'-Allāh interpreted the fulfilment of the 'encounter with God' (liqā' Allāh) in at least three ways: (1) meeting him in his place of imprisonment or residence, (2) receiving a scriptural Tablet from him, and (3) being mentioned by name in his presence. The Bāb and Bahā'-Allāh proclaimed that God had, through their persons and prophetic missions, again passed indirectly by, lived among them and spoken anew to humankind (cf. Exodus 33:22). Yet, they never compromised the Biblical and Qur'ānic theological axiom, that God Himself, in His absolute, transcendent Essence (dhāt), can neither be directly seen, encountered, incarnated or comprehended. Today, experiencing the millennial liqā'Allāh (Divine Presence), means coming to faith in the Bāb, Bahā'-Allāh and such previous founder Prophets as Zoroaster, Moses, the Buddha, Jesus and Muhammad. This involves transcending notions of both a one-time commencement and a subsequent cessation of divine guidance through Prophets and Messengers of God and such sages and saints as come under their shadow. It is the belief of Bahā'īs that the fanaticism generated by time-bound religious triumphalism and fixity, should give way to new visions of religious interdependence and unity.

Many thousands of eschatological traditions were assiduously compiled into sometimes bulky Istitdālīyya tracts (prophetic testimonia) by 19th-20th century disciples of the Bāb and Bahā'-Allāh. Considerable attention was given to overcoming any finality implied by Q. 33:40b.⁶⁸ Some, at Bahā'-Allāh's command, followed the lead of the Bāb's Dalā'il-i sab'a (Persian Seven Proofs) and his own Kitāb-i īqān (Book of Certitude). This with a view to arguing that all manner of messianic predictions and apocalyptic "signs", had come to pass (cf. INBMC 80). Bābīs and Bahā'īs have claimed that for many thousands of years, divine messengers (rusul) or mazhar-i ilāhī (divine Manifestations) founded and will progressively renew the eternal religion of God.

68 See Gulpaygānī, K. Farā'id, index; Ishrāq Khavarī, QI: 383ff; al-Tibyān wa'l-burhān, I:59ff Rawshānī, Khātamiyyat; Momen 1999: 34f, 87ff.

Appendix 1

Nabī (Prophet) and Rasūl/ Mursal (Sent Messenger).

We have previously set forth a few notes on the Nabī (Prophet) and the Rasūl / Mursal (sent Messenger) differentiations in Qur'ānic, Islamic and Bābī and Bahā'ī sacred literatures in the light of the “seal of the prophets” designation and the possibility of messianic fulfilment.

Appendix 2

“Between his shoulders (bayn katifayyihī)”: the Hadīth of the physicality of the “seal of prophethood” (khatam al-nubuwwa) and the observations of the Christian monk Baḥīrā.

It will be convenient to cite here a few of the traditions found with the six major and other supplementary Sunnī ḥadīth collections and literatures about the khātam al-nubuwwa (seal of prophethood) which variously describe the physical protrusion “between the shoulders” or on the back of the Prophet Muhammad.

The following example is a tradition relayed from `Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d;40/661), the first Imam and fourth Caliph, is found in his Sunnī ḥadīth collection, the al-Jamī` as-Saḥīḥ (The Sound Collection) of Muhammad al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892). It contains a detailed description and depiction of the physical characteristics and nature of the Prophet Muhammad:

When Alī described the Prophet ... he said: He was neither very tall nor excessively short, but was a man of medium size. He had neither very curly nor flowing hair but a mixture of both. He was not obese, he did not have a very round face, but it was so to some extent. He was reddish-white, he had wide black eyes and long eyelashes. He had protruding joints and shoulder-blades, he was not hairy but had some hair on his chest, and the palms of his hands and his feet were calloused. When he walked he raised his feet as though he were walking on a slope; when he turned round he turned completely. **Between his shoulders was the seal of prophecy (khatam al-nubuwwa) for he was the seal of the prophets (khātam al-nabiyyīn) [Q. 33:40].** He had a finer chest than anyone else, was truer in utterance than anyone else, had the gentlest nature and the noblest tribe. Those who saw him

suddenly stood in awe of him and those who shared his acquaintanceship loved him. Those who described him said they had never seen anyone like him before or since. (Tirmidhi al-Saḥīḥ, Ḥadith 1524 / Hadith 3638 in Tirmidhi vol. 5 pp. 332-334). **Complete and check this translation.**

Such traditions about the physical “seal of prophethood” on the body of Muhammad, are registered in many, sometimes very early, Islamic sources. They are, for example, commented upon as such works as the massive Tarikh (History) and Tafsīr (Qur’ān Commentary) of the great historian and commentator Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923).

