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**SOME ASPECTS OF
ISRĀ'ĪLIYYĀT AND THE EMERGENCE
OF THE
BĀBĪ-BAHĀ'Ī INTERPRETATION
OF THE BIBLE**

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CHAPTER SEVEN

The Bāb, Pre-islamic scripture and the Bible

7.1 Pre-Islamic scripture in the writings of the Bāb

That the Bāb had contact with Jews and Christians of Shīrāz and had been influenced by the NT in Persian translation has been asserted by some early European writers upon Bābism. Many were under the influence of statements made by the French diplomat and orientalist Joseph A. Comte de Gobineau (d.1882). He underscored the derivative nature of the teachings of the Bāb in chapter six of his *Les Religions et les Philosophies* (1st ed. Paris 1865 [1928]:133-4). Gobineau could not imagine Bābism, the religion of the Bāb, despite his very limited knowledge of the Bāb's writings, originating outside of a Christian or biblical sphere of influence. This is clear from one of his letters to Prokesch-Osten (d. 1876) (Momen, 1981:23-4).

Few, apart from the Turkologist Armin Vambery (d.1914), were aware of the often meagre knowledge of Gobineau in matters philological, religious and "orientalist".¹ Persons influenced by him include, for example, the Italian physician Michele Lessona (d.1894) who states in his *I Bābī* (written 1870's? pub. Turin 1881) that the Bāb had contact with the Jews and Zoroastrians of Shīrāz and had read the NT in Persian missionary translation (Lessona [1881]1981:11, 36-37, 46f).² Persian

¹ See Vambery's review of Browne's edition and translation of AB's *Sayyāh* where he makes some scathing remarks about Gobineau, reckoning him "no Orientalist at all". In his opinion Gobineau merely "worked with the assistance of a Mirza and a learned Akhond of Teheran" (Vambery, 1892:215).

² The unpublished trading accounts of the Bāb apparently confirm Zoroastrian connections as Browne had speculated in his index to the Persian Bayān (Browne, Nuqtat al-Kāf', XCIII-IV).

writers were also directly or indirectly influenced by Gobineau whose *Les Religiones...* was translated into Persian. The sentences alleging the Bāb's doctrinal indebtedness to Jews and to the NT are also reproduced by the Jewish writer Ḥabīb Lavi (d.1984) in his multi-volume *Tārīkh-i yahūd-i īrān* ("History of the Jews of Iran, 3 vols) (Tarikh III:604-5).¹ [225]

The supposition of Jewish and New Testament (= NT) influence has been repeated in various ways throughout the late 19th and 20th centuries. Even Edward G. Browne (d.1926) the renowned Cambridge orientalist and one-time expert on the Bābī religion, inaccurately furthered alleged NT links to the doctrinal teachings of the Bāb as will be seen in detail below. The origins and doctrinal bases of the Bābī religion are rather more complicated than the often simplistic theories of the 19th century orientalists with their limited access to primary sources. The doctrines of the Bāb cannot be wholly or adequately accounted for on the basis of Jewish associations, Western influences, Gospel study or even an alleged link with Zoroastrians or with such Russians as the diplomat Dmitrii I. Dolgorukov (d. Moscow 1867). It will be argued here that there is very little, if anything, in the Bāb's own writings that confirms NT influence, though high *irfānī* ("gnostic") theosophical streams of influence are much in evidence in his numerous, very largely Arabic, and Persian writings.

Concrete evidence in the primary sources for the Bāb's knowledge of the Bible/NT seems wholly lacking. There is not a great deal that presupposes either Jewish or

¹ The recent abridged English translation of this Lavi history (see bib. Lavi / Ebrahimi tr. Maschke) omits all of the considerable space given in the original 3rd. volume to Jewish and Bābī-Bahā'ī matters.

Zoroastrian influence either.² He never directly cites the HB in Arabic, Persian, nor any Jewish writers or literatures of any period save, save on the rare occasions when such sources are filtered through Shī'ī Islamic religious texts. It was the Bāb's mercantile associations with Jews or simply unfounded Muslim attitudes that in large measure account for these early European statements about the sources of the Bāb's inspiration and Bābī doctrine. Muslims generally, it should be borne in mind, viewed Jews with suspicion or contempt and regarded them as unclean (*najis*). Having Bābism derive therefrom was tantamount to dismissing it as unfounded nonsense of dubious origin.

Evidence is lacking in both the primary and secondary historical sources for sustained and direct contact between the Bāb and Jews. Jewish converts to Bābism during the Bāb's lifetime appear to have been non-existent. Though Bābism from the beginning presented itself as a neo-Shī'ī phenomenon with a message for all humankind (QA 1, etc) only a handful of six [226] Khurāsānī Jewish converts of the early 1850s (?) are known (Bushrū'ī, T-Khurasan: 86ff; cf. Pata'ī, 1997:76f).

In this chapter the opinions of the Bāb about pre-Islamic scripture will be surveyed. In this light some idea of the nature of the Bāb's alleged knowledge of the Bible / Gospels/ NT will be gleaned. After analysing the Bāb's own statements, the positive perspectives about his knowledge of the Bible/NT put forward by the Cambridge orientalist E.G. Browne (1864-1926) and the contemporary Yale historian Abbas Amanat will be shown to be without sound historical or textual foundation.

² It is not impossible that Gobineau's one-time Persian teacher and Jewish informant on Bābism, Mullā Lalizar (Eleazar) Hamadānī was aware of the Bāb's links with Jews and informed Gobineau accordingly.

Islamic messianism has it that an expected Mahdī-Qā'im would be fully aware of the location of the lost, genuine pre-Islamic scripture and come to rule non-Muslims in accordance with its dictates. Both Sunnī and Shī'ī traditions state that he would be guided to this pristine, uncorrupted Biblical scripture. Maṭār b. Muhammad Ṭahmān al-Warrāq (d. 125/743?) transmitted traditions from Ka'b al-Aḥbār to the effect that the Mahdī was so named because he would be guided (*yuhdā*) to find copies of the original texts of the Torah and the Gospel concealed in a cave in Antioch (Madelung EI² V:1232b). A parallel Shī'ī tradition from the 5th Imam, Muhammad al-Bāqir, as recorded by al-Nu'mānī (d.360/970-1) in his *Kitāb al-ghayba* (Book of the Occultation), reads as follows:

When al-Qa'im from the family of the Prophet will rise he will distribute equally among the people and will establish justice among his subjects... he will be called al-Mahdī, the one who will guide, since he will guide to the secret matters (*amr al-khafī*) and will bring out the Torah and other books of God from a cave in Antioch and will rule the people of the Torah according to the Torah, and the people of the Gospel according to the Gospel, and the people of the Qur'an according to the Qur'an (K. Ghayba, 164; cited Sachedina, 61).¹

Other Shī'ī traditions associate the Qā'im with varieties of the *jafr* about which there are [227] numerous traditions.² It is sometimes portrayed as a divinary,

1. Note also, "The Mahdī will... bring forth the Ark of the Divine Presence (*tābūt al-sakīna*) from a cave in Antioch in which are the Torah which God sent down to Moses and the Gospel which he sent down to Jesus, and, he will rule among the People of the Torah according to their Torah and among the People of the Gospel according to their Gospel".

2. Imam `Alī, K. *Jafr al-jāmi`* (1987); Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sh-Kafi* 2:85-9; Majlisī, *Bihar*² 47:270ff; al-Bahrānī, *Awalim* ; al-Bursī, *Mashariq*, 94, ; al-Aḥsā'ī, *JK* 1/ii [68-114] 87-8; Steingass, 365-6; Sachedina, 981:22.

“unwritten” sacred scroll inscribed upon cow hide containing the knowledge of the pre-Islamic prophets, learned Israelites [= Isrā’īliyyāt materials] and the secrets of future events (Biḥār ² 1:238f; cf. 47:270ff). The messianic Qā’im was expected to appear in possession of varieties of this *jafr* described in Shī’ī traditions from Imam Ja`far al-Ṣādiq and others as;

- (1) *al-jafr al-abyaḍ* (the white *jafr*), pure recensions of (Abrahamic scripture): the *Ṣuḥuf* of Abraham, the *tawrāt* (Torah) of Moses, the *zabūr* (“Psalter”) of David and the *Injīl* (Gospel) of Jesus as well as the *mushaf* (Scroll) of Fāṭima;
- (2) *al-jafr al-aḥmar* (the red *jafr*) a bag containing the weaponry (*al-salāḥ*) of the prophet Muhammad or the messianic Qā’im as the *sāhib al-sayf* (bearer of the sword).

Responding to a question about *jafr* al-Aḥsā’ī had it that this would be the exclusive inheritance of the messianic Qā’im. Imam `Alī had inherited the recognized *jafr* as the *‘ilm al-ḥurūf* (science of letters) from Muhammad via Gabriel when upon Mt. Paran (*jabal fārān*) (JK. 1/ii:87-8). The Bāb claimed knowledge of the secrets of this *jafr* in the sense of numerical, talismanic or gematric insight (cf. K. Panj :310, 429ff).³⁼¹ He did not, as far as I am aware, refer to any cave in Antioch or to the concrete discovery of lost pre-Islamic scripture. In certain of his writings, however, he does claim that God taught him the knowledge of pre-Islamic scripture. Probably presupposing this we read in his *Sūrat al-‘amā’* (Sūrah of the Divine Cloud”= QA 10): “We, verily, sent down [for the Bāb] the verses which are in the *Ṣuḥuf* (ancient

1. Dimensions of *jafr* referred to by the Imams as *jafr al-jāmi`* (“Comprehensive Jafr”) also indicates modes of gematric prognostication (see [pseudo-Imam] `Alī, 1987). This *jafr* is mentioned by BA* in his L. Ḥurūfāt al-muqaṭṭa`a (see bib).

scrolls)" (10:32). In this same surah the QA is also represented as a "Book" confirming and summing up "all that God sent down upon the prophets and the righteous ones in all the [previous] *alwāḥ* ('revealed tablets') (10:32). In an exegetical rewrite of Q. 3:48 in QA 3 the Bāb states, [228]

God hath assuredly taught you [the Bāb] the knowledge of the Book (*'ilm al-kitāb*) from the Furqān [= Q.] the *Injīl*, the *Tawrāt*, the *Zabūr* and what preceded them of the *Ṣuḥuf* (pre-Mosaic scripture) and with your Lord were you concealed and suspended above the Gate of the Point (*bāb al-nuqṭa*) of the letter "B" (*al-bā'*) (QA 3:11).¹

In Islamo-Bābī and Bahā'ī belief all revealed scripture is an expression of the will and Word of God. The knowledge of one sacred book, especially if it is the most recent, is tantamount to a knowledge of all revealed scripture. A new sacred book is another expression of the essences of all past revelations. Babī-Bahā'ī scripture presupposes that a true understanding of the Bayān and Q. is tantamount to a full awareness of pre-Islamic scripture. Worth noting in this connection is that during the Bābī period BA* referred to his 1857-8 *Ṣāḥifa-yi Fātimīyya* (Scroll of Fātima) or *K. maknūnih* (Hidden Words) as the "inner essence" (*jawāhir*) of all pre-Bābī scripture sent down unto past prophets (*al-nabiyyūn*) and clothed by him in the "garment of brevity" .

The Bāb not only mentions that Adam had a revealed *kitāb* ("Book") but, following mainstream Islamic tradition, affirmed the existence and inspired nature of the whole range of scripture originating in primordial and post-Abrahamic times. He

1. Qur'ān 3:48 on which this is based reads: "And He (God) will teach him (Jesus) the Book (*al-kitāb*), the Wisdom (*ḥikmat*), the Tawrat and the Injīl" .

refers to the *Ṣuḥuf* of Abraham, the *Tawrāt* (Torah) of Moses, the *Zabūr* (Psalms) of David and the *Injīl* (Gospel) of Jesus. In some of his later writings, including the P. Bayān, the Bāb refers to these sacred books after their initial Arabic letters: *Tawrāt* = “book of T” (*tā'*); *Zabūr* = “book of Z” (*zā'*)” and *Injīl* = “book of “A” (*alīf*)” (P-Bayān 3:13, etc).

Pre- Islamic scripture in the *Qayyūm al-asmā'* (mid. 1844).

References to pre-Islamic scripture in the QA of the Bāb are largely rooted in the Q. as exegetically rewritten so as to express a neo-Islamic and post-qur'ānic, Shī'ī *ta'wīl* (non-literal dimension). In the QA *Sūrat al-rukṅ* (Sūra of the Pillar) the Bāb states that Moses received the *Tawrāt* on Sinai and Jesus personally received the divinely revealed *Injīl* direct [229] "from heaven" (*min al-samā'*). These works are said to contain eschatologically suggestive references to the *Dhikr* and to concealed Tablets:

We, verily, gave Moses the Book and We preserved him in his youth until the time set in the book transpired... And We, indeed, gave Jesus, son of Mary the exposition (al-bayān) and aided him with a Spirit from Our Dhikr (bi-rūḥ min dhikrinā). We, indeed, sent down a Book (kitāb^{an}) upon the prophets (al-nabiyyīn) consisting of concealed tablets (al-alwāḥ al-mastūr^{an}) (QA 55:217; cf. Q. 2:87).

Probably addressing Sufis and speaking with the voice of God in the *Sūrat al-kitāb* (Sura of the Book = QA 41) the pre-existent Bāb affirms the revealed status of Abrahamic scripture. He associates his pre-existent Logos-Self with the quasi-messianic *Dhikr* (Remembrance) and the divine being who conversed with Moses on Sinai. He revealed the *Injīl* to Jesus who was subsequently taken up to the heaven of *baqā'* (permanent abiding in God). This until the *Hujjat-Allāh* (Messianic Qā'im)

appears at the time of second advent of Jesus and discloses the sealed mystery of the identity and purpose of the messianic *Dhikr* (= Bāb):

O People of effacement (*maḥw*)! Hearken unto my call, from the Point of Brightness (*nuqt*at al-Ṣaḥw*), from this Arabian Youth who, with the permission of God, cried out unto Moses on Mount Sinai (*al-ṭūr al-sinā'*). The Torah, in very truth, was assuredly sent down unto him on the part of God... With our hands did We beckon unto Jesus. The *Injīl* was indeed sent down from heaven unto his person in his allotted time. Then God lifted him [Jesus] up to heaven for eternal abiding [with Him] (*li'l-baqā'*), until, that is, the promised Day when the mystery will be disclosed from the sealed scroll (*al-Ṣaḥīfa al-makhtūma*) in the platform of the courtyard (*dakkaṭ al-qaṣā'*) of the great Mosque of Mecca (*al-masjid al-ḥarām*), by the tongue of the Ḥujjat-Allāh (Proof of God, the Qā'im), the truth that is, regarding the mystery of the *Dhikr* who represents Muhammad, the Arabian Prophet (QA 41:153).

