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The Development of Shaykhī Thought in  
Shī'ī Islam

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by

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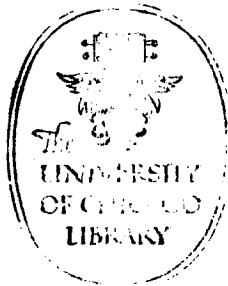
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To My Parents

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## A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND QURANIC REFERENCES

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

For the noun, "Shī'a" is used; for the adjective, "Shī'i."

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

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#### PUBLICATIONS

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  - 2- Seven articles, "Mutamimāt-i Umm al-Kitāb" (The Supplements to the Kitāb-i Aqdas) published in Āhang-i Badī', (1976- --). The series is continuing.
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## INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Development of Shaykhī Thought in Shī'ī Islam

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

Shaykh Aḥmad's doctrines were a synthesis of the views of the Akhbārī and the Uṣūlī schools. He emphasized the importance of the imāms and prepared his students for the advent of the Twelfth Imām or Mahdī, whose appearance had been expected for centuries.

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

of the royal family.

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

The teachings, particularly the predictions, of both Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kāẓim prepared their followers for the acceptance of the expected Mahdī. When the Bāb, the founder of the Bābī religious movement, claimed (in 1260/1844) that he was the expected one, many Shaykhīs accepted his claim.

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

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

In the Western literature on Islamic schism, essential terms such as "sect," "theological school," "group," and "school of law" are used inconsistently and often interchangeably. For example, the writers of articles in the Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam have used the various terms listed above to define or describe schisms with common elements and similar natures. There one finds under "al-Mur<sup>ḍ</sup>ji'a," "name of one of the early sects of Islam,"<sup>8</sup> and under "al-Mu'tazila" one reads, "the name of the great theological school which created the speculative dogmatics of Islam."<sup>9</sup> The "Khāridjites" are called "the earliest of the religious sects,"<sup>10</sup> and "al-Zaidiyya" are described as "the practical groups of the Shī'a."<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, "Mālikīs" are called "the school of law,"<sup>12</sup> and for the "Ḥanafites" the Arabic term "madhhab"--without even its equivalent in English (which could be "school")--is used.<sup>13</sup>

In contrast to the undifferentiated approach illustrated above, the introduction to al-Farq Bayn al-Firaq, a well-known book by one of the most eminent Muslim heresiographers, Abū Maṣṣū'ir 'Abd al-Qādir b. Ṭāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037), is a good example of a Muslim scholar's approach toward and evaluation of sects in an Islamic

context.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. The term "Shaykhī," the adjective from the word "Shaykh," is derived from the title of Shaykh Ahmad Aḥsā'ī.
2. B. R. Wilson, "A Typology of Sects," Sociology of Religion, ed. Roland Robertson (Great Britain: Penguin Education, 1969), p. 364.
3. Ibid., p. 365.
4. Ibid., p. 366.
5. Ibid., p. 367.
6. Ibid., p. 368.
7. Ibid., p. 369.
8. Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam, 1953 ed., s.v. "al-Murdjī'a," by A. J. Wensinck.
9. Ibid., s.v. "al-Mu'tazila," by H. S. Nyberg.
10. Ibid., s.v. "Khāridjites," by G. levi della Vida.
11. Ibid., s.v. "al-Zaidīya," by R. Strothmann.
12. Ibid., s.v. "Mālikīs," by W. Heffening.
13. Ibid., s.v. "Ḥanafites," by W. Heffening.
14. Abū Maṣū'ir 'Abd al-Qādir al-Baḡhdādī, al-Farq Bayn al-Firaq (Tehrān: Amīr Kabīr, 1344), p. 3.
15. Hafez Farmayan remarks that, "No period in Persian History is so rich in source materials as that of the recent Qājār (1794-1925)." "Observations on Sources for the Study of Nineteenth- and Twentieth Century Iranian History," International Journal of Middle East Studies, Vol. 5 (Jan. 1974), No. 1, p. 41.

The Religious, Intellectual Climate of Iran During  
the First Half of the Nineteenth Century

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

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

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

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

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

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

The curriculum of the circles consists of the study of

the Qur'ān, Shī'ī tafsīr (interpretation), hadīth (Tradition), fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), and Arabic grammar. The students begin their career by memorizing the Qur'ān and by studying the Arabic language through memorization of the Niṣāb al-Ṣibyān of Badr al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Abī Bakr Farāhī (d. 1208/1793). Alongside the Niṣāb, or a little later in their studies, the Amthila and Ṣarf Mīr of Mīr Sayyid Sharīf Jurjānī (816/1413) are studied as basic texts for Arabic grammar. In the literary sciences (e.g., Ma'ānī, Bayān, and Badī'), the Muṭawwal of Mas'ūd b. 'Umar Sa'd Taftāzānī (d. 793/1390) is the basic text. In principles of jurisprudence the Ma'ālim al-Uṣūl of Shaykh Ḥasan b. Zayn al-Dīn al-Shahīd al-Thānī, or the Qawānīn al-Muḥkama fi al-Uṣūl of Mīrzā Abū al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad Ḥasan, known as Mīrzā-i Qomī (d. 1231/1815), is taught. Although the basic courses offered in each circle are almost identical, the material covered in each course and the duration of the course depends on the interest of the teacher.<sup>2</sup>

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

The term of study in 'Atabāt is not fixed. Students

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In the field of tafsīr nothing was written that is comparable, either in length or in quality, to the earlier Shī'ī tafsīrs, such as the Majma' al-Bayān by Ṭabrisī (d. 548/1153).<sup>11</sup> The well-known books of tafsīr written in this period are commentaries on a few verses or chapters of the Qur'ān. A full, comprehensive commentary was not attempted.<sup>12</sup>

The 'ulamā, collectively known in Persian society as the Jāmi'a-i Rūhānīyat (the spiritual concourse), were in charge of religious rituals.<sup>13</sup> The members of this group, although differing from one another in rank, all functioned as commentators on the Qur'ān and Islamic law, religious leaders, judges, teachers, arbitrators, managers of the holy shrines, and recipients of the income of the religious endowments (auqāf). They were also entitled to receive the khums<sup>14</sup> on behalf of the imāms.

The 'ulamā were in charge of various socio-religious affairs of the community. They were trusted by the people as representatives of the holy imāms among the Shī'ā. They

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

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

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

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

Fath 'Alī Shāh (d. 1250/1834), who was a man with a strong religious sense,<sup>15</sup> respected, financially supported, and paid visits to the 'ulamā. The Shāh invited Mullā Ja'far of Astarābād (d. 1263/1846) to Tehrān and housed him

near the royal palace, visiting him at least once a month.<sup>16</sup> It is also reported that Fath 'Alī Shāh visited Mullā 'Abd Allāh Zomozi (d. 1257/1841) and presented gifts to him and to his students.<sup>17</sup> Mulla 'Abd al-Razzaq Donbolī (d. 1242/1820) states that Nāyib al-Salṭana 'Abbās Mīrzā (d. 1249/1833) and Qā'im Maqām (d. 1251/1835) expressed the utmost respect for the 'ulamā. Nāyib al-Salṭana was said to attend the congregational prayer every Friday, and Qā'im Maqām would host a reception for the 'ulamā every Thursday and Friday.<sup>18</sup> It is also reported that Muḥammad 'Alī Mīrzā (d. 1237/1821), son of Fath 'Alī Shāh and the governor of Kermānshāh, invited Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī (d. 1241/1825) to Kermānshāh and paid him one thousand tomāns<sup>19</sup> for his travel expenses. Shaykh Aḥmad was also paid a monthly salary of seven hundred tomāns.<sup>20</sup>

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

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

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

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

The Akhbārīs identify as the earliest Akhbārī scholars Kolaynī and Ṣadūq, who collected and classified the Traditions. The next great Shī'ī scholar was Muḥammad b. 'Alī known as Ibn Abī Jumhūr of Aḥsā (d. about 901/1495),<sup>23</sup> who appeared a full five centuries later. Akhbārī theology, with a distinct ideological system, begins with Mullā Muḥammad Amīn Astarābādī (d. 1026 or 1031 or 1036/1617, 1621 or 1626).

Mullā Muḥammad Amīn b. Muḥammad Sharīf Astarābādī was born in Astarābād and resided in Mecca and Medina. He was the first 'ālim to challenge the authenticity of the mujtahids' (Uṣūlīs') judgments,<sup>24</sup> and in many books, including the Fawā'id al-Madanīya, accused the mujtahids of being the cause of corruption in Islam.<sup>25</sup> Although the founding of the Akhbārī school by Astarābādī marks the division of the Shī'ī 'ulamā into two antagonistic groups, it was not until the eighteenth century that the Uṣūlī ideology was identified with a particular founder.

After Muḥammad Amīn Astarābādī, the Akhbārī school included a number of scholars such as Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī (d. 1091/1680), who wrote the Safīnat al-Najāt and criticized the Uṣūlīs. Fayḍ states in the Safīnat al-Najāt that religious legislation can be based only on the Qur'ān and the Traditions, not on the other sources used by the Uṣūlīs.<sup>26</sup> After Fayḍ, the doctrines of the Akhbārī school were developed by 'ulamā such as Mullā Muḥammad Ṭāhir of Qom (d. 1098/1686), Mullā Khalīl b. Ghāzī of Qazvīn (d. 1098/



1686),<sup>27</sup> and Shaykh Muḥammad b. Ḥasan Ḥurr 'Āmilī (d. 1033/1623). Among these, Shaykh 'Āmilī is the most important because of his work, Wasā'il al-Shī'a. He also wrote the Fawā'id al-Tosīya, a book on Akhbārī ideology which attacked the approach of the Uṣūlīs. In addition to the above works, 'Āmilī wrote the Hadīyat al-Abrār, devoted to the disputes between the Akhbārīs and the Uṣūlīs. He also wrote the Hidāyat al-Umma ilā Ahkām al-A'imma. As a major voice of "learned orthodoxy," he was opposed to the "ecstatic heterodoxy" of the Ṣūfīs.<sup>28</sup>

The views of Astarābādī, which were supported and enriched by the later Akhbārī 'ulamā, were accepted by the majority of the Shī'a in Iran, Iraq, and the Gulf provinces. Shaykh 'Alī b. Sulaymān Baḥraynī (d. 1062/1651) established the Akhbārī school in Baḥrayn<sup>29</sup> and was followed by Shaykh Sulaymān b. 'Abd Allāh Māhūzī (d. 1121/1709) and his students. The intellectual activities of the Akhbārīs in Baḥrayn made the province a major Akhbārī center. The most distinguished Akhbārī scholar of Baḥrayn was Shaykh 'Abd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ Samāhījī (d. 1135/1722), who severely attacked Uṣūlī beliefs and went to extremes in his enmity toward the Uṣūlīs. Samāhījī has described the views of the Akhbārīs and the Uṣūlīs in two of his works. The first, the Munyat al-Mumārīsīn fī Ajwabat Su'ālāt al-Shaykh Yāsīn (Yāsīn b. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn), was cited by the famous biographer Mīrzā Muḥammad Bāqir Khānsārī (d. 1313/1895) to describe the ideological differences between the two groups. The second,

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

The later Akhbārī scholar, Shaykh Yūsuf b. Aḥmad Baḥraynī (d. 1186/1772), well-known for his books, the Hadā'iq al-Nāqira and the Lu'lu'at al-Baḥrayn, was a moderate. He criticized the extremist Akhbārīs in his work, al-Durr al-Najafīya fī Radd al-Akhbārīya.<sup>31</sup> It was during the lifetime of this man that the founder of the Uṣūlī school, Muḥammad Bāqir b. Muḥammad Akmal al-Dīn of Behbahān (d. 1205/1790), known as Waḥīd Behbahānī, rose against the Akhbārīs, and Shaykh Yūsuf Baḥraynī gave way to the new Uṣūlī ideology.

Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Nabī Akhbārī (d. 1232/1816), better known as Muḥaddith Nīshāborī, was the last distinguished Akhbārī scholar. He wrote the Qal' al-Asās fī Naqḍ Asās al-Uṣūl<sup>32</sup> and the Maṣādir al-Anwār fī al-Ijtihād wa al-Akhbār to criticize the Uṣūlī mujtahids. Muḥaddith Nīshāborī was killed by the Uṣūlīs in 1232/1816 in Kaḏīmāyn at the age of 54.<sup>33</sup>

The persecution of Muḥaddith Nīshāborī and the rise of Muḥammad Bāqir Behbahānī put an end to the Akhbārī school; Akhbārī ideology, which had for centuries dominated the religious and intellectual life of the Shī'a in the main Shī'ī scholastic centers, was replaced by the Uṣūlī ideology.

Although the historical roots of Uṣūlī thought go back

to the occultation period, and since then there have been numerous Uṣūlī 'ulamā among the Shī'ā, Muḥammad Bāqir Behbahānī is considered to be the founder of the Uṣūlī school.<sup>34</sup> The new jurisprudential system he formulated was subsequently adopted by the Shī'ā, and with some modifications was accepted by well-known scholars such as Shaykh Murtaḍā Anṣārī and Mullā Muḥammad Kāzīm (d. 1329/1911), known as Ākhond Khorāsānī.

Because of his contribution to the formulation of Uṣūlī thought, Behbahānī became known among the Shī'ā as Mu'assis Behbahānī (Founder), Murawwij Behbahānī (Disseminator), Ostād-i Akbar (Great Teacher), and Ostād-i Kull (The Teacher of Everyone). He wrote a number of books, mostly in Persian, among which the Risāla dar Ijtihād va Akhbār is significant for its repudiation of Akhbārī views and for its support of the position of the mujtahid and his functions, namely, ijtihād (individual judgment).<sup>35</sup> He also wrote two other works on the same subject: Inḥiṣār-i Mardom bi Mujtahid va Muqallid,<sup>36</sup> on the theme that people are either legists or imitators, and the Fawā'id al-Uṣūlīya, a refutation of the Fawā'id al-Madaniya of Muḥammad Amīn b. Muḥammad Sharīf Astarābādī.

Behbahānī's views on the legislative authority of the 'ulamā won universal acceptance in Shī'ī circles through the work and efforts of some distinguished students of the Behbahānī circle who wrote, preached, and popularized the viewpoints of the Uṣūlīs. One of these was Shaykh Ja'far

Najafī (d. 1227/1812), the author of the well-known work, Kashf al-Ghiṭā. The beginning of this book is devoted to a description of the Uṣūlī approach to legislative problems. Najafī also wrote two other works on the same subject: the first, al-Haqq al-Mubīn fi al-Radd 'ala al-Akhbārīyīn,<sup>37</sup> to discuss the views of two parties and to reject the extremist Akhbārīs, and the second, another Kashf al-Ghiṭā, to refute the views of Muḥaddith Nīshāborī. Najafī sent a copy of this book to Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh to prove to him the falsity of the beliefs of the Akhbārīs and of their leading authority, Muḥaddith Nīshāborī.<sup>38</sup>

Behbahānī's views were elaborated in the works of the later Uṣūlīs, and the repudiation of the Akhbārīs continued in the works of other Uṣūlī 'ulamā such as Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabā'ī (d. 1242/1826).<sup>39</sup> The dispute between the Akhbārīs and the Uṣūlīs did not remain on an intellectual level. It became so intense that the Uṣūlīs killed Muḥaddith Nīshāborī for his Akhbārī views and fed his body to the dogs.<sup>40</sup>

The polemical works<sup>41</sup> of the Uṣūlīs and their violent measures against the Akhbārīs caused the Akhbārīs to lose their leadership of the Shī'ī community. The transfer of religious leadership from the Akhbārīs to the Uṣūlīs was a turning point in the history of Shī'ī doctrine. It gave the 'ulamā an active role in the political and social development of the nation. The leadership of the Uṣūlī 'ulamā, such as that of Mīr Sayyid Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabā'ī,

known as Mujāhid,<sup>42</sup> against the Russians (in 1241/1825) during the reign of Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh, is a clear example of the part the Uṣūlīs played in shaping the destiny of the Persian nation.<sup>43</sup>

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

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

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

Since the Traditions are substantially significant for the Akhbārīs, they give full validity to all of the Traditions collected in the Four Books of the Shī'ī Traditions, namely, Kāfī, Tahdhīb, Istibṣār, and Man lā Yaḥḍuruhu al-Faqīh. For the Uṣūlīs, on the contrary, the contents of the Four Books do not have the same validity.

The Uṣūlīs allow action on the basis of "opinion" (ẓann) when they cannot reach "knowledge" ('ilm), whereas the Akhbārīs do not trust opinion. They contend that knowledge is always attainable from the Traditions and is trustworthy.

Uṣūlī doctrine maintains that there are two groups in Shī'ī society: (1) mujtahids (legalists formulating independent decisions in legal or theological matters, based on the interpretation and application of the four uṣūl), and (2) muqallids (imitators, who imitate the mujtahids as their religious guides). The Akhbārīs believe that the Shī'ā must only imitate the infallible figures, that is, the imāms, and not the mujtahids, who are not infallible.

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

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

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

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

Regarding the use of the Qur'ān and the Traditions, the Uṣūlīs prefer to use the esoteric meaning of these works, whereas the Akhbārīs are inclined to use the interpretations of the Qur'ān and the Traditions offered by the imāms, if they are available. In regard to the "chain of Traditions," while the Uṣūlīs do not allow reference to Traditions related by an authority who is not infallible, the Akhbārīs recognize as authentic Traditions related by ordinary people.

A comparison of the two schools shows that the Uṣūlī

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

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

approach of the Akhbārīs.

NOTES

1. 'Atabāt, literally, "thresholds," refers to the Shī'ī cities in Iraq, namely, Karbalā, Kāzīmāyn, Najaf, and Sāmarrā.
2. For further information about the curriculum and the life of the religious circles see 'Abbās 'Alī Kayvān, Hajj Nāma (Tehrān: Bosfor, 1308/1929), pp. 98-100; Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān Ṣanī' al-Dawla, Maṭla' al-Shams (Tehrān: np, 1302/1884), vol. 2, pp. 31-32; Comte Arthur de Gobineau, Les religions et les philosophies dans l'Asie Central (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1900), p. 105.
3. Muḥammad 'Alī Mu'allim Ḥabībābādī, Makārim al-Āthār (Iṣfahān: Muḥammadī, 1377/1957), vol. 1, p. 84.
4. For a typical ijāza, see that of Mullā 'Alī Wā'iz-i Khīyābānī in the Kitāb-i 'Ulamā-i Mu'āṣirīn (Tehrān: Islāmīya, 1366/1946), pp. 408-409.
5. For example, in the families of Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Behbahānī, and Kāshif al-Ghiṭā, a few individuals reached the highest rank of leadership.
6. E. G. Browne states that, "The literature produced by this large and industrious body of men ('ulamā), both in Arabic and Persian, is naturally enormous, but the bulk of it is so dull or so technical that no one but a very leisured and very pious Shī'a scholar would dream of reading it. The author of the Qiṣaṣu'l-'Ulamā remarks that the 'ulamā often live to a very advanced age, and as their habits are, as a rule, sedentary and studious, and they devote a large portion of their time to writing, it is not unusual to find a single author credited with one or two hundred books and pamphlets." (A Literary History of Persia [Cambridge: The University Press, 1959], vol. 4, pp. 376-377.
7. Mu'allim Ḥabībābādī, Makārim al-Āthār, p. 86.
8. Ibid., p. 213.
9. E. G. Browne states that, "Many of these writings are utterly valueless, consisting of notes or glosses on super commentaries or commentaries on texts, grammatical, logical, juristic or otherwise, which texts are completely buried and obscured by all this misdirected ingenuity and toil." A Literary History of Persia, p. 377.
10. Mu'allim Ḥabībābādī, Makārim al-Āthār, pp. 87-90.

