

# **BAHA'I AND GLOBALISATION**

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## Introduction

The Danish RENNER project is a REsearch Network on the study of NEw Religions. This research network, which is supported by the Danish Research Council for the Humanities, has been active since 1992. In 1998, a new grant from the Research Council allowed us to conduct a specific study on new religions and globalisation, and we initiated the project with several separate studies of new age religion and globalisation. The present book, *Baha'i and Globalisation*, which is the seventh volume of the book series *Renner Studies on New Religion*, is the second of the case studies of the project. Another book, which emphasises the theoretical and methodological aspects of the study of new religions and globalisation, will be volume eight in the series, rounding off this special RENNER topic.

Globalisation is the conventional term used to describe the present, rapid integration of the world economy facilitated by the innovations and growth in international electronic communications particularly during the last two decades. Globalisation carries with it an increasing political and cultural awareness that all of humanity is globally interdependent. However, the awareness of this global interdependency has been aired by philosophers and politicians much before the term globalisation was introduced. Thus, the founder of the Baha'i religion, the Iranian prophet, Husayn-Ali Nuri (1817-1892) called Baha'u'llah, claimed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century that the central doctrine of the Baha'i religion is the realisation that the human race is one and that the world should be unified: 'The utterance of God is a lamp, whose light is these words: Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch'. This is a goal that 'excelleth every other goal'.<sup>1</sup>

Present-day globalisation is a continuation of a historical process over several hundred years. This process gained momentum in a crucial period from around 1870 and the subsequent fifty years. It is notable that this period coincides with the period when the central doctrines of the Baha'i religion were formulated by Baha'u'llah and his son and successor, Abdu'l-Baha (1844-1921). The sociologist of religion,

1 Both quotations are from Baha'u'llah (1988: 14).

James Beckford has noted that in some senses the faith of Baha'u'llah 'foreshadowed globalization, with its emphasis on the interdependence of all peoples and the need for international institutions of peace, justice and good governance' (Beckford 2000: 175).

The synchrony between the take-off of globalisation and the emergence of Baha'i on the world scene should not be dismissed as insignificant. Baha'u'llah's message that the world should be unified would probably not have fallen on fertile soil much before the 1870s, because the impact of globalisation was not yet begun to be felt among potential proselytes. In the late nineteenth century and in the beginning of the twentieth century, the climate for this idea was more receptive.

From the Baha'i point of view, the unification of the world is a consequence of the culmination of the spiritual development of humanity. This spiritual development has been achieved through the successive revelations of God's will in the prophecies of the different religions since the time of Abraham, with the Baha'i religion as the latest of the divine revelations. The Baha'is also perceive themselves as the vanguard of this historical process, which is destined to result in a new world civilisation, called the World Order of Baha'u'llah. This golden age for humanity, the 'Most Great Peace' is believed to be preceded by the 'Lesser Peace' in which the nations of the world reach an agreement to abolish war and establish the political instruments to secure world peace and prosperity, consonant with the Baha'i call for the unification of the world.

Thus, to study the Baha'is and their religion in the light of globalisation is to grasp an essential aspect of the Baha'i teachings, and it is with good reason that Baha'i and globalisation stands as a central case in the RENNER study of new religions and globalisation. Few other religions express so clearly in their doctrines the view that the world should be unified, politically and religiously. The Baha'is are also globalised in the sense that they live all over the world, and they deliberately aim at being present in as many locations as possible. In 2003, there were Baha'i communities in 190 countries and 46 territories of the world, and excerpts of Baha'u'llah's writings had been translated into 802 languages (*The Baha'i World* 2003: 311).

### *The Baha'i Religion*

The different chapters of this book assumes a basic knowledge of the Baha'i religion and its historical development. A brief review will therefore be given in the following.

The Baha'i religion has its origins in religious currents within Shi'i Islam in the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1844, a millenarian movement, called Babism, rose from these currents. The Babism provoked the Islamic establishment by insisting that their leader, Ali Muhammad Shirazi (1819-1850), called the Bab, was a new prophet and a source of divine revelations. This implied in principle that the age of Islam was over. The rapid growth of the Babi movement occurred in a general climate of public unrest, and from 1848 the Babism were engaged in a series of bloody fights with the Iranian government. By 1852, however, the movement seemed to have been crushed, and the surviving Babi leaders including Baha'u'llah were exiled to the neighbouring Ottoman Empire. After a break in 1866-67 with a minority of the Babism who acknowledged Baha'u'llah's half-brother Subh-i-Azal (ca. 1830-1912) as their leader, Baha'u'llah openly declared that he was a new source of divine revelation. The great majority of Babism soon recognised the theophanic claims of Baha'u'llah, and he gradually transformed Babism into the present Baha'i religion.