In the *Sūrat al-ghulām* (Surah of the Youth, QA 54) the Bāb refers to himself as the *al-bāb al-akbar* (Greatest Gate) and *al-ghulām al-'arabī* the Arabian Youth to whom reference is made in the *Tawrāt*, the *Injīl*, the *Zabūr* and the Q. as well as in the *umm al-kitāb*, the Archetypal Book (QA 54:214). This is in line with the Shī'ī notion that pre-Islamic prophets (*anbiyā'*) predicted the identity of the future advent of Muhammad before his being born in this world. The same is said of the Bāb as the eschatological Joseph-like “youth”. Both the Bāb and BA* believed their advent was specifically predicted in all past sacred books (Ibn Bābūya, *Risāla fī'l-ghayba*, IV [CD]).^[225]

There are several passages in the QA and other writings in which the Bāb refers to pre-Islamic scripture as alluding to himself or to the awaited messiah. In the highly

esoteric *Sūrat al-tarbī`* (Sūra of the Quadratic Talisman) of the QA, the Bāb, most likely referring to himself states

You on the Mount (*al-ṭūr*) are in the Point of the Gate (*nuqṭat al-bāb*) in the vicinity of the [Sinaitic] Fire planted by the hand of God, the pre-existent in the earth of the divine Cloud (*arḍ al-`amā`*). You are the shape of the talismans (*shakl al-ṭalismiyyūn*) in the Sinaitic Mount above the Light (*al-ṭūr `alā al-nūr*). You are as the Jesus-like Word (*al-kalimat al-`īsā`wiyyūn*) in the *Injīl* (Gospel) and the *Zabūr* (Psalter), most assuredly inscribed in the form of the *taṣbīḥ* (= *subḥān Allāh* = `Praised be God!'). Say: I, verily, am the triangular [talismanic] form (*shakl al-thulth* = `Alī?) written quadratic [fourfold = Muhammad?] (*marbi` an*) in the sanctum of the divine Cloud (*al-quḍs al-`amā`*) (QA 91:364).

In this passage the Bāb probably indicates his parentally bestowed name `Alī Muhammad (3 letters+4 letters). This was mystically registered in talismanic forms in Sinaitic pre-eternity. He was the locus of a Name (*ism*) written aforetime by the hands of the eschatological *Dhikr* in the *Tawrāt* (Torah), the *Injīl* (Gospel) and the Q. (QA 50:195).¹

Pre-Islamic scripture in some later writings of the Bāb.

Commenting on the letter “k” (*kāf*) of *li-rabbika* (Q. 108:2) in his T.Kawthar the Bāb relates *kalām Allāh* (the Word of God) to various past sacred books including the *tawrāt* and *injīl*;

Now concerning the letter “k” (*al-kāf*). It signifies the *kalām Allāh* (Word of God) in the Q. ... it signifies the Word of God (*kalām Allāh*) in the *Injīl* (Gospel) which God sent down through a letter of the exteriority of the Q. (*bi-ḥarf min `alāniyyat al-qur`ān*) unto whomsoever desired that he might believe in the All-Merciful in the realm of existence (*arḍ al-`imkān*). It [the

1. These statements may assume the pre-existent presence of letters of the *ism Allāh al-`aẓam* (the “Mightiest Name of God”) in pre-Islamic scripture (cf. T.LaylatQ. 69:18--> 8).

letter “k”] also signifies the Word of God (*kalām Allāh*) in the *tawrāt* (Torah) as accords with what God sent down unto Moses, son of `Imrān, from every direction... (T.Kawthar :f. 21a-b.)

This passage makes it clear that the “Word of God” in the *Injīl* is subordinated to the Q. originating from a mere *ḥarf* (“letter”) of the Islamic sacred book as is later echoed several times in the P-Bayān. The Bāb may here presuppose the *Injīl* being relayed to post-Jesus’ [230] disciples and others (?). This subordinate position of the *Injīl* (Gospel[s]) was doubtless a factor in the Bāb’s non-citation of 19th century canonical Gospel texts. He never refers to the *anājīl* (four Gospels) but, like the Q., invariably uses the singular *Injīl* which does not appear to have plural implications or be indicative of the NT Gospels. Among other things this tends to put the Bāb outside of the category of those Shīṭī ‘*ulamā*’ who debated with Christian missionaries (<-- 4.3).

None of the later writings of the Bāb,¹ including the P. Bayān contain NT or biblical quotations. There are though, several interesting references to the *Injīl* in its ideal, pristine essence. In this condition the *Injīl* is identical with the Q. and the Bayān (P-Bayān 2:15). It revolved around the word of Muhammad for whose sake it was written (P-Bayān 2:19; 3:3). Muhammad fulfilled and perfected the *Injīl* (P-Bayān 4:13). The *Injīl* was superceded or abrogated by the Q. and the Bayān which are more excellent and complete divine revelations (P-Bay. 3:4). This makes the copying and

1. Such scattered references to the *Tawrāt*, *Injīl* and *Zabūr* as exist in the Bāb’s *Dalā’il-i sab`a* (Per. & Ar.) *K. PanjS*, *K. Asmā’* and other late writings are largely of passing or minor interest.

study of the *Injīl* of no avail after the messianic advent of Muhammad (P-Bayān 7:1). It is no wonder that the Bāb chose not to cite the NT.

Despite this subordinate position the *Injīl* is quite definitely assumed to be the "Book of God" (*kitāb-i khūdāvand*) and the *kalām Allāh* (Word of God <--). The Bāb, however, reckoned that the spiritual essence of the pristine *Injīl* mystically coalesced with the Q. (when it was revealed to Muhammad) and became something "mundane". The true spirit and sanctity of the Gospel became dependent on the more elevated Q.;

There is no doubt that the *Injīl* was the *kitāb-i khūdāvand* (Book of God). But after the descent of the Furqān [Criterion = the Q.] its real spirits (*arvāḥ-i ḥuqqih-yi ān*) were elevated through the instrumentality of the Qur'ān. What remained was other than the *aliyyīn*, the sublimely elevated spirits [of the divinely revealed verses of the Q.] (P-Bayān 7:7, 289).

None of the passages cited above should be taken to be indicative of the Bāb's direct knowledge of Abrahamic sacred writ or biblical texts. Rather, they point to his being the mouthpiece of God in receipt of divine revelation, inspired with the knowledge of all past sacred [231] books. As the spiritual "return" of all past messengers of God, the Bāb explicitly claimed to be the author of all past religions and the revealer of *al-Kitāb*, the archetypal repository of all sacred scripture (Ar-Bayan, 1:82, 2:15, etc).

The Bāb's view of pre-qur'ānic sacred scripture is very much in line with that of `Abd al-Raḥman Jāmī (d.898/1492) and other Sufīs of the school of Ibn `Arabī including `Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī (d. c. 832/1428; al-Insān,1:111-4). The 28th section of al-Jāmī's composite Arabic-Persian *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ* (The Deliverance of the Texts), which comments upon aspects of Ibn al-`Arabī's *Naqsh al-fuṣūṣ* (The Imprint of the

Bezels) focuses upon the mysteries of the bezel relative to “the peerless wisdom in the Muhammadan word”. Here the Q. is equated with the Logos-like *nafs* (“Self”) and *ḥaqīqa* (Reality) of Muhammad. It is seen as “a singular expression (*aḥadiyya*) of the combination of the entirety of the divine books (*jam` al-jamī` al-kutub al-ilāhiyya*).”

The Q. Jāmī continues,

came about through the Prophet [Muhammad]...He said, “God revealed one hundred and four books from heaven”. Wherefore did he deposit the knowledge of these one hundred in these four; that is, [1] *Tawrāt*, (Torah), the [2] *Injīl* (Gospel[s]), [3] the *Zabūr* (Psalter) and the [4] *Furqān* (“Criterion” = the Q.). Then he deposited the knowledge of these four in the Q. He then deposited the knowledge of the Q. in the substance (*mufaḍḍal*) of its [114] sūrahs. Then he deposited the substance of its suraḥs into *al-Fātiḥa*, (= Q.1). Whoso has a knowledge of the commentary on the [sūrah of the] Opening (*tafsīr al-fātiḥa*) has a knowledge of the commentary (*tafsīr*) upon all the revealed books of God. Whomsoever recited it [Q.1 the *Fātiḥa*] it is as if he had recited the *Tawrat*, the *Injīl*, the *Zabūr* and the *Furqān* [= Q.] (Jāmī`, Naqd, 275).

This conflation of the substance of the revealed books into the first sūra of the Q. is probably inspired by the tradition that the whole of the Q. is in the point (•) of the letter “b” (ب) of the *basmala* of the first surah, *al-Fātiḥa* (Q.1), a tradition well-known to the Bāb. Jāmī’s mystical conflation of all previous revealed books into the first surah of the Q. reflects exactly the way that the Bāb viewed pre-Islamic revelations. The reality of the Bible as the *Tawrāt*, *Zabūr* and *Injīl* were spiritually subsumed within the essence of the Q. Its mysteries were implicit within the Islamic sacred book, more or less rendering the citation, direct knowledge (of translations) of the HB (Psalms) and Gospel/NT unnecessary. It has likewise been noted how [233] Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī expressed a similar opinion in his *Sharḥ al-Qāṣida al-lāmiyya*.

The Bāb on *taḥrīf* (“falsification”) and *tabdīl* (“scriptural alternation”).

At several points in his writings including the Per. and Ar. *Seven Proofs*, the Bāb presupposes that Jews possess the *tawrāt* (Torah) and Christians the *Injīl* and the followers of David the *Zabūr* (“Psalter”). He had an accepting, positive view of these past sacred scriptures although their importance is abrogated, virtually negated relative to the subsequent divine revelations of the Q. and the Bayān (= the Bāb’s own revelations). The Bāb does not appear to directly refer to the (canonical) *Tawrāt* and *Injīl* as having been subject to *taḥrīf* in the usual Islamic (post-qur’ānic) sense, though he does indicate their loss of “elevated spirits” (<--in P.Bay 7:7). In the *Sūrat al-kitāb* (Sūrah of the Book, QA 41) he warns readers not to subject the QA to *tabdīl* (alternation) or *taḥrīf* (“corruption”) even though revelation is essentially something beyond the letter:

O servants of the All-Merciful! Fear God regarding the *taḥrīf* (textual corruption) of the Book even to the extent of a single letter (*ḥarf an*) of what God has, in truth, sent down therein which goes beyond the [concrete] letter (*alā ghayr al-ḥarf*). (QA 41:151; cf. QA 53:209).

This passage may imply that the Bāb considered divine revelation more than something written in concrete letters which can be easily corrupted. Divine revelation for him appears something more elevated than what might be subject to concrete *taḥrīf* (corruption). This viewpoint also seems to be reflected in *P-Bayān* 7:7. For the Bāb neither the *Tawrāt* or *Injīl* have been subject to *taḥrīf* (“corruption”) in the standard Islamic sense. It is the loss of their “spirit” and “life” relative to their power to inspire religious truth that fades away before later expressions of divine revelation. The attempt to divine theological truth after another divine revelation is assumed to be

futile. When a new *mazhar-i ilāhī* (divine manifestation) appears with a new book which encapsulates the *‘aliyyīn* (“elevated spirits”) which impart *ḥaqīqa*, hermeneutical reality to the pure in heart. For the Bāb sacred books have a spiritual dimension which derives from the latest *mazhar-i ilāhī* and promotes insight and spirituality.

The *Injīl* referred to in most if not all of the writings of the Bāb cannot be straight-forwardly [234] equated with existing Christian Gospels, with the canonical Christian NT. *Injīl* primarily indicates the revelation of God to Jesus. It seems to be presupposed that this revelation is extant though its usefulness is eclipsed and superseded by subsequent revelations in the form of the Q. and the Bayān of the Bāb. These latter revealed texts encapsulate the new spiritual intention of the *Injīl*.

The Bāb’s position relating to the *Tawrāt* and *injīl* is sufficiently open or ambiguous to suggest and prepare the way for BA*’s rejection of any thoroughgoing Islamic expression the doctrine of biblical *taḥrīf*. It was only a decade or so after the Bāb’s execution in 1850 that BA* (then a leading Bābī) began (from the early 1860s) to make frequent citations of biblical scripture in attempting to prove the truth of Islam from the NT as well as the veracity of the religion of the Bāb. .

7. 2 The Delphic maxim and an Islamicate citation from the *Injīl*

In several of his major and certain of his minor works, including his *T. Baqara* (52a-b), *T. LaylatQ.* (69:17), *T. Man.* (14:472), *T. Ḥaqīqa*(14:465), *R. NubuwwaK* (4:385) and *P. Dalā’il* (*P. Dal*:39) the Bāb quotes and sometimes comments on a maxim which

he often identifies as a saying from the *Injīl* -- though it only vaguely reflects (?)

Matt.10:28 (= Luke 12:4-5?):¹

اعرف نفسك تعرف ربك
ظاهرك للفناء وباطنك انا

Know thyself and thou shalt know thy Lord;

Thine outer self (zāhir) is for [mystical] annihilation (fanā')

while thine inner self (bāṭin) is I, Myself (anā).

The first hemistich of this saying is rooted in the Delphic maxim, "Know thyself!" which was known from antiquity, prior to the time of Philo of Alexandria (d.c. 50 CE?) who commented upon it in a manner reminiscent of later Muslim philosophers and gnostics (Philo, Spec. Leg. 1.43ff; Mut. 7.10; Westra, 1992:89-102). In his *T. Baqāra* the Bāb understands the *nafs* ("Logos-Self") to be the "Reality" which provides a sure Path unto God: "Whoso hath known God [235] through the Path of this Logos-Self (*nafs*) which is in him hath assuredly known God. There is no Path for the servants other than this" (T. Baqara 52a). Like BA*, Philo held that the Delphic maxim implied the unknowability of God (Louth, 1981:20f; BA* Lawḥ-i Ḥajjī Mullā Ḥādī Qazvīnī, MAM:346-62). Just as one cannot know the depths of one's own "self" so is it reckoned impossible to know the reality of God.

