

Article

The *mi'rāj* in Select Shaykhī, Bābī, and Bahā'ī Texts

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Abstract: The *mi'rāj*, or ascension of the Prophet Muhammad to heaven, has received a great deal of attention on the part of Islamic scholars and writers, who expanded upon a short Qur'anic passage and communicated their understanding of this episode. Nineteenth century religious leaders associated with the the Shaykhī, Bābī, and Bahā'ī movements continued the practice of commenting on the *mi'rāj*. Rather than communicating fixed ideas about the meaning of the *mi'rāj*, their writings reflect the contexts in which they were composed.

Keywords: *mi'rāj*; Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī; Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī; the Bāb; Bahā'u'llāh; Karīm Khān Kirmāni

In the 19th century, Persian religious leaders associated with the Shaykhī, Bābī, and Bahā'ī movements commented on the *mi'rāj*, or the ascension of the Prophet Muhammad to heaven, placing particular attention to the question of whether or not the ascension was a spiritual or physical event, adding their understandings to an already diverse landscape of interpretation. The purpose of this paper is to examine several texts from the Shaykhī, Bābī and Bahā'ī religious traditions in order to gain a better understanding of the similarities, differences, and inter-connectedness of attitudes reflected in these religious texts regarding the *mi'rāj*. In order to establish the relationship between these connected writings, the paper employs a methodology of close and careful textual analysis of specific works. While considerable scholarship exists on the *mi'rāj* throughout the Islamic centuries, very little research exists on this topic within a Shaykhī, Bābī and Bahā'ī studies context. What does exist is referenced throughout this essay. The paper will demonstrate that founders and leaders of these traditions, rather than adhering to a fixed and unchanging perspective regarding the Prophet's bodily ascension in the *mi'rāj*, held nuanced positions that reflected the context in which they wrote.

The episode of the *mi'rāj* and the *isrā'*, or night journey, that preceded it, are associated with certain Qur'anic verses, in particular, 17:1: "Glory be to Him who transported His servant by night from the sacred place of prayer (*al-masjid al-ḥarām*) to the furthest place of prayer (*al-masjid al-aqsā*) upon which We have sent down our blessing, that we might show him some of our signs" (Sells 2012). Although the term *mi'rāj* does not appear in the Qur'an, legends surrounding the episode quickly developed in the first two centuries after the establishment of Islam and found their way into a number of different genres of Islamicate literatures, including *ḥadīth*, "stories of the prophets" (*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*), general histories, and biographies of the Prophet. Over time, the account expanded greatly to include an elaborate description of Muḥammad's journey, in which he rode into heaven upon the mythical creature Burāq, and there he encountered numerous religious and historical figures. As theologians, neoplatonic Islamic philosophers, Sufis, poets, and others interpreted and commented upon the story, lively and robust debate surrounded a number of its elements (Schieke). Indeed, the *mi'rāj* has captured the imagination of Muslims for centuries, and manifested itself in diverse times and places—from the exquisite illustrations in the famous fifteenth century *Mi'rāj-nāmah* produced in late Timurid Herat with text in Uighur script and marginal notes in Arabic, Turkish, and Persian—to the fanciful 20th



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century painted wooden *burāq* figures, used on the island of Lombok, Indonesia as seats of honor in village wedding and circumcision processions accompanied with gamelan orchestras (Séguy 1977; Cooper 2001).

Scripture from both the Bābī and Bahā'ī religions make frequent reference to the Shī'ī Shaykhī movement. In a number of treatises, Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī (d. 1826), the eponymous founder of what came to be known as al-shaykhiyya (Shaykhism) put forth his philosophical-theological ideas emphasizing the unveiling of truth from the occulted Imams, with whom he claimed a special relationship. Much research remains to be done in order to understand his views of the *mi'rāj*, which may explain at least in part why later writers and interpreters reached such disparate conclusions about them. In a *risālah* (treatise) within the *Jawāmi' al-kalīm*, a compendium of al-Aḥsā'ī's writings, he seems to imply that when the Prophet went on the *mi'rāj*, it was a bodily ascent, but he also defines "body" in a complex fashion, stating that when the Prophet's body went to heaven, it transformed into a "subtle (*latīf*)" body (*jism*), suitable for the spiritual ascent (al-Aḥsā'ī [1273] 1856, pp. 127–28).