The the Sīra (Biography) of Muḥammad

Mourad, Suleiman A., “Christians and Christianity in the Sīra of Muḥammad”, in: Christian-Muslim Relations 600 - 1500, General Editor David Thomas. Consulted online on 30 November 2017 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1877-8054_cmri_COM_24330> First published online: 2010

The Syrian Christian monk Baḥīrā and the physical “seal”.

Early Islamic sources relate that the young (aged 9 or 12 in some ancient Islamic sources) Muhammad was identified as a true prophet by the Syrian Christian monk Baḥīrā (Aram. Bakhīra, meaning ‘the elect’ and also known as ‘Sergius the Monk’) by virtue (among other things) of his bearing the physical “seal of prophethood”.⁶⁹

Appendix 3

Muhammad as khātam al-nabiyyīn (the Seal of the Prophets) in Bābī-Bahā’ī Scriptural Writings.

A considerable number of positive occurrences or uses of the title khātam al-nabiyyīn (the Seal of the Prophets) accorded the Prophet Muhammad are found within the

⁶⁹ For details see Wensinck, A. J.. art., ‘Baḥīrā’ in EI (1st ed); Abel, A. art. ‘Baḥīrā’ in EI²; Roggema, Barbara, art. ‘Baḥīrā’ in EI³; Griffith, Sydney H. art. ‘Baḥīrā Legend’ in Religion Past and Present (ed. Hans Dieter Betz et. al.) Add

massive corpus of the writings of the Bab. Bahā'-Allāh and other central figures and exponents of the Bahā'ī religion.

The Bāb.

Qayyūm al-asmā' = Tafsīr Surat Yūsuf (mid, 1844) (= QA)..

The XXV/25th sūrah of the QA of the Bāb is entitled Sūrat al-khāta/im, the 'Surah of the Seal / Ringstone' which is distinctly eschatological with repeated references to the messianic Dhikr Allāh (Remembrance of God), thus transcending any finality read into Q. 33:40. For other references of the Bāb to khātam/ khātam al-nabiyyīn in the QA. see, for example, QA IV [4] p. 9; XXV [25] p. 42f; QA LII [52] p.100; LXIV p. 129; LXVI [66] p. 132; LXXV [75] p.153. cf. XXIV [24] p. 40; XLVII [47] p. 89; CXI [111] p.232; LXIV [64] p. 129.

Select Other Writings of he Bāb

- 'Letter to the Imam/ People of Medina' In INBMC 91: 24;
- Work of the Bāb in INBMC 91 p. 38-39 (= Q. 33:40 cited) and p. 44 (Muhammad ... khatam al-nabiyyīn) p. 50 (Muhammad ... khātam al-nabiyyīn);
- Khuṭba al-Jidda in INMBC 91: 67; INBMC 91 p. 95 (= Q. 33:40 cited); p. 50;
- INBMC 91: 115 (Muhammad khātam al-nabiyyīn);
- Persian Bayān VII.5 (p. 244); VII.11 (khātim-i ū; p, 255).

Select Writings of Bahā'-Allāh,

References in the writings of Baha'u'llah to Muhammad as the 'seal of the prophets' include:

Jawāhir al-asrār (The Gems of the4 Mysteries)

- Jawahir al-asrar XX trans. Gems, p. XX

Kitāb-i īqān (Book of Certitude, c. 1862 CE = KI).

- Kl., ¶ 40 p. 26 / trans. p.39 (= Per. khātam-i anbiyā');
- ¶172 pp. 107-8, trans., 162;
- ¶ 178, p. 110, trans. 166-7;
- ¶ 181f, p. 112f, trans. 169f;
- ¶ 196, p. 118 trans, p. 179;
- ¶ 263, p. 155, trans. 233.