Variouly expanded Islamicate versions of the Delphic maxim are attributed in Islamic literatures to a variety of philosophers and sages as well as to Imam `Alī and Muhammad:

1. Matt. 10:28 seems to be the only NT saying that reflects a few Islamicate versions of the Delphic maxim: "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both souls and body in hell".

من عرف نفسه فقد عرف ربه

man `arafa nafsahu faqad `arafa rabbahu,

Whoso knoweth himself knoweth his Lord.²⁼¹

Apparently first introduced as a *ḥadīth* by Yaḥyā b. Mu`ādh (d. 871), it was quoted and commented upon by many medieval and later Muslim writers some of whom were aware of its Greek origin (Altmann, 1963[9]). In the *Rasā'il ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* versions of the Delphic maxim are attributed to both Muhammad and `Alī as they are in the writings of the Bāb (*Rasā'il* 1:76; III:351; Altmann 1963[9]:1). At one point in these encyclopaedic *Rasā'il* it is said to be incumbent upon every intellectual (*`āqil*ⁱⁿ) to seek "the knowledge of the self ("soul") as well as the gnosis of its essence and its refinement" (*'ilm al-nafs wa ma`rifatihi jawharihā wa tadhībihā*, R1:76). Ibn Sīnā reckoned that the version "Whoso knoweth himself knoweth his Lord" as a *kalima* (statement, saying) about which the *ḥukamā'* (philosophers) and *awliyā'* ('saintly ones') are in agreement (ibid 1969:1). In his opinion it calls for a "profound self-scrutiny" (Goodman, 1992:164).

Rewritten or expanded forms of the Delphic maxim were highly regarded by Sufi writers and mystics. Ibn al-`Arabī frequently commented upon it as is evident in his weighty *Futūḥāt* (II:308, 500; III:101; 314, 404, 552 etc. [ed Yahyā] 14:480, etc.; Houédard, 1992:1-10) and in his influential *Fuṣūṣ* (*Fuṣūṣ* 69; tr.74). His *Risāla al-wujūdiyya* (Treatise on Existence) is largely devoted to the mysteries of the Islamicate

1. Variant forms include, *a`rafukum bi-nafsihi arafukum bi-rabbihi* ("He among you who knows himself best knows his Lord best"). Both, for example, are found in *R. Ikhwān al-Safā'* (R.1:76).

Delphic maxim cited as a prophetic *ḥadīth*. It has, furthermore, been observed that the *al-Ḥikma al-`arshīyya* (Wisdom of the Throne) of Mullā [236] Ṣadrā is essentially an “extended commentary on the famous saying of Imam `Ali: `He who truly knows (*`arafa*) his soul/Self (*nafsahu*), knows his Lord” (Morris, 1981:62 fn.69; 78 fn. 88). Bursī also cited and commented upon versions of the Delphic maxim in his *Mashāriq* (Lawson, 1992: 271). Like numerous other Shī`ī writers both Shaykh Aḥmad¹ and Sayyid Kāẓim as well as the Bāb and BA* commented upon versions of this tradition (B* T.Man.14:468f). BA* commented upon an Islamicate Delphic maxim (*man `arafa nafsahu faqad `arafa rabbahu*) in his *L. H-Qazvini* (MAM:346-62) and his *K. īqān* (BA* KI:76/66) and other writings.

The first clause of the Bāb’s above cited quotation from the *Injīl* corresponds with one of the Arabic forms of the Delphic maxim. Its second hemistich is perhaps best regarded as a Sufī gloss indicative of its meaning. It may indicate that human beings by interior realization of their divine nature and the transitoriness of their *zāhir*, (outer physical form) come to a knowledge of God. Though not contained in the canonical NT the Bāb sometimes introduces this expanded version of the Delphic maxim as that which God said in the *Injīl* (*qāla Allāh fī’l-injīl*). Elsewhere in his writings he follows Islamic sources in attributing it to Muhammad or Imam `Alī.

1 See Ibrahīmī, *Fihrist.* 225 [item 13 = Shaykh Aḥmad’s commentary on the aforementioned *ḥadīth* in reply to a question of Shaykh Muhammad Mahdī Astarābadī]; Risāla in reply to Sayyid Abū al-Ḥasan al-Jīlānī in MajR. 30: 90-101, esp 94f.

The presence of this pseudo- Gospel divine utterance in the Bāb's writings is obviously not indicative of his direct knowledge of the NT. ¹ Its source in his writings is most probably the writings of the first two Shaykhī leaders who also occasionally quote forms of it as deriving from the *Injīl*. The first two Shaykhs most probably quote it from the *Mashāriq al-anwār* of al-Bursī. There, in a slightly longer version, it is reckoned to be that which the "Glorious Lord" (*al-rabb al-jalīl*) uttered in the *Injīl*. The text, as cited by al-Bursī along with [237] another two versions ascribed to Muhammad, the "Master of the [Islamic] Law" (*ṣāhib al-sharī'a*), and the rightly guided Imām reads;

يقول الرب الجليل في الإنجيل : اعرف نفسك أيها الانسان تعرف ربك ، ظاهرك
 للفناء وباطنك انا ، وقال صاحب الشريعة : اعرفكم بربه اعرفكم بنفسه ، وقال إمام
 الهداية : مَنْ عرف نفسه فقد عرف ربه.

The Glorious Lord says in the *Injīl*:

Know thyself, O thou humankind (*al-insān*)! then thou shalt know thy Lord. Thine outer being (*ẓāhir*) is for mystical annihilation (*li-l-fanā'*) while your interior reality (*bāṭin*) is I Myself (*anā*)

The master of the Law [= Muhammad] said: 'Know thyself through thy Lord and thou shalt know thine own self.'

¹ The Bab distinguishes this alleged quotation from the *injīl* from the two expanded Islamic forms of the Delphic maxim found in the *ḥadīth* literatures. He usually attributes the words *man `arafa nafsahu faqad `arafa rabbahu* to Imām `Alī and *a`rafukum bi-nafsihi a`rafukum bi- rabbihi* to Muhammad. Commenting on these traditions and the alleged quotation from the *Injīl* he affirms that the world of creation or the human *nafs* (cf. Qur`an 41:53) may be the locus of the theophany of the names and attributes of God but underlines the impossibility of any relationship between the human *nafs* and the unknowable Godhead (cf. BA*'s similar comments on *man `arafa nafsahu faqad `arafa rabbahu* in his L. H-Qazvīnī, .35f).

And the rightly guided Imam [ʿAlī] said: 'Whoso knoweth himself assuredly knoweth his Lord' (Bursī, *Mashāriq*, 188).¹

As noted, Ibn al-ʿArabī is another important source for Islamicate Bible citations. In his *K. al-jalāl wa'l-jamāl* (Book of the Divine Majesty and Beauty) he quotes the following Islamicate version of what God allegedly revealed (w-ḥ-y) in His *tawrāt* (Torah, Hebrew Bible):

O son of Adam! I created all things for thy sake and created thee for My sake. Then do not disgrace what I created for Myself through what I created for thy sake (Ar. text *Rasā'il ibn 'Arabī*, I:15).

In similar fashion al-Aḥsā'ī in his *Sharh al-ziyāra* cites the following *ḥadīth qudsī* said to be contained in the *Injīl* but which is again related to the Islamobiblical citations already given:

I [God] created existing things (*al-ashyā'*) for thy sake and I created thee for My sake for while thine inner reality (*bāt'inuka*) is I Myself (*anā*), thine outer self (*ẓāhiruka*) is for annihilation (*li'l-fanā'*) (Sh-Ziyara 3:352-3; cf. Ibid 4:26).

After this quotation the Shaykh goes immediately on to quote *al-Injīl* (The Gospel) exactly as in Bursī's *Mashāriq* (Sh- Ziyara, 3:363). [238]

Finally, it should also be noted that in the course of commenting on the words "I saw God and Paradise" in his *Sh. Tutunjiyya*, Sayyid Kāẓim also quotes the saying of the *Injīl* exactly as registered in Bursī's *Mashāriq* but with the following addition, "I am

1. This line is immediately followed by a similar saying of the "bearer of the law (*sā.hib al-shari'a* = Muhammad), "Whoso cometh to know his Lord best cometh to know his own self best" (Bursī, *Mashariq*,188). On Bursī and his concept of self-knowledge see Lawson, 1992:270f.

the theophany of the divine Essence (*zuhūr al-dhāt*) through the unique Word (*bi'l-kalām al-mutafarrid*)" (Rashtī, Sh-Tutunjiyya, 299 cf.185).

In the light of the above, it is evident that the Bāb's quotation of the typically Sufi, Islamicate "Gospel" citation, is his registering something derived from his Shaykhī teachers who were dependent upon al-Bursī or other mystically inclined philosopher-theologians. None of this has anything to do with the Bāb's knowledge of the NT.

7. 3 The Bāb and alleged biblical citations in primary and secondary sources.

Gobineau in *Religiones et Philosophies..* (Paris, 1865), the Italian physician Lessona in his *I-Babi* (Turin, 1881), several Christian missionary writers (Miller, Shedd, St.Clair-Tisdall) and a number of western academics (Browne, Amanat) have, to a greater or lesser extent, accepted the largely unfounded tradition that the Bāb had been influenced by Christianity through reading Bible translation(s). From 1910 this position was championed by E. G. Browne as allegedly backed up by somewhat dubious external evidence in support of the Bāb's biblical awareness in the form of a notice based upon a memorandum found among the papers of the (ABCFM) Presbyterian missionary John Haskell Shedd (d.1895) of the "Nestorian Mission" at Urumiyya (from 1870).

Shedd reported an account of an alleged interview between the Bāb and the British physician resident at Tabriz, William Cormick (d.1294/1877).¹ Cormick allegedly told

1. See 'An Interesting Document on the Bāb [A letter of W.A. Shedd to the Editor of the Muslim World, dated Urumia, Persia, August 28th, 1914]' in *The Moslem World*, Vol.5. (1915), pp.111-12 also cited in Browne, *Materials..* 260-2. William Cormick and two other Persian physicians had been sent to ascertain, apparently on behalf of the Shāh and the Muslim divines of Tabriz (before July 9th 1850), whether or not the Bāb was of sound mind and thus fit for execution. Cormick must have communicated his favourable impression of the Bāb to John Shedd between 1870 and 1877 (on Cormick see Momen Elr. IV:275-6).

John Shedd that the Bāb "was seen by some Armenian Carpenters, who were sent to make some repairs in his prison [presumably at Chihriq], reading the Bible". The Bāb, it was apparently said, "took [239] no pains" to conceal his reading the Bible but allegedly informed the Armenian carpenters accordingly (Shedd, 'Memorandum', 12).

Though it is not impossible that the Bāb had read the Bible during his imprisonment in Ādhirbayjān (or indeed prior to this time) there is nothing in his writings that supports the theory that he had studied and based his religious ideas upon a biblical / NT precedent. There is really no internal evidence supportive of the theory that the Bāb had read the NT in either the Persian translation of Martyn or any other Persian or Arabic NT version. As will be argued here, the Bāb never cited any of the books or testaments of the canonical Bible. Browne was too ready to accept the aforementioned missionary ascribed to Shedd which may have been motivated by a desire to account for the Bāb's "enlightened" teachings by way of Christian influence. The passages from the *injīl*, which the Bāb does several times explicitly cite, are non-canonical, entirely Islamicate or Islamo-biblical sayings deriving from earlier Muslim sources. If Armenian carpenters saw the Bāb reading or chanting sacred verses they might simply, in view of his widely recognised piety, have assumed that he was reading the NT. Even if he was doing so there is no clear internal evidence of this reading in any of the Bāb's writings I have seen. Having thus argued it is necessary to examine other supposed indications of the Bāb's knowledge of the Bible / NT. It can be assumed that the above missionary evidence is at best uncertain and very probably unreliable.

E. G. Browne and Gospel influence within the *Persian Bayān*.

While no convincing traces of the Bāb's direct knowledge of the Hebrew Bible have been found certain alleged signs of his knowledge of the NT have been set down by the aforementioned Cambridge orientalist Edward. G. Browne. This in his 'Index of Chief Contents of the Persian Bayan', contained in his English introduction to his 1910 edition of the *K. Nuqat*at al-kāf*. Here Browne listed seven alleged 'signs of the influence of the Gospel on the Persian Bayān.' As Browne succinctly registered them they are; [240]

- (1) "The first shall be last and the last first" (II.16,17; VIII.4.);
- (2) The Hour shall come suddenly ("like a thief in the night") (II.18);
- (3) A cup of water given by a believer (IV.8.);
- (4) Believers are to love one another (V.16);
- (5) Believers are to do as they would be done by (VI.15);
- (6) Selling in the Temple (IV.17);
- (7) Dying to God (II.8; III.13; V.3)." (Refer Browne (ed.) K-N-Kāf : Ixviii).

At first sight this list appears to be a fairly impressive indication of Gospel influence upon the Bāb / P-Bayān by a very highly respected Cambridge academic. Most, however, if not all of the alleged influences listed by Browne find clear parallels in Islamic literatures. None of these seven are direct or indirect signs of NT influence upon the Bāb. Browne's seven examples to some degree actually serve to illustrate the pre-19th century Jewish and Christian / biblical influence upon Islam. Exact Islamic sources for most of these alleged signs of Gospel influence, can be found in either the Q., the Islamic tradition literatures, in Sufi texts or other miscellaneous Islamic literatures. It will be argued here that such parallels make it very unlikely that Browne's 'Signs of Gospel Influence' are proofs of the Bāb's familiarity with the NT.

Each of these seven alleged signs of Gospel influence will now be briefly examined in the order given by Browne. Possible textual parallels in the Henry Martyn Persian NT will be borne in mind as will the Bāb's doctrines set out in the Persian and Arabic Bayāns and other writings.

• **(1) Eschatological reversal: 'The first shall be last and the last shall be first'.**

P-Bayān (= P-Bayān) 8:4 has to do with the hierarchical appropriation of all existence, "things", *kullu shay'* ("everything"). The Bāb opens P-Bayān 8:4 by stating that the most elevated portion of "everything" belongs to himself as the "Point" (*kullu shay' a'lāhū li-l-nuqt*a*). Its intermediate component exists for the *ḥurūf al-ḥayy*, ("Letters of the Living") while its most lowly (*andā*) aspect is assigned to humankind (*al-khalq*). Having used two Arabic superlatives expressive of the most elevated (*'alā*) and the most lowly (*andā*) the Bāb is inspired to incorporate the religious principle of bi-polar reversal, even combining Arabic and Persian superlative forms: [241]

.. In each religious theophany (*ḥar zuhūrī*) it is evident that the most elevated of creatures (*a'lā-yi khalq*) become the most abased [of creatures] (*andā*). And [furthermore that] the most lowly of creatures (*andā-yi khalq*) become [especially] elevated (*a'lā*). Additionally, the most elevated (*a'lā-tar*) become yet more elevated (*a'lā*) [through faith] while the most lowly (*andā*) become even lowlier (*andā-tar*) [through denial]... (P-Bayān 8:4, 283, cf. 2:16,17).