11. Ḥusayn Karīmān shows that the term Ṭabrisī is the Arabized form of the Persian word Tafresh. Ṭabrisī, however, is commonly mispronounced Ṭabarsī. See Ḥusayn Karīmān, Ṭabrisī va Majma' al-Bayān, 2 vols. (Tehrān: Tehrān University, 1340 sh), vol. 1, pp. 156-187.
12. For an annotated bibliography of the books of tafsīr see Muḥammad Shafī'ī, Mufasssīrīn-i Shī'a (Tehrān: Pahlavī University, 1349/1970), pp. 159-182.
13. For a detailed description of the functions of the 'ulamā see Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), pp. 11-14.
14. Khums is a religious tax paid to the family of the Prophet and after him to his successors, i.e., the imāms. After the occultation of the Twelfth Imām the 'ulamā have been receiving the khums as the representatives of the imāms in the Shī'ī community.
15. For a description of the Fath 'Alī Shāh's religious attitudes see Riqā Qolī Khān Hidāyat, Rawḍat al-Ṣafā-i Nāṣirī, 10 vols. (Qom: Markazī, Khayyām, Pīroz, 1339sh/1960), vol. 10, p. 106; and Muḥammad Taqī Lisān al-Mulk-i Sepehr, Nāsikh al-Tawārīkh, Dawra-i Kāmil-i Tārikh-i Qājāriya, ed. Jahāngīr Qā'im Maqāmī (Tehrān: Amīr Kabīr, 1337sh/1958), pp. 188-189, 214-215.
16. Mu'allim Ḥabībābādī, Makārim al-Āthār, p. 85.
17. Gobineau, Les religions et les philosophies dans l'Asie Central, p. 96.
18. 'Abd al-Razzāq Maftūn-i Donbolī, M'āthir Sulṭāniya, ed. Ghulām Ḥusayn Ṣadrī Afshār (Tehrān: Ibn-i Sīnā, 1392/1972), p. 140.
19. According to Nāsikh al-Tawārīkh (p. 214) one dirham is equal to thirty-six nokhod of silver and one dīnār is equal to eighteen nokhod of gold. Nine dirham is equal to one dīnār and one dīnār plus one dirham is equal to one tomān.
20. Muḥammad 'Alī al-Kashmīrī, Nujūm al-Samā fī Tarājim al-'Ulamā (Qom: Raṣīratī, 1394/1974), p. 368.
21. Comte Arthur de Gobineau, Trois ans en Asie (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1922), p. 42.
22. Muḥammad Bāqir al-Mūsawī al-Iṣbahānī, Rawḍāt al-Jannāt fī Ahwāl al-'Ulamā wa al-Sādāt, 8 vols. (Tehrān: Ismā'īliyyān, 1390/1970), vol. 1, p. 121.

23. 'Alī Davvānī, Ostād-i Kull, Āqā Muḥammad Bāqir b. Muḥammad Akmal Ma'rūf bī Waḥīd Behbahānī (Qom: Dār al-'Ilm, 1378/1958), p. 96.
24. Mujtahid: "A legist formulating independent decisions in legal or theological matters, based on the interpretation and application of the four uṣūl (Qur'ān, Sunna, Qiyās "analogy" or 'Aql "reason" in the Shī'ī view, and ijmā' "consensus"), as opposed to muqallid (Hans Wehr, A Dictionary of Modern Writing Arabic, ed. Milton Cowan [New York: Spoken Language Services, 1976], p. 143.).
25. al-Kashmīrī, Nujūm al-Samā, p. 42.
26. Muḥammad 'Alī Mudarris, Rayḥānat al-Adab fī Tarājim al-Ma'rūfīn bi al-Kunyat wa al-Laḡab yā Kunna wa Alḡab, 8 vols. (Tehrān: Khayyām, 1346sh/1967), vol. 4, p. 377.
27. Mullā 'Alī Wā'iz-i Khiyābānī, Kitāb-i 'Ulama-i Mu'aṣirīn (Tehrān: Islāmīya, 1366/1946), p. 283.
28. al-Mūsawī al-Iṣbahānī, Rawḍāt al-Jannāt, vol. 7, pp. 96-106.
29. 'Alī Davvānī, Ostād-i Kull, p. 98.
30. al-Mūsawī al-Iṣbahānī, Rawḍāt al-Jannāt, vol. 4, p. 250.
31. The title of this work is given as al-Durar al-Najafīya fi al-Multaqīāt al-Yūsufīya in Muḥammad 'Alī Mudarris, Rayḥānat al-Adab, vol. 1, p. 360.
32. Muḥammad 'Alī Mudarris, Rayḥānat al-Adab, vol. 1, pp. 85-86.
33. Ibid.
34. Mu'allim Ḥabībābādī, Makārim al-Āthār, p. 222.
35. Ijtihād: "Independent judgment in a legal or theological question, based on the interpretation and application of the four uṣūl, as opposed to taqlīd." Wehr, Modern Writing Arabic, p. 143.
36. Mu'allim Ḥabībābādī, Makarim al-Athar, p. 234.
37. The title of the work is given as al-Haqq al-Mubīn fī Taṣwīb al-Mujtahidīn wa Takhtī'at Juhhāl al-Akhhāriyyīn in Muḥammad 'Alī Mudarris, Rayḥānat al-Adab, vol. 5, p. 24.
38. al-Mūsawī al-Iṣbahānī, Rawḍāt al-Jannāt, vol. 2, pp. 200-206.

39. Algar, Religion and State in Iran, pp. 35-36.
40. Kayvān, Hajj Nāma, p. 127.
41. For a list of the polemic works see Āqā Bozorg al-Ṭehrānī, al-Dharī'ā ilā Taṣānīf al-Shī'a, 26 vols. (Tehrān: Majlis, 1375/1956), vol. 10, pp. 182-183.
42. al-Mūsawī al-Iṣbahānī, Rawḍāt al-Jannāt, vol. 7, p. 145.
43. Sayyid Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabā'ī was the son of Sayyid 'Alī Ṭabāṭabā'ī and the son-in-law of Sayyid Muḥammad Maḥdī Baḥr al-'Ulūm. The son of Sayyid Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Sayyid Ḥusayn, married the daughter of Shaykh al-Mulk who was the son of Fath 'Alī Shāh. This shows the relation by marriage of the Uṣūlīs and the royal family. (See 'Alī Davvānī, Ostād-i Kull, pp. 345, 356.)
44. For a full discussion of points of disputes between the Akhbārīs and the Uṣūlīs, see al-Mūsawī al-Iṣbahānī, Rawḍāt al-Jannāt, vol. 1, pp. 127-130.
45. A book written during this period about the qualifications of a mujtahid is the Jāmi' al-Funūn by Mullā Muḥammad Ja'far Astarābādī.
46. "In the usual classification of Muslim sciences, the uṣūl al-fikh ('ilm al-uṣūl) are generally defined as the methodology of Muslim jurisprudence, as the science of the proofs which lead to the establishment of legal standards in general." (Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam, 1953 ed., s.v. "Uṣūl," by J. Schacht.)

## CHAPTER II

Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī.

His Life and Works

## Sources on the Life of Shaykh Aḥmad

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

The oldest and most authentic source on the life of Shaykh Aḥmad is a short treatise written by Shaykh Aḥmad himself at the request of his son, Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī. This work provides brief information about the childhood and education of Shaykh Aḥmad and some facts about the social and religious climate of his society. The work was published in the Fihrist<sup>3</sup> and also separately by Ḥusayn 'Alī Maḥfūz.<sup>4</sup> In addition to this autobiography, Shaykh 'Abd Allāh, another son of Shaykh Aḥmad, wrote a treatise in Arabic on the life of his father. This work was translated into Persian and published by Muḥammad Ṭāhir Khān.<sup>5</sup> Another primary source on the life and achievements of Shaykh Aḥmad was Dalīl al-Mutahayyirīn<sup>6</sup> written in 1258/1842 by Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī (d. 1259/1843), the successor of Shaykh Aḥmad.

This work contains biographical information about the life of Shaykh Ahmad and the author himself. The author has included excerpts of the ijāzas of Shaykh Ahmad and a list of his works. According to the Fihrist,<sup>7</sup> the work was translated into Persian by Muḥammad Raqī b. Muḥammad Riḍā, a follower of Sayyid Kāẓim. Another primary source on the life of Shaykh Ahmad, the Hidāyat al-Ṭālibīn,<sup>8</sup> was written in 1261/1845 by Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kermānī (d. 1288/1871), the second leader of the Shaykhīs. This book, basically a response to the ideological opponents of Shaykh Ahmad, includes a description of the Shaykh's personality and some of his doctrines.

In addition to the above-mentioned works, a few Persian and European scholars have written about Shaykh Ahmad and the Shaykhī school. Among the Persian authors, Murtaḍā Mudarrisī-i Chahārdehī is the leading author on the Shaykhī topics. In addition to a book entitled Shaykhīgarī, Bābīgarī az Naẓar-i Falsafa, Tārīkh va Ijtimā'<sup>9</sup> on the life, personality, and principle doctrines of Shaykh Ahmad and the historical development of the movement, Mudarrisī has also published a series of articles on the subject in various Persian publications.<sup>10</sup>

Sayyid Muḥammad 'Alī Jamāl Zādeh published a series of historical articles on the lives of the first five leaders of the Shaykhī movement, i.e., Shaykh Ahmad Aḥsā'ī, Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kermānī, Ḥājj Muḥammad Khān Kermānī (d. 1324/1908), and Ḥājj Zayn al-

'Abidīn Kermānī (d. 1360/1941).<sup>11</sup>

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

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

Henry Corbin, the contemporary scholar of Shī'ī theology, has written L'École Shaykhie en Théologie Shi'ite.<sup>16</sup> This book provides a sketch of the life of Shaykh Ahmad and the succeeding Shaykhī leaders up to Abū al-Qāsim Ibrāhīmī (d. 1389/1969). It also contains a brief discussion of Shaykhī doctrines.

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



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

#### The Life of Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī

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

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

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

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

Upon completing the elementary religious courses in his native land, Shaykh Aḥmad went to 'Atabāt to attend the academic circle of scholars such as Muḥammad Bāqir Behbahānī

(d. 1207/1792), Sayyid Muḥammad Maḥdī Ṭabāṭabā'ī known as Baḥr al-'Ulūm (d. 1212/1797), Shaykh Ja'far Najafī known as Kāshif al-Ghiṭā (d. 1231/1815), and Mīr Sayyid 'Alī Ṭabāṭabā'ī (d. 1231/1815).<sup>30</sup> He received ijāzas from the most distinguished scholars of his time, obtaining his first one in 1209/1794.<sup>31</sup> Sayyid Muḥammad Maḥdī Baḥr al-'Ulūm, who issued this ijāza, asked Shaykh Aḥmad if he had written a dissertation. Shaykh Aḥmad presented to him a portion of his Sharḥ-i Tabṣira.<sup>32</sup> Baḥr al-'Ulūm studied it and replied, "You are the one who ought to give me an ijāza."<sup>33</sup> In addition to the ijāza of Baḥr al-'Ulūm,<sup>34</sup> six eminent scholars of his time issued ijāzas to Shaykh Aḥmad: Ḥusayn 'Alī 'Uṣfūr (d. 1216/1801),<sup>35</sup> Aḥmad Baḥrānī Damistānī,<sup>36</sup> Mīrzā Maḥdī Shahrestānī (d. 1216/1801),<sup>37</sup> Sayyid 'Alī Ṭabāṭabā'ī,<sup>38</sup> Shaykh Ja'far Najafī,<sup>39</sup> and Ḥājj Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Kalbāsī (d. 1262/1846).<sup>40</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

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

He made a number of pilgrimages to the shrines of the imāms in Iran, 'Atabāt, Mecca, and Medina. In fact, he spent the last fifty years of his life visiting these holy cities, preaching, and teaching the multitudes of students who attended his lectures. In the year 1186/1772, when Shaykh Aḥmad was in his twenties, he journeyed to 'Atabāt. The prestige of 'Atabāt as the center for higher Shī'ī education and the absence of any scholars in his native land led to this decision. This was the beginning of his direct connection with the center of the Shī'ī intellectual, cultural and academic world. His stay in 'Atabāt, although it lasted only one year, was very fruitful for him. He was able to obtain an ijāza from Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī Baḥr al-'Ulūm which brought him fame and respect in 'Atabāt and his native land. Apparently the typhus epidemic of the year 1186/1772 caused him to return to his native land. Knowledge about the life of Shaykh Aḥmad between his return in 1186/1772 and his second departure for 'Atabāt in 1212/1797 is very limited. It is likely that during this period Shaykh Aḥmad devoted most of his time to studying,

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

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

The following is a brief chronology of Shaykh Aḥmad's travels: After he emigrated to Baḥra in 1212/1797, he went to the small village of Dhuraq where he stayed for about three years. He returned to Baḥra and went to Ḥabarāt, a village near Baḥra, returning to Baḥra and proceeding to the village of Tanwīyḥ and then to Nashwah, where he stayed for eighteen months. In 1219/1804 he moved to Ṣafawah and stayed there for a year. He returned then to Baḥra, and in 1221/1806 he went to Najaf, Kāẓimayn, and then to Iran. The period between 1222/1807 and 1229/1813 was mostly spent in Yazd. During this time he paid three visits to the shrine of Imām Riḍā in Mashhad and made a trip to Tehrān to visit Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh. He left Yazd in 1229/1813 for Iṣfahān and then continued his journey to Kermānshāh, arriving there in Rajab 1229/1813. He departed from Kermānshāh for Mecca in 1232/1816 and after his pilgrimage returned to 'Atabāt,

where he stayed for about eight months; he then moved back to Kermānshāh in Muḥarram 1234/1818. This time he stayed in Kermānshāh for a few years until he left for another visit to the shrine of Imām Riḍā and went to Mashhad via Qazvīn, Qom, Tehrān, Shāhrood, and Nishābor. After twenty-two days in Mashhad he continued his journey to Yazd via Torbat and Ṭabas. Shaykh Aḥmad was in Yazd for only three months when he was ordered by Imām 'Alī, in one of his dreams, to go to 'Atabāt.<sup>49</sup> Consequently he left Yazd and went to Kermānshāh via Isfahān, where he stayed about forty days.<sup>50</sup> After staying in Kermānshāh for one year, he departed for 'Atabāt and Mecca. Shaykh Aḥmad died in Hadīya, about two stages from Medina, on 21 Dhī al-Qa'da 1241/1825<sup>51</sup> at the age of seventy-five and was buried in the cemetery of Baqī' in Medina.

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

After the death of Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī, his disciple, follower, and very close companion Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī

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

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

It is reported that the governor of Kermānshāh, Muḥammad 'Alī Mīrzā, known as Rukn al-Dawla, felt so honored that he went four-farsakhs (about 13½ miles) out of the city to welcome Shaykh Aḥmad to Kermānshāh.<sup>55</sup> The same kind of respect and hospitality was also paid Shaykh Aḥmad by the

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

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

Baraghānī's opposition was the beginning of serious intellectual as well as physical conflicts which extended to ʿAtabāt during the time of Sayyid Kāẓim and resulted in a distinction between the followers of the Shaykhī school and the rest of the Shīʿī community. Although it is not clear when the appellation of "Shaykhī" was first applied to the followers of Shaykh Aḥmad, it seems that the takfīr of Qazvīn contributed to the distinct identity of the followers of Shaykh Aḥmad, and the Shīʿa gave them the title in order

to differentiate them from the Shīʿa. The term Shaykhī was used in contrast with the Mutasharriʿīn which, in this case stands for the Shīʿa.<sup>59</sup>

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

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

Although the terms "Shaykhī," "Posht-i Sarī," and "Kashfīya" refer to a certain group of people, and were intended to distinguish them from the rest of Shīʿa, the group solidarity and identity of the Shaykhīs was in fact not so distinct as to sharply separate them from the rest of the Shīʿī community of Iran as an independent sect or even branch of Twelver Shīʿa. The Shaykhīs considered themselves true Shīʿa who thought and behaved in accordance with the teaching of the Shīʿī imāms; they did not consider them-

selves innovators.

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

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

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

To clarify Shaykh Ahmad's approach, Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, in the Dalīl al-Mutahayyirīn, states that the source of Shaykh Ahmad's knowledge was not only his dreams, but the Qur'ān, Sunna, and Traditions of the imāms as well. In addition to these sources, Shaykh Ahmad used his intellect and personal reasoning. Sayyid Kāẓim points out that Shaykh Ahmad has applied both the external reasoning and its internal meaning.<sup>65</sup> To distinguish between the Shaykhīs and the philosophers, Sayyid Kāẓim states that philosophers use the intellect (reasoning) in discussing theological problems, whether or not the result is in accordance with the Sharī'a. In contrast, we (the Shaykhīs), he states, are not among those who rely only upon intellect. We consider the intellect as one tool, then we consider the clear (muḥkamāt) verses of the Qur'ān if they are in agreement with our rational reasoning. Then we consider the Traditions, that is, only the musallam (indisputable), mashhūr (well-known, evident) and ghayr mutashābih (unambiguous) Traditions, and not all of the Traditions, if they are in agreement with

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

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

Regarding the validity of Traditions, Sayyid Kāẓim believes that there are two kinds of mutawātir<sup>70</sup> (successive) Traditions: al-mutawātirāt al-ma'nawīya (spiritually successive; that is, relating to the sense of import of a Tradition as opposed to literal Traditions) and al-mutawātirāt al-lafẓīya (literally successive). The spiritually successive Traditions are undoubtedly reliable, but the literally successive Traditions, although on the authority of the imāms, are not reliable because of the possibility that the imām had practiced dissimulation (taqīya)<sup>71</sup> for himself or for his community.<sup>72</sup>

From the Shaykhī point of view, the Uṣūlīs' approach towards jurisprudential problems is justified. According to Sayyid Kāẓim, the Book, Sunna, Ijmā', and Reasoning (or Book, Ḥadīth, Sunna, and Reasoning)<sup>73</sup> are the legislative sources.<sup>74</sup> But the Shaykhīs, unlike the Akhbārīs, do not

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

On the basis of these established methods for reaching the Truth, it is evident that Shaykh Aḥmad was neither an Akhbārī nor an Uṣūlī, although he made use of the methods of the two groups. Shīrvānī rightly points out that Shaykh Aḥmad was an 'arif (gnostic, saint) among the 'ulamā and an 'ālim among the 'urafā.<sup>76</sup>

Sayyid Kāẓim appreciates the approach of those Shī'ī 'ulamā through the centuries who were not merely concerned with the superficial aspects of law, but were illumined by an inspiration which came to them through their piety. Sayyid Kāẓim gives the names of some of them: Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Nu'mān Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022), Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Ṭosī (d. 460/1067), Ḥasan b. Sadīd al-Dīn 'Allāma al-Ḥillī (d. 726/1325), Muḥammad b. Makkī (known as Shahīd al-Thānī) (d. 966/1558), and Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Muqaddas al-Ardabīlī (d. 993/1585).

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

For Sayyid Kāẓim, the 'ulamā are the deputies of the imāms among the people and, in the absence of the Hujjat

Shaykh Ahmad's manuscripts in the libraries of Iraq and Tehrān University.

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

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

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

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

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

Shaykh Ahmad was the leading nineteenth century religious commentator on the works of Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1050/1640), his commentaries on the Mashā'ir and the 'Arshīya being of special importance. Shaykh Ahmad also wrote commentaries on the Risāla-i 'Ilmīya of Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ (d. 1091/1680) and the Tabṣirat al-Muta'allimīn of Ḥasan b. Sadīd al-Dīn 'Allāma al-Ḥillī (d. 726/1325). Shaykh Ahmad also wrote commentaries on some of his own earlier works: for example, his Sharḥ-i Fawā'id was a commentary on his earlier work, the Fawā'id.

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



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

#### The Works of Shaykh Aḥmad

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

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

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

1. A list arranged by Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī with a short description of each work. Some of the works mentioned in this list are not extant.

2. A lengthy list of the works of Shaykh Aḥmad and other leaders of the Shaykhī school prepared by 'Abd al-Majīd Fāḥiqī and including the number of lines, the questions, and brief answers given to the questions posed in each work.

3. A short list of the works of the first four leaders of the school, provided by an unknown author, which is used as the foundation for the information in the Fihrist.

4. A list of the works of the Shaykh prepared by Muḥammad Ṭāhir Khān, the author of a treatise on the life of Shaykh Aḥmad. Bibliographical information in this treatise is basically derived from the list of Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī.

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

In addition to the four sources given above and the Fihrist, the booklet Fihrist Taṣānīf al-'Allāma al-Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī, by Riyāḍ Ṭāhir,<sup>83</sup> contains a brief biography of Shaykh Aḥmad followed by a list of 104 of his works, as well as references to the location of some of

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

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

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

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

### Sharḥ al-Ziyārat al-Jāmi'a

This work is a commentary on the Ziyārat al-Jāmi'a written at the request of Sayyid Ḥasan b. Sayyid Qāsim al-Ḥusaynī al-Ishkavarī al-Jīlānī in 1230/1814. The Ziyārat al-Jāmi'a is a prayer of visitation of the holy shrines of the imāms, related on the authority of Imām 'Alī b. Muḥammad Naqī (the Tenth Imām, known as Imām al-Hādī) (d. 254/868) and is recorded by Ibn Bābawayh (Shaykh Ṣadūq)<sup>87</sup> and Shaykh Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭosī.<sup>88</sup> The prayer is well known among the Shī'a, and several Shī'i scholars have written commentaries on it.<sup>89</sup>

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

Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī began a commentary on the Sharḥ al-Ziyāra, but as he himself states, he realized that he was unqualified for the task and therefore left his commentary unfinished.<sup>90</sup> Sayyid Kāẓim states that Shaykh Aḥmad was inspired and directed by the imāms while he wrote the Sharḥ. According to Sayyid Kāẓim, Shaykh Aḥmad revealed some of the secret and esoteric nature of the prayer and brought together in this work the ẓāhir (external), i.e., sharī'a (religion) and the bāṭin (internal), i.e., ḥaqīqa (reality).<sup>91</sup> An unpublished abridgment of this book was made by Mīr Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ḥā'irī Shahrestānī (d. 1315/1897), entitled Talwīḥ al-Ishāra fī Talkhīṣ Sharḥ al-Ziyāra.<sup>92</sup>

The Sharḥ al-Ziyāra of Shaykh Aḥmad is a collection of the most important theological problems in Shī'ī thought. The "Ziyāra" itself is a master work in expressing the status of the imāms and Shaykh Aḥmad explains its status as such. The Sharḥ al-Ziyāra was published in 1267/1850 and in 1276/1859 in lithography in Tabrīz.