- Lawḥ-i Aḥmad, a Persian Tablet at one point dealing with the status of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī (d.1241/1826) and Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī (d.1259/1843). Here Muhammad is explicitly referred to (in Persian) as the “seal of the prophets” (Per. khātām-i anbiyā'). Text in Ishraq Khavari ed. Ma'ida IV: 134-5.
- Lawḥ-i Hasan Shāhābadī or `Lawḥ-i Khātām al-nabiyyīn' (see bib.). Q. 33:40b is cited here.
- Lawḥ-i Sayyid al-Shuhāda (Tablet to the Prince of Martyrs)
- Lawḥ-i Ibn-i Dhi`b (Epistle to the Son of the Wolf),
- **Add here**

Appendix 4

The Fuṣuṣ al-Ḥikam (Bezels of Wisdom) of Ibn al-Arabi: Extracts from the second, Seth (Shīth) and fourteenth Ezra (Uzayr) Sections relating to wilāya / walī.

Full translation. Stephen Lambden (2017).

The following, sometimes complex passages from the second Seth (Shīth, son of Adam) section of the Fuṣuṣ al-ḥikām, are appended here in full translation with frequent transliteration for the sake of clarity.

This particular knowledge [of God] (al-`ilm) is naught but what is specified to the Seal of the Messengers (khātīm al-rusul) and the Seal of the Intimate Ones [Friends, Saints] (khātīm al-awliyā'). None can envision it among the Prophets (al-anbiyā') and the Messengers (al-rusul) save by means of the Niche of that Messenger (mishhkat al-rasūl) who is their Seal (khātīm). The Intimate Friends (awliyā') can only envision it from the niche of the Walī (mishhkat al-walī) who is their Seal (khātīm). Even the Messengers (al-rusul) only envision it to the extent that they view it through the Niche of the Seal of the Intimate Ones [Friends, Saints] (mishkat khātīm al-awliyā'). Since the Sent Message (al-risāla) and the Prophethood (al-nubuwwa) express that Prophethood which has legalistic aspects (nubuwwat al-tashrī) and a specific message (risāla), it may come to be

terminated. Yet the phenomenon of wilāya (Providential Intimacy, Inspired Guidance, Sainly Virtue) shall never cease.

Wherefore, in their very being, the Sent Messengers (al-mursalūn) are Intimate Ones [Friends, Saints] (awliyā'). This though they do not see what we have just mentioned, save through the niche of the Seal of the Intimate Ones [Friends] (mishkat khātim al-awliyā'). How, for others, could it [this vision] be other than through the Intimate Ones [Friends, Saints] (awliyā')? Although the Seal of the Intimate Ones [Friends, Saints] (khātim al-awliyā') follows the dictates of the Law (sharī'a) of the Seal of the Messengers (khātim al-rusul), this neither diminishes his [spiritual] station nor detracts from what we have set forth. Indeed! From one vantage point, it constitutes a grave descent though from another it is a supreme elevation ... Every single Prophet (kull al-nabī), from Adam until the final Prophet (ākhir al-nabī), receives [prophethood] from the niche of the Seal of the Prophets (mishkat khātam al-nabiyyīn)... Aside from him, Prophets (al-anbiyā') only become a Prophet (nabiyy^{an}) by virtue of their being [specially] commissioned [by God].

It was likewise with the Seal of the Chosen Ones [Friends, Saints] (khātim al-awliyā') who was a Walī (Chosen Guide) when Adam was between [primordial] water and clay (al-mā' wa'l-ṭīn). Others among the Intimate Ones [Friends, Saints] (awliyā') did not come to be a Walī (Intimate Ones, Friend, Saint) save as a result of attaining the qualities of wilāya (Divine Intimacy, Sainly virtue) (sharā'it al-wilāya) through the appropriation of divine characteristics (al-akhlāq al-ilāhiyya). This in line with assimilating (al-ittiṣāf) the modality of God (kawn Allāh), exalted be He, for He [God] is named "the "Walī", the Protector, One worthy of Praise" (al-walī al-ḥamīd; a phrase concluding Q. 42:28).

