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

Sholeh A. Quinn

Department of History & Critical Race and Ethnic Studies, University of California, Merced, CA 95340, USA; squinn@ucmerced.edu

**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 Ahmad al-Ahsa’i; Sayyid Kāẓim Rashīt; the Bāb; Bahā’u’llāh; Karīm Khān Kirmānī

In the 19th century, Persian religious leaders associated with the Shaykht, Bāb, 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 Shaykht, Bábi and Bahá’í 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 Shaykht, Bábi and Bahá’í 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-haram]) to the furthest place of prayer ([al-masjid al-aqṣā]) 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 *hadith*, “stories of the prophets” (*qisas al-anbiyā’*), general histories, and biographies of the Prophet. Over time, the account expanded greatly to include an elaborate description of Muhammad’s journey, in which he rode into heaven upon the mythical creature Burq, 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 (Schrieke). 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’rajnāmih* produced in late Timurid Herat with text in Uighur script and marginal notes in Arabic, Turkish, and Persian—to the fanciful 20th
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 Shi‘ī Shaykhī movement. In a number of treatises, Shaykh Ahmad al-Aḥsā‘ī (d. 1826), the eponymous founder of what came to be known as al-shaykhīyya (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-kalām, a compendium of al-Aḥṣā‘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 (lattīf)” body (jism), suitable for the spiritual ascent (al-Aḥṣā‘ī [1273] 1856, pp. 127–28).

Al-Aḥṣā‘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 Muhammad Taqī Baraghi, uncle of the famous Bābī disciple Qurra‘at al-‘Ayn (Tāhirih), issued a fatwa of takfīr (heresy) against al-Aḥṣā‘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). Baraghi 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 Ahmad 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 Ahmad and his specific views on the mi‘rāj are referenced in a number of places, including the Arabic Dalīl al-mutahāyyirīn of Sayyid Kāzim Rashṭī (d. 1843). Rashṭī had met Shaykh Ahmad when the latter was in Yazd. There, he became a prominent follower of Shaykh Ahmad. He accompanied Shaykh Ahmad to Karbala, and when the Shaykh died, he became his successor and head of the Shaykhīs in Karbala (MacEoin, “Rashtī, Sayyid Kāzim”). The Bāb attended his classes in Karbala for several months before he began to disclose his own messianic claims. Rashīti completed the Dalīl al-mutahāyyirīn near Kufa in 1258/1842. MacEoin suggests that Rashītī, from the time he composed the Dalīl al-mutahāyyirīn until his death in 1844, was writing in a state of dissimulation (taqiyyah) (MacEoin 2009, p. 124).1 Essentially, a defense of Shaykh Ahmad and his doctrinal perspectives, the Dalīl al-mutahāyyirīn presents the Shaykh as a relatively orthodox Shi‘ī thinker, thereby rendering Shaykhism an acceptable phenomenon. In the Dalīl al-mutahāyyirīn, Sayyid Kāzim summarizes and then refutes the accusations against Shaykh Ahmad, 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 [Ahmad] 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.” (Rashītī n.d., p. 67; MacEoin 2009, p. 100).2 Sayyid Kāzim then quotes a speech that Shaykh Ahmad 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 (basharīyatīhi), his clothes (thīqābīhi), and his sandal[s] (nālīhi).” (MacEoin 2009, p. 124; Rashītī n.d., p. 69). The fact that the Dalīl al-mutahāyyirīn was written in defense of Shaykh Ahmad helps explain why
Sayyid Kāzīm emphasizes al-Aḥsāʿi’s belief in a literal bodily ascension rather than the more nuanced perspectives he expressed in his writings.

In 1844, Sayyid ‘Alī Muhammad 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 Ṣaḥīḥ-ī ‘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-Shaykhî audience. He also suggests that, like Sayyid Kāzīm Rashīdīn’s Dalīl al-mutahāyyīrūn, the Bāb wrote this fiqh text on usūl (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 Shiʿism, once his followers respected that, they presumably would then be in a position to pay attention to his later and more challenging pronouncements.