Al-Aḥsā'ī's perspectives on the *mi'rāj* became a matter of controversy, not necessarily because of his actual views on the matter, but as a result of clerical opposition. Despite his erudition and status, while staying in the Iranian town of Qazvin in 1238/1822, the cleric Muḥammad Taqī Baraghānī, uncle of the famous Bābī disciple Qurrat al-'Ayn (Tāhirih), issued a *fatwa* of *takfīr* (heresy) against al-Aḥsā'ī. The primary accusations in the *takfīr* included (1) his opinion that the resurrection (*ma'ād*) could be more than simply a bodily event, (2) his views that the Imams occupied a very elevated spiritual and cosmological position, and (3) his belief that the *mi'rāj* was a spiritual ascension, not a bodily one (MacEoin 2009, pp. 99–100). Baraghānī convinced a number of other more prominent clerics to support the *fatwa* and over time, the accusations against the Shaykh increased. As Denis MacEoin notes, though, none of the allegedly heretical views that Shaykh Aḥmad held were particularly unorthodox, for example, in comparison with those of the Shi'ī philosophers of the Safavid period (MacEoin 2009, pp. 99–100). The specific accusations in the *takfīr* did, however, ensure that Shaykhī interpretations of the *mi'rāj* would appear in theological disputes associated not only with the Shaykhī movement but also the Bābī and Bahā'ī religions.

The accusations against Shaykh Aḥmad and his specific views on the *mi'rāj* are referenced in a number of places, including the Arabic *Dalīl al-mutaḥayyirīn* of Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī (d. 1843). Rashtī had met Shaykh Aḥmad when the latter was in Yazd. There, he became a prominent follower of Shaykh Aḥmad. He accompanied Shaykh Aḥmad to Karbala, and when the Shaykh died, he became his successor and head of the Shaykhīs in Karbala (MacEoin, "Rashtī, Sayyid Kāzīm"). The Bāb attended his classes in Karbala for several months before he began to disclose his own messianic claims. Rashtī completed the *Dalīl al-mutaḥayyirīn* near Kufa in 1258/1842. MacEoin suggests that Rashtī, from the time he composed the *Dalīl al-mutaḥayyirīn* until his death in 1844, was writing in a state of dissimulation (*taqiyyah*) (MacEoin 2009, p. 124).¹ Essentially, a defense of Shaykh Aḥmad and his doctrinal perspectives, the *Dalīl al-mutaḥayyirīn* presents the Shaykh as a relatively orthodox Shi'ī thinker, thereby rendering Shaykhism an acceptable phenomenon. In the *Dalīl al-mutaḥayyirīn*, Sayyid Kāzīm summarizes and then refutes the accusations against Shaykh Aḥmad, indicating that such accusations were still alive even some twenty years after the pronouncement of the original *takfīr*. One such accusation had to do with the Shaykh's position on the *mi'rāj*: "They say that the Shaykh [Aḥmad] says that the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) did not ascend with his body to heaven on the night of the *mi'rāj*, but he ascended with his spirit." (Rashtī n.d., p. 67; MacEoin 2009, p. 100).² Sayyid Kāzīm then quotes a speech that Shaykh Aḥmad purportedly made in which he refuted the various accusations that had been leveled against him. In regard to the *mi'rāj*, he maintained that the Prophet "ascended to heaven with his body (*bashariyatihī*), his clothes (*thiyābihī*), and his sandal[s] (*na'lihī*)." (MacEoin 2009, p. 124; Rashtī n.d., p. 69). The fact that the *Dalīl al-mutaḥayyirīn* was written in defense of Shaykh Aḥmad helps explain why

Sayyid Kāzīm emphasizes al-Aḥsā'ī's belief in a literal bodily ascension rather than the more nuanced perspectives he expressed in his writings.

In 1844, Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad Shīrāzī, “the Bāb” (1819–1850), put forth the first of several messianic claims that expanded considerably over time: that he was the representative of the Hidden Imam. In 1846, he wrote his *Ṣaḥīfih-yi 'adliyyih*, a relatively straightforward Persian text and the first that he composed in that language. MacEoin states that this was an early attempt on the part of the Bāb to reach a broader non-Shaykhī audience. He also suggests that, like Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī in his *Dalīl al-mutaḥayyirīn*, the Bāb wrote this *fiqh* text on *uṣūl* (fundamentals [of religion]), in dissimulation (*taqiyyah*) mode, perhaps because the text was in Persian and would have been more easily understood by more people (MacEoin 2009, pp. 186–87). In this way, the Bāb could distance himself from Shaykhī thought and protect himself and his followers against intellectual and possibly physical attacks. Furthermore, since the text shows the Bāb as learned within Shi'ism, once his followers respected that, they presumably would then be in a position to pay attention to his later and more challenging pronouncements.