The Seal of the Messengers (khātim al-rusul), may thus be seen as expressive of His wilāya (Divine Intimacy, Sainly virtue) which is connected to the Seal of the Chosen Friends (khātim awliyā'). So too is he connected with the Prophets (al-anbiyā') and the Messengers (al-rusul). Wherefore is he the Walī (the Intimate Friend of God), the Messenger (al-rusul), and the Prophet (al-nabī). The Seal of the Chosen Friends (khātim awliyā') is indeed the Walī (the Chosen Friend), the

Inheritor (al-wārith) who receives from the Foundation (al-aṣl) and bears witness unto [those occupying the hierarchy of] the subsidiary levels (al-mashāhid l'l-marāṭib).

He [the Walī] is one perfect among the perfections (ḥasanat al-ḥasanāt) of the Seal of the Messengers (khātim al-rusul), Muhammad (may God bless him and grant him peace), the Foremost of the community (muqaddam al-jama`a) and the Lordly Master of the children of Adam (sayyid walad adam) who opens up the gateway of intercession (bāb al-shifā`a). He is thus assigned a specific spiritual status (ḥāl) which is all-embracing (`amam). Relative thereto he [Muhammad / the Walī] has precedence over the Divine Names (al-asmā' al-ilāhī) ... (Fusūs al-hikam, 2nd printing, ed Afīfī, 1980: 62-4; trans. Lambden).⁷⁰

Extracts from the fourteenth Ezra (Uzayr) Section of the Fuṣuṣ al-Ḥikam

Know thou that wilāya (providential Intimacy) is a universal, all-encompassing firmament [sphere] (al-fulk al-muḥīt al-`āmm) which can never be terminated [abstracted]. Universal prophets (al-anbiyā' al-`āmm) channel it. As for legislative prophethood (nubuwwat al-tashrī) and the conveyors of the sent messenger (al-risāla) this may come to be cut off. This was case of with [the legalistic prophethood of] Muhammad (upon him be peace) which was indeed terminated for there can be no prophet (nabī) after him. Certainly not, in other words, one Law-generating, one subject to one Law-generating or even a Messenger (rasūl) given to legislation (Fusūs al-hikam, 2nd printing, ed Afīfī, 1980: 134-137; trans. Lambden. cf. Chodkeiwicz, 50-51).

Appendix 5

The Liqā' Allāh ("Encounter with God") and related verses in the Qur'ān.

Words, verbal and nominal, deriving from the Arabic root l-q-y including al-liqā' (the encounter) are quite frequent in the Qur'ān. The basic senses of this trilateral root include:

TO BE ADDED.

⁷⁰ Cf. the translations of Burchardt, 25-31; Dagli, 2004: 26-28; Bewley, 2013; etc.

Appendix 6

The Hadīth of the Beatific, eschatological vision of the Lord.

There exist many prophetic and other ḥadīth about the eschatological vision of God, the resplendent Lord, in numerous respected Sunnī and Shī'ī Islamic sources. These include Islamic Tafsīr literatures and, for example, the ḥadīth collections of al-Bukhārī, Muslim (d. 875 CE), Ibn Mājah (d. 886 CE), al-Tirmidhī (d. 815 CE), Abū Dāwūd (d. 888 CE) and al-Nasā'ī (d. 915 CE), as well as in the early al-Muwattā' ("The Approved") of Imam Mālik ibn Anas (d.179/795). Here we can only cite and translate a few of these traditions about the vision of the Lord on the Day of Resurrection.

al-Bukhārī, Kitāb al-Tawḥīd (Book of the Divine Unity)

al-Bukhārī in the Kitāb al-Tawḥīd (Book of the Divine Unity), from Jarīr (No. 7436, pp. 318-9):

From 'Ata' ibn Yazid al-Laithi as narrated from Abū Hurayrah (No. 7437, p. 319-322),

From 'Aṭā' bin Yazid several times from Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī (No. 7438, p. 322+ No. 7438, p. 322) ...

Appendix 7

The Abrahamic religions and the eschatological Theophany.

Select texts and further bibliography.

Appendix 8

Some Further Notes on Wilāya and the Walī in Shaykhī, Bābī and Bahā'ī sacred literatures.

As in twelver Shī'ism, Bābī and Bahā'ī sacred literatures, view walāya (Providential Divine Intimacy) and the related human embodiments of it sometimes designated walī (Intimate, Friend, Imam Saint, Guardian) very highly. There are sometimes messianically charged references to wilāya / walī in the writings of the Bāb and Bahā'-Allāh. These important Islamic terms have key theological and historical dimensions in their writings.