Although Baha'u'llah abolished many Babi doctrines and practices, in particular the militancy and the harsh treatment of unbelievers, there is also a strong element of continuity between Babism and Baha'i. The Bab occupies a central and visible position in the Baha'i religion, and his remains are buried in a splendid golden-domed shrine on the slope of Mount Carmel in Haifa, adjacent to the Baha'i administrative headquarter, the Baha'i World Centre. The year 1844, when the Bab made his declaration, is the year one in the Baha'i calendar, which was devised by the Bab.

Through systematic mission initiated by Baha'u'llah's son and successor, Abdu'l-Baha (1844-1921), Baha'i gradually expanded outside its Muslim environment. Baha'i missionaries came to the USA and Canada in the 1890s and to West Europe around 1900. Effective growth in Europe did not occur, however, until after World War II, when Abdu'l-Baha's grandson and successor, Shoghi Effendi (1897-1957) organised a Baha'i mission in Europe assisted by many American

Baha'is who came to Europe as Baha'i missionaries or 'pioneers' in the Baha'i terminology.

### *Chronology of Babi and Baha'i Leadership*

The Bab (1819-1850)	<i>Declaration in Shiraz 1844</i> <i>Babi movement crushed 1852</i> <i>Exile in Baghdad 1853-1863</i>
Baha'u'llah (1817-1892)	<i>Exile in Edirne 1863-1868</i> <i>Schism ca. 1866</i> <i>Exile in Akko and Bahji 1868-1908</i> <i>Baha'i in the USA from 1894</i>
Abdu'l-Baha (1844-1921)	<i>Baha'i in Europe from 1899</i>
Shoghi Effendi (1897-1957)	<i>Systematic mission begins</i> <i>after World War II</i>
Interim leadership (1957-1963)	
Universal House of Justice (1963-)	<i>Worldwide expansion</i> <i>from fewer than half a million</i> <i>to five million at present</i>

The above figure gives a brief chronology of Babism and Baha'i, showing the names of the leaders and some major historical internal events in the Baha'i religion. Shoghi Effendi was the last individual to lead Baha'i. Abdu'l-Baha had appointed him as leader of the Baha'is with the title of 'Guardian of the Cause of God', and he was meant to be the first in a line of 'Guardians'. However, when Shoghi Effendi died in 1957 without an appointed successor, an interim collective leadership established in 1963 the present supreme ruling body of the Baha'i religion, the Universal House of Justice.

The writings of the Bab, of Baha'u'llah, and of Abdu'l-Baha make up the canon of Baha'i sacred texts. The writings of Shoghi Effendi are not considered sacred but they are still binding in doctrinal and legislative matters. The Baha'i leaders were prolific writers and left both books and a massive corpus of letters of doctrinal significance, called tablets. Some of the central Babi and Baha'i texts are introduced and analysed in the different chapters with a view of elucidating the globalisation aspect of the religion.

### *Diachronic Perspectives*

We have sought to study the relation between Baha'i and globalisation from its historical beginning in early Babism until today. To do so, RENNER and the University of Copenhagen invited an international group of scholars to participate in a three-day conference in August 2001. The scholars who represented different fields were asked to apply their specialisations in a study of Baha'i and globalisation. All contributions are original and are published here for the first time.

The chapters of the first part of *Baha'i and Globalisation* roughly follow a chronological scheme and together they make up a diachronic sweep of the rise of the global orientation of the Babi and Baha'i religions. The opening chapter by Stephen Lambden aims at showing that the Babi-Baha'is were not unprepared for Baha'u'llah globalist thoughts. In his paper, Lambden emphasises the continuity between the globalism in the Bab's early major work, the *Qayyum al-asma'*, and Baha'u'llah's globalism, but also the breaks, notably the abandoning of *jihād* as a means of promoting a globalisation process. Todd Lawson's chapter is a philological analysis of Baha'u'llah's important early work, the *Hidden Words* from the 1850s, and with this example Lawson elucidates the further development of the global orientation of the Babi-Baha'i religion in the cosmopolitan atmosphere of Baghdad. Juan R. I. Cole shows in his chapter on Abdu'l-Baha that the globalist thinking in Baha'i was now far-reaching and truly international in character. Abdu'l-Baha embraced many of the ideas of liberal modernity, and he clearly perceived that the world had become a single place even in the early twentieth century.