#### Sharḥ Tabṣira

One of the earliest of Shaykh Aḥmad's works, this commentary on the Tabṣirat al-Muta'allimīn fī Aḥkām al-Dīn, a well-known work of fiqh by 'Allāma al-Ḥillī,<sup>94</sup> is the treatise Shaykh Aḥmad presented to Baḥr al-'Ulūm and for which he received his first ijāza.<sup>93</sup>

#### Sharḥ 'ala al-Risālat al-'Ilmīya

The Risālat al-'Ilm is a theological treatise by Fayḍ Kāshānī on the knowledge of God. Shaykh Aḥmad wrote a commentary on this work at the request of Mīrzā Bāqir Nawwāb<sup>95</sup> in Kermānshāh in 1230/1814.<sup>96</sup> This Sharḥ was published in the Jawāmi' al-Kilām.<sup>97</sup>

#### Sharḥ al-Mashā'ir

Al-Mashā'ir is a work of Mullā Ṣadrā. Shaykh Aḥmad wrote a commentary on this work at the request of Mullā Mashhad b. Mullā Ḥusayn 'Alī Shabestarī. This work deals with the philosophical question of the essence of Being. The Sharḥ al-Mashā'ir was written in 1234/1818.<sup>98</sup>

#### Sharḥ al-'Arshīya

Al-'Arshīya is another work by Mullā Ṣadrā. Shaykh Aḥmad wrote a commentary on it in Kermānshāh at the request of Mullā Mashhad b. Mullā Ḥusayn 'Alī Shabestarī.<sup>99</sup> The commentary consists of two volumes; the first, written in 1234/1818, regarding mabda' (God) and the second, written in 1236/1820, regarding the ma'ād (return). The Sharḥ al-'Arshīya was published in 1271/1854 and 1279/1862.

#### Fawā'id

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

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

## Ḥayāt al-Nafs

This book was written on the five principles of Islamic belief, i.e., tawḥīd (oneness of God), ʿadl (justice), nubuwwat (prophethood), imāmat (imamate), and maʿād (return). The book's epilogue concerns the necessity of belief in the advent of the promised Qāʿim. The work was written in 1236/1820<sup>102</sup> and published in the Jawāmiʿ al-Kilam in 1273/1856. This work was translated into Persian by Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī.

## NOTES

1. The following are the major sources: Maḥammad Bāqir al-Mūsawī al-Iṣbahānī, Rawḍāt al-Jannāt fī Aḥwāl al-ʿUlamā wa al-Sādāt, 8 vols. (Tehrān: Ismāʿīliyan, 1390/1970), vol. 1, pp. 88-94; Muḥammad ʿAlī Mudarris, Rayḥānat al-Adab (Tehrān: Khayyām, 1967), vol. 1, pp. 78-82; and al-Sayyid Muḥsin al-Amīn, Aʿyān al-Shīʿa (Beirut: Maṭbaʿat al-Inṣāf, 1960), vol. 8, pp. 272-282.
2. See in The Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2d ed., s.v. "al-Aḥsāʾī" by A. Bausani; Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam, s.v. "Shaikhī" by C. Huart; ʿAlī Akbar Dehkodā, Lughat Nāma-i Dehkodā, s.v. "Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī".
3. Abū al-Qāsim Ibrāhīmī, Fihrist-i Kutub-i Mashāyikh-i ʿIzām, 3d ed., (Kermān: Saʿādat, n.d.), pp. 132-143.
4. Ḥusayn ʿAlī Maḥfūz, Sīrat al-Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī (Baghdād: Maṭbaʿat al-Maʿārif, 1957), pp. 9-22.
5. This translation was published along with the Risāla-i Tadhkirat al-Awliya in Kermān in 1383/1967. References to this translation are made under the title of Risāla-i Shaykh ʿAbd Allāh throughout this work.
6. Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī, Dalīl al-Mutaḥayyirīn (lithography, n.d.).
7. Ibrāhīmī, Fihrist, p. 311.
8. Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kermānī, Hidāyat al-Tālibīn, 2d ed. (Kermān: Saʿādat, 1380/1960).
9. Murtaḍā Mudarrisī Chahārdehī, Shaykhīgarī, Bābīgarī az Naẓar-i Falsafa, Tārīkh va Ijtimāʿ (Tehrān: Furūghī, 1345/1966).
10. Murtaḍā Mudarrisī Chahārdehī, Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī (Tehrān: ʿIlmī, 1334sh). This work, with very little addition, was republished in Tārīkh-i Falāsifa-i Islam (Tehrān: ʿIlmī, 1336sh), pp. 52-106; "Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī," Yādgar, vol. 1, no. 4 (Jan. 1944), pp. 30-47; "Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kermānī," Sīmāy-i Bozorgān (Tehrān: Amīr Kabīr, 1335sh), pp. 173-204.
11. Jamāl Zādeh's articles were published in Yaqhmā, vol. 14, no. 9, pp. 402-409; no. 10, pp. 440-448; no. 11, pp. 488-493; no. 12, pp. 538-543. The series ended with the biography of the fifth leader, Zayn al-ʿAbidīn Khān Kermānī.

12. A. L. M. Nicolas, Essai Sur Le Chéikhisme, vol. 1: Cheikh Ahmed Lahçahi; vol. 2: Séyyèd Kazem Reçhti; vol. 3: La Doctrine; vol. 4: La Science de Dieu (Paris: Paul Gauthner, 1910-14).
13. de Gobineau, Les Religions et les Philosophies, pp. 23-39.
14. Edward G. Browne, "The Bābis of Persia. II. Their Literature and Doctrines," Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society 21(1889): pp. 884-885, 888-892. In his introduction to the Kitāb-i Nuqtatu'l - Kāf (Leyden: Brill, 1910) pp. xx-xxiii, Browne briefly discusses the major beliefs of the Shaykhīs.
15. 'Abdu'l-Bahā, A Traveller's Narrative, trans. Edward G. Browne (Cambridge: University Press, 1891), vol. 2, pp. 234-244.
16. The work, with its translation into Persian by Fereydoun Bahmanyar, was published in Tehrān in 1967.
17. Ibrāhīmī, Fihrist, p. 132.
18. According to Zayn al-'Ābidīn Shīrvānī in his Bostān al-Siyāha (Tehrān: Kārkhāna-i Ḥabīb Allāh, 1897), p. 522, Ahsā is the original name of the country, but it is also called as Laḥsā and Ḥasā. Thus the people of the county are known as Laḥsāwī or Ḥasāwī as well as Ahsā'ī.
19. Risāla-i Shaykh 'Abd Allāh, pp. 17-18.
20. Ibrāhīmī, Fihrist, p. 132.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*, p. 136.
24. Risāla-i Shaykh 'Abd Allāh, p. 8.
25. al-Ajurrūmiya fī Qawā'id 'Ilm al-'Arabīya, a textbook in Arabic grammar, written by Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Ibn Ajurrūm; the 'Awāmil, a textbook in Arabic grammar, written by 'Abd al-Qāhir b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jurjānī.
26. Ibrāhīmī, Fihrist, p. 136.
27. Chahārdehī, Tārīkh-i Falāsifa-i Islam, p. 62.

28. The complete title of the book is Masālik al-Afhām wa al-Nūr al-Munjī min al-Ḥalām, known as al-Mujlī.
29. Muḥammad Ma'šūm Shīrāzī, known as Ma'šūm 'Alī Shāh and Nāyib al-Ṣadr, Tarā'iq al-Ḥaqā'iq, ed. Muḥammad Ja'far Maḥjūb (Tehrān: Bārānī, 1345sh), vol. 3, p. 217.
30. Risāla-i Shaykh 'Abd Allāh, p. 18.
31. Mudarris, Rayḥānat al-Adab, vol. 1, p. 79.
32. Tabṣira is one of the main works of 'Allāma Ḥillī.
33. Risāla-i Shaykh 'Abd Allāh, p. 18.
34. For Muḥammad Maḥdī Baḥr al-'Ulūm's ijāza see Hājj Muḥammad Khān Kermānī's Risāla-i Behbahāniya (Kermān: Sa'ādat, 1351sh), pp. 23-24; Hājj Muḥammad Khān Kermānī's Hidāyat al-Mustarshid (n.p., 1312/1894), pp. 59-60; and Dalīl al-Mutaḥayyirīn, p. 39.
35. For Ḥusayn 'Alī 'Uṣfūr's ijāza see Risāla-i Behbahāniya p. 26; Hidāyat al-Mustarshid, p. 56; and Dalīl al-Mutaḥayyirīn, p. 40. According to Makārim al-Aḥār (vol. 2, p. 572) this ijāza was issued on the second of Jumādā al-Thānī 1214/1799.
36. A portion of Shaykh Aḥmad Damistānī's ijāza was published in Hidāyat al-Mustarshid, p. 57.
37. For Shahrestānī's ijāza see Risāla-i Behbahāniya, pp. 24-25; Hidāyat al-Mustarshid, pp. 57-58; and Dalīl al-Mutaḥayyirīn, p. 39.
38. For Ṭabāṭabā'ī's ijāza see Risāla-i Behbahāniya, p. 27; Hidāyat al-Mustarshid, pp. 58-59; and Dalīl al-Mutaḥayyirīn, p. 41.
39. For Shaykh Ja'far Najaffī's ijāza see Risāla-i Behbahāniya, p. 25; Hidāyat al-Mustarshid, pp. 60-61; and Dalīl al-Mutaḥayyirīn, p. 40.
40. Ibrāhīmī, Fihrist, p. 150.
41. Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī, Dalīl al-Mutaḥayyirīn, p. 20. See also Hājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kermānī, Hidāyat al-Ṭālibīn, pp. 63-65.
42. Mudarris, Rayḥānat al-Adab, p. 79.
43. Ibrāhīmī, Fihrist, p. 133.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

45. Ibid.
46. Risāla-i Shaykh 'Abd Allāh, p. 13.
47. Ibrāhīmī, Fihrist, p. 141.
48. Ḥājī Muḥammad Khān Kermānī, Risāla-i Behbahānīya, pp. 11-12.
49. Ḥājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kermānī, Hidāyat al-Ṭālibīn, p. 41.
50. Ibid., p. 43.
51. In the Rayḥānat al-Adab two phrases are recorded which have numerical values of 1242, for first: فرت بالفردوس and the second: رحم الشيخ أحمد (Rayḥānat al-Adab, vol. 2, p. 81).
52. For detailed information about the members of the Shaykh's family see Risāla-i Shaykh 'Abd Allāh, pp. 41-42.
53. al-Mīrzā Muḥammad 'Alī al-Kashmīrī, Nujūm al-Samā fī Tarājim al-'Ulamā (Qom: Baṣīratī, n.d.), pa. 368.
54. Risāla-i Shaykh 'Abd Allāh, p. 23.
55. Ibid., p. 34.
56. Ibid., p. 37.
57. Ibid., p. 39.
58. A complete report on the nature of this dispute and its consequences is given in Muḥammad Tonekābonī's Qiṣaṣ al-'Ulamā (Tehrān: Islāmīya, n.d.), pp. 34-43.
59. Aḥmad Kasravī, Bahāyīgarī (Tehrān: Pāydar, n.d.), p. 18.
60. For a full description of the conduct of Shaykh Aḥmad see Ḥājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kermānī's Hidāyat al-Ṭālibīn, p. 84.
61. Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, Dalīl al-Mutaḥayyirīn, pp. 14-15.
62. Ibrāhīmī, Fihrist, p. 141.
63. Ibid.
64. A full discussion of the Shaykh's sources would be a significant task requiring a great deal of research.

- It is not intended here to study his sources of knowledge and information or even to provide a full list of works used by the Shaykh. On the basis of his major works such as Sharḥ al-Ziyāra, it is obvious that he made much use of the well-known Shī'ī collections of Traditions. Uṣūl al-Kāfī of Kōlaynī (d. 329/940), al-Amālī, al-Khiṣāl, and 'Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā, three major works of Ṣadūq are quoted often. Shaykh Aḥmad also frequently refers to the works of Faḍl b. Ḥasan b. Faḍl Ṭabrisī (d. 548/1153) such as Majma' al-Bayān and al-Wāfī. Among the exegeses on the Qur'ān, Shaykh Aḥmad is fond of those that contain the Traditions concerning qualities and attributes of the imāms. He refers to Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī by Muḥammad b. Mas'ūd b. Muḥammad b. 'Ayyāsh and the exegesis of Mīrzā Muḥammad b. Mullā Muḥammad Riḍā Jamāl al-Dīn Qomī entitled the Kanz al-Daqā'iq wa Bahr al-Gharā'ib, which both contain the Traditions on the imāms. The Shaykh frequently quotes other works of such 'ulamā as Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī, particularly his Sharḥ al-Ziyāra; Majma' al-Bahrayn of Fakhr al-Dīn b. Ṭurayḥ (d. 1085/1674); Kāmil al-Ziyāra of Ja'far b. Muḥammad Qolawayh (d. 368/978); and al-Iḥtijāj of Aḥmad b. 'Alī Ṭabrisī.
65. Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, Dalīl al-Mutaḥayyirīn, p. 19.
  66. By the term "madhhab" he may mean the Shī'ī doctrine.
  67. He is referring to the verse of the Qur'ān which reads, "We will show them Our signs in all the regions of the earth and in their own souls, until they clearly see that this is the truth." (41:53).
  68. Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, Dalīl al-Mutaḥayyirīn, p. 69.
  69. Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, Risāla-i Uṣūl, p. 135. Sayyid Kāẓim wrote a treatise on the principles of Islamic jurisprudence. This treatise is combined with three other Shaykhī manuscripts in one volume under the call number 2013-F in the Bahā'ī National Archive in Iran. The 71-page treatise was written at the request of an unknown questioner.
  70. "Mutawātir is applied to a tradition with so many transmitters that there could be no collusion, all being known to be reliable and not being under any compulsion to lie." Encyclopaedia of Islam, new ed., vol. 3, p. 25.
  71. According to Hughes' Dictionary of Islam, taqīya is, "A Shī'ah doctrine. A pious fraud whereby the Shī'ah Muslim believes he is justified in either smoothing down or in denying the peculiarities of his religious

72. Risāla-i Uṣūl, p. 136.
73. Ibid., pp. 99-100.
74. Ibid., p. 132.
75. Ibid., p. 131.
76. Zayn al-‘Abidīn Shīrvānī, Bustān al-Siyāha, p. 522.
77. Risāla-i Uṣūl, p. 109.
78. Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī, Dalīl al-Mutaḥayyirīn, p. 14.
79. Risāla-i Uṣūl, p. 152.
80. Ibid., p. 153.
81. Considering the fact that Shaykh Aḥmad usually did not make a second copy of his treatise for himself, and the fact that his works were kept in the house of Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī in Karbalā, which was robbed twice, the Shaykh could well have written more than 132 works (Ibrāhīmī, Fihrist, p. 125).
82. Ibrāhīmī, Fihrist, pp. 214-215.
83. Riyād Ṭāhir, Fihrist Taṣānīf al-‘Allāma al-Shaykh Ahmad al-Aḥsā’ī (Karbalā: al-Ḥā’riya, n.d.).
84. Ibrāhīmī, Fihrist, p. 219.
85. Ibid., p. 242.
86. Ibid., p. 237.
87. Abī al-Ṣadūq Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. Bābawayh al-Qomī, Man Lā Yahduruh al-Faqīh (Najaf: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīya, 1957), vol. 2, pp. 370-375.
88. Abī Ja‘far Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭosī, Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām (Najaf: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīya, 1960), vol. 6, pp. 95-101.
89. For the list of commentaries written on the Ziyārat al-Jāmi‘a see Aqā Bozorg al-Ṭehrānī, al-Dharī‘a ilā Taṣānīf al-Shī‘a (Najaf: Maṭba‘at al-Qaḍā, 1959), vol. 13, pp. 305-306.
90. Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī, Dalīl al-Mutaḥayyirīn, p. 128.
91. Ibid.

92. Aqā Bozorg al-Ṭehrānī, al-Dharī‘a, vol. 4, p. 430.
93. Risāla-i Shaykh ‘Abd Allāh, p. 18.
94. Commentaries have been written on Tabṣīrat al-Muta‘allimīn by not less than 30 Shi‘a ‘ulama. (See al-Dharī‘a, vol. 3, pp. 321-323; and vol. 13, pp. 133-138.
95. Ibrāhīmī, Fihrist, p. 228.
96. In al-Dharī‘a (vol. 13, p. 288), the title of the work is recorded as Sharḥ Risālat al-‘ilm and the references to the manuscripts of the work are given.
97. A collection of Shaykh Aḥmad's important treatises was published under the name of Jawāmi‘ al-Kilām in two volumes, the first in 1273/1856 and the second in 1276/1859. The first volume consists of 40 treatises and the second has 52.
98. Ibrāhīmī, Fihrist, p. 228.
99. Ibid., p. 241.
100. Riyād Ṭāhir, Fihrist Taṣānīf, p. 6.
101. Ibid., p. 12.
102. Ibid., p. 13.

## CHAPTER III

### The Basic Shaykhī Ontological Doctrines

The ontological doctrines of Shaykh Aḥmad constitute the most important link between the Shaykhī school and the mainstream of Islamic thought. In these views he relates his thought to Shī'ā and challenges Sunnī and Ṣūfī positions.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Not only can man not comprehend God, but neither can

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In contrast to essential attributes, actional attributes are new (hādith) and created (makhlūq). Will (mashī'a), decree (irāda), and speech (kalām), in the Shaykh's view, are actional attributes and, therefore, are new and created.<sup>11</sup> God can be attributed with the actional attributes, or, in contrast to essential attributes, with their opposites. For example, God may will or may not will.

