

Qā'im (Ariser) and Qayyūm (Deity Self-Subsistent) : The background and significance of twin messianic advents in Bābī-Bahā'ī scripture.

Stephen N. Lambden

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**Rise up, O people! for the victory of God! The Qayyūm [Bahā'u'llāh] hath assuredly come about whom the Qā'im [the Bāb] gave you glad-tidings. (Iqtidarāt, 99).**

According to the Bahā'ī poet and historian Nabī-i Zarandī, the Shaykhī leader Sayyid Kāzim Rashtī (d. 1260/1844) predicted that "after the Qā'im the Qayyūm will be made manifest" (Dawnbreakers, 41). It is clear from numerous passages in Bābī-Bahā'ī scripture\* that this was understood to refer to the twin messianic advents of Sayyid `Alī Muhammad, the Bāb (1819-1859 = the Qā'im) and Mirzā Husayn `Alī, Bahā'-Allāh (1817-1892) considered the Qayyūm as the eschatological advent of divinity.

In this paper something of the linguistic, theological and messianic background of the terms Qā'im and Qayyūm will be sketched along with aspects of their Bābī-Bahā'ī import. Those familiar with the Markan, New Testament record of Jesus' regenerating Aramaic words to Jairus' young daughter in (expanded loose) Greek transliteration, Talitha cumi meaning, "little girl arise!" (Mk. 5:41) will have encountered a word related to Qā'im. The Aramaic feminine imperative form *cumā* or *qumā* like the Arabic [Persian] Qā'im is derived from the Semitic root [Q-W-M].

Within Shī'ī Islam as the expected messianic figure is commonly referred to as the Qā'im ('Ariser') or 'Qā'im of the family of Muhammad'. Sayyid `Alī Muhammad the Bāb (d. 1850) claimed to be the expected messianic figure known within

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According to the Bahā'ī poet and historian Nabī-i Zarandī, the Shaykhī leader Sayyid Kāzim Rashtī (d. 1260/1843[4]) predicted that "after the Qā'im the Qayyūm will be made manifest" (Dawn-Breakers, 41). It is clear from numerous passages in Babī-Bahā'ī scripture that this was understood to refer to the twin messianic advents of Sayyid `Alī Muhammad, the Bāb (1819-1850 = the Qā'im) and Mīrzā Husayn `Alī, Bahā'-Allāh (1817-1892) considered the Qayyūm as the eschatological advent of divinity. Thus, in one of his writings the founder of the Bahā'ī religion addresses humanity exhorting them to "Rise up!" for the victory of God in the light of the fact that the Qayyūm [Bahā'u'llāh] has appeared about whom the Qā'im [the Bāb] gave glad-tidings (Iqtidārāt 99).

In this paper something of the linguistic, theological and messianic background of the terms Qā'im and Qayyūm will be sketched along with aspects of their Bābī-Bahā'ī import. Those familiar with the Markan, New Testament record of Jesus' regenerating Aramaic words to Jairus' young daughter in (loose, expanded) Greek transliteration, "Talitha cumi" meaning, "little girl arise!" (Mk. 5:41) will have encountered a word related to Qā'im. The Aramaic feminine imperative form cumī or qumī ("arise!") like the Arabic/Persian (active participle) qā'im and the masculine noun qayyūm are derived from the same Semitic root (Q-W[W]-M).

Readers of the Hebrew Bible may also recall reference to God (YHWH; or a manifestation of Him) as one who descended in a cloud and stood with Moses on Mount Sinai (see Exodus 34:5). In Samaritan (Jewish) Aramaic the Hebrew word for "stood" in this Biblical text is qa'mu and came to be related to human-angelic-divine manifestations of the Deity. The Arabic Qā'im is used of God in the Qur'ān as well as in Bābī-Bahā'ī scripture. Its Shī'ī messianic sense is indicative of an Imam who will *arise* from the family of Muhammad (Per. Qa'im-i āl-i Muhammad) and redress injustice,

may be rooted in Samaritan Jewish texts and traditions.

The Bāb did not openly claim to be the expected eschatological Qā'im until well into his six year mission (1844-50). In sūra 78 of his multi-faceted first major work, the Qayyūm al-asmā (loosely, 'Eternality of the Names'; mid. 1844) he claims to be "naught but one of his [the expected one's] servants". Some four years later, most notably in a Tablet to Mullā Shaykh `Alī Turshīzī, `Azīm (late 1848?), he made his `messianic secret' known by explicitly claiming Qā'imīyya. Many of the later works of the Bāb contain sections in which Shi'i notions relating to the identity and times of the Qā'im are given novel interpretations or demythologized in the light of his being to be the Qā'im (Ariser) and the (identical) Mahdī (Righty Guided One).

Qā'imīyya was also claimed at various times by certain of the Bāb's followers. Between the 1850s and his passing in 1892 the claims of Bahā'-Allāh were also gradually communicated to the Bābīs and later to all humankind. They culminated in his theophanic claim to subordinate divinity in the light of the expected personal appearance of God on the Day of God. In quite a number of post-1863 Tablets he claimed to be the deity who is the Qayyūm or the eternal *mazhar* (Manifestation) of God divine being who is Self-Subsistent.

In one Tablet interpreting an alchemical saying of Mary the Copt/Jewess (fl.1st cent BCE) Bahā'-Allāh clearly puts the transcendent Divine Essence beyond being either Qā'im ('Eternal') or Qayyūm ('Self Subsistent') the terms being understood as divine attributes. As in the Qur'ān, however, God remains in such writings of Bahā'-Allāh as the *Lawh-i anta al-kāfī* ("Long Healing Prayer") a transcendent Being who is both Qā'im (Overseer) and Qayyūm ('DeitySelf-Subsistent'). Additionally, numerological aspects of Qā'im-Qayyūm are interpreted by both the Bab and Bahā'-Allāh as chronological ciphers, as prophecies of the name and date of the appearance of Bahā'-Allāh in `the year nine' (1269 = 1853/3); as indications of the mystery of Bahā' as the personal *al-ism al-a`zam* ("greatest name [of God] ")