The *Ṣaḥīfih-yi 'adliyyih* consists of five chapters devoted to (1) the mention of God, (2) an explanation of the Balance, (3) the knowledge of God and his saints, (4) the return to God, and (5) the prayer of devotion to God (MacEoin 2009, p. 186; MacEoin 1992, pp. 69–70).³ In chapter four, the Bāb reiterates the same perspectives on the *mi'rāj* that Sayyid Kāzīm presented in the *Dalīl al-mutaḥayyirīn*, and writes emphatically about the need to believe that the *mi'rāj* was a literal event: “Additionally, believing in the ascension of that eminent one (Muḥammad) with his body (*jism*) and his clothing (*libās*) and his two sandals (*na'layn*) is firmly required.” (The Bāb n.d., p. 34). He further states that “Belief in the ḥadīth transmitted from Ḥumayrā ('Ā'ishah) in this situation is also necessary: at the hour of the ascension, the eminent one was at the house, but at the same hour, he ascended with his body (*jismihi*) to the kingdom of the heavens and the two earths, even though he was in the house with his body.” (The Bāb n.d., p. 34).

Scholarship on the *mi'rāj* has shown that the nature of the Prophet's ascent was a contested issue in some of the earliest texts in Islamic history. Both recensions of Ibn Iṣḥāq's biography of the Prophet, one by Yūnus ibn Bukayr (d. 199/814) and the other by Ibn Hishām (d. 833), include in their *mi'rāj* accounts a ḥadīth on the authority of 'Ā'ishah, the Prophet's wife. In this ḥadīth, she reports that only the Prophet's spirit (*rūḥ*) ascended to heaven, while his body remained at home. The ḥadīth appears in Ibn Iṣḥāq's recension as follows: “One of Abū Bakr's family told me that 'Ā'ishah the Prophet's wife used to say, ‘the Apostle's body remained where it was but God removed his spirit by night.’” (Ibn Hishām 2004, p. 288; Guillaume 1995, p. 183). While 'Ā'ishah's ḥadīth emphasizes the spiritual ascension, other ḥadīth seem to imply that the ascension was a bodily experience for the Prophet, and this view of the *mi'rāj* came to be accepted as standard Sunni belief in later centuries. (Vuckovic 2005, pp. 78–80; Colby 2008, pp. 59–61). Nevertheless, the inclusion of this ḥadīth in Ibn Iṣḥāq reflects an early understanding of a spiritual ascension that must have enjoyed some acceptance before the consensus changed. (Colby 2008, p. 52, 251 n. 5).

While 'Ā'ishah's ḥadīth as it appears in Ibn Iṣḥāq's account clearly states the *mi'rāj* was a spiritual event, other versions of the ḥadīth in Shi'i sources indicate the ascension was both a spiritual and bodily event. Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī (d. 1699), author of the late Safavid era compilation of Shi'i ḥadīth and related sources, the *Bihār al-anwār*, states on the authority of Muhammad bin Jarīr al-Ṭabarī's commentary (*tafsīr*) that Ḥadḥīfah, 'Ā'ishah and Mu'āwiyah relate the *mi'rāj* as a dream or vision and it was not the body of the Prophet [that ascended] (Majlisī [1403] 1983, p. 284). Other commentators, Majlisī later says, noted that the traditions from 'Ā'ishah and Mu'āwiyah differed: 'Ā'ishah said that it was not the body [that ascended] and Mu'āwiyah stated that it was a dream (Majlisī [1403] 1983, p. 291). Later in the text, Majlisī cites Ibn Shahrāshūb's *Manāqib Āl 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib* as asserting that 'Ā'ishah said it was both a spiritual and a bodily ascension (Majlisī [1403] 1983, pp. 284, 291, 293, 350, 364, 380). Given these many traditions on the subject of the Prophet's

ascension, the Bāb appears to base his comments on a version of the ḥadīth stating that, according to ‘Ā’ishah, the ascension was a physical event. In doing so, however, he does not preclude the possibility of the Prophet ascending to heaven with both his body and his spirit.