Abdu'l-Baha was a determined leader, and Moojan Momen's chapter gives much substance to the tight connection between Abdu'l-Baha's thinking and his practical directives in the exceptional global expan-

sion of the Baha'i religion in the first two decades of the twentieth century. In connection with this expansion Robert Stockman argues how Abdu'l-Baha's thinking inspired much of the practice of the Baha'i proselytising, and he brings to attention the practical activism of the early American Baha'is and the mutual bonds of assistance between the Baha'i communities of North America and Iran. It was, however, precisely the international orientation of the Iranian Baha'is which gave rise to allegations of unpatriotism from nationalist circles in Iran. This is shown by Fereyduun Vahman who analyses a broad selection of Iranian anti-Baha'i polemic literature before the Iranian revolution of 1979. The global ambitions of the Baha'is are furthermore illustrated in Zaid Lundberg's chapter on Shoghi Effendi's *World Order of Baha'u'llah*. Lundberg carefully describes Shoghi Effendi's understanding of the Baha'i religion as part of a global evolution aiming at a world commonwealth which were to be identical with a Baha'i commonwealth. Morten Warmind puts the Baha'i emphasis on globalisation and modernity into perspective by comparing and contrasting it with another break-off movement from Islam in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Ahmadiyya. Margit Warburg concludes the chronological section with a chapter that integrates a view of the historical development of the Baha'i religion into a general understanding of globalisation, based on a model originally proposed by the sociologist Roland Robertson. This model is further developed in the chapter and is used in an analysis of the changing attitudes of the Baha'i leadership in relation to international politics.

#### *Some Synchronic Themes*

The second part of the book gives a thematic, synchronic coverage of contemporary Baha'i and globalisation. Wendi Momen opens with a chapter on the globalisation thinking in Baha'i from a political exegesis of the Baha'i writings, in particular the writings of Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi. With the Internet, the individual Baha'is' reflections on their religion can now be expressed in a truly global forum. David Piff treats the Baha'i discourse on the Internet and shows its potentials for creating a new transnational community feeling among the participants and for being a seedbed for diverging and sometimes controversial discourses on Baha'i doctrines.

The ideas conveyed in the sacred texts are reflected and reinterpreted in the minds of the followers, and this is treated in several

of the following chapters. Two chapters are based on interviews of Baha'is with regard to their understanding and conceptualisation of the global ideas of Baha'i. Lynn Echevarria has conducted interviews among 21 of the oldest living Canadian Baha'is, showing how ideas of the 'oneness of mankind' and of 'world consciousness' were salient in the early Baha'i mission. Will van den Hoonaard has interviewed 18 Baha'is world-wide and has also made extensive use of Baha'i secondary and core literature to elucidate the discourse of the idea of 'unity in diversity' in different Baha'i communities. Sen McGlinn continues the thread of interpretation and re-interpretation of texts and he brings to the surface a number of divergent Baha'i stances on issues following in the wake of modernisation and globalisation, such as the relation between state and church or the equality of the sexes. Finally, Denis MacEoin points to the triumphalist aspect of the Baha'is' self-understanding as representing the religion to unite all religions in the culmination of globalisation. However, on the path ahead lie issues of secularism, and MacEoin discusses the challenges which secular values present to a religion that – rooted in Islamic thinking – aims to fuse the spheres of religion and society.

#### *Issues of Terminology*

Having completed the fifteen chapters of *Baha'i and Globalisation*, the observant reader may have noted certain inconsistencies with respect to spelling (British or American usage, as regards the central term globalisation/globalization!) and the use of diacriticals. There are (good?) reasons why inconsistencies are hard to eradicate. Many Baha'i names and terms are of Persian or Arabic origin, and Baha'is usually transcribe these words with full diacritical marks in all official texts of the religion. However, their transcription does not always follow modern academic transcription systems; apart from some spelling particularities the most conspicuous difference is that the Baha'is have retained an earlier practice of using the acute accent instead of the horizontal stroke over the long vowels, a, i and u.

Fortunately, for the convenience of most of the readers who have no particular interest in the details of transcription, also many scholars who are themselves Baha'is have now chosen to reduce the use of diacriticals to a minimum. This trend set by leading specialists in the Baha'i religion is a refreshing liberation from the spelling orthodoxy

of earlier Baha'i research, and we have not wished to interfere with this in the edition of the work. Nor have we wished to standardise the denotation of the Baha'i religion itself, whether it is called the Baha'i Faith (the official Baha'i term), Bahaism, or just Baha'i.