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

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

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

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

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

creates the creation from absolute nothingness. Shaykh Ahmad refers to a Tradition on the authority of Imām Riḍā which states that the terms mashī'a, irāda, and ibdā' are synonymous.<sup>14</sup>

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

called the simplicity of the will the "possible simplicity" (al-bisātat al-imkāniyya) to differentiate it from the simplicity of God.<sup>17</sup>

The will is at the highest level of the hierarchy of Possible Being and has produced everything below it; the will was the first being, preceding all else in the realm of Possible Being. The will is eternal (sarmad) and God has created (aḥdatha) the possibilities (imkānāt) of things from it in a general, infinitive sense ('alā wajhin kullin lā yatanāhī) in the Possible Being.<sup>18</sup>

Shaykh Aḥmad states that the possible (imkān) is the source (mansha' or aḡl) of the existent (wujūd or akwān).<sup>19</sup> As an adjective depends upon the noun it qualifies, existence depends upon the possible. The relationship between the possible and the existent, in a more tangible example, is like the relationship between sperm and a man.<sup>20</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

particularly brings men to God. On the journey the sālik experiences a series of "states" (ahwāl), some continuing and hence called "resting-places" (makām, manzil), at each of which he learns various ma'ārif. When the heart is thoroughly purified, the veil (ḥidjāb) of those "other" things which hide God (mā siwā'Allāh) is drawn aside; all things, past, present and future, are known; God grants the manifestation (taḥjallī) of Himself; and finally union with Him (waṣl) is achieved.<sup>25</sup>

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

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

Aḥmad's second major point of disagreement with the Ṣūfīs, particularly Muḥy al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī, concerns the Ṣūfī theory of "unity of being" (wahdat al-wujūd). According to this theory, existence (wujūd) is described as one plain (basīt), continuous thing (shay' wāḥid), which is nothing but God, and God is nothing but that existence. Shaykh Aḥmad denounced this pantheistic doctrine and therefore designated its upholder, Ibn al-ʿArabī, as an infidel.<sup>28</sup> Such a doctrine necessitates that God be, on the one hand, a creator, and, on the other, a creature--which is patently against the basic principle of the Qur'ān and the Islamic Traditions.<sup>29</sup> Schimmel writes,

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Shaykh quotes a Tradition on the authority of Imām Ṣādiq which reads, "There was God, our respected and exalted God, and knowledge was His essence and there was nothing known [ma'lūm] to Him . . . . When He created [aḥdatha] things and the known came into being, His knowledge came to rest [waqa'ā] upon the known".<sup>34</sup> The Shaykh explains this Tradition by saying that God certainly is all-knowing, but at first His knowledge comprehends only His essence, and after He creates things His knowledge knows them.<sup>35</sup>

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

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

Shaykh Aḥmad asserts that Mullā Muḥsin's view is contrary to that of the imāms, and points out that created things (ḥādith) are not under any circumstances eternal

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

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

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

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



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

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

Shaykh Aḥmad believes that even the simplicity of

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The relationship between a prophet and a man is like

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The imāms are the a'rāf (the area between Paradise and Hell), intermediaries through whom God can be understood, i.e., the understanding of God is only possible through the guidance of (ahl al-ḥaqq), the people of truth, i.e., the imāms.<sup>58</sup>

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

The imāms are the refuge (malja'), protection (malādh), and authority (marji') for every thing that has issued from His will, namely, substance ('ain) or notion (ma'nā), matter (jawhar) or accident ('arad), essence (dhāt) or attribute (ṣifat), ecstasy (ḥāl) or condition (ḥarf), and even material (bu'd jismī), place (bu'd makānī), and time dimension (bu'd zamānī). In sum, everything takes refuge in them because of its poverty and needs.<sup>59</sup>

The Shaykhīs believe that certain verses in the Qur'ān

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

[aṣluhā] and 'Alī is its branch [far'uhā]; and the imāms are its twigs [aghṣānuhā], our knowledge is its fruit, and our people [shī'atunā] are its leaves."<sup>63</sup> In addition to these verses, some Quranic terms such as "The Farthest Lote-Tree" (sidrat al-muntahā) (53:14); "The Garden, The Place to be Resorted to" (jannat al-ma'wā) (53:15) are also considered as references to the imāms.<sup>64</sup>

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

NOTES

1. Shaykh Ahmad Aḥsā'ī, Jawāmi' al-Kilam, 2 vols. (Tabrīz: lithography, 1273-76/1856-59), vol. 1, part 2, p. 167.
2. Shaykh Ahmad's works on ontology are too numerous to list in full. The main ones are as follows:  
 (1) Jawāmi' al-Kilam, (Among the treatises compiled in this collection we have relied heavily on "Sharḥ'ala al-Risāla al-'ilmīya," part 2, pp. 166-200); (2) Sharḥ al-Ziyārat al-Jāmi'a (Tabrīz: lithography, 1276/1859); (3) Sharḥ al-Mashā'ir (Tabrīz?: lithography, 1255/1839); (4) Sharḥ al-Fawā'id (Tabrīz?: lithography, 1254/1838).  
 Sayyid Kāzīm's major works and those referred to here most frequently are: contained in the Uṣūl-i 'Aqā'id, a collection of manuscripts with the call number 2016-F in the National Bahā'ī Archive of Iran, consisting of three works: (1) Uṣūl-i 'Aqā'id (pp. 1-215); (2) Risāla-i Radd-i Shubḥa-i Akil va Ma'kūl, written at the request of Prince Muḥammad Riḍā Mīrzā (pp. 216-263); (3) an untitled treatise written for Mīrzā Muḥammad Ḥasan (pp. 263-281) to answer his questions on: (a) the meaning of the Qāba Qawsayn, (b) 'Illiyat-i Wājib or 'Illiyat-i Mashī'at, and (c) Khalq-i Mashī'at bi Nafsihā.
3. Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī, Uṣūl-i 'Aqā'id, pp. 12-13.
4. Necessary Being (al-Wājib al-Wujūd), is the Being which exists by itself in contrast to the Possible Being (al-Mumkin al-Wujūd), which receives its Being from another, i.e., from the Necessary Being. While the nonexistence of Necessary Being is unthinkable, the nonexistence of the Possible Being is thinkable. Philosophers use the term Necessary Being for God and Possible Being for the world.
5. Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī, Uṣūl-i 'Aqā'id, p. 9.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., p. 11.
8. Shaykh Ahmad Aḥsā'ī, Sharḥ al-Ziyārat al-Jāmi'a, p. 124.
9. Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī, Uṣūl-i 'Aqā'id, p. 36.
10. Shaykh Ahmad Aḥsā'ī, Sharḥ al-Ziyārat al-Jāmi'a, p. 134.
11. Sayyid Kāzīm quotes a Tradition on the authority of Imām Riḍā which reads, "Will and decree are from among

- the actional attributes. One who claims that God has possessed will and decree from eternity (i.e., preexistence with God) does not believe in the oneness of God." (Uṣūl-i 'Aqā'id, p. 36).
12. Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī, Uṣūl-i 'Aqā'id, p. 31.
13. The verse of the Qur'ān reads, "I have not created Djinn and man, but that they should worship me." (51:56); and a Tradition reads, "I was a hidden treasure, I wished to be known, therefore, I created all creation in order to be known."
14. Shaykh Ahmad Aḥsā'ī, Sharḥ al-Mashā'ir, p. 3.
15. Ibid., p. 308.
16. Shaykh Ahmad Aḥsā'ī, Sharḥ al-Fawā'id, p. 457.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid., p. 458.
20. Ibid., p. 459.
21. Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī, The Treatise for Mīrzā Muḥammad Ḥasan, p. 279.
22. Reference to this term is frequently made throughout the works of Shaykh Ahmad. For example see Jawāmi' al-Kilam, vol. 1, part 2., p. 183.
23. A. E. Affifi, The Mystical Philosophy of Muhyid Dīn-Ibnul 'Arabī (Cambridge: University Press, 1939), pp. 171-172.
24. Ibid., p. 13.
25. The Encyclopaedia of Islam, new ed., s.v. "Ibn al-'Arabī," by A. Ateş.
26. Shaykh Ahmad Aḥsā'ī, Sharḥ al-Ziyārat al-Jāmi'a, p. 40.
27. Ibid., p. 123.
28. Ibid., p. 125.
29. Shaykh Ahmad Aḥsā'ī, Jawāmi' al-Kilam, vol. 1, part 2, p. 175.
30. Annemarie Schimmel, Mystical Dimension of Islam (Chapel

Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), p. 267.

31. Ibid., p. 268.
32. Shaykh Ahmad Aḥsā'ī, Jawāmi' al-Kilam, vol. 1, part 2, p. 176.
33. Ibid., p. 177.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. 'Abd al-Muhsin Mishkāt al-Dīnī, Nazarī bi Falsafa-i Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī "Mullā Ṣadrā" (Tehrān: Bonyād-i Farhang-i Irān, 1345sh), pp. 174-175.
39. Jawād Muṣṭafī, Mabda'-i Āfarīnesh az Dīdgāh-i Falāsifa-i Islām (Tehrān: Tehrān University, 1354sh), p. 181.
40. Shaykh Ahmad Aḥsā'ī, Sharḥ al-Fawā'id, p. 157.
41. Ibid., p. 455.
42. Ibid., p. 456.
43. Shaykh Ahmad Aḥsā'ī, Sharḥ al-Ziyārat al-Jāmi'a, p. 11.
44. Ibid.
45. Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, Uṣūl-i 'Aqā'id, p. 119.
46. Ibid., p. 125.
47. Ibid., p. 117.
48. Ibid., p. 129.
49. Ibid., pp. 131-132.
50. There are verses in the Qur'ān and Traditions that refer to sins and shortcomings of the prophets. Sayyid Kāẓim suggest that these verses are among those unclear (mutashābihāt) verses that should be understood in the light of the clear (muḥkamāt) verses. Here, for example, are three verses that indicate the sins and shortcomings of the prophets: "And Adam disobeyed his Lord, so his life became evil (to him)" (20:121);

"God forgiveth thy earlier and later faults, and fulfilleth His goodness to thee, and guideth thee on the right way" (48:2); "And of old We made a covenant with Adam; but he forgot it; and we found no firmness of purpose in him" (20:115).

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

51. Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, Uṣūl-i 'Aqā'id, p. 156.
52. Ibid., p. 157.
53. Shaykh Ahmad Aḥsā'ī, Sharḥ al-Ziyārat al-Jāmi'a, p. 11.
54. Ibid., p. 112. See also pp. 116 and 120.
55. Ibid., p. 136.
56. Ibid., p. 37.
57. Ibid., p. 49.
58. Ibid., p. 44.
59. Ibid., p. 80.
60. Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, Uṣūl-i 'Aqā'id, p. 176.
61. Shaykh Ahmad Aḥsā'ī, Sharḥ al-Ziyārat al-Jāmi'a, p. 24.
62. Ibid., p. 80.
63. Ibid., p. 65.
64. Ibid., p. 49.

65. "A title given to a leading sect of the Shī'ahs who, through their excessive zeal for the Imāms, have raised them above the degree of human being." Thomas Patrick Hughes, Dictionary of Islam (New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint, 1976), p. 139.

#### CHAPTER IV

##### The Basic Shaykhī Eschatological Doctrines

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

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



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

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

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

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

and the realm of will:

1. The realm of similitudes ('ālam-i mithāl), known also as the realm of intermediary (barzakh, or Havarqalyā)
2. The realm of bodily matter (mawādd-i jismānīya)
3. The realm of nature ('ālam-i ṭabī'at). This realm is contained in the realms of intellects ('ālam-i 'uqūl), spirits (arwāḥ) and souls (nufūs), but no separation or distinction exists among these three
4. The realm of souls (nufūs)
5. The realm of spirits ('ālam-i arwāḥ)
6. The realm of intellect ('ālam-i 'uqūl)
7. The realm of heart ('ālam-i fu'ād)<sup>3</sup>

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

The basic eschatological questions which Shaykh Aḥmad discusses are the Day of Judgment and its related issues-- Resurrection, Return, Meeting with God, Paradise and Hell, and reward and punishment. The advent of the Mahdī (Guided One) is strongly related to eschatological issues, but, since it occupies a special place in Shaykh Aḥmad's works and played a significant role in the subsequent development of the movement, it will be dealt with in a separate chapter.

Before considering Shaykh Aḥmad's views, it is necessary to review the essence of Islamic eschatology as it is revealed in the Qur'ān and expanded in the Traditions.

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

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

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

Muḥammad Mu'īn's research on the etymology and history of the term Havarqalyā shows that it is derived from the Hebrew term habal qarna'im (Doppelgänger). According to this derivation, the pronunciation of the term should be Havarqalyā ( هَوْرَقَالِيَا ) as Mu'īn has suggested.<sup>8</sup> This pronunciation, although the most authentic, is, however, less common. While Shaykh Aḥmad does not mention the pronunciation of the term in his works, Muḥammad Tonekābonī (d. 1302/1884), who was very familiar with the Shaykhī ideology, in his Qiṣaṣ al-'Ulamā states that the term should be pronounced Huvarqalyā ( هُوْرَقَالِيَا ).<sup>9</sup> Tonekābonī, however,

adds that the term is commonly mispronounced Hurqalyā ( هُرْقَالِيَا ). He notes that when he pronounced the term Huvarqalyā ( هُوْرْقَالِيَا ) during a conversation with Ḥājj Mullā Ḥādī Sabzavārī (d. 1289/1872),<sup>10</sup> Sabzavārī pointed out that the correct pronunciation was Hurqalyā ( هُرْقَالِيَا ), not Huvarqalyā ( هُوْرْقَالِيَا ). Tonekābonī then told Sabzavārī that he had heard a student of Mullā 'Alī Nūrī<sup>11</sup> quote Mullā 'Alī's statement that Hurqalyā ( هُرْقَالِيَا ) was wrong and that the correct pronunciation was Huvarqalyā ( هُوْرْقَالِيَا ).<sup>12</sup>

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

Shaykh Aḥmad was not the first to use the term Huvarqalyā. According to Mu'īn,<sup>13</sup> the term was first used by Shihāb al-Dīn Yaḥyā b. Ḥabash Sohravardī, known as Shaykh al-Ishrāq (d. 587/1191), although the term itself received little explanation either in the works of Sohravardī or his commentators, such as Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd Shahzorī and Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Mas'ūd Shīrāzī (d. 710/1310). In the works of Sohravardī, the realm of similitudes is described as consisting of an elementary ('anāṣir) realm, within which are Jabursā and Jabulqā, and a celestial (aflāk) realm: this celestial realm of similitudes ('ālam aflāk al-muthul),<sup>14</sup> is called Huvarqalyā.

In the works of Shaykh Aḥmad, Huvarqalyā (the realm of the subtle) has several connotations and often is used synonymously with "the realm of similitudes" ('ālam-i

mithāl) and "isthmus" (barzakh).

According to Shaykh Aḥmad, Huvarqalyā is a Syriac term<sup>15</sup> meaning "the next world" (mulk ākhar), located in the eighth climate (iqḷīm) and including two cities: Jabursā in the west and Jabulqā in the east.

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

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

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

Regarding the functions and characteristics of the subtle body, Shaykh Ahmad states that a "true man" consists of intellect ('aql), soul (nafs), nature (ṭabī'at), matter (mādda) and subtle (mithāl). Intellect is in soul, and soul is in nature, and all three--intellect, soul, and nature--are in matter. But the existence of matter is dependent upon the subtle body. Only when the subtle clings to matter, does a body (al-jism al-aṣlī) come into being.<sup>19</sup> Shaykh Ahmad describes the first external body (al-ḥasad al-awwal al-ẓāhirī) as a "shell" made of earth, air, fire, and water, while the second body (al-ḥasad al-thānī) is a more delicate internal substance, like a pearl, made of subtle elements which are hidden in matter, i.e., the shell. After death, matter remains in the grave and its external appearance perishes. But its internal substance, which is subtle, survives. This internal substance is the second body, made of the Havarqalyā's elements.

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

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

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

In answering the question of Kāzīm b. 'Alī Naqī al-Suhā'ī on the nature of the relationship between letters, attributes of God, and creation, Shaykh Aḥmad outlines another aspect of the concept of the "realm of the subtle." He states that the "limited being" (wujūd al-muqayyad), which begins with the First Intellect and ends up with earth, consists of twenty-eight stages, each of which corresponds to an attribute of God as well as a letter of the Arabic alphabet as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1

1	Intellect ( <u>'aql</u> )	The Incomparable ( <u>al-badī'</u> )	ا
2	Soul ( <u>nafs</u> )	The Resurrector ( <u>al-bā'ith</u> )	ب
3	Nature ( <u>ṭabī'at</u> )	The Hidden ( <u>al-bāṭin</u> )	ج
4	Matter ( <u>mādda</u> )	The Last ( <u>al-ākhir</u> )	د
5	Subtle ( <u>mithāl</u> )	The Manifest ( <u>al-zāhir</u> )	هـ
6	The Universal Substance ( <u>jism al-kull</u> )	The Wise ( <u>al-ḥakīm</u> )	و

7	The Heaven ( <u>al-'arsh</u> )	The All-Encompassing ( <u>al-muḥīṭ</u> )	ز
8	The Throne ( <u>al-kursī</u> )	The Appreciative ( <u>al-shakūr</u> )	ح
9	The Celestial Spheres ( <u>falak al-burūj</u> )	The Self-Sufficient ( <u>ghanī al-dahr</u> )	ط
10	The Celestial Stations ( <u>falak al-manāzil</u> )	The Powerful ( <u>al-muqtadir</u> )	ی
11	The Sphere of Saturn ( <u>falak al-zuḥal</u> )	The Lord ( <u>al-rabb</u> )	ک
12	The Sphere of Jupiter ( <u>falak al-mushtarī</u> )	The All-Knowing ( <u>al-'ālim</u> )	ل
13	The Sphere of Mars ( <u>falak al-mirrikh</u> )	The Subduer ( <u>al-qāhir</u> )	م
14	The Sphere of the Sun ( <u>falak al-shams</u> )	The Light ( <u>al-nūr</u> )	ن
15	The Sphere of Venus ( <u>falak al-zuhrah</u> )	The Fashioner ( <u>al-muṣawwir</u> )	س
16	The Sphere of Mercury ( <u>falak 'uṭārid</u> )	The Counter ( <u>al-muḥṣīy</u> )	ع
17	The Sphere of the Moon ( <u>falak al-qamar</u> )	The Evident ( <u>al-mubīn</u> )	ی
18	The Ethereal Globe ( <u>kura al-athīrīy</u> )	The Restrainer ( <u>al-qābiḍ</u> )	ص
19	The Atmospheric Globe ( <u>kura al-hawā</u> )	The Alive ( <u>al-ḥayy</u> )	ق
20	The Water Globe ( <u>kura al-mā'</u> )	The Quickener ( <u>al-muḥyī</u> )	ر
21	The Earth Globe ( <u>kura al-turāb</u> )	The Creator of Death ( <u>al-mumīt</u> )	نی
22	Mineral ( <u>al-jamād</u> )	The Mighty ( <u>al-'azīz</u> )	ن
23	Vegetation ( <u>nabāt</u> )	The Provider ( <u>al-rāziq</u> )	ن
24	Animal ( <u>al-ḥayawān</u> )	The Dishonorer ( <u>al-mudhill</u> )	خ

25	Angel ( <u>al-malak</u> )	The Strong ( <u>al-qawīyy</u> )	ز
26	Jinn ( <u>al-jinn</u> )	The Gracious ( <u>al-laṭīf</u> )	ص
27	Man ( <u>al-insān</u> )	The Gatherer ( <u>al-jāmiʿ</u> )	ط
28	The Comprehensive Stage ( <u>martabat al-jāmiʿ</u> )	The One Who is Ex- alted in Rank ( <u>rafīʿ al-darajāt</u> )	ع

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

1. Intellects (ʿuqūl), substances free from any physical element or form
2. Souls (nufūs), the words of the Preserved Tablet
3. Natures (ṭabāyiʿ), the realm of concrete individuals
4. The Realm of Jewel, or technical substances, referring to the atoms of atmosphere
5. The Realm of the Subtle, the forms in the atmosphere of the barzakh, between the malakūt and the mulk, located between the nonmaterial realm and the realm of time (the material)

6. The Realm of Material Bodies, which consists of elementary matter (al-mawādd al-ʿunṣurīya) and the subtle forms (al-ṣuwar al-mithālīya) which Shaykh Ahmad understands from the realm of subtle, in this context, as the realm of image of substance (ṣuwar al-dhāt), and that is the image of existence and its origin<sup>24</sup>

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

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

If we, hypothetically, imagine that the realm of the subtle, like this material realm, has an earth and a heaven, Jābulqā and Jābursā would be its earth and Havarqalyā its heaven.

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

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

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

Regarding Hell and Paradise, Shaykhīs hold that there are two paradises: a worldly paradise (behesht-i dunyā) and a Paradise in the hereafter (behesht-i ākhirat). After

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

"way" is a symbol which stands for the imām, his friendship, his teachings, and the recognition of himself.<sup>37</sup>

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

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

would be fulfilled allegorically.

NOTES

1. This term refers to allegorical verses in the Qur'ān. See Qur'ān 3:7 and 39:23.
2. The Qur'ān reads, "He it is who has revealed the Book to you: some of its verses are decisive, they are the basis of the Book, and others are allegorical; then as for those in whose hearts there is perversity, they follow the part of it which is allegorical, seeking to mislead, and seeking to give it (their own) interpretation; but none knows its interpretation except Allah, and those who are firmly rooted in knowledge." (3:6).
3. Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī, The Treatise for Mīrzā Muḥammad Ḥasan (see chapter 3, n. 2), pp. 266-268.
4. See the following verses of the Qur'ān on the Day of Judgment: 101:1-11; 82:1-19; 69:13-37; 56:1-56.
5. The term means false or lying. It is given in Islamic Traditions to religious impostors.
6. Gog and Magog, in Arabic, Yājūj wa Mājūj or Y'ajūj wa M'ajūj, are mentioned in the Qur'ān. See 18:93-97.
7. Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī, Uṣūl-i 'Aqā'id (see chapter 3, n. 2), p. 188.
8. Muḥammad Mu'īn, "Havarqalyā," Majalla-i Dāneshkada-i Adabiyāt, vol. 1 (1333sh), no. 3, p. 84.
9. Muḥammad Tonekābonī, Qiṣaṣ al-'Ulamā (Tehrān: 'Ilmiya Islāmīya, nd.), p. 44.
10. The most famous philosopher in nineteenth century Iran. Particularly well known for his commentaries on Mullā Ṣadrā's works.
11. A great philosopher of his time and the teacher of Ḥājīj Mullā Hādī Sabzavārī.
12. Tonekābonī, Qiṣaṣ al-'Ulamā, pp. 45-46.
13. Mu'īn, Majalla-i Dāneshkada-i Adabiyāt, p. 84.
14. Ibid., p. 85.
15. Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī, Jawāmi' al-kilam (see chapter 3, n. 2), vol. 1, part 2, p. 124.

16. Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī, Sharḥ al-'Arshīya (Tabrīz: lithography, 1278/1861), p. 119.
17. Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī, Jawāmi' al-Kilam, vol. 1, part 1, p. 123. Shaykh Aḥmad's doctrine on this subject is not original. However, an examination of the origins of his doctrine, and of the sources which may have influenced his ideas, and of the similarities between his doctrine and other religious and philosophical systems, is beyond the scope of this work.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid., p. 122.
20. Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī, untitled collection of treatises, p. 61, published in 1276/1859 in Tabrīz. This work contains mostly treatises written by Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī at the request of individual questioners. A lithography of this collection, bound along with Shaykh Aḥmad's Sharḥ al-Fawā'id bears the call number 2019-F in the National Bahā'ī Archive of Iran. This collection will hereafter be referred to as Collection of Treatises.
21. Nafs-i nāṭiqa, "the reasoning soul," is unique to human beings. While it possesses the faculties of vegetable and animal souls it also has the faculty of reasoning, which distinguishes man from plants and animals. Nafs-i nāṭiqa is the manifestation of man's spirit.
22. Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī, Collection of Treatises, p. 361.
23. Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī, Davāzdah Risāla az Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī, p. 33. This collection of twelve short treatises by Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī was copied by Ya'qūb b. Muqīm b. Sharīf al-Bārforoshī in 1263/1846; the manuscript is in the National Bahā'ī Archive of Iran and has the call number 2022-F. This collection will hereafter be referred to as the Davāzdah Risāla.
24. Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī, Sharḥ al-Fawā'id (see chapter 3, n. 2), pp. 160-161.
25. Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī, Davāzdah Risāla, p. 37.
26. Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī, Jawāmi' al-Kilam, vol. 1, part 2, p. 119.
27. See the Qur'ān, 17:1; 53:7-14.
28. Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī, The Treatise for Mīrzā Muḥammad Ḥasan, p. 272.