One year later, in 1846, the Bāb composed a short Arabic treatise entitled the *Risālah fī jasad al-nabī* (“The Treatise on the Body of the Prophet”), also known as the *Sharḥ kayfiyyat al-mi’rāj* (“Treatise on the Circumstances of the Mi’rāj”) (The Bāb 1970, pp. 416–18; Lambden 2007). Historical context helps explain the difference in style and possibly content between this text and the *Ṣaḥīfih-yi ‘adliyyih*. The Bāb addressed the *Risālah fī jasad al-nabī* to a certain Mīrzā Ḥasan Nūrī, an Ishrāqī thinker of the Mullā Ṣadrā school of philosophy. In this text, the Bāb limits his discussion of the *mi’rāj* to explaining how the body of the Prophet could have been in more than one place at the same time (MacEoin 1992, p. 80). Expressing himself in language that would have been familiar to those versed in the philosophical/theological perspectives associated with the so-called school of Isfahan of the Safavid era, the Bāb defines three modes of time: *sarmad* (transcendental time), *dahr* (eternal time), and *zamān* (temporal time) (Aminrazavi 2007, p. 161).⁴ He points out that the only way to understand this matter is through the knowledge of “the matter that is betwixt two matters (*al-amr bayn al-amrayn*), which is the “very secret of destiny.” (The Bāb 1970, pp. 416–18; Lambden 2007). He then says that if one takes into account these three different notions of time, and the “regulating force of *sarmad*,” then it is possible for the prophet to have been (simultaneously) in the house of Ḥumayrā (‘Ā’ishah) and at the same time travel “in Heaven, in the various paradises and the two luminous orbs.” (The Bāb 1970, pp. 416–18; Lambden 2007). Explaining that there are two levels of divine theophany, which can presuppose that the Prophet may be manifest in two places at once, he states that “it is clear that any given reality can be allotted all manner of secondary [space-time] levels and similar theophanological actualizations.” (The Bāb 1970, pp. 416–18; Lambden 2007). Thus, the Prophet could be veiled at one point on the spatio-temporal continuum—presumably while in the heavens during the *mi’rāj*—while at the same time unveiled (*la yahtajib*) at another, in the house of ‘Ā’ishah. While the Bāb seems to accept a literal *mi’rāj* in this text, he nevertheless creates space for other understandings. In expanding the orthodox position by bringing into play the different notions of time, he proposes a nuanced and multi-faceted understanding of the essence of the Prophet.

Some four years after the Bāb wrote the *Risālah fī jasad al-nabī*, a contemporary religious claimant and rival to the Bāb, Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī (1810–1871), also commented on the *mi’rāj*. Karīm Khān was the son of a Qajar prince, Ibrāhīm Khān ṣāḥir al-Dawlah. When he went to Karbala soon after his father’s death, he met Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, successor to Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsā’ī and leader of the Shaykhī movement at the time, and became one of his fervent disciples (Bayat 1982, p. 86; MacEoin, “Shaykhiyya”). Karīm Khān was extremely learned and highly prolific, and perhaps best known for his elaborations on the “fourth pillar,” or the “*rukṅ-i rābi’*.” When Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī died in 1843, Karīm Khān proclaimed himself the new leader of the Shaykhī school, and continued to spread the teachings of Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kāẓim. In addition to experiencing clashes with the religious orthodoxy and other Shaykhīs, Karīm Khān also vehemently denounced the Bāb, and attacked him and his claims in at least eight essays and books.⁵

Karīm Khān Kirmānī outlines his perspective on the *mi’rāj* in a lengthy discourse within a work entitled the *Irshād al-‘avāmm* (“Guidance for the Masses”), written in 1267/1850–51 (Quinn 2004). Kirmani wrote this treatise in a simple and straightforward Persian that his intended audience of common people (*al-‘avāmm*) would understand. While he accepts a bodily ascension later in his detailed and rather extensive discussion of the *mi’rāj*, his introductory comments on the subject have the most significant bearing on a later Bahā’ī text. Here, he states that understanding the *mi’rāj* required knowledge of some twenty five sciences, including geometry, astronomy, geography, talismanic magic, grammar, addition and subtraction, mechanics and Ptolemaic studies (Kirmānī n.d., pp. 396–97). Karīm Khān presents himself as the only individual sufficiently knowledgeable in these sciences to be

able to expound the realities of the *mi'rāj*. In listing these sciences, Karīm Khān indirectly acknowledges the level of learning attained by Shaykh Aḥmad, thereby implying that it was the Shaykhī leaders—with their polymathic learning understood to be derived from the imams—who possessed the intellectual and religious authority to understand and explain the *mi'rāj*. Indeed, in the *Dalīl al-mutaḥayyirīn*, Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī states that Shaykh Aḥmad was well versed in some thirty sciences. While Rashtī does not link these to understanding the *mi'rāj* as does Kirmānī, several appear in Kirmānī's list, such as geometry (*handasah*), medicine (*ṭibb*), Kabbalistic magic (*sīmiyā*), divinity (*ilāhiyyah*), meanings (*ma'nī*) and explications (*bayān*) (Rashtī n.d., pp. 13–16; MacEoin 2009, p. 72).