Among the new religions of the modern age, Baha'i has indeed been one of the most successful. Today, the Baha'is claim that there are more than five million registered Baha'is world-wide and the religion is represented in almost all countries in the world. Nevertheless, the Baha'i religion has attracted less interest among students of new religions than it deserves, and the number of scholars who have Baha'i as their main research topic is limited. Most of them are, in fact, represented in this book, which is the first anthology in Baha'i studies that deals with globalisation. On behalf of RENNERT and the authors I hope that it will catch the interest of students of new religions and globalisation as well as promoting the academic study of the Baha'i religion and its followers.

*Margit Warburg*  
Copenhagen, August 2005

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## Part I

### Diachronic Perspectives

## CHAPTER 1

# The Messianic Roots of Babi-Baha'i Globalism

*Stephen N. Lambden*

Ideas of the oneness of a globally united humanity has a rich and variegated history, reaching back to antiquity (Baldry 1965; Kitagawa 1990). A substantial part of this global thinking is represented by major world religions, which have been theologically globally-minded through most of their existence. This is especially the case as far as their eschatological hopes, messianisms and apocalyptic visions are concerned. Eschatological expectations within diverse apocalyptic traditions include religious messianisms which are associated with national, global and / or cosmic renewal. It was expected by many that God would one day through the instrumentality of one or more exalted messiah figures, set the whole world and its peoples in order. At least within the main Abrahamic religious traditions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam), messianic hopes have often presupposed that in the 'latter days' a messianic advent of global import would take place alongside a cosmic re-creation.

Scriptures and traditions held sacred within Judaism, Christianity and Islam all give value to predictions that their religion would ultimately be made truly global through acts of eschatological warfare and divine judgment (Klausner 1956; Levey 1974; Sachedina 1981; Neusner 1984). A final world-embracing battle, an Armageddon, a major *jihad* achieving the universal defeat of ungodliness, should take place throughout the earth and perhaps throughout the cosmos. It was anticipated that injustice, evil and ungodliness would be challenged and ultimately defeated, resulting in the universal establishment of world order and truth. One or more warrior-messiah figures along with an elect would induce many of the peoples of the whole world to



turn towards God. Those that refuse meet an unpleasant end as spelled out in various apocalyptic texts. This final act of universal 'holy war' would be supplemented by acts of supernatural divine intervention such that the whole world would become an earthly expression of the heavenly 'kingdom of God'.

Globalism in eschatological thinking is thus pictured as being achieved by militaristic means through the defeat and complete annihilation of all forms of evil and ungodliness. Within streams of ancient Judaism, Christianity and Islam the waging of a universal holy war is fundamental to and preparatory of millennial peace.

A global religious perspective fuelled by world-wide eschatological hopes has always been and remains something absolutely central to Babi-Baha'i religiosity, despite the fact that narrow Shi'i exclusivisms were dominant within the mindset of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Persianate world into which both the Bab and Baha'u'llah were born. Cloaked for a while in the - at times - opaque garment of messianic secrecy, they, as will be seen, harboured universalist messianic sentiments. Almost from the outset they directly and indirectly addressed all humanity and its religious and ecclesiastical leaders. By the late 1860s a global soteriological call was clearly voiced to all humankind by the Persian born messianic claimant Mirza Husayn 'Ali Nuri entitled Baha'u'llah ('The Splendour of God', 1817-1892). By the 1880s in a large number of his writings he came to frequently voice as a divinely revealed, universalist dictum, 'The earth [world] is but one country and all humankind its citizens' (Baha'u'llah 1978: 167).

It will be argued in this paper that the world-embracing, globalistic nature of the Baha'i religious message has religious roots in Shi'i and Babi messianisms and related visions of universal, global, eschatological renewal. One of the aims of this paper will be to argue that Islamic, especially Shi'i messianic and associated apocalyptic traditions, underpin present day Baha'i globalism, internationalism and universalism, and that this underpinning was achieved through a reinterpretation of the *jihad* doctrine in early Babism.

### Globalism after Eschatological Warfare in Shi'i Islam

Islamic messianisms and apocalyptic scenarios frequently echo, mirror or creatively refashion aspects of Zoroastrian, Jewish, Christian and,

to a lesser extent, Manichaeic materials pertaining to the wars and tribulations attendant upon the consummation of the ages (cf. Pedersen, 1996). This, along with the associated 'signs' of the 'Hour', the onset of the *yawm al-qiyama* (Day of Resurrection) and the *yawn al-din* (Day of Judgment). Predictions of a militaristic latter-day, global *jihad* are common in a very wide range of Islamic eschatological and related literatures. They predict that a universal holy war is to be waged by a messianic savior figure at the time of the end. This results in the internationalism and globalization of the religion of God established in the final age.