The Ṣaḥīḥ-ī ‘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). In chapter four, the Bāb reiterates the same perspectives on the miʿrāj that Sayyid Kāzīm presented in the Dalīl al-mutahāyyīrūn, and writes emphatically about the need to believe that the miʿrāj was a literal event: “Additionally, believing in the ascension of that eminent one (Muhammad) with his body (jism) and his clothing (libas) and his two sandals (naʿlayn) is firmly required.” (The Bāb n.d., p. 34). He further states that “Belief in the ḥadīth transmitted from Ḥumayrā (‘Āʾishah) 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 (jismihī) 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 miʿrāj 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 Hīshām (d. 833), include in their miʿrāj accounts a ḥadīth on the authority of ‘Āʾishah, the Prophet’s wife. In this ḥadīth, she reports that only the Prophet’s spirit (ruḥ) 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 ‘Āʾishah the Prophet’s wife used to say, ‘the Apostle’s body remained where it was but God removed his spirit by night.’” (Ibn Hīshām 2004, p. 288; Guillaume 1995, p. 183). While ‘Āʾishah’s ḥadīth emphasizes the spiritual ascension, other ḥadīths seem to imply that the ascension was a bodily experience for the Prophet, and this view of the miʿrāj 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 ‘Āʾishah’s ḥadīth as it appears in Ibn Iṣḥāq’s account clearly states the miʿrāj was a spiritual event, other versions of the ḥadīth in Shiʿi sources indicate the ascension was both a spiritual and bodily event. Muhammad Bāqir Majlīsī (d. 1699), author of the late Safavid era compilation of Shiʿi hadith and related sources, the Bihār al-anwār, states on the authority of Muhammad bin Ḥajr al-Ṭabarī’s commentary (tafsīr) that Ḥadīthfah, ‘Āʾishah and Muʿāwiyah relate the miʿrāj as a dream or vision and it was not the body of the Prophet [that ascended] (Majlīsī [1403] 1983, p. 284). Other commentators, Majlīsī later says, noted that the traditions from ‘Āʾishah and Muʿāwiyah differed: ‘Āʾishah said that it was not the body [that ascended] and Muʿāwiyah stated that it was a dream (Majlīsī [1403] 1983, p. 291). Later in the text, Majlīsī cites Ibn Shahrāshūb’s Muntaqīb AlʿAlī ibn Aḥī Tālīb as asserting that ‘Āʾishah said it was both a spiritual and a bodily ascension (Majlīsī [1403] 1983, pp. 284, 291, 293, 350, 364, 380). Given these many traditions on the subject of the Prophet’s
ascension, the Báb appears to base his comments on a version of the hadith stating that, according to ‘A’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 Báb composed a short Arabic treatise entitled the Risālah fi ḥaḍrat al-nabī (“The Treatise on the Body of the Prophet”), also known as the Sharh kayfiyyat al- mīrāj (“Treatise on the Circumstances of the Mi’rāj”) (The Báb 1970, pp. 416–18; Lambden 2007). Historical context helps explain the difference in style and possibly content between this text and the Šahīfih-yi ‘adliyyih. The Báb addressed the Risālah fi ḥaḍrat al-nabī to a certain Mīrzā Ḥasan Nūrī, an Ishrāqī thinker of the Mullā Ṣadrā school of philosophy. In this text, the Báb limits his discussion of the mīrāj 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 Báb defines three modes of time: sarmad (transcendental time), dahr (eternal time), and zamān (temporal time) (Aminrazavi 2007, p. 161). 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 Báb 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 (‘A’ishah) and at the same time travel “in Heaven, in the various paradises and the two luminous orbs.” (The Báb 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 Báb 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 mīrāj—while at the same time unveiled (la yahtajib) at another, in the house of ‘Ā’ishah. While the Báb seems to accept a literal mīrāj 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 Báb wrote the Risālah fi ḥaḍrat al-nabī, a contemporary religious claimant and rival to the Báb, Muhammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī (1810–1871), also commented on the mīrāj. Karīm Khān was the son of a Qajar prince, Ibrāhīm Khān zāhīr al-Dawlāh. When he went to Karbala soon after his father’s death, he met Sayyid Kāẓim Rāshī, successor to Shaykh Ḡāned al-Ḥāṣā’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 “rūknh-ī rābī’.” When Sayyid Kāẓim Rāshī died in 1843, Karīm Khān proclaimed himself the new leader of the Shaykhī school, and continued to spread the teachings of Shaykh Ḡāned and Sayyid Kāẓim. In addition to experiencing clashes with the religious orthodoxies and other Shaykhis, Karīm Khān also vehemently denounced the Báb, and attacked him and his claims in at least eight essays and books.5

Karīm Khān Kirmānī outlines his perspective on the mīrāj in a lengthy discourse within a work entitled the Irshād al-‘avāmm (“Guidance for the Masses”), written in 1267/1850-51 (Quinn 2004). Kirmānī 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 mīrāj, his introductory comments on the subject have the most significant bearing on a later Bahá’í text. Here, he states that understanding the mīrāj 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 Ahmad, thereby implying that it was the Shaykhi 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-mutahāyyirīn, Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī states that Shaykh Ahmad 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 (ṣīmiyā), divinity (īlahiyah), 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 īqān (“Book of Certitude”) by Mīrzā Husayn 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 Hājjī Mīrzā Sayyid Muhammad, one of the maternal uncles of the Bāb, the Kitāb-i īqān 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 īqān 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-‘avāmm 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 (ṭīmiyat), and natural magic (ṣīmiyā). 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 Shaykhs, 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 [Muhammad] 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 īqān, 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.” (ṣāhib-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 ṭaqqān* 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 ṭaqqān*. 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 *Lawh-ī 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 Shaykhi, Bāb, 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 *Ṣaḥīḥ-yi ‘adliyyih*, advocated a bodily ascension. Soon thereafter, however, in his *Risālah fi 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 ṭaqqān*, 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 Shaykhi, Bāb, 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 Dalil al-mutahayyirin, 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 Shaykh writing from this time on.”

2 Shaykh Ahmad was also accused of believing that ‘Ali, not God, was the creator; that all references to God in the Qur’an really referred to ‘Ali, and that the Imam Husayn 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, dahir, and zamân.

5 Kirmâni’s earliest work against the Bâb was the Izhaq al-bâtîl, which he composed approximately a year or so after the Bâb made his claims to Mullâ Husayn, and in it he not only divined the fact that the Bâb was making a great claim, but thought fit to reject it and condemn it through a close analysis of the Qayyûm al-asnâ. Elsewhere, he claimed the Bayân was blasphemous, attacked the notion of a “new prophet,” and vowed that he would destroy the Bâb (Bayat 1982, p. 80).

References


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