A discussion of Karīm Khān's list of sciences required to understand the *mi'rāj* appears in the *Kitāb-i iqān* ("Book of Certitude") by Mīrzā Ḥusayn Nūrī, "Bahā'u'llāh" (1817–1892), prophet-founder of the Bahā'ī religion. Bahā'u'llāh composed this text in Baghdad in 1861, approximately one to two years before he made something of his theophanological claims known, from 1863 onwards. Written in reply to certain questions posted by Ḥājji Mīrzā Sayyid Muḥammad, one of the maternal uncles of the Bāb, the *Kitāb-i iqān* covers themes including the Day of Resurrection, the twelfth imam, Qur'anic interpretation, and the messianic Qa'im.

Karīm Khān Kirmānī's name appears in the *Kitāb-i iqān* because, as Bahā'u'llāh explains, many people had asked him about Kirmānī. However, he did not have access to his writings until eventually someone was able to locate in the city of Baghdad a copy of a book entitled the *Irshād al-'awāmm* and brought it to him (Bahā'u'llāh n.d., pp. 142–43; Shoghi Effendi 1983, p. 118). While the book was in his possession, he continues, he noticed Kirmānī's list of sciences necessary for understanding the *mi'rāj*, and specifically names and then rejects several of those sciences:

Among the specified sciences were the science of metaphysical abstractions (*falsafa*), of alchemy (*kīmiyā*), and natural magic (*sīmiyā*). Such vain and discarded learnings, this man hath regarded as the pre-requisites of the understanding of the sacred and abiding mysteries of divine Knowledge.

(Bahā'u'llāh n.d., p. 144; Shoghi Effendi 1983, p. 119)

Then, in a rejection of the kind of polymathic knowledge favored by Kirmānī and the Shaykhīs, Bahā'u'llāh asks:

"How can the knowledge of these sciences, which are so contemptible in the eyes of the truly learned, be regarded as essential to the apprehension of the mysteries of the 'Mi'rāj,' whilst the Lord of the 'Mi'rāj' Himself [Muḥammad] was never burdened with a single letter of these limited and obscure learnings, and never defiled His radiant heart with any of these fanciful illusions?"

(Bahā'u'llāh n.d., pp. 144–45; Shoghi Effendi 1983, pp. 119–20)

Accusing Karīm Khān of arrogance and ignorance, Bahā'u'llāh expresses surprise that people were actually listening to him and following him and insinuates that whereas Kirmānī's alleged abilities in the science of alchemy were "fancy" and "pretension," he could, were it not for the persecution he was enduring, himself perform the alchemical task in order to distinguish truth from falsehood. (Bahā'u'llāh n.d., pp. 146–47; Shoghi Effendi 1983, p. 121).

In this portion of the *Kitāb-i iqān*, Bahā'u'llāh links true understanding not to the religious classes represented by people like Karīm Khān or expertise in sciences such as alchemy, but to divine assistance, and calls on his reader to "seek enlightenment from the illumined in heart." (*ṣāhibān-i af'idah*). (Bahā'u'llāh n.d., p. 148; Shoghi Effendi 1983, p. 122). He lists several qualities that a "true seeker," (*mujāhid*) needs in order to gain knowledge of the "ancient of days." These include patience and resignation, trust in God, regarding backbiting as grievous error, detachment from this world, commune with God at the dawn of every day, and not wish for others that which he would not wish for himself (Bahā'u'llāh n.d., pp. 148–51; Shoghi Effendi 1983, pp. 123–25). In doing this, Bahā'u'llāh indirectly juxtaposes Karīm Khān's list of twenty five "sciences" with his own list of approximately

the same number of qualities necessary for understanding the divine mysteries. For those readers who were familiar with the *Irshād al-'avāmm* and Kirmānī's list of twenty five sciences, reading this portion of the *Kitāb-i īqān* certainly would have provided a significant contrast.