The Shi'i messianic Mahdi (Rightly Guided One) is essentially an eschatological warrior figure often referred to as the Qa'im (messianic 'Arise'), or the *Qa'im bi'l-sayf* (the messianic 'Arise' armed with the sword). He is a military figure who should establish global justice and true global religiosity. Through his actions, evil, anarchy and ungodliness will be defeated and justice, righteousness and peace be established throughout the world.

The first Imam by Shi'i reckoning 'Ali b. Abi Talib (d. 40/661) is one of the key prototypes of the Shi'i eschatological messiah. His militaristic prowess has long been celebrated as is reflected, for example, in such diverse sources as the *Tarikh al-rusul wa'l-muluk* (History of Prophets and Kings) of al-Tabari (d. 310/922) and the semi-*ghuluww* ('extremist') *Khutba al-tutunjiyya* ('Sermon of the Gulf') ascribed to Imam 'Ali himself (delivered between Medina and Kufa) and containing messianic and apocalyptic passages well-known to both the Bab and Baha'u'llah (al-Tabari 1997; 'Ali b. Abi Talib 1978). In eschatological times the militaristic genius of Imam 'Ali is echoed in that of the twelfth Imam and his Shi'i followers who are to redress injustices in these final decisive battles.

This militaristic vision of global justice informs and lies behind aspects of the Babi-Baha'i concepts of messianic universalism and its claimed fulfillment in the religions of the Bab and Baha'u'llah. The following few notes sum up select Islamic eschatological *jihad* traditions which directly or indirectly inspired the Bab and his first Shi'i-Shaykhi-rooted followers.

A number of Shi'i traditions state that the messianic Qa'im will be characterized by various qualities central to previous sent Messengers. One such tradition from the sixth Shi'i Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq

(d. c.145/765) as cited by Ibn Babuya al-Qummi (d.280/991) in his *Kamal al-din...* (The Perfection of Religion), reads as follows:

In the [messianic] Qa'im ('Ariser') is a sign from Moses, a sign from Joseph, a sign from Jesus and a sign from Muhammad... As for the sign from Jesus, it is traveling (*al-siyaha*) and the sign from Muhammad is the sword (*al-sayf*). (Ibn Babuya 1991: 39).

The location from which the messianic Qa'im will call for universal holy war is variously indicated in the Shi'i sources. They often give considerable importance in this respect to al-Kufa, the location of the shrine / mosque of 'Ali b. Abi Talib and to Karbila, the Iraqi site of the shrine of the martyred Imam Husayn (d. 61/680). Both these sacred places are intimately associated with the parousia of the Qa'im and his role in initiating and waging an ultimately global *jihad*.

Another very lengthy, composite Shi'i tradition on eschatological lines is that ascribed to Mufaddal b. 'Umar al-Ju'fi (d. c. 145/762-3) an associate of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq and recorded in Majlisi's *Bihar al-anwar* ('Oceans of Lights') (Majlisi, *Bihar* 53:1-38, in al-Mufid 1979: 346ff). This tradition associates eschatological events with Syria, Iraq (Baghdad) Iran (Khurasan) and other places. A Hasanid Sayyid is mentioned who calls all people to the messianic Qa'im when pious souls from Taliqan (Khurasan, Iran) arm themselves for *jihad* and mount swift horses. It is predicted that at Kufa they will slay numerous enemies of God and come to settle in this sacred city. In time they are to further assist the Mahdi in *jihad* activity involving much slaughter and the globalization of religion.

Several further Islamic traditions presuppose that the messianic Qa'im, the *sahib al-amr* (bearer of a Cause / Command) will establish a new religious *amr* (religious 'Cause') which will be propagated throughout the globe. One *hadith* again originating with Ja'far al-Sadiq as cited by Shaykh al-Mufid is fairly explicit in this respect:

When the Qa'im... rises, he will come with a new *amr* (religious 'Cause'), just as the Messenger of God [Muhammad] (*rasul Allah*) ...at the genesis of Islam summoned unto a new *amr* (religious 'Cause'). (al-Mufid 1979: 364)

A number of Shi'i traditions registered in the final section of the *Kitab al-ghayba* (The Book of the Occultation) of Muhammad b. Ibrahim b.