That there will be a (bi-polar) eschatological reversal of (faith) status (First/Last: Last/First or Exalted/Humbled: Humbled/Exalted) is certainly indicated in Judaeo-Christian biblical and extra-biblical tradition (Ezek.2:31 (LXX); Ps. 74:8 (LXX) Ep. Arist. 363; Erub 13b, etc). NT evidence indicates that this was central to the parables and teachings of Jesus (Mk.10:31; Matt. 19:30; 20:16; Lk. 13:30; 14:11; 18:14, Barnabas

6:13 etc).¹ The coming of the Kingdom of God involved a (pre-) eschatological reversal demanding judgement in the present (Perrin, 1974:52; O'York,1991:9ff).

In various forms this teaching is reflected in the Q. and in Islamic tradition. In the P-Bayān and other writings, the Bāb concretizes this perspective by teaching that with the advent of each religious theophany or dispensation elevated souls become abased and abased souls are elevated. This by virtue of their acceptance or rejection of expected *mazhar-i ilāhī* (Divine Manifestations). Lofty inmates of the garden (*jannat*, of true faith), if they fail to accept the claims of subsequent Divine Manifestations, become abased inhabitants of the Fire (*nār*, of unbelief). During his own era lofty souls (learned Muslims) became abased through rejecting him while humble souls were elevated by a positive response to his call (P-Bayān 8:4). Warning his followers the Bāb predicts that the same may happen at the future Day of Resurrection when *man yuzhiru-hu Allāh* appears (P-Bayān 7:9).

Though ultimately rooted in NT texts it is upon Islamic sources that the Bāb draws in order to indicate an eschatological reversal of faith status. Passages in both Bayāns (Per. + Ar.) and related writings expressive of a bi-polar faith reversal do not reflect the terminology of the Persian NT translation of Henry Martyn or any other Persian or Arabic NT versions known to the present writer. In P-Bayān 8:4 the Bāb refers to the fact that learned scholars in the "land [242] of ṣad" (= Isfahān) failed to recognise him while a humble wheat-sifter named (Mullā) Ja`far Gandum Pākkūn was

¹ The NT references are:- Mk 10:31; Matt 19:30, 20:16; Lk 13:30; Matt 23;11-12; Luke 14:11; 18:14; cf.Mk 9:35,10:43-4;Lk 9:48, 22:26.

invested with the *qamīṣ-i niqabat* (the garb of primacy).²⁼¹ This, the Bāb then notes, is the “mystery of the utterance (*sirr-i kalām*) of the Shīṭī holy family, the *ahl-i bayt* (people of the House)”. In saying this it is obvious that the Bāb himself regards the tradition of the bi-polar reversal of faith status as a Shīṭī tradition and not anything NT based. During the Bāb’s own theophany the following Islamic tradition found fulfilment as is clearly stated in P-Bayān 8:14, a passage which Browne appears to have overlooked;

The lowest of the creatures (*asfal-i khalq*) [shall become] the most exalted of the creatures (*a`lā-yi khalq*) and the most exalted of the creatures (*a`lā-yi khalq*) [shall become] the lowest of the creatures (*asfal-i khalq*)” (cited P-Bayān 8:14, 296-7).

The Bāb also quotes a similar version of an Islamic (not NT!) tradition indicative of a reversal of faith status in his late *Shū'unāt al-fārsī* (Persian Grades).

It will come to pass that your lowly ones [shall become] your most exalted ones and your most exalted ones [shall become] your lowly ones” (*Shu'unK.* 82:94).

In his *K. īqān* and other writings BA* also cites Arabic, Islamic and other versions of this tradition (KI:113/ 94). In the course of citing the Bāb in his Edirne dated *Lawḥ-i Sarrāj* (c. 1867) another version expressive of bi-polar reversal is given (Mā'idih 7:34). This tradition is also commented upon in other *alwāḥ* of BA*; in connection, for example, with the exegesis of the phrase of Shaykh Aḥmad, *sirr al-tankīs li-ramz al-ra'īs* (“The mystery of inversion through the symbol of the Ruler”) (K.Aqdas1 ¶ 157/ tr. 75-6; cf. L. Hirtik, LH 3:218) which is understood to allude to an

²⁼¹ Mullā Ja`far Gandum Pākkūn was converted to Bābism by Mullā Ḥusayn during the early years of the Bābī movement and died during the Ṭabarsī upheaval.

eschatological, bi-polar reversal of faith status graphically indicated by an upturned inverted Arabic letter *wāw* (= ۉ see below) in Shī'ī representations of the *ism Allāh al-a`zam* (Mightiest Name of God) as well as in the NT and Islamic traditions (Māzandarānī, AA 5:237-245; Mā'idah 1:12f). AB* likewise quoted, cited and commented on the biblical as well as the Islamic tradition relating to the eschatological reversal of faith status (Ishrāq Khavarī, *Rahiq* 1:685ff; *Mā'idih* 2:19,34). [243]

Browne's reckoning the reversal of faith status in P-Bayān 8:4 a sign of Gospel influence is wholly unconvincing in the light of the Bāb's own drawing on Islamic traditions to this effect as well as the numerous Islamic predictions of an eschatological reversal of faith status.

(2) The suddenness of the eschatological "hour", "like a thief in the night".

The fairly brief and succinct Persian Bayān 2:18 is in "exposition of the fact that there is absolutely no doubt about the advent of the [eschatological] Hour (*al-sā`ah*).” The note of suddenness occurs towards the very end of this section of the P-Bayān and reads,

Anticipate then the theophany of God (*zuhūr Allāh*) for undoubtedly the "Hour" (*al-sā`a*) shall come upon you suddenly (*baghtat^{an}*). (P. Bay. 2:18, 72).

Browne focuses upon the fact that the Bāb states that 'The Hour shall assuredly come upon you *baghtat^{an}* ("suddenly)". In the Arabic verse cited above which concludes P-Bayān 2:18 the Bāb does not, however, state that the eschatological "hour" will come "like a thief in the night" or repeat NT expressions of eschatological

immanence.¹ In the complex partly realized, partly futurist eschatology of the Bāb, there are quite a number of varied and diverse expressions of the imminence of the eschatological "Hour". None of them seem to have any connection with NT verses expressive of the last "Hour" or the parousia coming like a "thief in the night".

In the eschatologically charged first *Sūrat al-mulk* of the QA the Bāb exhorts the kings of the world to purify the earth of such as refute the Book on the "Day" when the *Dhikr*, (messianic Remembrance) will come *baghtat*^{an} ("suddenly", QA1:3). Such references are not inspired by NT texts but by the Q. where the adverbial use of *baghtat*^{an} occurs thirteen times and mostly of the "suddenness" of the eschatological "Hour" (Kassis, 313). Notes of eschatological suddenness in the Bāb's writings are fully in line with Islamic eschatological expectations themselves rooted in NT eschatology.

Note, for example, the following texts: [244]

Lost indeed are those who regard the meeting with God as falsehood -- until such time as the Hour (*al-sā`a*) is suddenly (*baghtat*^{an}) upon them..
(Q. 6:31).

It [the "Hour"] shall not come upon you except suddenly (*baghtat*^{an})."
(Q.7:187)

...Or the sudden (*baghtat*^{an}) coming of the Hour (*al-sā`at*) while they perceive not." (Q.12:107)

...Until the Hour (*al-sā`a*) come suddenly (*baghtat*^{an}) upon them.."
(Q.22:55).¹⁼²

1. See Mk 13:33f; Matt 24:42f; Lk 21:36; Matt 25:13; I Thess. 5:2f; 2 Peter 3:10 cf. 1 Peter 4:1; Lk 12:39; Matt 24:43f; Rev 3:3.

2. See also Q. 43:66; 21:41; 26:202; 29:43; 39:56. Various Islamic traditions, it should also be noted, express the belief that the Ma.hdī or Qā'im will come suddenly or unexpectedly. cf. Persian Bayān VII.9. where, alluding to the coming of God or *man yuzhiru-hu Allāh* on the Day of Resurrection, the Bāb states that "He will suddenly shine forth" (*va .tāli` mīshavad baghtat*^{an}).

It is not necessary to invoke direct NT influence in accounting for the Bāb's own note of the suddenness of the last "Hour". The Bāb's use of the motif of eschatological "suddenness" and unexpectedness clearly echoes qur'ānic verses and related Shī'ī traditions. Islamic sources themselves quote Jesus using *baghtat*^{an}, the note of suddenness in an Islamicate NT expression of the suddenness of the advent of the "Hour". In the Shī'ī *Qīṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* of Ibn al-Rawandī for example, Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq clearly echoes Mk. 13:32 (+ parallels) in reporting that,

.. Jesus son of Mary asked Gabriel, 'When shall be the emergence of the (eschatological) Hour (*al-sā'at*)?' At this Gabriel trembled and shuddered all but losing consciousness. When he composed himself he replied, 'O Spirit of God! Over this most perplexing issue the one questioned (= Gabriel) is no more knowledgeable (*a'lam*) than the questioner (= Jesus) or anyone else be they in the heavens or upon the earth. It [the "Hour"] will not come upon you but *baghtat*^{an} (suddenly)' (Rawandī, Qisas, 271-2; cf. BA* ESW:143) .

[3] A cup of water given by a believer (P. Bay. IV:8).

And whoever shall give one of these little ones only a cup of cold water to drink in the name of a disciple, truly I say to you that he shall in no wise have lost his reward (Matt. 10:47)

The Bāb sums up P-Bayān 4:8 in the following way;

The essence of this gate is this, that through his verses he [God] creates the essential reality of all things (*kaynūniyyat-i kull shay'*) and thereby gives sustenance, causes to die, and makes to come alive (P-Bayān 4:8,127).

Later in the same section of the P-Bayān the Bāb states: [245]

Thus, if today but one cup of water (*finjān-i āb*) be given by a believer in the Bayān it would seem sweeter (*ahlā*) to the mystic knower (*`ārif*) than all the benefits of this world (*kull-i ālā' al arḍ*) proffered by one not believing in the Bayān (ibid 128).

This section of the Bayān basically revolves around the belief that a pure action such as the giving of a rose-leaf (*waraq-i gul*) by a believer to another of the *ahl-i bayān* (Bābīs), is fundamentally a divine action. It is tantamount to being a divine action as the action of the “Letters of the One” (*wāḥid*), the nineteen strong Bābī pleroma of first disciples (P-Bayān 4:8,127).

In P-Bayān 4:8 Browne found a sign of Gospel influence in that the Bāb refers to “a cup given by a believer” (Matt 10:42; Mk 9:41; cf. Matt 25:35ff). The alleged parallel is not, for a number of reasons, an exact parallel. In P-Bayān 4:8 it is simply a “cup of water” that is given to another not a “cup of cold water” (Martyn = *kā's-i āb-i sardī*) (Matt 20:42b). Quite different is the P-Bayān where it is a mature or learned Bābī, an *`ārif* (one of mystical perception) who receives the cup of water not, as in Matt. 10:42b *yek āz at*fāl* (so H. Martyn), “one of these children” or “one of these little ones”.

As translated above, the Bāb in P-Bayān 4:8 writes that if in his day a believer in the Bayān should give but a cup of water (*finjān-i āb*) to another it would prove sweeter than all the benefits of the earth given by a non-Bābī. Though there is something of a parallel with Matt 10:24 (= Mk 9:41) it is not explicit enough to indicate the Bāb's direct knowledge of the NT. The reference summed up above to the efficacy of a rose-leaf given by one of the people of the Bayān (Bābīs) likewise has no explicit

NT parallel. The "cup of water" (*finjan-i āb*) motif of itself is not a strong enough parallel to categorically uphold Gospel influence upon the Bāb.

[4] The love ethic, that "believers should love one another" (V:16).

In his summary of P. Bayān 5:16 Browne expresses his aforementioned sign of Gospel influence as follows (I have added some points of Persian transliteration):

What God loves most in the people of the Bayān (*ahl al-bayān*) is their love one for another [*ḥubb-i ishān ba`aḍi ba`aḍi-rā....namāyand*]. They should not then dispute with each other, or rebut one another's speeches in religious [246] matters. And if anyone in the Bayān rejects another he must give 95 (19x5) *mithqāls* of gold to [the Bābī messiah] Him whom God shall manifest, and to none other, who will if He please remit it, or take it (SWEGB: 372-3; P-Bayān 5:16,177f).

Here, it is with the Persian phrase *ḥubb-i ishān ba`aḍi ba`aḍi-rā.... namāyand* like several Arabic phrases incorporating one or more uses of *ba`aḍ*, that the Bāb expresses a reciprocity or mutuality of love among the *ahl al-bayān* (Bābis) (cf. Wehr, Dictionary⁴, 82). God's greatest (*a`zam*) love (*dūst mīdārad*) he states, is that the Bābis express this reciprocity of love for one another. This Browne finds a sign of NT influence. A "love ethic" is indeed mentioned a few times in the Johannine literature and is hinted at elsewhere in the NT (e.g. Matt 5:43-4; Jn 15:12, 17; 1 Jn 2:10, 3:10, 4:7ff; Rom 13:8). This ethical teaching though is something fundamental to many Persian Sufi mystics and a part of the spiritual discipline of numerous Sufi orders. The Bāb's statements in P-Bayān 5:16 could be equally and more satisfactorily be accounted for through the influence of the Sufi love ethic.

Various mystical doctrines associated with *ḥubb* (love) are also clearly in evidence in the Bayāns of the Bāb as well as in several of his other writings; most

notably his Sufi influenced QA and Sufi addressed *R. Dhahabiyya*. In the QA 88 the “love” motif is introduced into the Q. based account of the primordial angelic prostration (Q.Kassis, 1067-8). Heavenly angels arrayed about the Dhikr were commanded to fall prostrate before the Bāb in the “path of Love” (*sabīl al-ḥubb*). This is stipulated in the celestial *umm al-kitāb* (Archetypal Book) (QA 88:355). Then, speaking of primordial and celestial affairs in QA 109, the Bāb states:

We, in very truth, affixed to the mightiest Throne (*al-`arsh al-a`zam*) before Our servant [the Bāb] the *kalimat al-ḥubb* (Word of Love) such that God, His angels and his chosen ones (*awliyā*) in every respect witnessed his [the Bāb’s] truth... (QA 109:436).