29. Ibid., p. 268.
30. Sayyid Kāzim Rashtī, Uṣūl-i 'Aqā'id, pp. 197-198.
31. Ibid., p. 200.
32. Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī, Davāzdah Risāla, p. 107.
33. See the Traditions in Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār (Tehrān: al-Maktabat al-Islāmīya, 1384/1964), vol. 13, part 51, pp. 44-64.
34. Ibid., p. 49.
35. Ibid., p. 58.
36. Ibid., p. 45.
37. Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī, Jawāmi' al-Kilam, vol. 1, part 2, p. 139.
38. Sayyid Kāzim Rashtī, Collection of Treatises, p. 271.
39. Ibid., p. 272.

## CHAPTER V

### Developments in the Shaykhī School After the Death of Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī

The death of Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī in 1241/1327 did not result in a struggle for succession, for it was widely known within his circle as well as outside that Sayyid Kāzim Rashtī was to be his successor. Once when Shaykh Aḥmad had been asked who should be the authority after him, he replied that Sayyid Kāzim was the one.<sup>1</sup> Shaykh Aḥmad called Sayyid Kāzim "My Son" (waladī).<sup>2</sup> Indeed, one commentator has gone so far as to describe Sayyid Kāzim as "the shining apple of his [Shaykh Aḥmad's] eye and the splendid bright strength of his heart, his companion in his hardships and troubles, and he who was like the shirt on his back."<sup>3</sup>

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

Sayyid Kāzim Rashtī b. Qāsim b. Aḥmad b. Ḥabīb was born in 1212/1798<sup>4</sup> in Rasht in the Province of Gilān. His family was reputed to have been descended from the Prophet and traced its origin to Medina. After Sayyid Ḥabīb's death, his son, Sayyid Aḥmad, emigrated to Rasht, where his son Qāsim, and then Sayyid Kāzim, were born.<sup>5</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

Sayyid Kāẓim's most important confrontation took place in Karbalā at a meeting with three distinguished Uṣūlī scholars: Sayyid Maḥdī b. Sayyid 'Alī Ṭabāṭabā'ī (d. 1260/1844), Muḥammad Ja'far Astarābādī (d. 1263/1847), and Muḥammad Sharīf b. Mullā Ḥasan 'Alī Māzandarānī, known as Sharīf al-'Ulamā (d. 1245/1829).<sup>7</sup> The meeting, held at the request of Sayyid Maḥdī Ṭabāṭabā'ī, was called to examine the Shaykhī views on theological questions such as the Return, the Ascension of the Prophet, and the status of the imāms.<sup>8</sup> In this meeting, Sayyid Kāẓim admitted that some of Shaykh Aḥmad's writings appeared to contradict popular Shī'ī

beliefs. Upon this admission, Ṭabāṭabā'ī, with the cooperation of his colleagues, issued a takfīr to the effect that Shaykhīs were heretics. Later, Mullā Muḥammad Ja'far Astarābādī, one of the participants in that meeting, wrote a book rejecting the Shaykhī ideology.<sup>9</sup> This takfīr was followed by others issued by authorities such as Mullā Āqā Darbandī (d. 1286/1869); Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad Raḥīm (d. 1250/1834), the author of al-Fuṣūl al-Gharawīya fi al-Uṣūl al-Fiqhīya; and Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥasan b. Bāqir Najafī (d. 1266 or 1268/1844), author of the Jawāhir al-Kalām fī Sharḥ Sharāyi' al-Islām.<sup>10</sup>

On another occasion in Karablā, a confrontation took place with Mīrzā Muḥammad Ḥasan, the son of the well-known philosopher and student of Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophy, Mullā 'Alī Nūrī (d. 1246/1830). The subject was the concept of basīṭ al-ḥaqīqa, to which the opposition of Shaykh Aḥmad was well known. Although the concept was a major point of disagreement between the Shaykh and Mullā Ṣadrā, it is reported that when Muḥammad Ḥasan, who was a representative of Mullā Ṣadrā's school, explained Ṣadrā's stand on the subject, Sayyid Kāẓim did not have any objection.<sup>11</sup>

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

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

The very fact that these discussions took place, regardless of the outcome, reveals that in Karbalā the Shī'ī 'ulamā regarded the Shaykhīs as a group against which they had to take measures in the name of protection of the Sharī'a. There is no doubt that they recognized in Shaykhī ideas a potential threat to their own authority and position.

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

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

## Sayyid Kāẓim's Works

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

Sayyid Kāẓim also wrote commentaries on Quranic verses or phrases, on Traditions on the authority of the Prophet and the imāms, and on the works of his predecessors, such as Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ or Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī. Besides writing commentaries on Shaykh Aḥmad's works, Sayyid Kāẓim translated Shaykh Aḥmad's Ḥayāt al-Nafs and Risāla-i Ḥaydarīya into Persian as well as a few sections of the Sharḥ al-Ziyāra.

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

Sayyid Kāẓim wrote extensively. He himself gives a

list of 138 works at the end of his Dalīl al-Mutahayyirīn.<sup>14</sup> Nicolas, in Essai Sur Le Chéikhisme, lists 135 works;<sup>15</sup> Habībābādī, in the Makārim al-Āthār, lists 60; and Mudarris, in Rayḥānat al-Adab, mentions that Sayyid Kāẓim wrote 150 works.<sup>17</sup> The most complete and comprehensive list of Sayyid Kāẓim's works, however, is provided by Ibrāhīmī, who devotes the second chapter of the second volume of the Fihrist<sup>18</sup> entirely to them. In this chapter, he lists about 170 works under the following headings:

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

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

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

are considered in greater detail.

### 1. Sharḥ al-Khuṭbat al-Tutunjīya

This is a commentary on a sermon delivered by 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib between Kufa and Medina. Nahj al-Balāgha does not contain this sermon, but it is recorded in al-Majmū' al-Rā'iq<sup>21</sup> and Shaykh Rajab al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Bursī's Mashāriq Anwār al-Yaqīn.<sup>22</sup> Sayyid Kāẓim wrote the commentary, which exceeds 350 pages, in 1232/1816 at the request of certain 'ulamā, whose names are not mentioned. Sayyid Kāẓim in his Dalīl al-Mutahayyirīn states that his commentary on Tutunjīya contains divine secrets that only a pure-hearted and enlightened person could bear to understand.<sup>23</sup> The version of 'Alī's sermon he has used is that quoted by Shaykh Rajab al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Bursī.<sup>24</sup> In his commentary, Sayyid Kāẓim quotes the sermon phrase by phrase and follows each quotation with an elaborate interpretation. The commentary contains detailed a discussion of eschatological and ontological issues as treated by Muslim scholars.

### 2. Sharḥ al-Qaṣīdat al-Lāmiya

The Qaṣīdat al-Lāmiya was written by 'Abd al-Bāqī Afandī al-Mūshilī<sup>25</sup> in praise of Imām Mūsā al-Kāẓim.<sup>26</sup> Sayyid Kāẓim wrote his commentary on the Qaṣīda in 1258/1842 at the request of 'Alī Riḍā Pashā, the governor of Baghdād. Sharḥ al-Qaṣīda is Sayyid Kāẓim's major work on broad Islamic theological perspectives.<sup>27</sup>

### 3. Dalīl al-Mutahayyirīn

This work was written to explain Shaykhī views and to defend

Shaykhī ideology against the attacks of the 'ulamā. The book contains a biography of Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī, excerpts from his ijāzas, and comments on his character, his achievements, and the hardships he suffered during his life. Sayyid Kāẓim explains points of dispute between the Shaykhīs and the Shī'a and records in detail his confrontations with the 'ulamā. At the end of the book, he lists the works of the Shaykh and then his own works, with a few words of description about each.

Sayyid Kāẓim, in addition to writing religious treatises, educated hundreds of students, many of whom became leading authorities on religion and participated actively in social and religious struggles after he died. The Makārim al-Āthār gives the names of several of Sayyid Kāẓim's students,<sup>28</sup> among whom are Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kermānī, the great Persian poetess Qurrat al-'Ain, Mullā Ḥusayn Boshro'ī, and Shaykh 'Alī Torshīzī. All became influential and distinguished leaders in the later developments of the Shaykhī school.

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

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

Inspired and energetic, Sayyid Kāẓim played such an



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

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

The headquarters of the movement which had been established in Karbalā at the time of Shaykh Ahmad and had attracted hundreds of religious students at the time of Sayyid Kāzīm, now moved out of Karbalā and new centers were established in Kermān and Ādharbāyjān. They attracted fewer students in general, and far fewer students from the Arab lands. The new centers also lacked the scholarly reputation that Karbalā had possessed at the time of Sayyid Kāzīm. As long as the Shaykhī school was based in Karbalā, the center for Shī'ī scholarship, it had a direct connection with other Islamic trends of thought, but the relocation of the Shaykhīs to Iran removed them from this direct contact with the mainstream. The Shī'ā who considered the Shaykhīs heretics, may well have viewed this move out of Karbalā as a victory.

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

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

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

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

The fact that Sayyid Kāẓim did not appoint anyone as his successor, and the fact that he urged his followers to seek the walī, indicates that Sayyid Kāẓim believed that the advent of the walī was imminent, thus there was no need to appoint a successor. Without an appointed successor, and with no student who could win general acceptance within his circle, as had been the case after the death of Shaykh Aḥmad, disputes arose and various claimants to the succession appeared. Among them two distinguished students of Sayyid Kāẓim were most prominent: Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kermānī (d. 1288/1871) and Ḥājj Mīrzā Shafī‘ Tabrizī.

It should be noted that the ideological viewpoint which resulted in the division of the followers of Sayyid Kāẓim into two groups had to do primarily with the type of leadership that each group sought. While Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kermānī believed in individual leadership, Ḥājj Mīrzā Shafī‘ believed in ijtihād. This meant that Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān claimed, and was accepted by his followers, to be the only individual leader of the Shaykhīs whose ideas were legitimized, whereas Mīrzā Shafī‘ believed

that the Shaykhīs should follow the principles of Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kāẓim but for daily religious questions, should follow the examples of the Shī‘ī recognized mujtahids of their time.

It was about five months after the death of Sayyid Kāẓim, on 5 Jumādā al-Ulā 1260/1844, that Sayyid ‘Alī Muḥammad Shīrāzī declared himself to be the Bāb (Gate) to the advent of the Qā‘im. Sayyid ‘Alī Muḥammad's claim was not connected with the crises of succession within the Shaykhī school, but since he had attended Sayyid Kāẓim's circle,<sup>41</sup> and the advent of the Qā‘im was predicted in the Shaykhī writings,<sup>42</sup> the claim of the Bāb attracted many students of the Shaykhī school, who became known as Bābīs.<sup>43</sup>

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

Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kermānī  
and the Shaykhīs of Kermān

The student of Sayyid Kāẓim who won the largest number of supporters was Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kermānī.<sup>44</sup> He was the son of Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Khān Ḥāzīr al-Dawla, the governor of Kermān and cousin of Faṭḥ ‘Alī Shāh.

Muḥammad Karīm Khān was born in 1225/1810 to a rich

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

The majority of the Shaykhīs in Kermān accepted Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān as the legitimate leader of the school after Sayyid Kāẓim. He considered himself as an inspired leader who was acting in accordance with divine guidance,<sup>49</sup> but his authority was based on the loyalty of his followers, mainly the members of his family located in Kermān; he never attracted the loyalty of all the followers of Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī.

The followers of Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān became known as the Shaykhīs of Kermān (Shaykhīya-i Kermān or Shaykhīya-i Ḥājj Karīm Khānī) in contrast with the groups of Shaykhīs in

Tabrīz and Hamadān. He was a traditionalist Shaykhī who remained loyal to the Shaykhī school. The school of Kermān never entered into active revolt against the established authorities. They were among the power elite of Kermān who conservatively limited themselves to religious activities mainly in that province. The Shaykhī leader of Kermān was, in fact, the head of his clan, and the leadership of the Shaykhīs of Kermān has remained in the family of Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān to the present day. The successors of Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān were his son Muḥammad Khān (d. 1324/1906); Ḥājj Zayn al-'Abidīn Khān (d. 1360/1941), his other son; then Ḥājj Abū al-Qāsim Khān (d. 1389/1969),<sup>50</sup> the son of Ḥājj Zayn al-'Abidīn Khān.<sup>51</sup> Presently 'Abd al-Riḍā Ibrāhīmī, the son of Ḥājj Abū al-Qāsim Khān, is the leader of the school, and his headquarters are still in Kermān.

When Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān appointed his son Muḥammad Khān as his successor, a great Shaykhī scholar, Mīrzā Muḥammad Bāqir Hamadānī (d. 1319/1901), did not accept the latter's leadership. Mīrzā Muḥammad Bāqir b. Muḥammad Ja'far, originally from Iṣfahān but known as Hamadānī because he had resided in Hamadān for about thirty years, was born in 1239/1823.<sup>52</sup> He received his elementary education in Iṣfahān and then joined Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān's circle in Kermān. He studied with Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān, and became his devoted follower and then his deputy in Hamadān.

Mīrzā Muḥammad Bāqir believed that successorship should be given to the most learned member of the Shaykhī community-- i.e., himself!--not necessarily to a member of Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān's family. This claim, which was supported by many Shaykhīs, particularly outside Kermān, brought into being a new branch of Shaykhīs under the leadership of Mīrzā Muḥammad Bāqir, who considered himself to be the most respected and learned Shaykhī after Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān. His followers came to be known as the Bāqirīs, or the Shaykhīs of Hamadān. Mehdī Bāmdād, in the Tārīkh-i Rijāl-i Irān, states that after the separation of the Bāqirīs, the followers of Ḥājj Muḥammad Khān became known as Nāṭiqī (adjective form derived from the noun nāṭiq which literally means speaker) or Nawāṭiq (plural of nāṭiq).<sup>53</sup> This statement, however, is not supported by any other sources.

Mīrzā Muḥammad Bāqir wrote about 150 books and treatises.<sup>54</sup> His better known works are al-Ijtināb, written in Persian in 1307/1889 to answer the polemical questions 'Abd al-Ṣamad b. 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥusaynī al Māzandarānī (d. 1315/1897) had raised in his work, the Tiryāq-i Fārūq;<sup>55</sup> and al-Uṣūl al-Dīniya, a work written in Persian on Shī'ī doctrines.<sup>56</sup>

In 1315/1897, there was an uprising against the Shaykhīs of Hamadān, during which Mīrzā Muḥammad Bāqir fled to Nāeīn and subsequently made his residence in that area. He died in 1319/1901 in Jandaq at the age of eighty.<sup>57</sup>

Mīrzā Shafī' Tabrīzī  
and the Shaykhīs of Tabrīz

Mīrzā Shafī' was a student of Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī and Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī. As soon as he returned to Tabrīz after the death of Sayyid Kāzīm, he established a Shaykhī circle there, and members of his family and the nobility of Tabrīz supported him.<sup>58</sup>

Mīrzā Shafī' b. Mīrzā Rafī' was born in 1218/1803 and lived for eighty-three years. He received the traditional elementary education in his home town and then went to 'Atabāt to continue his education. In 'Atabāt he studied with Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥasan Najafī, author of the Jawāhir al-Kalām, the most important work on jurisprudence written in this period, and then continued with Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī, from whom he received his ijāza. Mīrzā Shafī' was a respected man of his time, known for his piety and knowledge.<sup>59</sup> After his death, his son, Mīrzā Mūsā, received his father's authority and led the school till 1319/1901, when he died.

Of the twenty-one children that Mīrzā Mūsā left behind, Mīrzā 'Alī became the most famous. Born in 1277/1860 and killed by the Russians in 1330/1912,<sup>60</sup> he became known as the Thiqat al-Islām-i Shahīd. He received his elementary education from his grandfather Mīrzā Shafī', and others, and went to 'Atabāt for higher religious education.<sup>61</sup> Upon his return to Tabrīz in 1308/1890 he became a respected,

learned man. With the death of his father, Mīrzā Mūsā, in 1319/1901, he became the head of the Shaykhī school of Tabrīz. Mīrzā 'Alī was a distinguished scholar in religion and literature. He was interested in new sciences, social change and the socio-political issues of his time. His interests led him to participate in the social affairs of the country as a secular thinker.<sup>62</sup> He wrote several books such as the Risāla-i Lālān, on social issues, and the Mir'āt al-Kutub, an immense biobibliography.<sup>63</sup>

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

The Shaykhīs of Tabrīz never succeeded in obtaining hegemony over all the Shaykhīs, but immediately following the death of Sayyid Kāẓim they attracted those students of his who held more antitraditionalist views. In contrast

with the Shaykhīs of Kermān, the Shaykhīs of Tabrīz were very much involved in the current socio-political issues of the province of Ādharbāyjān, where they had a close relationship with the royal family residing there and engaged in the public affairs of the society. This involvement manifested itself most clearly at the time of Mīrzā 'Alī, who came out publicly against the established authorities and institutions and received the support of his adherents. This developed into an active rebellion against the established order and ultimately led to the Constitutional Movement.

In contrast with the leaders of the Shaykhīs of Kermān, who claimed to enjoy the inspired leadership of their community, the leaders of the Shaykhīs of Tabrīz never made such a claim. While the leadership of the Shaykhīs of Kermān was centered in an acknowledged individual, the Shaykhīs of Tabrīz lacked a universally accepted individual leader.

In contrast with the Uṣūlī 'ulamā of Tabrīz and the Shaykhīs of Kermān, who were among the local notables with considerable landed property and other investments and lived in luxury, the Shaykhīs of Tabrīz lived a moderate life.<sup>68</sup>

Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad Shīrāzī, The Bāb  
and the Bābīs

Within a short period after Sayyid Kāẓim's death,

Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad declared himself to be the Bāb (Gate) to the twelfth Imām for whom the Shī'a in general and the Shaykhīs in particular had been waiting.

Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad Shīrāzī was born into a respected merchant family of Shīrāz on the first of Muḥarram 1235/1819.<sup>69</sup> Orphaned at an early age, he was raised by his maternal uncle, Sayyid 'Alī. He received his formal elementary education in his home town and then, as a young man, went into business with his uncle, who was also a merchant. In 1257/1841, Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad made a pilgrimage to 'Atabāt where he stayed for 11 months.<sup>70</sup> There he met Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī and attended his circle. Upon his return to Shīrāz, he proclaimed himself the Bāb on (5 Jumādā al-Ulā 1260/23 of May 1844). He made his declaration to Mullā Ḥusayn Boshro'ī, an eminent student in the Shaykhī circle, saying, "O thou who art the first to believe in Me! Verily I say, I am the Bāb, the Gate of God, and thou art the Bābu'l-Bāb, the gate of that Gate. Eighteen souls must, in the beginning, spontaneously and of their own accord, accept Me and recognize the truth of My Revelation."<sup>71</sup> Shortly after this event, seventeen other people became believers and, along with Mullā Ḥusayn Boshro'ī, formed the Letters of the Living (Ḥurūf-i Ḥayy; the numerical value of the word Ḥayy is 18). The Letters of the Living, most of whom were Shaykhīs, as the first disciples of the Bāb were given the task of proclaiming his advent throughout the country. Through the Bāb's writings, which were addressed

to religious and secular leaders,<sup>72</sup> and through the efforts of his disciples, the Bāb's message spread and within only six years reached every corner of Iran, attracted the attention of thousands, and became the main issue of the day.