Ja'far al-Nu'mani (d. Damascus 360/971), entitled 'What has been [authoritatively] relayed [from the Imams] about the duration of the [final] *mulk* ('rule', 'dominion') of the Qa'im... subsequent to his rising up' (al-Nu'mani 1973: 231-32). Ja'far al-Sadiq is recorded as having stated that the messianic Qa'im 'will rule' (*yamlaka al-qa'im*) for 'nineteen and some months' (al-Nu'mani 1973: 231ff). This and similar traditions mentioning 'seven', 'nine' and other periods of time, are sometimes understood messianically in Babi-Baha'i literatures. The allusions to a 19 or so year messianic period was understood as reflecting the period separating the advents of the Bab (1260/1844) and Baha'u'llah (1279-80/1863) viewed as the twin eschatological advents of the Qa'im and the Qayyum ('Divinity Self-Subsisting').

Any messianic claimant appearing in Qajar Iran claiming to be (or to represent) the eschatological Qa'im would of necessity have to clarify his position regarding holy war for his Shi'i contemporaries. Such traditions as are summarized above would need to be interpreted. The Bab did this in certain of his earliest writings - not that all of his listeners were satisfied with his statements.<sup>1</sup>

### The Bab, the *Qayyum al-asma'* and Globalization through *Jihad*

It has not been my purpose here to examine all that the Bab has written about *jihad* or review the nature of the Babi upheavals in this light.<sup>2</sup> Rather, the focus of attention will be on the move towards universalism as a result of the messianic call for global, eschatological *jihad*.

The first major work of the Bab originating at the time of his Shiraz disclosure of his actual or imminent messiahship (*Qa'imiyya*) before

1 The earliest attack on emergent Babism was penned by the Kirmani Shaykhi leader Hajji Mirza Muhammad Karim Khan Kirmani (d. 1871). He questioned the legitimacy of the Bab's call for holy war in the *Qayyum al-asma'* and elsewhere since such a call can only legitimately be made by the Qa'im in person, not by one who commits *i'jaz*, the production of non-revealed qur'anic type verses as Kirmani meant the Bab had done (Kirmani 1972-3: 127ff).

2 See, for example, MacEoin (1982; 1988); Zabihi-Moghaddam (2002a; 2002b); Lambden (1999-2000; 2004). A survey of the writings of the Bab is given by MacEoin (1992), and the reader is referred to this work for a description of the Bab's major works discussed in the present paper.

Mulla Husayn Bushru'i on 22 May 1844, is his bulky, over four hundred pages long, neo-qur'anic *Qayyum al-asma'* (loosely, 'Self-Subsistent Reality of the Divine Names'; mid. 1844 CE). Its first chapter is entitled *surat al-mulk*, the Surah of the Dominion.<sup>3</sup> This title is highly eschatologically suggestive, being intended to remind humankind that the eschatological 'Hour' or 'Day' is shortly to be realized, the time when earthly dominions would return to God Himself through the imminent global sovereignty of His messianic representatives. Just as qur'anic *surah* ('chapter') titles derive from key words used in the surahs so named, so does the title of this *Surat al-mulk* derive from a seminal verse halfway through, where we read:

O concourse of kings and of the sons of kings! Lay aside, in truth, as befits the Truth, one and all your (Ar.) *mulk* (dominion) which belongs unto God (Bab 1976: 41 revised).

Global rulership is to be returned to God Himself through His messianic representatives the Mahdi-Qa'im, twelfth Imam, the *Dhikr* (Remembrance), or their servant the Bab himself. It is the Bab's *Surat al-mulk* which sets the theological-eschatological parameters whereby the words *al-mulk li-láhi* (the Kingdom belongs to God) can be realized. The mediator for this process is the Bab who communicates with the hidden Imam who directs the carrying out of God's will. This involves the relinquishment of worldly kingship by human kings and rulers. It is also related to the immanent advent of the messianic Qa'im (Ariser) who is the true ruler of the eschatological age on account of his imminent global victory.

For the Bab the *mulk Allah*, the rule of God should ideally be established by kings who become faithful servants of the promised messiah. If such kings take personal part in a global *jihad* with the messianic twelfth Imam they would be amply rewarded (*Qayyum al-asma'* 1: 29ff). About half-way through the *Surat al-mulk* the Bab addresses the 'King of the Muslims' most likely indicating the Persian Muhammad Shah

3 The Arabic word *mulk*, has a wide range of meanings including, 'dominion', 'kingdom' or 'sovereignty'. This word *mulk* (cf. *malik* = king) actually occurs 8-9 times within key verses of the first chapter of the *Qayyum al-asma'* (see esp. *Qayyum al-asma'* 1: 20ff). The *surat al-mulk* has been translated by Lambden and is electronically available, see references.