QA 91 contains an address of the Bāb to the *ahl al-ḥubb* (community of love), possibly [247] members of the Dhahabiyya Sufi order of Shiraz¹ or other Shirazi Sufis known to the Bāb as persons who fostered a condition of spiritual *ḥubb* (love);

O community of love (*ahl al-ḥubb*)! Hearken unto my call from the Light of mine inmost heart (*nūrī al-fū`ād*) nigh the celestial *masjid al-aqṣā* (furthestmost Mosque cf. Q.17:1), in very truth, about the elevated Throne of God (*`arsh Allāh*).... (QA 91:364).

Here, as elsewhere, there are signs of the Bāb’s association with Sufis from whom he was probably influenced in the direction of a mystically oriented love ethic (T.Basmala, 361; cf. T.`Asr, f.96ff). At various points in his P-Bayān the Bāb reflects and develops themes ascribed to the female love mystic Rabiya al-`Adawiyya of Baṣra

1 On the Dhahabiyya Sufi Order see Gramlich, 1965 1:14-26. This Order is traced back to its alleged founder, Sayyid `Abd-Allāh Barzishābādī (d. 872/1467-8) whose *silsala* branches off from the Kubrawī master Sayyid Muhammad Nūrbaksh (d.c. 869/1464). On the 19th century Dhahabiyya of Shiraz see Lewisohn, 1998-9 (BSOAS, 61).

(d.c.185/801) who is especially famous for her poetical celebrations of spiritual love (*maḥabba*) and intimacy (*uns*). Her somewhat detached love mysticism is echoed and made communal in the writings of the Bāb.

In P-Bayān 7:19 (on *ṣalat*) the Bāb defines true *'ibādat* (worship) in a distinctly Rabi`an fashion when he directs that God should be worshipped intensely, outside of a fear of Hell-fire (*nār*) or the hope of Paradise (*jannat*):

So worship God in such that if your worship of him lead you to Hell-Fire (*nār*), no alteration in your worship (*parastish*) would be produced; and similarly, if it should lead you to Paradise (*jannat*). This alone should characterize the worship which befitteth the One God. If you worship out of fear (*khawf*), this was and has ever been unseemly relative to the expanse of the Divine sanctity (*bisāṭ-i quds-i ilāhī*) and in view also of the stipulation of the Divine Oneness (*ḥukm-i tawḥīd*). Likewise, if your gaze is upon the attainment of Paradise (*jannat*) you would be adding gods to God (*mushrik*) [in your worship] even though created humanity desires Paradise (*jannat*) thereby. Both Hell-Fire (*nār*) and Paradise (*jannat*) serve and fall prostrate before God. That [worship] which is worthy of his Essence (*dhāt-i ū*) is to worship him for his own sake. This without fear of Hell-Fire (*nār*) or hope of Paradise (*jannat*). When true worship (*taḥaqquq-i 'ibādat*) is offered, the worshipper is preserved from the Hell-Fire (*maḥfūz az nār*) and enters the paradise of God's good-pleasure (*jannat-i riḍā-yi ū*), though this should not be the motive of one's action (P-Bayān 7:19, 271-2).

Such passages appear to be inspired by the well-known and much cited devotional saying of Rabi`a quoted towards the beginning of Farīd al-Dīn `Attār's *Tadhkirat al-awliyā'* [248] (Memorials of the Saints):

O God, if I worship Thee for fear of Hell, then burn me in Hell, and if I worship Thee in hope of Paradise, exclude me from Paradise; but if I worship Thee for Thy own sake, grudge me not Thy everlasting beauty (tr. Arberry, *Tadhkirat*: 51).

Apparently addressed to a certain Mīrzā Abū'l-Qāsim, a Dhahabī *murshīd* known as Mīrzā Bābā (also Jawād?), the love ethic is in evidence in the Bāb's *R. Dhahabiyya* (1262/1845-6). Its lengthy opening prayer includes the words of the Bāb, "Thou assuredly know, O my God, that I do not love that I should love Thee save by virtue of what Thou do love" (Dhah. 86:75). Later the Bāb appears to refer to himself as being upon the *ṣirāt al-ḥubb* (Path of love) which is the basis of faith (*aṣl al-aymān*) and the Tree of certitude (*shajarat al-īqān*). Probably attempting to break down the looseness of Sufi non-exclusivism, he addresses his questioner saying,

O thou who gazes out with equity and love (*bi'l-inṣāf wa'l-ḥubb*)! Such is the decree of every religion (*kull al-dīn*), so don't make the issue difficult for yourself. Ponder then upon the station of the Balance (*maqām al-mīzān*) (R.Dhah. 86:86).

In Shī'ī Islam love for God, Muhammad, the Imāms and fellow Shī'ī Muslims is a central ethical teaching. Important to the Bāb and BA*, the *Khuṭba al-ṭutunjiyya*, for example, has it that `Alī uttered the following almost Christian soteriological message expressed therein, "then hold to the *waṣī* (legatee) of your Prophet (= Imam `Alī) through whom is your salvation (*najāt*), for, through love for him (*bi-ḥubbihi*) on the [eschatological] Day of Gathering is your abode of salvation" (Bursī, *Mashāriq*, 66). At one point in his *Sharh al-ziyāra* al-Aḥsā'ī teaches that it is love for `Alī which is the foundation of Paradise (*S-Ziyāra* IV:167).

A multi-faceted love ethic is foundational in many branches of Sufism and Islamic mysticism. It has its foundation in numerous Islamic traditions and *ḥadīth qudsī* (Nasr IS1:108-9, Graham, 1978; see above 3.1). It is expressed in a multitude of Sufi poetical and theosophical writings (Giffin, 1971; Bell, 1979; Khairallah, 1980;

Schimmel, 1978: 130ff). While al-Jahiz (d. 255/868-9) wrote two treatises on *ishq* (passionate love) Avicenna penned another. Scores of statements about divine and human *ḥubb* and *ishq* (love and spiritual yearning) were made by [249] later Muslim writers. Throughout the poetry of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 627/1273), for example, there are numerous musings upon the intricacies of divine and human love (Chittick, 1983:194-231). `Ayn al-Quḍat Hamadānī (d. 525/1131) as evidenced in his *Tamhīdāt* and other works, considered theo-erotic love as “The very constitutional foundation of creation, of being, of living, and of dying.” (Dabashi, `Any al-Qudat, 420). Many other Persian Sufis thought similarly.

It is not at all necessary to seek NT influence to account for the place the Bāb gave to the love for God and for fellow believers. It is astonishing that Browne should have bothered to list such a loose alleged sign of Gospel influence. Spiritual and mystical concepts of *ḥubb* are an important aspect of the thought of the Bāb as they are in both Sufism and Shīism. The Bāb’s use of *ḥubb* is more likely rooted in Sufism and Shi`ism than the result of any familiarity with the Gospels. The Q. as expounded within Persianate Islam has much to say in this respect.

[5] The Golden Rule in the Gospels and the Persian Bayān.

O People of the Bayān! Whatsoever you do not desire [approve] for anyone do not approve for your own self (P-Bayān. 6:15, 231)

This negative form of the ‘golden rule’ is rooted in Greek popular morality as formulated by Sophists. This golden rule is the maxim enjoining one to treat others as one would wish to be treated oneself (Hamerton-Kelly, IDB(S): 369-70). In either a positive or negative form it is registered in a multitude of Jewish (Aristeas, 207; Tobit,

4:15 Sab. 31a., cf. Deut 15:13; Lev. 19:18), Christian (Matt 7:12, cf. 5:33f; Lk 6:31., cf. Jn 15:7; Didache 12., Barnabas XIX.5), Islamic and other (i.e. Hindu and Buddhist) literatures. It will be seen here that the Bāb was most directly influenced by Islamic forms of the golden rule not through NT references as Browne supposed.

A Shīrī Islamicate conflation of a negative form of Matt 7:12/Lk 6:31 and Matt 5:39b/Lk 6:29 is reported by Imām Ja`far al-ṣādiq as the words of Jesus son of Mary to some of his disciples. It reads,

Whatever you do not wish to be done to yourself, do not do the same to anyone else. And should anyone strike your right cheek then let him strike the left also (Majlisī, *Biḥār*² 14:287). [250]

The line of the P-Bayān 6:15 cited above could be viewed as a fairly precise Persian version of the first part of this Arabic conflation of Jesus' words. In this light direct appeal to NT influence is again unnecessary. Forms of the golden rule attributed to Muhammad and others are common in Islamic ethical literatures. In the Sunnī *Kitāb al-`arba`īn* (Book of the Forty [Ḥadīth]) compiled by al-Nawawī (d.676/1277), for example, the following tradition, found in both Bukharī and Muslim, is recorded on the authority of Abū Ḥamza Anas ibn Mālik, (Muhammad said): "None of you [truly] believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself" (K-Arba`īn / Forty Hadith, 56-7, Ḥadīth, 13).

[6] The sanction on buying and selling in the mosque (IV.17)

It is not lawful to transact business (*bai`a*) in the precincts of the House (*ḥāl al-bayt*). Whomsoever desires to elevate this sanctum (*ḥāl*) above [all such matters] should feel free to appropriate whatever is in the sanctum (*ḥāl*) even though its owner is not at all satisfied therewith. God is the more rightful owner of (*Allāh aḥaqq*) this property (*milk*) than that servant who has simply possessed it for a few years (PB 4:17,145-6 [Arabic synopsis] cf. SWEGB:359).

You shall not transact business with what which belongs to God in the precincts of the House (*al-bayt*) or the Mosque (*al-masjid*). You all should submit as much of your possessions (property, *al-milk*) as you are in a position to, within the [sacred] boundary (*ḥadd*) [of the Mosque?]....

The Sanctified Mosque (*masjid al-ḥaram*) indicates the birthplace of *man-yuḏhiruhu Allāh* and that is also where I was born... Say: the Seat of Aḥmad [Muhammad] is there and is the object of] My Remembrance (*maq`ad aḥmad dhikrī*) (? Cf. Q. 54:55). He enters therein and it is there that you should perform your devotions. You should not turn towards my house (*baytī*) neither towards the [other] seats [shrines of the `Letters of the Living?'] unless you have sufficient means on the path and will not be saddened [on account of travelling difficulties].... (Ar. Bay. 4:17a, Ḥasanī, 88).

In his Bayāns (Per. & Ar.) 4:17 the Bāb forbids buying and selling, the conducting of business affairs, around the sacred *bayt* (House), apparently relative to his own house in Shiraz which also appears to be that of *man yuḏhiru-hu Allāh* and hence described as the *masjid Allāh* (Mosque of God) and the *masjid al-ḥaram* (Sanctified Mosque, a qur`ānic term normally descriptive of the Ka`ba at Mecca, Q.2:144 etc.,Kassis, 888-9).

[251]

Bayāns 4:17 is an example of the Bāb's appropriating, and to some degree upgrading, Islamic piety by giving it something of a messianic application. Bearing in mind that certain laws of the Bāb reflect his attempts at establishing a perfect earthly paradise reflecting heavenly archetypes and opulent alchemical substances, it is worth noting that an Islamic tradition cited by Bāyazīd al-Bast*āmī (d.c. 261/874) and others has it that "In *jannat* (Paradise) there is a market where there is no buying and selling" (cited Chittick IS1:405 cf. Ibn `Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt*, II:682)

The Q. and numerous Sunnī and Shī`ī sources have it that the *masjid* (mosque, lit. `place for prostration') is primarily a sacred location for community worship (Q. 2:144; 9:17-18; 7:32 etc). It is secondarily a place of assembly thought fitting for various public affairs, having "political, social and cultural functions" (Salam-Liebich, `Mosque - History and Tradition' Enc.Rel.10:121). Often used as a centre of legal, administrative and educational activity, the mosque was thought fitting for the "transacting of matters of public finance and the existence of a community treasury (*bayt al-māl*). (ibid, 123). In early Islamic times the transacting of business in the mosques was not entirely forbidden (EI² VI:654-5) though there are some early traditions that seem to regulate or overrule this.

The Bāb's directive against buying and selling in P-Bayān IV:17 corresponds with those Islamic traditions that consider buying and selling in mosques as something undesirable or forbidden. A tradition relayed through the forbears of Ibn Shuayb recorded in the (Sunnī) *Kitāb al-masājid* (Book of Mosques) within the *Sunan* of Abū `Abd al-Raḥmān al-Nasā'ī (d.303/915) reads, "The prophet [Muhammad] forbade group meetings before *ṣalat* (prayer) on the day of gathering (Friday), as well as the

buying (*al-shirā'*) and selling (*al-bai'*) [of goods in the mosque]" (Sunan, 2:47-8). Similar traditions are also recorded by Abū Dawūd and Tirmihdī (Numaynī, 1978 II: LIV. No. 116, page 123). There may well be Shī'ī traditions to this effect though they do not seem to be common.

That the Bāb apparently reacts against commercial activity in mosques may reflect those Shī'ī traditions which highlight their supreme sanctity, especially that of the *masjid al-ḥaram*. [252] Ja'far ṣādiq transmitted the prophetic tradition "When you arrive at the gate of the mosque know that you have approached the gate of the house of a mighty King" (*Biḥār*² 83:373-4 [339ff]; Jīlānī, *Miṣbāḥ*, 1:86-90; Tibrīzī, *Farā'id*).

Despite the considerable differences in location, detail and purpose, Browne found something of a parallel between P-Bayān 4:17 and the Gospel story of Jesus' cleansing the Temple, the Jerusalem House of God. While Jesus threw out the moneychangers from the Temple the Bāb would have all goods in the sanctum of the Mosque belong to God by virtue of their being placed in this sacred region. Again, rather than invoking Gospel influence Bayāns 4:17 reflect the Bāb's mercantile and Islamic background as opposed to the Gospel account of the cleansing of the Temple. For the Bāb the eschatological call for a higher degree of piety relative to new sacred regions and centres of pilgrimage is what is focussed upon. There are no obvious textual or other relationships between Bayāns 4:17 and the Persian Gospel versions of Jesus' 'cleansing of the Temple' (Matt 21:12-13; Mk 11:15-18; Lk 19:45-8; Jn 2:13-17).