The Bāb made fairly numerous use of the terms walāya and walī. He titled Surah LXII (62) of his important Qayyūm al-asmā' the Surah of the Chosen Friends (al-Awliyā'). He made much of walāya concepts central in his Tafsir on the Surah 'By the Declining Day' (wa'l-asr) Qur'an 103, the opening letter of which is the letter "w". Among other things this letter "w" represents dimensions of walāya. Commenting upon this letter "w" (al-wāw) in this Tafsīr Sūrat wa'l-`Aṣr he writes:

ADD

In QA AAAA the Bāb explicitly refers to himself as al-Walī

Among the further wilāya related concepts of the Bāb in the Tafsīr wa'l-aṣr are his imamological and alphabetical interpretations of the letter wāw (= walāya) ADD (T. `Asr 69: 33ff on the 1st wāw = wilāyat al-kulliyā...etc; 36f, 55f on letter 35 (= wāw), etc).

In this important Arabic commentary the walāya phenomenon is also related to a hierarchy of its human embodiments, including eschatological worthies and the enlightened `ulamā', the Shī'ī divines:

... Now regarding the thirty-fifth letter [of this Sūrah, 103], the letter "W" (al-wāw). It signifies the wilāya which was shattered by means of a trace of this walāya and which God [consequently] allotted unto the Nuqaba (Shī'ī Notables/ Nobles)

Central to his exegesis of various qīṣaṣ al-anbiyā' (Stories of the Prophets) episodes is his wilāya related treatment of the story of Adam and the angels in his early, highly imamologically oriented Tafsīr Sūrat al-Baqāra (Q. 2).

Bahā'-Allāh likewise made use of concepts of wilāya though these have yet to be investigated (e.g. L. Ḥurūfat, 74). Commenting upon the word "moon" in Q. 91:2 in his Tafsīr Sūrat al-shams (Commentary on the Sūrah of the Sun, Q. 91), Bahā'-Allāh has it indicate walāya.

Ultimately Bahā'ī wilāya was focussed in its embodiment Shoghi Effendi Rabbani (1896-1957) as the (Per.) Valī- yi amr Allāh (Guardian of the [Bahā'ī] Cause of God'). For Bahā'īs the Walī / Valī is the title of the 'Guardian of the Cause of God' (Persian, valī-yi amr Allāh), the head of the Bahā'ī religion between 1921 and 1957 He was

succeeded by the internationally elected Universal House of Justice (bayt al-`adl al-a`zam).

Though not explicitly stated in primary scriptural sources, it may be noted here that a Bābī-Bahā'ī theological interpretation of the insights of Ibn al-`Arabī, might suggest that the “Youth” which the Great Shaykh encountered nigh the Meccan Ka`ba was the pre-existent person of the Bāb. The supreme, Jesus-like Walī (Intimate, Friend of God) of eschatological times, the Khātīm al-awliyā' (‘Seal of Universal Intimacy/Sainthood’) and the source of his Meccan and other disclosures (“revelations”), could be seen as the eternal reality of the timeless person of Bahā'-Allāh who explicitly claimed to be the “return” of second coming of Jesus.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY AND ABBREVIATIONS.

BPT = Bahā'ī Publishing Trust;

BWC = The Bahā'ī World Centre, Haifa, Israel.

L = Lawḥ (pl. alwāḥ), a scriptural writing or sacred `Tablet`

MMMA = Majmu`ah-yi millī-yi maṭbu`at-i amrī (Iranian BPT.).

INBMC = A privately published (in the mid. 1970s.) series of bound photocopies of mss. of the writings of the Bāb, Bahā'u'llāh and others in 100 + vols.

Q. = Qur`ān

QA = Qayūm al-asmā' (see Bāb below).

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- `Letter to the Imam / ` People of the City of Medīna') In INBMC 91: 23-25.
- `Letter to Salmān' in INBMC 91: 52-56.
- K-Panj-S = Kitāb-i panj sha'n. (“The Book of the Five Modes”), np.nd. [Tehran Azali ed. mid.1960s]
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