(reigned 1834-1848) calling him to aid the messianic Remembrance. The Shah should purify or purge the 'holy land' (*al-ard al-muqaddas*), most likely the 'atabat or shrine cities of Iraq.<sup>4</sup> Then, as a devotee of the messianic *Dhikr* and his *amr* (religious 'Cause'), he should 'subdue' the various *al-bilad*, the regions or countries of the earth. If he accomplishes this task of holy war he is promised by the Bab a place in *al-akhira*, the post-resurrection 'Hereafter', among the *ahl al-jannat al-ridwan* the inhabitants of the paradise which is the 'Garden of Ridwan'.

In the *Qayyum al-asma'* the Bab further explicitly calls Muhammad Shah and other kings to render God victorious through their 'own selves' and 'by means of their swords' in the shadow of the messianic Remembrance. Eschatological victory through *jihad* is clearly referenced. In an address to Hajji Mirza Aqasi (d.1265 /1848), the *wazir al-mulk* (minister of the King, Muhammad Shah), the Bab bids him relinquish his *mulk* (dominion) in view of the fact that he, the Bab, has inherited the earth and all who are upon it. The *mulk* (dominion) of kings is now something 'vain', 'false' or 'ephemeral'.

The Bab also called upon the kings to hastily disseminate his revealed verses to the Turks and to the *ard al-hind*, the people of India as well to those beyond these lands in both the East and the West. Such statements most clearly illustrate the universalism or globalism of the Bab at the very onset of his mission.

In the course of the *Surat al-mulk* (the first *surah* in *Qayyum al-asma'*) the Bab not only raises the call for universal *jihad* and announces the imminent *mulk* (dominion, state, rule, etc) of God and /or the Qa'im, but utilizes the above-mentioned motif of a new *amr* (religious 'Cause'). About half-way through the forty-two or so verses in the *Surat al-mulk*, the Bab refers to his emergent messianic religion as *al-amr al-badi'* ('the new Cause', 'novel religion') (cf. Bab 1976: 41 which has 'wondrous revelation').

The question of latter-day *jihad* and its messianic centrality is evidenced in both the initial 3-4 pages of the *Surat al-mulk* and, most notably, in seven or more sometimes adjacent chapters within the complete 111 surahs of the *Qayyum al-asma'*. Most of the titles of these surahs were named by the Bab himself in his early *Kitab al-fihrist* (Book

4 The 'atabat are the Iraqi cites of Najaf, Kufa, Karbila, Kazemayn and Samarra where the shrines of six of the twelver Imams and other places of Shi'i visitation are located.

of the Index written in Bushire in 1261/June, 1845) and his *Kitab al-Ruh* (Book of the Spirit). Several manuscripts of the former work identify these seven adjacent surahs, spanning from *surah* (95) 96 until *surah* 102, as all designated either *Surat al-qittal* (The Surah of the Slaughter) in four recensions or *Surat al-jihad* (The Surah of Holy War) in three recensions.

These seven surahs all contain rewritten qur'anic materials having to do with holy war and its eschatological application relative to the combative role of the messianic person of the *Dhikr-Allah*. They are not merely repetitions of qur'anic verses relating to *jihad* but are at times infused with a millennial excitement centering upon the realization of the long-awaited *nasr Allah*, the 'victory of God', pronounced near at hand. The following passage must suffice to give an idea of the Bab's innovative refashioning of qur'anic motifs as evidenced in *surah* 102, the last of the four *Surat al-qittal* (The Surah of the Slaughter):

O Qurrat al-'Ayn! [= the Bab] Should the following directive (*al-amr*) come from before Us [God], 'So summon ye the people for killing (*al-qittal*)!' then [know ye] that God has stored up for your [eschatological] Day men even as powerful mountains. For such were indeed [written] in the Archetypal Book (*umm al-kitab*), [as persons] manifest for the name of the Exalted Dhikr-Allah (messianic Remembrance of God) (*Qayyum al-asma'* 102:408).

For the Bab, God is capable of raising up very strong male warriors even as 'powerful mountains' for fighting in the messianic *jihad*. Qur'anic laws of holy war are repeated or modified in the *Qayyum al-asma'* without explicit abrogation (cf. Qur'an 74:31b).