[7] Dying to God (P-Bayān II.8; III.13; V.3).

The following are some of the passages which Browne most probably thought reflected Gospel [NT] influence upon the Bāb's understanding of 'dying to God';

On the exposition of the reality of death (*ḥaqīqat al-mawt*); an ultimate reality (*al-ḥaqq*)... Whoso inwardly knows "death" is eternally dying before God (*lam yazal mayyit an 'ind Allāh*) for such an one has no will other than God's will and such is his "death" (*al-mawt*) before the Point of the Bayān (*nuqt*at al-bayān* = the Bāb) (P-Bayān 2:8, 33, 36).

All the [Divine] Names and similitudes (*asmā' va amthāl*) of the Ultimate Reality (*ḥaqq*) are within the Ultimate Reality (*dar-i ḥaqq*) and all such as are outside the Ultimate Reality (*dū-i ḥaqq*) are outside the Ultimate Reality (*al-ḥaqq*)...

Should any person truly be an 'Ārif (mystic knower) he would assuredly die in Him (*bi-ū mayyit mīgardad*) and before His Divine Will (*nazd-I mashiyyat-i ū*) (P-Bayān 3:13, 93).

The Bāb's complex ideas about dying (death, *al-mawt*) are registered in the lengthy eighth gate of his P. Bayān (23-31; cf. A.Bay. 2:8, 84) and elsewhere (P-Bayān 3:3, 84) [253] though hardly, it appears, in P. Bayān (5:3, 157-9). It must suffice here to note that P. Bayān 2:8 is a lengthy consideration of what constitutes the reality of death (*ḥaqīqat al-mawt*). Physical and other modes of "death" (*al-mawt*) have limitless meanings for the Bāb. "Death" takes on further senses when associated with a new theophany or manifestation of the *shajarat al-tawḥīd* (Tree of the Divine Oneness). Several non-literal senses of "death" are expressive of a collective, universal "death" implicit in five partial *shahāda* like testimonies commencing with the Arabic particle of negation, لا (lā = "no"). For the Bāb they are suggestive of

mystical “death” and an expression of inappropriate faith affirmations (P-Bayān 2:8, 33-34, cf. A.Bay. 2:8) .

Browne did not specify precisely which Gospel (NT) texts he thought influenced the Bāb’s ideas about “death”. He most probably gave weight to the *mayyit bi-ū*, “dying in Him” (loosely “dying to God”) in P-Bayān 2:8. Browne evidently found these references evocative of NT texts, most probably those commencing with the Greek spatial ἐν (= “in -----”) though the notion of ‘dying to God’ is not a commonplace in the Gospels (or the rest of the NT). It was perhaps the case that the Persian *mayyit bi-ū* reminded Browne of such Johannine phrases as ἐν Χριστῷ (in Christ), ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, (in Jesus Christ), ἐν κυρίῳ (in the Lord) (Jn 14:20; 15:4-10; 1 Jn 3:24; 4:13-16). Other predominantly Pauline (and pseudo-Pauline), occurrences of ἐν Χριστῷ (in Christ) and ἐν κυρίῳ (in the Lord) occur twenty times each in Romans and I Corinthians and a few times elsewhere (Phil. 1:1,14, 4:7; II Cor. 5:17 etc.; TDNT X:537ff; EDNT1:448; 2:459).

The phrase ‘dying to God’ (so Browne) as “dead in Christ” occurs only a few times in the NT. 1 Thess. 4:16 has it that those “dead” (Gk. *nekros*) “in Christ” (οἱ νεκροὶ ἐν Χριστῷ = Christians) shall “rise first” at the parousia, the second coming of Christ (cf. Jn 5:25, 28f). Christian martyrs would seem to be those referred to in the beatitude of Rev. 4:13 as “the dead” (οἱ νεκροὶ) who from henceforth die “in [the] Lord” (ἐν Χριστῷ) (cf. also Rom 6:8; Col. 2:20 and 2Tim. 2:11). Henry’s Martyn’s Persian translation of the aforementioned NT passages does not suggest any close textual parallelism with the relevant passages in the P. Bayān of the Bāb. [254]

Browne's proposal of direct NT influence upon the Bāb is unnecessary and unconvincing. This in view of the varied and common Islamic concept of doing things *fi Allāh* (lit. 'in God') evident in the Q. 22:78 and Q. 29:69 (Nöldeke on -- *fi Allāh* "in God" in Nöldeke-Schwally, 1909:1:257 cited Graham, 1977:143). It is a common phrase in Sufi literatures. Most importantly the Persian *bi-ū mayyit mīgardad* is basically equivalent to the Arabic *fanā' fi Allāh*, "dying to God" and the virtually synonymous phrase *baqā' fi Allāh* (abiding permanency, subsistence) (lit.) "in God" (cf. Q.55:26-7).

In tracing the roots of the concept of persons dying "in Him" or *fi Allāh* ("in God") in the Bāb's writings one must again bear in mind the widespread use of these phrases in Sufi literatures where --- *fi Allāh* (– in God') and related terminology is very common. The Bāb is again much more likely to have been influenced by the Sufi background than by the few NT phrases mentioned above. NT influence upon *fi' Allāh* (= Per. *bi-ū mayyit* ...) is assured though it predates by hundreds of years the time of the Bāb and the 19th century Persian Gospel translations.

From early Islamic times Muslims appropriated Christian terminology associated with doing something *fi Allāh* (lit. 'in God') including 'dying to God' ("in God"). Goldziher, as long ago as 1888 had ably demonstrated that Muslim expressions of doing something *fi Allāh* were the result of NT- Christian influence upon early *ḥadīth* and other Muslim literatures.¹ He stated, for example, that,

1. See the appendix to his essay, 'The ḥadīth as a means of Edification and Entertainment' (Eng. trans. in Goldziher (ed) Stern vol. II:145-163 detailing NT influence upon *ḥadīth* literature written in 1888 (Eng. trans. In Stern 1971 vol.II:346-362). This appendix is further supplemented by Goldziher in his article, 'Neutestamentliche Elemente in der Traditionslitterature' in *Oriens Christianus* II (1902), 315-22.

A specifically Christian expression which has penetrated deeply into Islamic literature is to do anything 'in God,' *fi'llāh* or *bi'llāh*. The Muslim interpreters of the traditions in which this expression occurs explain it generally in the sense of *fi sabīl Allāh*, i.e. in God's way or to the glory of God.. (Goldziher, Muh. Studien II: 392-3 [tr. Stern, II: 355). [255]

Goldziher gives several examples of the above from Sunnī *ḥadīth* collections as well as the following statement from the 4th Shī'ī Imam, `Alī Zayn al-`Ābidīn (d. 95/713) regarding “the *jirān Allāh* (protected of God) who “sit together in God, practise common devotional exercises in God, and together go on pilgrimage in God (*nataj alas fi'llāh wa-natadhākar fi'llāh wa-natazāwar fi'llāh*) (al-Yaqūbī II:264-5 cited Goldziher, ed. Stern, II:356 underlining added).²⁼¹

Though the Bāb strongly criticized anything suggestive of a pantheistic *waḥdat al-wujūd* which compromised God's being 'wholly other', his writings do suggest a deep mysticism surrounding the believers self-effacement in the *mashiyyat Allāh* (The divine Will) centred in the *mazhar-i ilāhī* (divine manifestation) through a “death” of self (*mayyit*) in its ultimate reality (*al-ḥaqq*). This has no close NT parallel but many Sufi parallels. In fact the Bāb is not so far removed from the Great Shaykh (Ibn al-`Arabī) who championed a *via negativa* as well as a mediatory *al-Insān al-Kamil* and various kinds of unitative spiritual conditions expressive of dying to God.

It is also pertinent to note that within the writings of the mystically oriented philosophers of the Safavid period such as Fayḍ al-Kāshānī (d. 1099/1679), there are discussions of these matters. In Kashānī's *Kalimat-I maknūnih* (Hidden Words) there is

1 For further examples of the Muslim use of *fi Allāh* in the Q. and in select *ḥadīth qudsī* (see Graham 1978 which also registers some learned comments of Nöldeke (d.1930) on the use of *fi Allāh* in the Q (Graham, 1977:143 referring to Noldeke-Schwally I:257).

a section entitled “The discourse [word] (*kalimat*) in which is an indication of the significance of *al-fanā’ fī Allāh* ([mystical] dying in God) and *al-baqā’ bi’-llāh* (eternal abiding in God)”. Without going into details, it is explained that gnostic initiates (*ahl-ma’rifā*) teach that the intention of “the death (*fanā’*) of the servant (*‘abd*) in the ultimately Real (God, *ḥaqq*) is not *fanā’-i dhāt*, (the extinction of his personal essence [in God]) but rather the (mystical) death of self (*fanā’*) before the dictates of His law (*fanā’ jaht-i bi-sharīat-i ū*) in the direction of that “Lordship” which results from complete servitude before the *al-ḥaqq*, the Real-God *rūbubiyyat-i ḥaqq*) (Kāshānī, *Kalimat*, 116). [256]

The foregoing seven ‘signs’ of Gospel influence suggested by Browne in the Bāb’s P. Bayān provide little or no solid evidence of the Shirazī Sayyid’s direct knowledge of the Gospels (NT). As far of I am aware there is nothing in the Bāb’s other writings which clearly indicate his direct knowledge of the Bible. Unless better evidence is forthcoming it can be assumed that the Bāb never cited the canonical NT nor any other biblical texts. It is likely that he bypassed existing Persian and Arabic translations because of his extreme veneration of the Q. The pristine Bible had its spiritual essence assimilated into the Arabic Qur’ān. For the Bāb the *tawrat* and *injīl* were expressions of the sublime word of God but scriptures appropriate to a previous religious theophany.

7.4 The Bible in the address of the Bāb to the Letters of the Living.

Attention will now be focussed upon a Gospel informed speech of the Bāb which he allegedly delivered to his first disciples, the ‘Letters of the Living’. Some statements of Amanat about the Bāb’s knowledge of the NT in his 1989 *Resurrection and Renewal* will also be critically surveyed.

In 1888 a leading Bahāī poet and teacher then resident in `Akkā named Mullā Muhammad and known as Nabīl-i Zarandī (1247/1831--1310/1892) was commissioned by BA* to write a history of the Bābī-Bahāī religions. This, it seems, in order to supercede an inadequate history "from the year 60" (1260 =1844 CE) written by BA*'s long-time amanuenses Mīrzā Āqā-Jān Khadīm-Allāh (d. 1319 /1901). Subsequently, from Dhū'l-Qada 1305/ July-August 1888 Zarandī began to compile a lengthy collection of historical sketches and associated notes, an initial draft of which was completed on 19th Jumādī 1 1307 (= 12th January 1890). After taking account of BA* and AB*s suggestions the revised 1014 page (each page being 25x21 cm. and having 22-24 lines) manuscript was completed on 26th Rabi` 1 1308 (10th Nov.1890). Among other things this work included coverage of the pre-Bābī Shaykhism of the first two Shaykhs continuing up till the time of completion (1890) and dominated by the person of BA*, his writings and his major disciples. This work came to be known as the *Tārīkh-i [Nabīl-i] Zarandī*.¹ [257]

Zarandī's apologetically and hagiographically oriented salvation history begins with a citation from a fasting Tablet of BA* and a poem revolving around his theophany. There follow three pages of gematric and theological considerations of BA*'s name Ḥusayn and the mysteries of *al-ism al-a`zam* ("The `Mightiest Name of God") as *bahā'*, ("splendour", see below 7.2f) in the light of Islamic *ḥadīth*, the *al-ḥurūfāt al-muqaṭṭa`ah* (the isolated letters of the Q.) and aspects of *`ilm-i -ḥurūf* (the

1 Some details about the unpublished *Tārīkh-i Nabīl Zarandī* can be found in Vahid Rafati's 1996 article `Tārīkh-i Nabīl Zarandī in *Khūshihā-yi az kharmā-I adab va hunar*. vol. 7 (Proceedings of a seminar on Nabīl-i a`zam-i Zarandī), 76-87. In the following paragraph's I draw primarily on this article by Rafati, the only easily available first hand account of the Haifa located mss. Cf. MacEoin, Sources, index, 272-3.

science of letters) (*Zarandī*, mss. 1-4 in Rafati, 1996: 87 cf. 76f). A few pages later (page 6ff) Zarandī explains how he came to write his history which he prefaced (page 8f) with a list of topics covered and details regarding key Bābī-Bahā'ī informants. Then begins the work proper. It is impossible to adequately assess its style and contents without full access to the original text which has not been available for scholarly examination for many years. Only a few isolated pages of the original Persian have found their way into print.²

The *Tārīkh-i Zarandī* has never been wholly published in the original or in translation. What is now known is (largely) the result of SE*'s 1932 publication of his selective English translation and thorough reworking of parts of the first portion of Zarandī's history of the Bāb and Babism. This he entitled the *Dawn-Breakers Nabī's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahā'ī Revelation* (1st ed.1932. 685pp). It appears to be selective 'recreation' of narratives contained in the (largely) initially Shaykhī prolegomenon and Bābī portion of the *Tārīkh-i Zarandī*. The Shaykhī period presents Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kāzim as harbingers of the Bābī (-Baha'i) religion. Then,

²⁼¹ As far as I am aware very few Bahā'ī or non-Bahā'ī scholars have been allowed to examine or consult Zarandī's original papers constituting a recension of the *Tārīkh* (= in part the "Dawn-Breakers"). For reasons that are not entirely clear, contemporary Bahā'ī authorities are loathe to allow scholarly examination of the Persian-Arabic originals in their possession. I was informed in 2000 that the Haifa ms. of Zarāndī is not in fact the final recension incorporating all the revisions and suggestions of BA* who apparently regarded Zarandī's theological *Tārīkh* as lacking concrete historical details. The fully revised edition of Zarandī was apparently appropriated by opponents of BA* and is not now in the archives of the Bahā'ī World Centre (Haifa, Israel).

after detailing aspects of the life and writings of the Bāb, it continues up until the time of the Mazandarān upheaval (1852).¹ [258]

For the 20th century Bahā'ī international community, SE*'s English language *Dawn-Breakers* occupied a central place in Bābī-Bahā'ī salvation history. SE* lavishly praised Zarandī's history and directed western Bahā'īs to study it. Bahā'ī teachers and missionaries should evangelize after the sacrificial example of the Bābīs of the *Dawn-Breakers*. From the time of its translation it became a kind of touchstone for assaying the value of other Bābī (-Bahā'ī) historical works. In the late 1950s, for example, zealous Iranian Bahā'īs in the light of a letter of SE* dated 15th Sept.1932, tried to suppress other histories thought to contradict the *Dawn-breakers* which they viewed as a virtually infallible work.