Although Bahā'u'llāh does not directly offer a spiritual interpretation of the *mi'rāj*, in stressing the spiritual qualities necessary for its proper understanding, he presumes a non-literal dimension to it. We know that such a non-literal understanding was accepted by at least some of his followers during his own lifetime, because Mullā Jamāl Burūjirdī, an early Bahā'ī, had sent to Karīm Khān a list of questions clearly based on the ideas in the *Kitāb-i īqān*. One of these questions presupposes a spiritual *mi'rāj* and asks Karīm Khān to explain the bodily *mi'rāj* and the sciences required to understand it. In his disdainful response to Burūjirdī, published as *Risālah dar javāb-i su'ālāt-i Mullā Jamāl-i Bābī* (1866), Kirmānī defends his earlier position as outlined in the *Irshād al-'avāmm*. He also addresses what he perceives to be the grammatical errors in Burūjirdī's questions. Learning of the contents of this later treatise of Kirmānī led Bahā'u'llāh to compose his *Lawḥ-i qinā'* ("Tablet of the Veil") (some time between 1868–1871), in which he sets aside the question of the *mi'rāj* and instead focuses largely on grammar, another highly contested issue in anti-Bābī and anti-Bahā'ī polemic (Quinn 2010).

This paper has demonstrated, by way of analyzing several texts, that the *mi'rāj* was a topic of theological discussion and sometimes of dispute within the Shaykhī, Bābī, and Bahā'ī movements. Al-Aḥsā'ī's views on the *mi'rāj* are difficult to ascertain, but in one of his writings he seems to imply that the *mi'rāj* was a bodily ascent, although his understanding of "body" was complex. Al-Aḥsā'ī's successor, Rashtī, defended his teacher's perspective and maintained the position that the *mi'rāj* was a bodily ascension in his *Dalīl al-mutahayyirīn*. The Bāb initially, in his *Ṣaḥīfih-yi 'adliyyih*, advocated a bodily ascension. Soon thereafter, however, in his *Risālah fī jasad al-nabī*, he admitted the possibility of a less literal interpretation, when he employed a philosophically oriented language for a more specific audience. In the *Irshād al-'avāmm*, Kirmānī rejected a spiritual interpretation of the *mi'rāj*, and asserted his own authority in engaging in such interpretation due to his knowledge of numerous sciences. That position was in turn challenged by Bahā'u'llāh, who, in the *Kitāb-i īqān*, maintained that understanding of the *mi'rāj* was not reserved for clerics, but rather required spiritual insight.

The analyses presented in this paper of the highlight the different philosophical and hermeneutical stances on the topic of the *mi'rāj* adopted by 19th century Iranian religious thinkers. Some of them inclined to a literalist level of understanding, while others were open to a more nuanced deeper level of comprehension. Their discourse was determined to a considerable extent by historical context and consonant polemical considerations which gravitated between the desire to appear orthodox and the desire to take on board a deeper level of meaning. These conclusions should be seen as preliminary, as a great deal of work remains to be done in reaching a more comprehensive understanding of the positions held by the Shaykhī, Bābī, and Bahā'ī leaders, particularly given the extensive writings associated with these movements. A useful next step would be to identify all of the texts in which al-Aḥsā'ī, Rashtī, the Bāb, and Bahā'u'llāh discussed the *mi'rāj*.

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Notes

- 1 “The summary of this sermon, which he himself gives in *Dalīl al-mutaḥayyirīn*, is valuable evidence as to the four main points of doctrine then at issue, as well as to the Sayyid’s use of subterfuge (*taqiyyah*), which becomes a marked feature of Shaykhi writing from this time on.”
- 2 Shaykh Aḥmad was also accused of believing that ‘Alī, not God, was the creator; that all references to God in the Qur’an really referred to ‘Alī, and that the Imām Ḥusayn was not killed. See (MacEoin 2009, p. 100).
- 3 These are the sections as outlined in (MacEoin 2009, p. 186).
- 4 I am using Aminrazavi’s translations of *sarmad*, *dahr*, and *zamān*.
- 5 Kirmānī’s earliest work against the Bāb was the *Izhāq al-bāṭil*, which he composed approximately a year or so after the Bāb made his claims to Mullā Ḥusayn, and in it he not only divined the fact that the Bab was making a great claim, but thought fit to reject it and condemn it through a close analysis of the *Qayyūm al-asmā*. Elsewhere, he claimed the *Bayān* was blasphemous, attacked the notion of a “new prophet,” and vowed that he would destroy the Bāb (Bayat 1982, p. 80).

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