The 'ulamā, threatened by the new message, the implication of which was nothing short of undermining the traditional order and the authority of the mujtahids, used all their resources to destroy the Bāb and his followers. The state joined the 'ulamā in its efforts. As a result, thousands of Bābī men, women, and children were murdered in the most horrible circumstances. Lord Curzon, in his Persia and the Persian Question, writes: "Tales of magnificent heroism illumine the bloodstained pages of Babi history . . . and the fires of Smithfield did not kindle a nobler courage than has met and defied the more refined torturemongers of Tehran."<sup>73</sup>

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

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

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

asās; among the Nuṣairīs, Salmān al-Fārisi, who was entrusted with the propaganda, is the Bāb. The Druses call by this name the first spiritual minister, who embodies universal reason.<sup>74</sup>

Among the Shī'ā the term Bāb was assigned to Four Gates (al-Abwāb al-Arba'a), four people who claimed to be intermediaries between the Hidden Imām and the believers during the Lesser Occultation.<sup>75</sup> The term is used in almost the same sense in Shaykhī writings. On the basis of Shī'ī Traditions, Shaykh Aḥmad in his Sharḥ al-Ziyāra states that the Prophet Muḥammad--and the Prophet's knowledge--is like a house and that the imāms are like the doors (al-abwāb) to it.<sup>76</sup> Shaykh Aḥmad quotes a famous Tradition on the authority of the Prophet which reads, "I am the city of knowledge and 'Alī is its Gate."<sup>77</sup>

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

1. The knowledge of the oneness of God
2. The knowledge of al-ma'ānī (the meanings)
3. The knowledge of al-abwāb (the gates)
4. The knowledge of al-imām (the imāms)
5. The knowledge of al-arkān (the pillars)
6. The knowledge of al-nuḡabā (the guardians)
7. The knowledge of al-nuḡabā (the helpers)<sup>78</sup>

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

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

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

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

Truth, of the crystal-pure waters of His Revelation . . . ."<sup>85</sup>

The title of "Gate to the Twelfth Imām" was only employed in the very early period of his mission. Other titles such as the "Gate of God," "Remembrance of God,"<sup>86</sup> and "The Point of the Bayān,"<sup>87</sup> however, are used more frequently throughout his works.

Although the Bāb originally claimed to be the "Gate to the Twelfth Imām," later, in his most important work, the Persian Bayān, he claimed to be the Twelfth Imām, the Qā'im, himself.<sup>88</sup> In his Dalā'il al-Sab'<sup>89</sup> he explains the reason for this change:

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

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

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

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

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

The Shaykhīs who believed in the Bāb saw in him the fulfillment of Shaykh Aḥmad's and Siyyid Kāzīm's predictions and, thus, there remained no reason for them to reject him. This group of Shaykhīs, who formed the nucleus of the Bābīs, were among the most learned students of Sayyid Kāzīm. Among the early adherents of the Bāb were such distinguished personalities as Qurrat al-'Ain, Mullā Ḥusayn Boshro'ī, Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī Hashtrudī, and Mullā 'Alī Baraghānī.

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



books and treatises to demonstrate that the advent of the Bāb was in accordance with the Qur'ān, the Islamic Traditions, and particularly with Shaykhī predictions. Their energetic efforts to publicize the claims of the Bāb attracted thousands of Persians to his movement.

The early Bābīs who actively participated in proclaiming the Bāb's mission came from all levels of Iranian society: merchants, peasants, landowners, government employees, and the learned class. The number of Bābīs from each group and their role, in relation to the others, in spreading the new faith requires further study. It is clear, however, that the leadership of the Bābīs in their social organization and efforts to propagate their faith was in the hands of the newly converted 'ulamā, particularly the Shaykhī 'ulamā.

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

In addition, in his Persian Bayān, the Bāb came out

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

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

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

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

A comprehensive and convenient synopsis of the charges leveled against the Bāb is Ḥājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān's Risāla dar Radd-i Bāb-i Murtāb, which he wrote at the request of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh Qājār. In this book, written in 1283/1866, about two decades later than his other works in refutation of the Bāb, Ḥājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān accuses the Bāb of several heresies. In summary, Ḥājī Karīm Khān charges that,

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

5. The Bāb considered himself as the only legitimate person, in whom everyone should believe. He ordered people to Holy War (jihād); he permitted the blood of his enemies to be shed; he requested that the Muslims who did not believe in him be executed.
6. The Bāb stated that the Day of Resurrection had come and that the Return had passed. By this statement he meant that they had occurred with his appearance. (This was the most blatant statement of abrogation of the creed of his society and was an immediate line of demarcation between his followers and the SHĪ'Ī community.)
7. The Bāb claimed that meeting with him was like meeting with God.
8. The Bāb said that the realm of isthmus (barzakh) is the period before the appearance of a new prophet of God. Ḥājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān also states in his book that the Bāb wrote a letter to him in his own handwriting and sent it to him by courier.<sup>97</sup> In the letter, Ḥājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān says, the Bāb solicited his support and requested him to ask the mu'adhdhins to include his name in the adhān.<sup>98</sup> When the courier came, Ḥājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān continues, he argued with him, giving him reasons for being unable to accept the Bāb's request. Then, Ḥājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān says, he sent him back disappointed and miserable.<sup>99</sup>

At the end of his book, Ḥājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān states

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

The opposition of the Shaykhīs of Kermān to the Bāb and his followers did not remain on an intellectual level. It is reported that Mullā Kāẓim b. Yūsuf, one of Muḥammad Karīm Khān's learned followers, became a follower of the Bāb and, in a mosque where Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān and other Shaykhīs were present, expressed his belief in the validity of the Bāb's claim to be the Qā'im. Upon this expression, which was followed by words of praise for the Bāb and his movement, Ḥājj Ghulām 'Alī Khān, the brother of Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān, seized Mullā Kāẓim and beat him so severely that he died a few days later.<sup>101</sup>

The opposition of the Shaykhīs of Tabrīz to the Bāb reflected their strong ties with the political authorities of the province in that period. In contrast to the opposition of the Shaykhīs of Kermān, which was mostly intellectual, their opposition took the form of torturing

the Bāb and his followers and finally of issuing a religious decree for the Bāb's death. When the Bāb was brought from his prison in Chehrīq to Tabrīz for trial, the 'ulamā in charge of the interrogation were Shaykhī leaders: Ḥājj Mullā Maḥmūd Tabrīzī, known as Niẓām al-'Ulamā (d. 1273/1856), Mullā Muḥammad Mamaqānī (d. 1269/1852), and Mīrzā 'Alī Aṣghar Shaykh al-Islām (d. 1278/1861).<sup>102</sup>

Niẓām al-'Ulamā was the head of the court and the teacher of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh. He wrote about the trial, and his account was used by Riqā Qolī Khān Hidāyat in his Rawḍat al-Ṣafā as well as by I'timād al-Saltāna in his al-Mutanabī'In.<sup>103</sup>

Mullā Muḥammad Mamaqānī was a leading Shaykhī authority in Tabrīz and one of those who claimed to be the successor of Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī. His sons later became the leaders of opposition to the Bābīs. Under the pen name of Nayyir,<sup>104</sup> one of his sons, Mīrzā Muḥammad Taqī (d. 1312/1894), wrote a book against the Bābīs entitled Ṣaḥīfat al-Abrār. Written in 1290/1873 and published in 1319/1901,<sup>105</sup> it contains the proceedings of the interrogation of the Bāb.<sup>106</sup>

Mīrzā 'Alī Aṣghar Shaykh al-Islām, another participant in the interrogation, was a Shaykhī leader in Ādharbāyjan. It was he who took the Bāb to his home after the trial and administered a beating to him. Mīrzā 'Alī Aṣghar died in 1278/1861 at the age of ninety-six, but enmity against the Bāb remained in his family and found an expression in a polemic against the Bāb written by his son, Mīrzā Abū

al-Qāsim, entitled Qal' al-Bāb.<sup>107</sup>

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

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

NOTES

1. Hājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kermānī, Hidāyat al-Tālibīn (Kermān: Sa'ādāt, 1380/1960), p. 71.
2. Abū al-Qāsim Ibrāhīmī, Fihrist-i Kutub-i Mashāyikh-i 'Izām, 3d ed., (Kermān: Sa'ādāt, n.d.), p. 116.
3. Muḥammad Bāqir al-Mūsawī al-Iṣbahānī, Rawḍāt al-Jannāt fī Aḥwāl al-'Ulamā wa al-Sādāt, 8 vols. (Tehrān: Ismā'īliyyān, 1390/1970), vol. 1, p. 225.
4. Ibrāhīmī, Fihrist, p. 115.
5. Ibid.
6. Muḥammad 'Alī Mu'allim Ḥabībābādī, Makārim al-Āthār (Iṣfahān: Muḥammadī, 1377/1957), vol. 1, p. 217.
7. Muḥammad Tonekābonī, Qiṣas al-'Ulamā (Tehrān: 'Ilmīya Islāmīya, n.d.), pp. 43-44.
8. Sayyid Kāzim Rashtī, in his Dalīl al-Mutaḥayyirīn, gives a full report on the nature of the dispute. See page 46 ff.
9. Tonekābonī, Qiṣas al-'Ulamā, p. 100. Astarābādī's book, entitled Ḥayāt al-Arwāḥ, was written in 1240/1824. Mīrzā Ḥasan b. 'Alī Gauhar Qarācha Dāghī, an outstanding student of the Shaykhī school, wrote Sharḥ-i Kitāb-i Ḥayāt al-Arwāḥ in 1252/1836 to reject Astarābādī's views.
10. Ibid., p. 44.
11. Ibid., p. 55.
12. For example, the treatise written for Shaykh Muḥammad b. Shaykh Ḥusayn Baḥrānī contains 80 questions. See Ibrāhīmī, Fihrist, p. 342.
13. Sayyid Kāzim, Dalīl al-Mutaḥayyirīn, p. 144.
14. Ibid., pp. 146-168.
15. A. L. M. Nicolas, Essai Sur Le Chéikhisme (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1904), pp. 32-36.
16. Mu'allim Ḥabībābādī, Makārim al-Āthār, pp. 213-217.
17. Muḥammad 'Alī Mudarris, Rayḥānat al-Adab (Tehrān: Khayyām), 3d ed., vol. 2, pp. 308-309.

18. Ibrāhīmī, Fihrist, pp. 288-359.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 286.
20. Mūsawī is quoted in Mudarris, Rayḥānat al-Adab, vol. 2, p. 309.
21. According to Āqā Bozorg al-Ṭehrānī (al-Dharīʿa ilā Ṭaṣānīf al-Shīʿa, 26 vols., [Ṭehrān: Majlis, 1375/1956], vol. 20, p. 55), the complete title of the work is al-Majmūʿ al-Rāʿiq min Azhār al-Ḥadāʿiq. It contains prayers and Traditions on the authority of the Prophet and the imāms and several treatises by different authors on subjects such as religious beliefs, theology, and fiqh. The work was compiled by Sayyid Hibat Allāh b. Abī Muḥammad al-Ḥasan al-Mūsawī in 703/1303.
22. Mashāriq Anwār al-Yaqīn fī Ḥaqāʿiq (kashf) Asrār Amīr al-Muʾminīn, a major work of al-Bursī, written in 773/1371. See al-Dharīʿa, vol. 21, p. 34.
23. Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, Dalīl al-Mutahayyirīn, p. 146.
24. Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, Sharḥ al-Khuṭba al-Tutunjīya (Tabrīz: lithography, 1270/1853), p. 7.
25. ʿAbd al-Bāqī b. Sulaymān b. Aḥmad Afandī al-Mūṣilī was born in 1204/1789 in Mūṣil but spent most of his life in Baghdād. He was a distinguished poet and the author of several books on poetry and biography. He died in 1278/1861 in Baghdād. See Muʿallim Ḥabībābādī, Makārim al-Āthār, pp. 172-173.
26. Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, Dalīl al-Mutahayyirīn, p. 147.
27. A lithograph of this work was published in Tabrīz in 1272/1855.
28. Muʿallim Ḥabībābādī, Makārim al-Āthār, pp. 217-220.
29. Ibrāhīmī, Fihrist, p. 122. Qurrat al-ʿAin, the great Persian poetess and the famous student of Sayyid Kāẓim, in one of her treatises has called him "al-Qatīl" (the killed one). See Mīrzā Asad Allāh Fāḍil Māzandarānī, Ẓuhūr al-Ḥaqq (Ṭehrān: n.p., n.d.), vol. 3, p. 502.
30. Muʿallim Ḥabībābādī, in Makārim al-Āthār, p. 220, gives the phrase غاب بدر الهدى, and Mudarris in Rayḥānat al-Adab, vol. 2, p. 309, gives the phrase غاب نور. The numerical values of both phrases are equal to 1259, the year Sayyid Kāẓim died.

31. Muḥammad maʿṣūm Shīrāzī, known as Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh and Nāyib al-Ṣadr, Ṭarāʿiq al-Ḥaqāʿiq, ed. Muḥammad Jaʿfar Maḥjūb (Ṭehrān: Bārānī, 1346sh), vol. 3, p. 338.
32. Sayyid Kāẓim's will was dictated to Mīrzā Muḥīṭ (Kermānī), his close student and companion. A copy of the will, in manuscript form, is included (ms. no. 4) in the Shaykhī Manuscript Collection in the Near Eastern Collection, Special Collection Department, in the Research Library at the University of California, Los Angeles. The copy, which runs to 15 pages of 14 lines per page, is undated and does not bear the name of the scribe. It will hereafter be referred to as Will.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
34. The Day of Gathering (yaum al-jamʿ) is referred to in the Qurʾān in the following verse: "And that you may give warning on the day of gathering together wherein is no doubt. . . ." (42:7).
35. Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, Will, p. 4.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*, These phrases are derived from the following Quranic references: 2:256; 3:102; 31:22.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
41. Qurrat al-ʿAin states that the Bāb (al-Dhikr al-Akbar) stayed at ʿAtabāt for eleven months--eight months in Karbalā and three months in other cities. While he was in Karbalā he would attend the circle once every two or three days but he would not attend the entire session; he would either come in at the beginning or in the middle or at the end of the session. (Mīrzā Asad Allāh Fāḍil Māzandarānī, Ẓuhūr al-Ḥaqq, p. 529.
42. The question is not the precise definitions and exclusive limits of each term (qua concept) but the fluid overlap and deliberate use of the "gray area" terminology.
43. The Bāb states that those who, through the preparation of Sayyid Kāẓim, believed in him were all the most pious scholars to whose piety and knowledge Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kāẓim had testified. (Mīrzā Asad Allāh Fāḍil Māzandarānī, Ẓuhūr al-Ḥaqq, p. 286).

44. For the biography of Hāj̄j Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kermānī see the Fihrist, pp. 57-73 and Ni‘mat Allāh al-Raḍawī al-Sharīf, Tadhkirat al-Awliyā (Bombay: 1313/1895), pp. 2-95.
45. Muḥammad Himmat, Tārīkh-i Mufaṣṣal-i Kermān (Kermān: Himmat, 1350sh), pp. 252-256.
46. Ni‘mat Allāh al-Raḍawī al-Sharīf, Tadhkirat al-Awliyā, p. 15.
47. Ibrāhīmī, Fihrist, p. 64. Hāj̄j Muḥammad Karīm Khān wrote a short autobiography in Arabic. This work was translated into Persian by Abū al-Qāsim Ibrāhīmī and is included in his biography in the Fihrist, pp. 61-73.
48. Ibrāhīmī, Fihrist, p. 64. Hāj̄j Muḥammad Karīm Khān attended Sayyid Kāzīm's circle for a total of about three years.
49. Ibrāhīmī, Fihrist, pp. 66-67.
50. Muḥammad Himmat, Tārīkh-i Mufaṣṣal-i Kermān, p. 256.
51. For the biography of the Shaykhī leaders of Kermān see the first volume of the Fihrist.
52. Mehdī Bāmdād, Tārīkh-i Rijāl-i Irān (Tehrān: Zawwār, 1351sh), vol. 6, p. 209.
53. Ibid., p. 210. Bāmdād explains that in Shī‘a the term nāṭiqī indicates that there must always be a nāṭiq, i.e., a leader or imām in the community and that the other members must be silent.
54. Ibid., p. 211.
55. Al-Dharī‘a (vol. 4, p. 171), and the Rayḥānat al-Adab (vol. 3, p. 273) state that the author of the Tiryāq-i Fārūq is Muḥammad Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Ḥusaynī al-Shahrestānī. On the second page of the book, the author gives his name as ‘Abd al-Ṣamad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥusaynī al-Māzandarānī. The Tiryāq-i Fārūq was written in 1301/1883 and published in lithography in Mashhad in 1308/1890.
56. Āqā Bozorg al-Ṭehrānī, al-Dharī‘a, vol. 8, p. 113.
57. Bāmdād, Tārīkh-i Rijāl, vol. 6, p. 211. According to Kayvān, however, the uprising during which Mīrzā Muḥammad Bāqir was killed took place in 1314/1896 not in 1315/1897. See ‘Abbās ‘Alī Kayvān, Hāj̄j Nāma (Tehrān: Bosfor, 1308sh), p. 128.

58. Ibid., p. 132.
59. Nuṣrat Allāh Faṭḥī, Zendeqī Nāma-i Shahīd-i Nīknām Thiḡat al-Islām Tabrīzī (Tehrān: Bonyād-i Nikokārī-i Nūriyānī, 1352sh), p. 17.
60. See ibid., chapters 41 and 42.
61. Ibid., p. 22.
62. Ibid., p. 24.
63. Ibid., pp. 45-78. Faṭḥī also published a collection of Thiḡat al-Islām's treatises, letters, cables, and articles, entitled Majmū‘a-i Āthār-i Qalamī-i Shādravān Thiḡat al-Islām-i Shahīd-i Tabrīzī (Tehrān: Anjoman-i Āthār-i Millī, 1354sh).
64. Aḥmad Kasravī, Tārīkh-i Mashrūṭa-i Irān (Tehrān: Amīr Kabīr, 1349sh), p. 133.
65. Faṭḥī, Zendeqī Nāma-i Shahīd, pp. 40-41.
66. Ibid., p. 41.
67. Ibid.
68. Bāmdād, Tārīkh-i Rijāl, vol. 6, p. 41.
69. Shoghi Effendi, trans. and ed., The Dawn-Breakers: Nabīl's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahā’ī Revelation (Wilmette: Bahā’ī Publishing Trust, 1974), p. 72.
70. This is according to Qurrat al-‘Ain. See n. 41.
71. Shoghi Effendi, Dawn-Breakers, p. 44.
72. Several extracts of these addresses are published in the following work: Sayyid ‘Alī Muḥammad the Bāb, Selections from the Writings of the Bāb, trans. Habib Taherzadeh (Haifa: Bahā’ī World Center, 1976), pp. 11-37.
73. George N. Curzon, Persia and the Persian Question (London: Green and Longmans, 1892), vol. 1, p. 501.
74. Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam, 1953 ed., s.v. "Bāb," by C. Huart. For the history of this title and its employment see also, "Note D. The meaning of the Title 'Bāb'" in A Traveller's Narrative, written by ‘Abdu’l-Bahā to illustrate the episode of the Bāb, trans. and ed. with introduction and explanatory notes by Edward

Browne (London: Cambridge University Press, 1891), pp. 226-234.

75. In SHĪ'Ī history the period between the years 260/872-329/939 is the period of the Lesser Occultation. During these sixty-nine years the Imām communicated with his people through four gates: Abū 'Umar 'Uthmān b. Sa'id; Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. 'Uthmān, son of the above; Ḥusayn b. Rūh; and Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Muḥammad Sīmarī.
76. Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī, Sharḥ al-Ziyāra, p. 11.
77. Ibid.
78. Ibid., p. 13.
79. Ibid., p. 15.
80. Mīrzā Asad Allāh Fāḍil Māzandarānī, Ḥuḥūr al-Ḥaqq, p. 512.
81. Ibid., p. 502.
82. Selections from the Writings of the Bāb, p. 51.
83. Browne, Traveller's Narrative, p. 227.
84. Selections from the Writings of the Bāb, p. 44.
85. Ibid., p. 50.
86. Ibid., p. 46.
87. Ibid., p. 80.
88. The Bāb in his Persian Bayān writes, As thou hast heard, at the manifestation of the Nuḳṭa-i-Furḳān [i.e., Muḥammad, who was in his time the "Point of Revelation"] all those who were believers in the Gospel were expecting the promised Aḥmad, and thou hast heard what befell that Sun of Truth during the twenty-three years of his mission, so that he said, "No prophet hath been afflicted as I have been afflicted." Yet all were entreating and craving his appearance, and in the words of Jesus, working for him. Praise be to God that in that day thou wast not! But thou wast in the manifestation of the Nuḳṭa-i-Beyān [i.e., the Bāb, the "Point of Revelation"] when all believers in the Apostle of God were expecting the appearance of the promised Mahdī;

for this tradition is from the Apostle of God, and all, simple and gentle, are agreed therein. Now there is no doubt that the substance of Faith was confined to the Shi'ites, and that the sect of Islām is this same outward sect whereof the adherents call themselves Shi'ites; while men avowedly call Fārs the "Abode of Knowledge": Yet, although the Tree of Truth arose, not one of the people recognized it [even] after perceiving it. The degree of their remoteness is evident, for this sufficeth unto their abasement; yet night and day they exclaim "speed! speed!"

And also,

Consider with due attention, for the matter is very strait, even while it is more spacious than the heavens and the earth and what is between them. For instance, if all those who were expecting [the fulfillment] of the saying of Jesus had been assured of the manifestation of Aḥmad [i.e. Muḥammad], not one would have turned aside from the saying of Jesus. So likewise in the manifestation of the Nuḳṭa-i-Beyān [i.e., the Bāb] if all should be assured that this is that same Mahdī [whose coming was] promised, whom the Apostle of God foretold, not one of the believers in the Ḳur'ān would have turned aside from the saying of the Apostle of God. So likewise in the manifestation of Him whom God shall manifest behold the same thing, for should all be assured that he is that same "He whom God shall manifest" whom the Nuḳṭa-i-Beyān foretold, not one would turn aside.