The NT in the Bāb's alleged address to select 'Letters of the Living' (mid. 1844).

Reckoned the twelfth of the nineteen apostles of BA*, the abovementioned Muhammad `Alī Nabī-i Zarandī was a zealous Bahā'ī propagandist and a poet of considerable talent (Browne, LHP IV: 151,187 fn.). He was also an insightful apologetic historian of four decades Bābī-Bahā'ī experience (Zarandī, 1923[95]; *Khūsh-I hā*, no.7). Involved in Bābī activities since the Tabarsī episode, Zarandī had many key first-hand

1. The *Tārīkh-i Zarandī* has never been wholly published in the original Persian (and Arabic) or in any other language into which it might have been translated. On its publication history see Rafati, 1996:83f. All partial publications of the *Tārīkh-i Zarāndī* are translations from SE*'s English version. An Arabic translation entitled *Maṭā'īl al-anwār* (Cairo, Egypt, 1941) was made by the Egyptian Bahā'ī `Abd al-Jalīl Bey Sa`d (d.1942) but was banned and the original print run appears to have been destroyed by the Egyptian authorities. A Persian translation from the English via the Arabic (!) was made by Ishrāq Khavārī (d. 1971) with a similar title and was first printed in 117 BE = 1961 (?).

informants for his detailed and highly significant though not infallible, hagiographically oriented, *istidlāliyya* informed history.

Of the various addresses included in the English *Dawn-Breakers* of Zarandī [SE*] (completed c. 1308/1890-1 1st pub. USA. 1932) there exists an address of the Bāb (without any *iṣnād* / chain of authorities) allegedly delivered to most of his first disciples, the *ḥurūf[āt]-l ḥayy* (Letters of the Living) before sending them out to proclaim his mission in the summer of 1260 / 1844 (DB [SE*]:63-5). As translated and doubtless to some extent “recreated” by SE* (Rabbanī, PP: [259] 215) this address incorporates phrases and citations which echoing ascribed to Jesus in the Authorized (‘King James’, 1611) NT version. The ‘Sermon of the Mount’ (Matt 5:1ff and Lk 6:17ff) and words attributed to Jesus as he addressed his own disciples as they embarked on their missions (Mk.6:7f; Matt.9:35f; 10:1f; Lk. 9:1f;10:1f) account for many of these allusions. SE*s translation of the bulk of this speech is as follows (with select NT references and key NT phrases in capitals):

O my beloved friends! You the bearers of the name of God in this Day. You have been chosen as the repositories of His mystery...Ponder the words of Jesus addressed to His disciples, as He sent them forth to propagate the Cause of God. In words such as these, He bade them arise and fulfil their mission:

'Ye are even as the fire which in the darkness of the night has been kindled upon the mountain top. LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE BEFORE THE EYES OF MEN [Matt. 5:16]. Such must be the purity of your character and the degree of your renunciation, that the people of the earth may through you recognise and be drawn closer to the HEAVENLY FATHER who is the Source of purity and grace. FOR NONE HAS SEEN THE FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN [Jn 6:46; cf. Jn 1:18; Matt 6:9; 11:27;Lk 10:22]. You who are His spiritual children must by your deeds exemplify

His virtues, and WITNESS TO HIS GLORY. YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH, BUT IF THE SALT HAVE LOST ITS SAVOUR, WHEREWITH SHALL IT BE SALTED? [Matt.5:13a] Such must be the degree of your detachment, that INTO WHATEVER CITY YOU ENTER [Matt. 10:11 cf. Mk 6:10; Lk 9:4] to proclaim and teach the Cause of God, YOU SHOULD IN NO WISE EXPECT EITHER MEAT OR REWARD FROM ITS PEOPLE [cf. Matt 7:2b+ Lk 6:38b]. Nay, WHEN YOU DEPART OUT OF THAT CITY YOU SHOULD SHAKE THE DUST FROM OFF YOUR FEET [Lk 9:5, cf. Matt 10:14; Mk. 6:11]. As you have entered it pure and undefiled, so must you depart from that city. For verily I say, THE HEAVENLY FATHER IS ever with you and keeps watch over you. If you be faithful to Him, He will assuredly deliver into your hands all the treasures of the earth, and will exalt you above all the rulers and kings of the world.' O My Letters! Verily I say, immensely exalted is this Day above the days of the Apostles of old... Scatter throughout the length and breadth of this land. I am preparing you for the advent of a mighty Day. Exert your utmost endeavour that, in the world to come, I who am now instructing you, may, before the MERCY-SEAT OF GOD, rejoice in your deeds and glory in your achievements" (Zarandī / SE* DB:63-64, 65).¹

The miscellaneous quotations and allusions to the NT record of Jesus' words in his 'Sermon on the Mount', 'Mission of the Apostles' and elsewhere have been thought to underline the Bāb's familiarity with the NT. After selectively citing passages and references from this address of the Bāb Amanat comments, "These and other remarks

1 Two of Amanat's biblical cross-references footnoted to these last two sentences, "Scatter throughout the length and breadth of this land..." (fn. 240 = cf. Matt11:3) and "... I am preparing you for the advent of a mighty Day" (fn. 241 = cf. Matt. 10:7, 23) are meaningless. They have no bearing upon the Bāb's alleged NT allusions. Several of the biblical references in R&R are erroneous.

appear to be free references [260] to the Gospel” (R&R:198). This is largely correct² but these citations and allusions are not the Bāb’s own “free references”. It is methodologically very suspect to make this assertion on the basis of the English of the Zarandī / SE* recension of an address only indirectly attributed to the Bāb. Neither the Bāb’s early writings nor his later works contain anything comparable to this speech. Even the English introduction to this speech has it that these words are only the like of what the Bāb might have said to his first disciples: “With such words the Bāb quickened the faith of His disciples and launched them upon their mission” (DB :65).

Zarandī / SE* also have the Bāb himself say, “In words such as these He [Jesus] bade them arise and fulfil their mission” (DB:63). In the light of these points it is not surprising that SE* who himself framed the address in AV/King James’ English), in a 1934 letter advised Bahā’ī readers not to take the speeches attributed to the Bāb and BA* in the English *Dawn-Breakers* as their “exact words” but, rather, as “the substance of their message” (SE*,UD: 433). It is surprising that this address of the Bāb has been taken by Amanat to highlight the Bāb’s personal knowledge of the NT and of Christianity.

In taking the Zarandī/SE* DB address to be a testimony to the biblical knowledge of the Bāb it would also be necessary to assert that he knew the Hebrew Bible in the AV. This in that the last sentence from this address (DB:65 cited above but not by Amanat) contains AV biblical English terminology rooted in the Hebrew Bible by making reference to the “mercy-seat of God”. This phrase is biblical English deriving

1 The Bāb’s references to the apostles of Jesus (*.hawārīyun*) are few and far between. See, for example, QA 63:255 (EGB. Coll.f.109a), a passage inspired by Q. 3:52f and *T. Kawthar*, (EGB Coll. Or. F10 (7), f.91a) (cf. P.Bay. 2:9).

from the Tyndale (1526) Bible version subsequently taken up in the 1611 AV. The AV 's "mercy-seat" has no obvious Arabic-Persian or Islamic equivalent. It translates the Hebrew *kapporet* (Exod. 25:17ff etc) which designates the place of expiation (Lat. Vulgate = *propitiatia*) which is the golden lid covering the Ark of the Covenant containing the two stone tablets of the law. This golden lid is the "mercy-seat", so-called because it was sprinkled with sacrificial animal blood to atone for the sins of the Israelites (Lev.16:14-15). [261]

In the Greek Septuagint (LXX) the Heb. *kapporet* is often translated by the Gk. *hilasterion* (to. ἱλαστήριον) which influenced the English rendering "mercy-seat" in the Greek (Pseudo-Pauline) book of Hebrews at 9:5 (cf. Rom. 3:25) which is the only NT use of this English phrase. This takes us far from language and concepts the Bāb might have used in an 1844 address. Amanat makes no reference to this Zarandi/SE* AV biblical phrase in the Bāb's address. It doubtless originated with SE* who used "mercy-seat" ten or more times in translating from the writings of the Bāb and BA*. ¹ The original behind "mercy-seat" in DB:65 may well also be (Ar.) *al-'arsh* though this tells us nothing at all of the Bāb's knowledge of the intricacies of the HB. It testifies to SE*'s delight in the beauty of the biblical English of the AV. He used it freely in beautifying and "westernizing" the words of the Bāb and BA*.

¹ On occasion SE* used "mercy-seat" to (non-literally) render *al-'arsh* (lit. the Throne) in QA 91 though the *'arsh* of Islamic -Bābī cosmology has nothing to do with expiation (SWB: [QA 91]] 45/tr. 68). In translating *alwāḥ* of BA* in his *Prayers and Meditations of Bahā'u'llāh* (1st ed. 1934) SE* also at one point used the English "mercy seat of Thy Oneness" to render the Arabic *'arsh raḥmat waḥdāniyyatika* (lit. Throne of the mercy of Thy Oneness") (P&M No. 184, 323/Ar. 216).

In the light of the above it can hardly have been the case that the Bāb “took his references direct from the Gospels” (so Amanat R&R:198) and allegedly had, as Amanat puts it, an “above average” knowledge of the NT (R&R:00). This “above average” knowledge of the NT is that of Zarandī as put into AV English by SE*. It can be confidently asserted that the Bāb himself never uttered the Zarandi/SE* *Dawn-Breakers* address as cited above (DB:63-5). The address to the Letters of the Living appears to have been primarily authored by Zarandī and subsequently brought into line with biblical AV English by the Bahāī Guardian. There is nothing comparable to this *Dawn-Breakers* address in any of the authentic Persian and Arabic writings of the Bāb known to the present writer.

The widely travelled Zarandī most likely authored words used by SE* as a basis of the Bāb’s address to his disciples. Prior to writing his history (in 1888) Zarandī doubtless had considerable dialogue with Christians in the Ottoman empire and in the `Akkā-Haifa region [262] where there were several churches and numerous Christians. He could easily have gained a knowledge of Arabic and / or Persian translations of the NT as did many other Bahāīs of his generation, including Mīrzā Abū’l-Faḍl Gulpaygānī (d. 1914) and Hajjī Mīrzā Ḥaydar `Alī Iṣfahānī (d. 1921). It could well have been his knowledge of the Bible that enabled him, at Alexandria in August 1868, to convert a Protestant physician named Fāris Effendī (d.18?? unknown?) whom BA* subsequently addressed as (a probably honorary?) *usqūf al-naṣārī* (“one of the bishops of the Christians”) and to whom he wrote at least two weighty Arabic Tablets (Zarandī, *Tarīkh* tr. in Balyuzi, BKG:265ff; Lambden, 1993).

Zarandī had ample opportunity to learn about the Bible/NT. He would very likely have familiarized himself with, if not memorized such central Gospel passages as the

`Sermon on the Mount'. Then, in writing his history, he might have gained inspiration from the NT record of Jesus' address to his disciples before sending them out on their evangelical mission. This line of approach may best account for his drawing on NT passages to fill in lacunae in Bābī history. The Dawn-Breakers address of the Bāb cited above is best viewed as a piece of Christian-Bahā'ī inspired salvation history of the late 1880's and early 1890s updated in highly biblicalized form in the early 1930's by SE*. The Bāb's words were created in order to provide a befitting and wonderful address for the new messiah who was seen to take on a Christ like prophetological persona. In similar fashion Zarandī / SE* had also used and adapted a version of the Islamic account of Jesus' first day at school to provide hagiographical inspiration and precedent for the account of the Bāb's first day at the school of Shaykh `Ābid (Lambden, BSB 1/4 [1983], 22-32 = 1986:1-31).

The Bāb's 1260/1844 speech to the bulk of his Letters was greatly favoured by SE*. It was highly inspirational for many of its Bahā'ī readers of western Christian background. This is evidenced by the fact that the address was several times separately printed in addition to numerous [263] printings of the English *Dawn-Breakers*.¹ It served to inspire western Bahā'īs in the propagation of their religion (Rabānī, PP:217f; SE* MIS:299;). As a piece of salvation history it was very effective though it can hardly be deemed historical or to be what the Bāb might himself have

¹ Collins records several American printings of the 5 or so page `The Bāb's Address to the Letters of the Living' (New York: Bahā'ī Pub. Committee, 193?; 1949; 1953; 196?) (Collins, 1990:8). It was also included, for example, at the end (pp. 20-22) of the commemoration of the centennial anniversary of the `Martyrdom of the Bāb 1850-1950' (np .nd. [1950]) by the NSA of the Bahā'īs of Australia and New Zealand.

uttered. It has no bearing at all upon the Bāb's alleged knowledge of the Bible or his self-understanding.

Unfounded assertions of Amanat in his *Resurrection and Renewal*

Amanat's understanding of the Bāb's address to the 'Letters of the Living' and of wider issues relating to the Bāb's knowledge of the NT and of Christianity are set out in his 1982 Oxford University doctoral thesis, a revised version of which was published in 1989 by Cornell University Press with the title *Resurrection and Renewal, The Making of the Bābī Movement in Iran, 1844-1850*, (= R&R). Both the thesis and the book contain a number of statements about the Bāb and the influence of the NT upon him. Almost everything said in this area is either demonstrably false or based on very scant evidence indeed.

In R&R:142 Amanat asserts that "There is enough evidence that even in the early stages, prior to his proclamation [May 1844 CE], the Bāb had access to recent translations of the New Testament, though probably not the Old Testament". The evidence for this is spelled out in a footnote (no.174). Therein Amanat sketches the availability of Persian translations of the NT/ Bible. First, the availability of these translations has nothing whatsoever to do with the Bāb's actual possession or use of them. For this there would seem to be no reliable primary evidence at all. Amanat then asserts that, "Constant references in the *Bayān*, and in his earlier works to Jesus and to "the letters of the Gospel" (i.e. Christians) and their faith, leave little doubt as to his direct knowledge of the Gospel" (R&R:142) This is entirely misleading. While there are a fair number of references to Christians in the *P. Bayān* and a few other late works, detail is [264] lacking as it is in the Bāb's "earlier works". In fact references to the "letters of the Gospel" (= Jesus' disciples, Christians) are not particularly numerous

and show no indication at all of NT influence. There is nothing which leads the reader of the Bāb's early works to substantiate Amanat's over confident and misleading assertion that there is "Little doubt as to his direct knowledge of the Gospels" (R&R:142).

The Bāb's references to Christians are more likely accounted for as born out of his admiration for Christians and Europeans gained during his time at Bushire or merchant years in Shiraz and Bushire. Amanat's footnote to the above cited assertion (fn. 75 p,142) refers the reader to his Ch.4 and to the (Persian) *Dalā'il-i Sab'ih* 52-3 for "references to the Gospel". While the information in Ch. 4 will be dealt with below, the passage in the Persian *Dalā'il-i Sab'ih* allegedly containing "references to the Gospel" reads as follow:

And now that the bearer of the divine ordinance (*ṣāhib-i ḥukm* = the Bāb) is manifest with evident proof and certain testimony, they (Christians, etc) have remained wrapt up in veils. Like the Christian community (*ummat-i 'īsā'*) whose priest-monks (*rahbān*) indulged in austerities (*riyāḍat mīkashīdand*) in order to [befittingly comprehend] a single ordinance (*ḥukm*) in conformity with the divine good-pleasure [as stipulated] in the Gospels (*injīl*). And [then] the messenger of God (*rasūl Allāh* = Muhammad) was made manifest as the fountainhead of the divine ordinances (*maṣḍar-i aḥkām-i ilāhī*) and they remained wrapt up in veils. Still they indulged in austerities (*riyāḍat mīkashand*) in order to comprehend the divine good-pleasure [regarding messianic expectation] in the Gospels (*injīl*). Now bear witness how the well-being (*rizq*) of the veiled ones [Christians] ended up such that they were in a state of error (*maḥall-i idnī?*). Not a single one [Christian] is looked upon favourably, for he only operates according to the parameters of his own destiny. And one and all [of the Christians) act bereft of understanding save, that is, such as God has accorded [true] salvation (*najat*).

This passage contains no Gospel references at all and shows no special knowledge of Christians. In Islamicate fashion it simply states that the most pious Christians failed to comprehend the advent of Muhammad as the one promised in the Gospels. They largely remained veiled to both the messianic advent of Muhammad and that of the Bāb.

It is in Ch.4 of R&R that Amanat refers to the speech attributed in Zarandi/SE*, to the Bāb. After correctly reckoning Shīʿite traditions “the main impetus for the Bāb and his followers”, he states that these were “not the only sources of inspiration” (R&R:196) and continues, [265]

The speech the Bab delivered to his disciples in the summer of 1260/1844, just before departure to their assigned missions, also shows traces of Christian influence. He even drew a direct comparison with Christ and his disciples. After expressing his hopes for the progress of the movement and emphasising the moral strength and sacrifice needed for fulfilling their mission, the Bab cautions his followers to shun any hesitation or weakness that might lead them to retreat and silence. He then directly refers to the words of Jesus (R&R:197)

It is evident that Amanat takes the NT allusions in Zarandī/DB* speech of the Bāb to his Letters (which he cites) as evidence of the Bāb’s making direct reference to the “words of Jesus” (Amanat, *ibid*). The following Gospel references are given in R&R:198 (fn.239), “Compare to Matthew 5:14-16 (cf.10:27), 11:27; 5:13; 10:11-14, 20 (also Luke 9:5) respectively.” They are followed by a sentence asserting that “Nabil makes no specific reference to any of the Gospels” which is evidently intended to affirm their going back to the Bāb himself. Amanat thus implies that though the Bāb knew the Gospels, Zarandī did not! In the light of what has already been argued it will be evident that the opposite is far more likely to be the case. The *Dawn-Breakers*

Gospel allusions only inform us about the knowledge of Zarandi/SE*. Having largely correctly identified though wrongly attributed certain of these NT allusions Amanat also makes the following bold yet mistaken assertions,

This preoccupation with Christ was beyond the common Muslim knowledge of the time, which was mainly confined to the Qur'ān and other Islamic sources. He must have taken his references directly from the Gospel, the study of which had given him an understanding of revelation and divinity somewhat different from that of the Qur'ān. No doubt the Bāb found the personality of Christ appealing and his message of affection and self-sacrifice in conformity with his own. Traces of Christian doctrines of Trinity and Atonement is apparent even in his earliest works (R&R:198)

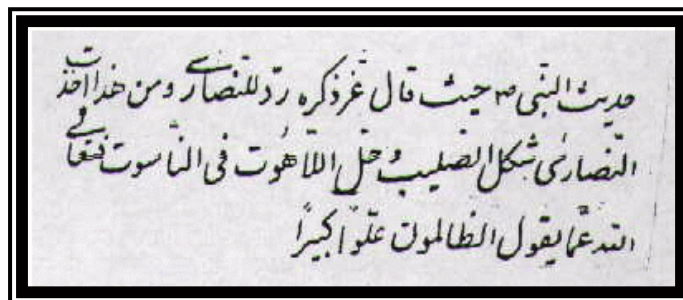
The Bāb did not exactly have a “preoccupation with Christ”. His knowledge was not exactly “beyond the common Muslim knowledge of the time” because his attitude towards the Bible was something wholly different to that of most of the Shī'ī apologists of his day. A careful examination of the Bāb's references to Christians indicates that he was not at all preoccupied with Christ but deeply concerned over heretical Christian Trinitarian concepts and the related Christian rejection of Muhammad. [266]

Most of the Bāb's major works contain not “traces” of Christian Trinitarianism but Q. like refutations of “trinitarianism” and other forms of heretical *shirk* (associationalism).¹ Commenting on Q. 2:111 in his early *T. Baqara* the Bāb denies both Jews and Christians a place in Paradise on account of their various forms of *shirk* (associating gods with God). Christians will not enter paradise who associate (1)

¹ See, for example, T. Baqara, f.254f. cf. f.12 (on Q. 2:1-2); f. 264 (on 2:116); T.Tawhid [69]:2-13[10ff]), QA 61:245; QA 91:365; QA 72:250; T.Aṣr:f 84ff,98;T.Hā' (1):4, 238f, 257f; Q.Zavārih:423ff. S.Ja`far 96:51).

themselves, (2) Jesus and (3) God in *haykal al-tathlīth*, in a “tritheistic configuration”. For the Bāb God is not "a fourth among four" or the "third of three" (cf. Q. 5:77, etc). His Oneness precludes any direct link between his Essence and his creation. (T. Baqara, f.254f).

A cross is basically the intersection of two lines transverse to each other which became a widespread symbol of life in pre-Christian antiquity. From the 2nd cent. CE the cruciform became an important symbol of the Christian religion on account of Jesus' death by crucifixion (Grossi, 'Cross' EEC 1:209). As far as I am aware, the Bāb does not refer to the atonement or to Jesus' crucifixion but repeats a tradition about the origin of the Christian symbol of the cross as associated with a concept of the incarnation seen as something heretical not soteriological. The Bāb refers to the *shakl al-salīb* (form, shape, symbol of the cross), to the origin of the form or symbol of the cross. The following tradition (*ḥadīth*) usually attributed to the Muhammad, is quoted many times in the major and minor writings of the Bāb. Though his quotations sometimes vary slightly an example is shown below along with the translation:



[267]

The *ḥadīth* of the Prophet [Muhammad] .. in refutation of the Christians: `And from this [shape] the Christians took the form of the cross (*shakl al-ṣalīb*) and the descent (*ḥall*) of the Divinity (*al-lāhūt*) into the human sphere (*al-nāsūt*). But exalted be God, Lofty and Mighty, above that which these transgressors assert.¹

This tradition has no relationship to Christian atonement but is critical of the Christian incarnation as symbolized in the “cross” seen as a talismanic sign of the heretical conjunction of *lāhūt* (divinity) and *nāsūt* (humanity). The *shakl al-tathlīth* (“threefold form”) has multiple senses in the Bāb’s writings though whenever it indicates the Christian trinity it is always something categorically rejected. According to tradition, the Mahdī, if not the Qā’im, is to destroy the “cross”. He is not, as Amanat implies, to embrace or repeat a Christian doctrine of atonement. The number of times the Bāb cites the above prophetic tradition about the folly of Christians at having adopted the *shakl al-ṣalīb* (form / symbol of the cross), might lead one to think the Bāb was inspired by the tradition of the eschatological destruction of things cruciform.

Amanat’s second sentence cited above (R&R:198) again presumes the Bāb’s direct reference to the NT for which there is no evidence. His fn. 243 has it that such is evidenced “in his commentary on *Sūrat al-Baqara*, INBA no. 64, 298” though there is

1 This boxed text is excerpted from the Bāb's Q. Zawarih 69:425. See also T. Baqara f.195 (Q.2:62); T. basmala, f.339(b); T. Kawthar, f.19b; T al-Hā' (1): f. 268; T. `AṢr 69: f. 29; T Akhī 14: f.414; Q. Mahfuz : f.79-80; Untitled :INBMC14:163-80. It can also be noted that the use of the Syriac loan words *lāhūt* and *nāsūt* for “divinity” and “humanity” has a long history in Islamic Trinitarian discussions as can be seen in the use of these terms by the Zaydī al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm, in his *Radd `alā al-Naṣārā*, 317ff; al-Ḥallāj, and al-Shahrastānī in the section of Christians in his al-Milal 2:220 where a Christian opinion is expressed to the effect that Jesus’ ascension involved awareness of *al-lāhūt* (Divinity) in/through *al-nasūt* (the humanity).

no such page reference in this INBA volume neither does the T. Baqara contain any non-Islamic or canonical NT citations. This same fn. also refers to the Bāb's "letter in reply to questions by Mīrzā Muhammad Sa'īd Ardistānī" though this reference is also incorrect containing nothing supportive of the Bāb's direct knowledge of the NT or his understanding of Christian doctrines.

INBMC 69:424 has no reference to anything appropriate to Amanat's argument. On the following page of this source, however (= INBMC 69:425), there begins the "Reply to three [268] questions of Mīrzā Muhammad Sa'īd Zavārih (= Mīrzā Muhammad Sa'īd Ardistānī?) about the *Basīṭ al-ḥaqīqa* and other matters". In the course of commenting on the *Basīṭ al-ḥaqīqa*, the Bāb does assert the transcendence of the divine Essence and make some anti-Trinitarian statements. The single divine Reality cannot be either a "third between two" (*lā thālīth bayn-humā*) or the a "third aside from two" (*thālīth ghayr-humā*) (69:423). After citing the *al-Kāfī* of Kulīnī and further underlining the divine transcendence with reference to the qur'ānic, anti-Christian Trinitarian phrase *thālīth al-thalātha* ("third of three", Q. 5:73), the erroneous nature of proponents of *basīṭ al-ḥaqīqa* (the singleness of the Real) which presuppose a multiplicity of the divine Reality is clear. In this connection the Bāb also cites the prophetic *hadīth* about the heretical Christians derivation of the *shakl al-salīb* ("form of the cross") through belief in incarnation, that there was a "descent of divinity (*lāhūt*) into the human realm (*nāsūt*). (INBMC 69:425)

There is no evidence in the sources cited to substantiate Amanat's proposal of the Bāb's knowledge of the Gospels or of the intricacies of Christian theology. Neither is there any trace of his affirming the Christian "doctrines of Trinity and Atonement". NT reading did not give the Bāb a concept of "revelation and divinity somewhat

different from that of the Qur'ān". His statements in this respect are not NT or Christian rooted but perspectives based upon his championing of an apophatic theology and a Shī'ī, Q. rooted anti- *waḥdat al-wujūd* (existential oneness) and anti-Trinitarianism.

When, furthermore, Amanat asserts that there is "No doubt" that "the Bab found the personality of Christ appealing and his message of affection and self-sacrifice in conformity with his own" one might ask where he finds evidence of the Bāb's knowledge of the "personality of Christ" or the Christian message of "self-sacrifice" to assume such an influence. One would be better advised to look towards the centrality of the Shī'ī notion of the sacrifice of Ḥusayn at Karbala rather than to NT teachings.

Finally in connection with Amanat's statements regarding the Bāb, the NT and Christianity, it may be noted that the Bāb's "ideas of the Second Coming" were not a blending [269] of the "apocalyptic role assigned to Jesus in Shi'ism" with the apocalyptic eschatology of the NT but an expression of Shī'ī ideas of the "return" of the Qā'im without any significant NT input. It is not so much that the Bāb as the Qā'im is a suffering, sacrificial messiah like Jesus but that he is a Qā'im whose universal and successful *jihad* was thwarted and one who expected martyrdom like many of the twelver Imams without reference to the sacrifice of Jesus.

Neither mainstream twelver Shī'ism nor Bābism have any real place for a parousia ("second coming") of Jesus to enact another sacrificial death or martyrdom. The Bāb's rare references to his own martyrdom have no connection with those of the NT Jesus. It was not, as Amanat asserts, that "The Christlike Mahdi of the Bab saw salvation in suffering rather than in violent revanchism." (R&R:198) His "preoccupation with theophany" might have led some of his opponents to accuse him "of believing in

Christianity and preaching the Trinity" though this is merely the repeating of some uninformed remarks of such as would make his teaching dependent upon unorthodox Christian heresies. These, in fact, the Bāb did much to dispel.

Concluding Note

To sum up, while the Bāb was subject to some general western and Christian influence his direct familiarity with the Bible is very unlikely. E.G. Browne's arguments for his being influenced by the NT are very flimsy. Amanat's statements are largely unfounded. The evidence of the *Tārīkh-i Zarandī* in the form of the *Dawn-Breakers* saying anything historical about an alleged speech of the Bāb to most of the Letters, is very weak. It may be that a thorough examination of more of the Bāb's extensive Persian and Arabic writings (not all available) will expose elements more suggestive of his having read the NT., but any marked biblical influence can safely be ruled out. The Bāb's own writings contain no biblical citations and no definite indications of biblical or Christian theological influence. The Bāb yet had a very high Islamic type estimation of Jesus (cf. Ibn al-`Arabī), referring to him in his *Tafsīr man `arafa nafsahu* as the *ashraf al-anbiyā'* ("noblest of the prophets") (T.Man, 74). Christian influence upon the Bāb was minimal. As Amanat rightly states "Whatever the effect of Christianity on his ideas, the Bab was still firmly tied to Shi'ism" (R&R:198).