(Browne, Traveller's Narrative, pp. 293-295. The two passages above are Browne's translation.)

89. Dalā'il al-Sab', one of the Bāb's major works, was written for Mullā 'Abd al-Khāliq Yazdī while the Bāb was in prison at Māko. In it the author gives seven reasons for his claim's validity.
90. Selections from the Writings of the Bāb, p. 119.
91. Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad Bāb, Persian Bayān (lithography: n.d.), pp. 324-326.
92. Ibid., pp. 200-210; pp. 218-219; pp. 306-309; pp. 274-278.
93. Ibid., p. 181.
94. Ibid., pp. 29-30.

95. The Bāb writes, "Say, O people of the world! Do ye dispute with Me about God by virtue of the names which ye and your fathers have adopted for Him at the promptings of the Evil One? God hath indeed sent down this Book unto Me with truth that ye may be enabled to recognize the true names of God, inasmuch as ye have strayed in error far from the Truth. Verily We have taken a covenant from every created thing upon its coming into being concerning the Remembrance of God, and there shall be none to avert the binding command of God for the purification of mankind, as ordained in the Book which is written by the hand of the Bāb."  
(Selections from the Writings of the Bāb, p. 65).
96. The main polemical works of Ḥājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān are as follows: (1) Izhāq al-Bāṭil dar Radd-i Bāb-i Murtāb, written in 1261/1845 and published in Kermān in 1351/1932; (2) Tīr-i Shihāb dar Radd-i Bāb-i Khusrān Ma'āb, written at the request of Muḥammad Sharīf Kermānī in 1262/1846. This work is a part of Majma' al-Rasā'il, no. 1, published in Kermān in 1386/1966; (3) Shihāb-i Thāqib, written in 1265/1848 and published in Kermān in 1353/1934; (4) Risāla-i Radd-i Bāb-i Murtāb, written at the request of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh, in 1283/1866. This work was published in 1384/1964 in Kermān and its translation into Arabic also appeared in the same year. About his attempts to refute the Bāb, Ḥājī Karīm Khān writes, "For a long time from the pulpit (minbar) and in my classes, I showed everyone that this man (the Bāb) was wrong. I wrote many books and sent them to all parts of Iran, Ādharbāyjān, Khorāsān, Arabia, India, and so on, and with the help of God, I prevented a great number of people from falling victim to this plight." (Radd-i Bāb-i Murtāb [Kermān: Sa'ādat, 1384], p. 24. This edition of Radd-i Bāb-i Murtāb along with Risāla-i Tazyyil dar Radd-i Hāshim-i Shāmī was published in one volume.)
97. Ḥājī Karīm Khān Kermānī, Risāla-i Radd-i Bāb-i Murtāb, pp. 27-28, 58.
98. Ibid., p. 27. The Adhān is the "call to prayer" by which a crier (mu'adhdhin) summons the believers to the public prayer.
99. Ibid., pp. 28-58.
100. Ibid., pp. 45-47.
101. Fāḍil Māzandarānī, Zuhūr al-Ḥaqq, pp. 399-400.
102. For a full account of the interrogation of the Bāb see, "Examination of the Bāb at Tabriz" in Shoghi Effendi,

Dawn-Breakers, pp. 309-323; and "The First Examination of the Bāb at Tabriz" in Browne, Traveller's Narrative, pp. 277-290.

103. Bāmdād, Tārīkh-i Rijāl, vol. 4, pp. 59-60.
104. Ibid., vol. 3, pp. 289-290.
105. Āqā Bozorg al-Ṭehrānī, al-Dharī'a, vol. 15, p. 15.
106. Riyāḍ Ṭāhir, Fihrist Taṣānīf al-'Allāma al-Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'i (Karbālā: al-Hā'iriya, n.d.), p. 5.
107. Bāmdād, Tārīkh-i Rijāl, vol. 2, p. 452.



## CHAPTER VI

### Shaykhī Teachings that Paved the Way for The Bāb

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

The Bāb and Bābī historians in their writings represent Shaykh Ahmad and Sayyid Kāẓim as forerunners of the Bāb,<sup>2</sup> divinely inspired persons who prophesied the appearance of the Bāb and prepared their students for the recognition of the expected Qā'im.<sup>3</sup>

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

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

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

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

finality.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

TABLE 2

1	Sunday <u>yaum al-aḥad</u>	life-germ <u>yaum al-nuṭfa</u>	The First Intellect <u>yaum al-ʿaql al-awwal</u>	Existence in the Universe <u>yaum al-wujūd fi al-ʿālam</u>
2	Monday <u>yaum al-ithnayn</u>	clot <u>yaum al-ʿalaqa</u>	The Universal Soul <u>yaum al-nafs al-kullīya</u>	Quiddity <u>yaum al-māhiya</u>

3	Tuesday <u>yaum al-thulathā</u>	morsel of flesh <u>yaum al-muḍgha</u>	The Universal Nature <u>yaum al-ṭabīʿa al-kullīya</u>	Spring <u>yaum faṣl al-rabiʿ</u>
4	Wednesday <u>yaum al-arbiʿā</u>	bones <u>yaum al-ʿiẓām</u>	The Universal Matter <u>yaum al-mādda al-kullīya</u>	Summer <u>yaum faṣl al-ṣayf</u>
5	Thursday <u>yaum al-khamīs</u>	flesh <u>lahm</u>	Subtle <u>yaum al-mithāl</u>	Fall <u>yaum faṣl al-kharif</u>
6	Friday <u>yaum al-jumʿa</u>	Another Creation <u>yaum yanshāu Khalqan Akhar</u>	Body <u>yaum al-jism</u>	Winter <u>yaum faṣl al-shitā</u>

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī (d. 1111/1700), compiler of the Bihār al-Anwār, the lengthiest and most comprehensive collection of Shī'ī Traditions, has denoted the thirteenth volume of this work to Traditions on the Mahdī. These Traditions almost unanimously affirm that the world will not end until a man from the family of the Prophet, in the line of 'Alī and Fāṭima, appears. He will rule according to the

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

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

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

The Shaykhī prophecies are mostly based on the Shī'ī Traditions. Shaykh Ahmad and Sayyid Kāẓim, however, added to the prophecies of the Traditions by elaborating them. Shaykhī prophecies are the most abstruse parts of the

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

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

As in Shī'ī Traditions, the Qā'im is also referred to by other titles, such as Ṣāhib al-Zamān (The Lord of the

Age), Hujjat Allāh (Proof of God), Baqīyat Allāh (The Remnant of God), Dhikr (The Remembrance), and, more commonly, Mahdī (The Divinely Guided One).

Shaykhī prophecies on the Qā'im are of two kinds: prophecies which closely repeat the popular expectations of the Shī'a concerning the coming of the Qā'im and prophecies which are not literally in accordance with popular expectations. In the prophecies of the first kind, the Twelfth Imām is alive and present in the world, but invisible. He is the son of Ḥasan al-'Askarī (d. 260/872), the Eleventh Imām, from the family of the Prophet. The Qā'im, therefore, is identified as the Twelfth Imām. The advent of the Qā'im will be accompanied by the Return of the imāms as well as their enemies. In the year of the arrival of the Qā'im, the following events will occur: there will be a serious famine, heavy rain will fall from the twentieth day of the month of Jumādā to the beginning of Rajab. The Dajjāl, or Antichrist--the False Messiah, who performs miracles and pretends that he is God--will appear in Iṣfahān in the month of Rajab, and the Sufyānī, 'Uthmān b. 'Utba, will appear in Ramla in Wādī Yābis. In the same month of Rajab, the body of 'Alī will be manifested in the disk of the sun and it will be possible for everyone to recognize him. There will be an eclipse of the moon at the end of the month of Ramaḡān. There will also be an eclipse of the sun on the fifth (or the middle) of Ramaḡān. It will be in the early morning of the twenty-third (of Ramaḡān) that Gabriel will

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

On the twenty-fifth of Dhī al-Ḥijja, Nafs al-Zakīya Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan<sup>25</sup> will be killed between the Rukn and the Maḡām.<sup>26</sup> Friday, the tenth of Muḥarram, will be the day of the advent of the Greater Light of God (nūr Allāh al-Akbar), the Lord of the Age (Sāhib al-Zamān), the Qā'im, who will go to the Masjid al-Ḥaram<sup>27</sup> and kill the preacher, and then will enter the Ka'ba. At night he will call upon his followers and 313 of them, from the east and the west, will be assembled around him, and the first believer in the Qā'im will be Gabriel.<sup>28</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

name of the Bāb, 'Alī Muḥammad "علي محمد": (ع=70, ل=30, ي=10, م=40, ح=8, م=40, ر=4).

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

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

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

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



istics of the Second Christ or Imām Ḥusayn. Like the Shaykhī predictions on the Qā'im, these are of two kinds: predictions that almost repeat the popular expectations of the Shī'a and predictions that are peculiar to the Shaykhīs and are not found in Shī'ī works.

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

Of the second kind of predictions, Shaykh Ahmad, in a letter to Sayyid Kāẓim,<sup>43</sup> states, "For every prophecy is a term, and you will come to know, and most certainly you will come to know about it After a Time (Ba'da Ḥīn)."<sup>44</sup> In this statement, the Arabic word, "Ḥīn حين", according to the Abjad system, is equal to 68: (ح =8, ی =10, ن =50).

"After a time" (ba'da ḥīn) means 69, i.e., ḥīn is 68 and after the ḥīn is 69. The Shaykhī view of the term "after a time" (ba'da ḥīn) is based upon Imām Ṣādiq's interpretation of the Quranic verse: "And most certainly you will come to know about it after a time (ba'da ḥīnin)." (38:88) Imām Ṣādiq says that the Quranic term "ba'da ḥīn" refers to the year in which the Qā'im will appear.<sup>45</sup>

It was in the year 69 (1269/1852) that Bahā'u'llāh, while in the prison of Siyāh Chāl in Tehrān, claimed to have received his revelation. Although the term Qā'im was understood by the Bābīs to refer to the Bāb and not to Bahā'u'llāh, Imām Ṣādiq says that the Qā'im will appear in the year 69. It seems, therefore, that the term Qā'im in this Tradition has been used by the Shaykhīs who became Bābīs as a general term referring to the "one who will rise," which could be a reference to Bahā'u'llāh as well as to the Bāb.

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

Cryptic language in the introductory pages of Sayyid Kāẓim's major book, Sharḥ al-Qaṣīda,<sup>47</sup> was understood later by the Bābīs as a reference to the name of Bahā'u'llāh.

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

written by Mullā Muḥammad 'Alī Baraghānī,<sup>48</sup> the brother of the famous Mullā Muḥammad Taqī, known as Shahīd-i Thālith, who issued the takfīr against Shaykh Aḥmad. This expectation was based primarily on the Shaykhī prophecies which the Bāb reaffirmed in his letter to Muḥammad Shāh as well as on numerous other occasions in his writings, particularly in his major work the Persian Bayān.<sup>49</sup> In these instances, the Bāb refers to the year 9 after the commencement of his ministry, that is, 1269/1852, as the year in which the Second Christ would appear.<sup>50</sup> The year 9 in the Bāb's writings corresponds with the "ba'da hīn" in Shaykh Aḥmad's works; both refer to 1269/1852, the year in which Bahā'u'llāh received his first revelation in the prison of the Siyāh Chāl.

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

fearlessly the principles of the new movement.

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

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

NOTES

1. For the names of some of the Shaykhī scholars who became Bābīs see Mehdī Bāmdād, Tārīkh-i Rijāl-i Iran (Tehrān: Zawwār, 1351sh), vol. 2, ---. 471-472.
2. Nabīl Zarandī, one of the earliest historians of the Bābī movement, devoted the first two chapters of his history to the biographies of Shaykh Ahmad Aḥsā'ī and Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, showing how through their teachings Shaykh Ahmad and Sayyid Kāẓim prepared their students for the acceptance of the Bāb. Nabīl opens his first chapter thus: "At a time when the shining reality of the Faith of Muḥammad had been obscured by the ignorance, the fanaticism, and perversity of the contending sects into which it had fallen, there appeared above the horizon of the East that luminous Star of Divine guidance, Shaykh Ahmad-i-Aḥsā'ī. . . . Aglow with zeal and conscious of the sublimity of his calling, he vehemently appealed not only to Shī'ah Islam but to all the followers of Muḥammad throughout the East, to awaken from the slumber of negligence and to prepare the way for Him who must needs be made manifest in the fulness of time, whose light alone could dissipate the mists of prejudice and ignorance which had enveloped that Faith." Shoghi Effendi, trans. and ed., The Dawn-Breakers: Nabīl's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahā'ī Revelation (Wilmette: Bahā'ī Publishing Trust, 1974), pp. 1-2. For the Bāb and the Bābīs, Shaykh Ahmad and Sayyid Kāẓim resembled John the Baptist, who prophesied the coming of Jesus.
3. Bausani writes, "Before his [Sayyid Kāẓim's] death (1259/1843) he had sent disciples to all parts of Persia in search of the awaited Mahdī, the Ṣāhib al-Zamān, who, according to his prophecies, would not be long before manifesting himself." (Encyclopaedia of Islam, new ed., s.v. "Bāb").
4. The writings of Shaykh Ahmad and Sayyid Kāẓim on the Qā'im are too numerous to list in full. For a list of the main passages, sections, and chapters dealing with this subject and related issues see Appendix A.
5. The abjad system is a title for an arithmetical arrangement in which each letter of the alphabet has a numerical value from one to one thousand. For a list of the letters with their equivalent numerical values see Appendix B.
6. Shaykh Ahmad Aḥsā'ī, Jawāmi' al-Kilam, vol. 1, part 2,

- p. 103. Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī elaborates the idea in his Sharḥ al-Khuṭba al-Tutunjiya, p. 180.
7. Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, Uṣūl-i 'Aqā'id, p. 157.
8. Ibid., p. 157.
9. Ibid.
10. Shaykh Ahmad Aḥsā'ī, Jawāmi' al-Kilam, vol. 1, part 2, p. 153.
11. Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, Uṣūl-i 'Aqā'id, p. 158.
12. This is based on the Traditions on the authority of the Shī'ī Imāms. Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī quotes several of them in his Bihār al-Anwār (Tehrān: al-Maktabat al-Islāmiya, 1384/1964), vol. 13, part 51, pp. 44-64.
13. See chapter 5, n. 32.
14. The Qur'ān reads, "And that you may give warning of the day of gathering together wherein is no doubt. . . ." (42:7).
15. For the conception of the Mahdī see "The Expected Deliverer" in John Alden Williams, ed., Themes of Islamic Civilization (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 191-251. The excerpts of the primary sources in translation are given in those pages.
16. According to Shī'ī sources, the Twelfth Imām, Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. 'Alī al-'Askarī, went into occultation in 260/872. For sixty-nine years, until 329/939, a period referred to as the Lesser Occultation, he communicated with his believers through the Four Gates. In 329/939, with the death of the Fourth Gate, the period known as the Greater Occultation began. During this period, which will last as long as God wills, the Imām has no temporal communication with his followers. One day, however, God will grant him permission to manifest himself again.
17. Majlisī, Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 13, part 51, p. 30. Volume 13 of Bihār al-Anwār in al-Maktabat al-Islāmiya edition appeared in three parts: 51, 52, and 53.
18. Ibid., p. 36.
19. Ibid., p. 43.
20. Ibid., p. 30.

21. Williams, Themes of Islamic Civilization, p. 207.
22. Majlisī, Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 13, part 51, pp. 44-64.
23. Shoghi Effendi, Dawn-Breakers, pp. 27-28.
24. Shaykh Ahmad Aḥsā'ī, Ḥayāt al-Nafs, trans. Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī (Tabriz: Dār al-Ṭubā'at al-Riḍā'ī, 1377/1957), p. 90.
25. Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Ḥasan b. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, known as Nafs al-Zakīya, originally from Medina, was one of the companions of Imām Ṣādiq. He claimed to be an Imām and was killed in 145/762.
26. The Rukn is the corner on the cubic-shaped Ka'ba in which the Black Stone is located. The Maḡām is a separate structure, Maḡām Ibrāhīm, to the north of the Ka'ba.
27. The Sacred Mosque (Masjid al-Ḥarām) is in Mecca and contains the Ka'ba.
28. Shaykh Ahmad Aḥsā'ī, Ḥayāt al-Nafs, p. 91.
29. The Sufyānī, according to the Shī'ī sources, is an ugly man from the descendants of Yazīd b. Mu'āwiya who will arise to fight with the Mahdī. See Encyclopaedia of Islam, first ed., by D. B. Macdonald, s.v. "al-Mahdī".
30. Shaykh Ahmad Aḥsā'ī, Ḥayāt al-Nafs, p. 92.
31. Ibid.
32. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Ishrāq Khāvarī, Rahīq-i Makhtūm (Tehrān: Mu'assisa-i Millī-i Maṭbū'āt-i Amrī, 1973), vol. 1, pp. 679-680.
33. Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī, Sharḥ al-Qaṣīda, p. 298.
34. Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī, Collection of Treatises, p. 272 (see chapter 4, n. 20).
35. Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī, Sharḥ al-Qaṣīda, p. 2.
36. Mīrzā Asad Allāh Fāḍil Māzandarānī, Ḥuhūr al-Ḥaqq (Tehrān: n.d.), vol. 3, p. 402.
37. Ibid., p. 509.
38. Shoghi Effendi, Dawn-Breakers, p. 14.
39. Ibid., pp. 25, 38.

40. Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī., Usūl-i 'Aqā'id, p. 207.
41. Shīmr b. Dhi al-Jawshan was the head of Yazīd's army, which fought with Ḥusayn b. 'Alī. Shīmr carried the head of Ḥusayn to Yazīd in Damascus. He was killed fighting the army of Mukhtār b. Abū 'Ubaydah Thaqāfī. Yazīd b. Mu'āwiya b. Abī Sufyān was the second Caliph of the Umayyad Dynasty, who sent his army to fight with Ḥusayn b. 'Alī. He died in 64/683 at the age of 38.
42. Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī, Usūl-i 'Aqā'id, p. 208.
43. Ibrāhīmī, Fihrist, pp. 120-122.
44. Ibid., p. 122.
45. Majlisī, Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 13, part 51, p. 62.
46. Selections from the Writings of the Bāb, p. 19.
47. Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī, Sharḥ al-Qaṣīda, p. 2.
48. Mīrzā Asad Allāh Fāḍil Māzandarānī, Ḥuhūr al-Ḥaqq, pp. 309-310.
49. The Bāb's prophesies of Bahā'u'llāh are very often made under the title "Him Whom God Shall Manifest." See "Note V. Texts from the Persian Beyan Illustrating the Bāb's view of His Relation to 'Him Whom God Shall Manifest'" in Browne, Traveller's Narrative, pp. 347-349.
50. The Bāb writes, "Today the Bayān is in the stage of seed; at the beginning of the manifestation of Him Whom God Shall make manifest its ultimate perfection will become apparent." "Ere nine will have elapsed from the inception of this Cause the realities of the created things will not be made manifest. All that thou hast as yet seen is but the stage from the moist-germ until We clothed it with flesh. Be patient until thou beholdest a new creation. Say: Blessed, therefore, be God, the Most Excellent of Makers!" Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By [Wilmette: Bahā'ī Publishing Trust, 1970], p. 98).

The Relationship of Shaykhī Doctrines  
to the Religious Thought of the Bāb

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

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

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

The most famous opponents of Shaykh Aḥmad during his lifetime were the eminent Uṣūlī 'ulamā of Ātabāt and Iran, including Mullā Muḥammad Ja'far Astarābādī,<sup>3</sup> Mullā Āqā Darbandī, Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn Najaffī,<sup>4</sup> and Sayyid Ibrāhīm

Qazvīnī. A leading figure in the intellectual opposition to Shaykh Aḥmad, and to the Shaykhīs in general, was 'Abd al-Ṣamad b. 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥusaynī al-Māzandarānī,<sup>5</sup> who was born in 1255/1839 in Kermānshāh. His mother was the daughter of Sayyid Aḥmad b. Muḥammad 'Alī Kermānshāhī, a well-known Uṣūlī scholar.<sup>6</sup> A typical opponent of the Shaykhīs, Ḥusaynī is important because he not only criticized the views of Shaykh Aḥmad, but also those of Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī and Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kermānī.

To protect the Sharī'a, he wrote three polemical works refuting Shaykhī ideology. The first was al-Marāṣid 'alā Sharḥ al-Fawā'id, which was written to refute the Sharḥ al-Fawā'id of Shaykh Aḥmad. The second was the Tanbīh al-Anām, written in 1293/1876 to refute Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān's best known work, the Irshād al-'Awām.<sup>7</sup> In the Tanbih, Ḥusaynī levels one hundred charges against Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khan's views as expressed in his Irshād.<sup>8</sup> The third work of Ḥusaynī which deserves attention is the Tiryāq-i Fārūq, written in 1301/1883. The Tiryāq is a convenient synopsis of the most important charges that Shī'ī scholars have leveled against the Shaykhīs. Unlike the other two polemical books by Ḥusaynī, which were written to criticize specific Shaykhī works, the Tiryāq attacks the entire Shaykhī ideology, and, since it was written after them, it is more comprehensive.

In his book, Ḥusaynī criticizes the most important works of Shaykh Aḥmad, Sayyid Kāẓim, and Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm

Khān. His main sources are the Sharḥ al-Ziyāra and the Sharḥ al-Fawā'id of Shaykh Aḥmad, Sharḥ al-Khuṭba al-Tutunjiya of Sayyid Kāẓim, and the Irshād al-'Awām of Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān.

To demonstrate the innovations of the Shaykhīs, Ḥusaynī frequently refers to the works of several leading Shī'ī authorities such as Muffīd, Ṣadūq, 'Allāma-i Ḥilliī, and Majlisī. Ḥusaynī contends that the original Shī'ī ideology is expressed in the works of these scholars, and that the Shaykhī doctrines which contradict this ideology are innovations.

In the Tiryāq, Ḥusaynī enumerates forty-three ideological differences between the Shaykhīs and the Shī'a. The differences can be summarized under three main headings: the imāms, ontology, and eschatology.

Regarding the imāms, Ḥusaynī states that the Shaykhīs differ from the Shī'a by maintaining that:

1. The imāms are the Four Causes: the actional cause ('illat-i fā'ilī), the material cause ('illat-i māddī), the formal cause ('illat-i ṣūrī), and the final cause ('illat-i Ghā'ī)<sup>9</sup>
2. The imāms' knowledge is inspired (ḥuḍūrī) knowledge, derived from the presence of God<sup>10</sup>
3. The imāms are lords, and the people are their slaves<sup>11</sup>
4. The imāms' physical bodies do not crumble to dust<sup>12</sup>

Ḥusaynī's conclusions with regard to the Shaykhīs' view of the imāms is that the Shaykhīs have exaggerated the

position of the imāms, and, therefore, they are infidels just like the Mufawwiḍa and the Ghālīya.<sup>13</sup>

Regarding ontology, Ḥusaynī states that the Shaykhīs differ from the Shī'ā by maintaining that:

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

Regarding eschatology, Ḥusaynī states that the Shaykhīs differ from the Shī'ā by maintaining that:

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

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

Ḥusaynī accuses the Shaykhīs of misinterpreting several verses of the Qur'ān. He mentions cases such as the Shaykhī belief that Mount Sinai is a symbol for the heart of a believer,<sup>25</sup> and that the "manifestation of the light upon the Mountain"<sup>26</sup> stands for the manifestation of the light of Moses' essence upon his heart. The Shaykhīs, Ḥusaynī states, believe that the "Barrier of Dhulqarnayn"<sup>27</sup> stands for "dissimulation" (taqīya),<sup>28</sup> and that Gog and Magog in the Qur'ān<sup>29</sup> have an allegorical meaning and refer to the enemies of Shī'ā.<sup>30</sup> In another case, Ḥusaynī states that by "Children of Israel" (banī Isrā'īl),<sup>31</sup> the Shaykhīs mean the Prophet and his children, because, according to the Shaykhīs, Isrā'īl literally means the Slave of God ('Abd Allāh) and 'Abd Allāh was the name of the Prophet's father.<sup>32</sup>

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

The opposition of Shī'ī 'ulamā to the Shaykhīs did not, however, remain on an intellectual level. In several cities serious clashes occurred between the Shī'ā and the Shaykhīs during which members of both parties were killed and property was destroyed. One such clash occurred when Ḥājj Mīrzā Aḥmad Khoeī of Tabrīz,<sup>34</sup> a leading mujtahid of Ādharbāyjān, issued a takfīr against the Shaykhīs of that city. A massive uprising against the Shaykhīs followed, in

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

In another clash, in 1314/1896, the Uṣūlīs of Hamadān attacked and burned Shaykhī houses and killed Mīrzā Muḥammad Bāqir Hamadānī, the leader of the Shaykhīs of Hamadān, as well as a certain Mīrzā Muḥammad, a distinguished Shaykhī of that city.<sup>36</sup>

The serious intellectual opposition of the Uṣūlī 'ulamā and their attacks against the Shaykhīs prevented the Shaykhīs from gaining a following or even considerable recognition in Persian society.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



shifted the attention of his followers to the imāms. Shaykh Ahmad's view was accepted by the Bāb and resulted in the complete elimination of the clergy in the Bābī religious system.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Like Shaykh Ahmad, the Bāb compares the successive appearance of the prophets and their increasing perfection

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

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

And also:

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

He also states that

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Bāb writes:

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

Elsewhere he writes:

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

In the Bāb's writings paradise and hell are given

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

Shaykh Ahmad regarded Resurrection as the day of the advent of the Qā'im. Although he also interpreted Resurrection in accordance with the traditional belief of the Shī'a, the Bāb only interprets it as the day of the appearance of a new prophet. This interpretation is radically different from what the Shī'a understand in a purely material sense. The Bāb's most comprehensive explanation of his views on the Resurrection occurs in his main book, the Persian Bayān. It reads,

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

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

Later in the same chapter, he continues,

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

And elsewhere in the same book he writes,

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

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

NOTES

1. Mudarris, in his Rayhānat al-Adab ([Tehrān: Khayyām, 1346sh], vol. 1, p. 81), states that when Shaykh Ahmad's works and approach (maslak) became widely known, he became subject to the curses and censure of the people. They changed their attitude toward him and even his son, Shaykh Muhammad, openly rose against him. Then, Mudarris gives the names of the most distinguished 'ulamā who opposed Shaykh Ahmad, namely, Muhammad Ḥasan (the author of Jawāhir al-Kalām, Āqā Sayyid Ibrāhīm (Qazvinī) (the author of Dawābiṭ), Sharīf al-'Ulamā, and Muhammad Ḥusayn (the author of Fuṣūl). Mudarris continues that the majority of the theologians (fuqahā) of the period did not decline to curse him; even the divine philosopher, Ḥājj Mullā 'Alī Nūrī, in spite of his respect for the Shaykh, denied his scholarship (faḍl), and Khānsārī, also, cursed him, in his Rawḍāt al-Jannāt, in which he wrote the biography of Shaykh Rajab Bursī.  
Ḥusaynī, in his Tiryāq-i Fārūq ([Mashhad: lithograph, 1308/1890], p. 26), says that because Shaykh Ahmad regarded the imāms as the Four Causes (see below) a group of 'ulamā rejected him. Then, Ḥusaynī gives several names as examples, namely, Sayyid Maḥdī b. 'Alī Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Mullā (Muhammad) Taqī (known as Shahīd-i Thāliṭh), Mullā (Muhammad) Ja'far Astarābādī, and Mullā Āqā Darbandī. As demonstrated previously, the opposition to Shaykh Ahmad dates back to 1239 or 40/1824 when Ḥājj Muhammad Taqī Baraghānī (Shahīd-i Thāliṭh) issued a takfīr against him. Then, at the time of Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī, the takfīr of Sayyid Maḥdī Ṭabāṭabā'ī was issued. This was followed by a series of attacks from several religious leaders whose names appear above.
2. The polemical works against the Shaykhīs are too numerous to be fully listed here. Al-Ṭehrānī, in his al-Dharī'a ilā Taṣānif al-Shī'a (26 vols., [Tehrān: Majlis, 1375/1956], vol. 10, pp. 182, 203) describes several of them. Below, a typical polemical work, the Tiryāq-i Fārūq, will be closely examined.
3. Mullā Muhammad Ja'far Astarābādī was one of the participants in the interrogation of Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī (see chapter 5). He wrote the Ḥayāt al-Arwāh, a polemical work against the Shaykhīs, in 1240/1824, apparently the earliest one (See chapter 5, n. 9).
4. Shaykh Muhammad Ḥasan Najafī was the author of Jawāhir al-Kalām, the most comprehensive work of jurisprudence in the period.

5. The name is also recorded as Muhammad Ḥusayn b. Muhammad 'Alī al-Ḥusaynī al-Shahrestānī (see chapter 5, n. 55).
6. 'Alī Davvānī, Ostād-i Kull, Āqā Muhammad Bāqir b. Muhammad Akmal Ma'rūf bi Waḥīd Behbahānī (qom: Dār al-'Ilm, 1378/1958), p. 463.
7. Irshād al-'Awām is a major work of Ḥājj Muhammad Karīm Khān Kermānī on theology written in Persian in about 1263-65/1846-48.
8. Āqā Bozorg al-Ṭehrānī, al-Dharī'a, vol. 4, p. 441.
9. Ḥusaynī has a lengthy discussion on this point which runs to 52 pages (pp. 6-58). He gives the Shaykhī doctrines on the subject and then quotes several statements from Mufīd, 'Allama Hillī, Majlisī and Sayyid Murtaḍā to show that Shaykhī doctrines contradict these thinkers.
10. Ḥusaynī, Tiryāq-i Fārūq, p. 59.
11. Ibid., p. 179.
12. Ibid., p. 193.
13. Ḥusaynī quotes Mufīd who quotes Ṣadūq that, "In our belief the Ghulāt and the Mufawwiḍa are infidels and are worse than the Jews, Christians, Majūs, Qadariya, Ḥarūriya, and Ḥarbiya, or any other group of innovators with misleading illusions." Then Mufīd elaborates Ṣadūq's statement above in the following words, "The Ghulāt are those who have relatee 'Alī and his descendants, the imāms, to God and prophethood, and have described their religious and secular virtues to an extreme. They are infidels whom the Amīr al-Mu'minīn ('Alī) ordered to be killed and burned; the imāms also regarded them as infidels who have left Islam. The Mufawwiḍa were a branch of the Ghulāt, but they believed that the imāms are noneternal and created, and denied that they are eternal. In spite of this, the Mufawwiḍa regard the imāms as the creators and the distributors of sustenance (rizq). The Mufawwiḍa believe that God only created the imāms and He delegated (tafwīd) them to create the whole world and every thing and every action in it." (Tiryāq-i Fārūq, pp. 44-45).
14. Ḥusaynī, Tiryāq-i Fārūq, p. 151.
15. Ibid., p. 154.

16. Ibid., p. 158.
17. Ibid., pp. 164-165.
18. Ibid., p. 119.
19. Ibid., p. 169.
20. Ibid., p. 170.
21. Ibid., p. 196.
22. Ibid., p. 174.
23. Ibid., p. 182.
24. Ibid., pp. 200-201.
25. The Qur'ān reads, "And a tree that grows out of Mount Sinai which produces oil and a condiment for those who eat" (23:20). And also it reads, "Consider the fig and the olive, and Mount Sinai" (95:1-2).
26. The Qur'ān reads, "And when Moses came at Our appointed time and his Lord spoke to him, he said: My Lord! show me (Thyself), so that I may look upon Thee. He said: You cannot (bear to) see Me, but look at the mountain, if it remains firm in its place, then will you see Me; but when his Lord manifested His glory to the mountain He made it crumble and Moses fell down in swoon: then when he recovered, he said: Glory be to Thee, I turn to Thee, and I am the first of the believers." (7:143).
27. The Qur'ān reads, "They said: O Zulqarnain! surely Gog and Magog make mischief in the land. Shall we then pay you a tribute or condition that you should raise a barrier between us and them." (18:94).
28. "'Guarding oneself.' A Shi'ah doctrine. A pious fraud whereby the Shi'ah Muslim believes he is justified in either smoothing down or in denying the peculiarities of his religious belief, in order to save himself from religious persecution. A Shi'ah can, therefore, pass himself off as a Sunni to escape persecution. . . ." (Thomas Patrick Hughes, Dictionary of Islam (New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Co., 1976, [first ed. 1885]), p. 628.
29. Mention of Gog and Magog is made in two places in the Qur'ān; 21:96 and 18:94. The latter reference has to do with the discussion (Quoted in n. 27 above).
30. Ḥusaynī, Tiryāq-i Fārūq, p. 202.
31. Ibid., p. 203.
32. Ḥusaynī regarded the "Āl Muḥammad" the descendents of 'Abd Allāh rather than the Prophet Muḥammad.
33. Ḥusaynī, Tiryāq-i Fārūq, p. 214.
34. According to Mehdī Bāmdād, some people believe that the family of Mīrzā Aḥmad were from Mughān and not from Khoy (Sharḥ-i Ḥāl-i Rijāl-i Irān [Tehrān: Zawwār, 1347 sh], vol. 1, p. 100).
35. Ibid., p. 100.
36. 'Abbās 'Alī Kayvān, Hajj Nāma (Tehrān: Bosfor, 1308sh), p. 128 (see chapter 5, n. 57).
37. The Bāb writes, "Since thou hast faithfully obeyed the true religion of God in the past, it behooveth thee to follow His true religion hereafter, inasmuch as every religion proceedeth from God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.  
He Who hath revealed the Qur'ān unto Muḥammad, the Apostle of God, ordaining in the Faith of Islām that which was pleasing unto Him, hath likewise revealed the Bayān, in the manner ye have been promised, unto Him. Who is your Qā'im [He Who ariseth], your Guide, your Mihdī [One Who is guided], your Lord, Him Whom ye acclaim as the manifestation of God's most excellent titles." (Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad, The Bāb, Selections from the Writings of the Bāb, trans. Habib Taherzadeh (Haifa: Bahā'ī World Centre, 1976), p. 139.
38. The Bāb writes, "God hath indeed sent down this Book unto Me with Truth that ye may be enabled to recognize the true names of God, inasmuch as ye have strayed in error far from the Truth." (Ibid., p. 65).
39. The Bāb writes, "O ye concourse of the believers! Utter not words of denial against Me once the Truth is made manifest, for indeed the mandate of the Bāb hath befittingly been proclaimed unto you in the Qur'ān aforetime. I swear by your Lord, this Book is verily the same Qur'ān which was sent down in the past." (Ibid., p. 67).
40. Professor Bausani suggests that, "The metaphysics of the Bāb is similar in certain ways to that of the Ismā'īlīs" (Encyclopaedia of Islam, new ed., s.v. "Bāb"). Although this statement is correct, the similarities between the Shaykhīs and the Bābīs are even greater in

respect to the Bāb's approach, terminology, and his metaphysics. This matter still requires further investigation.

41. See Chapter 6, n. 16.
42. Selections from the Writings of the Bāb, pp. 123-124.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 89.
44. Sayyid 'Ali Muḥammad, the Bāb, Persian Bayān (lithography: n.d., n.p.), p. 195.
45. Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest (man yuḏhiruhu Allāh) is the title for the "expected one" in the works of the Bāb. See "Note V. 'Texts From the Persian Bayān Concerning the High Estate of Him Whom God Shall Manifest'" in Browne, A Traveller's Narrative (see chapter 5, n. 74), pp. 347-349.
46. Selections from the Writings of the Bāb, p. 104.
47. Persian Bayān, p. 130.
48. Selections from the Writings of the Bāb, pp. 105-106.
49. Persian Bayān, pp. 95-96, 98, 156.
50. *Ibid.*, pp. 235, 281.
51. Selections from the Writings of the Bāb, p. 89.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 125.
54. Professor Bausani, in his article "Bāb" (Encyclopaedia of Islam, new ed.), considers the contents of the Bayān under four fundamental points. In describing the second one he writes, "The spiritualistic interpretation of the eschatological terms which appear in the Qur'ān and other sacred works, such as 'Paradise', 'Hell', 'Death', 'Resurrection', 'Return', 'Judgement', 'Bridge' (Ṣirāt), 'Hour', etc., all of which allude not only to the end of the physical world but also to that of the prophetic cycle. From certain passages it seems that it must be understood that the true world being that of the spirit, of which the material world is nothing but an exteriorisation, God effectively destroys the world at the end of each prophetic cycle in order to re-create it by the Word of the subsequent prophet; the creative worth of the World is given great importance in the Bayān."
55. Selections from the Writings of the Bāb, p. 111.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
58. Persian Bayān, p. 81.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 167.
60. Selections from the Writings of the Bāb, p. 79.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
62. Persian Bayān, pp. 29-30.
63. *Ibid.*, pp. 42, 50, 96.
64. *Ibid.*, pp. 43, 46.
65. *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 24.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
67. The phrase "the Tree of divine Reality" (shajara-i ḥaqīqat) is used for any prophet of God.
68. Selections from the Writings of the Bāb, pp. 106-107.
69. *Ibid.*, p. 108. The phrase "the Primal Tree" (shajara-i awalīya) is used for any prophet of God.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

## CONCLUSION

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

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

attack by some of the eminent Shī'ī 'ulamā. Although in his ontological doctrines, Shaykh Aḥmad opposed some of his predecessors, such as Ibn al-'Arabī, Mullā Ṣadrā, and Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī, he nevertheless was influenced by them and, particularly through Mullā Ṣadrā, by Ibn Sīnā. Shaykh Aḥmad's doctrines on the philosophical questions of creation, God's will, and His relationship with the universe manifest obvious similarities to those of the Ismā'īlīs. Shaykh Aḥmad's understanding of the position of the imāms brings him close to the Ghālīs and the Mufawwiḍa, while terminology and interpretation of the subtle body are reminiscent of Shihāb al-Dīn Sohrawardī and other Illuminists. His piety and detachment from the material affairs of daily life, his inspiration from the imāms in his dreams, and the love and annihilation of the will of the imāms, of which he speaks throughout his works, characterize him as a Ṣūfī, but, unlike other Ṣūfīs, he rejects the possibility of union with God.

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



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

Shaykh Aḥmad's original contribution was his synthesis of the two main schools of Shī'ī thought in the first half of the nineteenth century--the Akhbārī and the Uṣūlī. Neither the dogmatic speculations of the Akhbārīs, nor the scholastic discussions of the Uṣūlīs satisfied him; therefore, he took a position between these two groups.

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

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

new perspective, but its source was firmly grounded within the Shī'ī framework and was regarded by others as the Shaykhī school of thought within Shī'ī Islam.

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

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

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

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

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

## APPENDIX A

Writings of Shaykh Ahmad and Sayyid Kāzīm on the Qā'im

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

The Works of Shaykh Ahmad Aḥsā'ī

1. Risāla-i Ja'farīya, written for Mīrzā Ja'far Nawwab. Question 7 (p. 222)
2. Risāla-i 'Ismat wa Raj'at, written for Prince Muḥammad 'Alī Mīrzā (p. 242)
3. Fā'ida, written for Shaykh Mūsā b. Muḥammad Ṣā'igh (p. 242)
4. Risāla-i Mūsawīya, written for Shaykh Mūsā Baḥrānī (p. 244)
5. Khuṭba, a prayer of supplication for the Qā'im (p. 246)
6. Khuṭba, which contains a prayer of supplication for the Qā'im (p. 245)
7. Risāla, written for Sayyid Ḥusayn b. 'Abd al-Qāhir. Question 2 (p. 259)
8. Risāla-i Rashtīya, written for Mullā 'Alī b. Mīrzā Jān Rashtī. Questions 12 and 28 (p. 260)
9. Risāla-i Ṣālihiya, written for Shaykh Ṣāliḥ b. Ṭawq. Question 16 (p. 262)
10. Risāla-i Qaṭīfiya, written for Shaykh Ahmad b. Shaykh Ṣāliḥ Qaṭīfī. Questions 39, 40 and 41 (p. 272)
11. Risāla-i Qaṭīfiya (another work composed for the above person). Question 6 (p. 279)

The Works of Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī

His two main works, Sharḥ al-Qaṣīda al-lāmīya (Tabrīz: lithography, 1272/1855) and Sharḥ al-Khuṭba al-ṭutunjiya (Tabrīz: lithography 1270/1853) are the major sources for the questions on the Qā'im. His other works on the subject are as follows:

1. Risāla, written for Shaykh Muḥammad b. Shaykh 'Abd 'Alī

Āl 'Abd al-Jabbār Qatīfī (p. 314)

APPENDIX B

2. Risāla, written for Ḥājj Makkī b. Ḥājj 'Abd Allāh Baḥrānī. Question 2 (p. 315)
3. Risāla, written for Shaykh Muḥammad b. Shaykh Ḥusayn Baḥrānī. Questions 8 and 9 (p. 342)
4. Risāla, written for Mīrzā Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Tabrīzī. Questions 1 and 2 (p. 348)
5. Risāla, written for an unknown questioner. Question 3 (p. 349)
6. Risāla, written to answer several questions that he received from Iṣfahān. Question 3 (p. 353)
7. Risāla, written for an unknown questioner. Question 2 (p. 359)

The Abjad System

List of Letters and Their Numerical Values

ا	1	ی	10	ق	100
ب	2	ك	20	ر	200
ج	3	ل	30	ش	300
د	4	م	40	ت	400
ه	5	ن	50	ث	500
و	6	س	60	خ	600
ز	7	ع	70	ذ	700
ح	8	ف	80	ض	800
ط	9	ص	90	ظ	900
				غ	1000

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