### Eschatological Warfare and the Religion of the Bab

From a study of the Bab's writings it will be evident that the Bab did not shrink away from the issue of the holy war expected to occur universally in the last days by all Shi'i and most other Muslims. In his many writings the Bab quite frequently made reference to *jihad* and to an anticipated eschatological *nasr* (victory). Yet, despite the later sporadic engagements between the Babis and the government troops, *jihad* never seems to have been straightforwardly or collectively called by the Bab during his lifetime (MacEoin 1982).

Though this matter cannot be discussed in detail here, it may be noted that an early Arabic prayer of the Bab was composed in response to questions associated with the above-mentioned eschatological events at Kufa. In this prayer the Bab appears to respond to questions raised by such messianic and militaristic traditions as are ascribed to the abovementioned Mufaddal b. 'Umar. In this early expository prayer the Bab states that he only knows what God has taught him regarding the [advent of the] *al-nafs al-zakiyya* (The Pure Soul) 'who will be slain in the land of Kufa', 'the one who will emerge from Khurasan and Taliqan' and regarding the [militaristic] 'decree of the Husaynid Sayyid'. He then states that he is nothing but 'the like of what God has stipulated' and continues to add that he would, if necessary and in accordance with the will of God, blot out such matters through *al-bada'* ('innovation'), the alternation of the divine plan. Then such eschatological affairs would through *al-bada'* 'be rescinded consonant which whatsoever hath been promised the trustees of the All-Merciful' (Bab, 'Prayer in reply to questions').

From this prayer it seems clear that the Bab was made aware – through his questioner – of certain traditions relating to figures who will proceed and assist the messianic Qa'im in his holy war activities. He apparently disclaimed personal knowledge of the meaning of these traditions and appears to indicate that such expectations may or may not be realized in the light of his possible implementation of *al-bada'*, (loosely) the emergence of a change in the divine plan.<sup>5</sup> Through the Bab, God can change his mind about the realization of such expectations. The militaristic messianism of the *hadith* of Mufaddal and others need not take place and could be 'demythologized' if God so willed. The early plans for a literalistic fulfillment of Shi'i expectations of global *jihad* centering on Kufa and Karbila, were thus cancelled, despite that from the outset of his messianic activities the Bab invited the kings of the world to a global *jihad* and taught that God would 'wreak his vengeance' upon such as had martyred Imam Husayn (d. 61/680) (*Qayyum al-asma'* 21: 69, cf. Bab 1976: 49).

5 The Arabic word *bada'*, literally means 'emergence', indicating the emergence of new circumstances which require a change to an earlier circumstance or ruling. It indicates the alteration of a previously divinely ordained plan. God may change his mind as it were.

The historical fact is that when the Bab returned to Shiraz in June 1845 from his pilgrimage to Mecca, he decided not to go to Karbila as planned, maybe because of the *fatwa* issued against him in connection with Ali Bastami's trial.<sup>6</sup> After his cancellation of the Karbila rally, a formal call for *jihad* seems never to have been categorically reissued by the Bab himself, although *jihad* by kings and others still remained a future possibility in the achievement of the global spread of his religion (Bab, *Dala'il-i Sab'ih*: 43; Bab, *Haykal al-din*: 15ff).

### The Terrestrial and Cosmic Universalism of the Bab

In the *Qayyum al-asma'* and numerous other writings the call of the Bab is not restricted to Iran, Iraq and the Middle East, but is addressed to all humanity and even beings beyond this world. Within the over 100 *surahs* and more than 500 pericopae of the *Qayyum al-asma'* there are scores of universalistic and cosmic addresses.<sup>7</sup> While outside of the *Surat al-mulk* in the 63<sup>rd</sup> *Surat al-Rahman* (*Surah* of the All-Merciful) the Bab bids all worldly kings fear God respecting his position as messianic Gate, in the 9<sup>th</sup> *Surat al-tawhid* (*Surah* of the Divine Unity) he addresses all the 'people of the earth'. Influenced by qur'anic cosmology, the Bab called all within and betwixt the heavens and the earths to have faith in him / the messianic *Dhikr* and his divinely inspired message. He communicated a global and extra-global cosmic message. He called out to human and supernatural beings including the *jinn*, the celestial concourse (*mala' al-a'la*) and beings associated with the divine Throne (*al-'arsh*) in the 'sphere of lights'. This also sets the scene for Babi-Baha'i internationalism and globalism.

6 Mulla Ali Bastami was among the Bab's close disciples ('the Letters of the Living') who had gone to Karbila to spread the teachings of the Bab. Large crowds of expecting adherents gathered while arms were purchased for the preparation of *jihad*. Bastami was, however, arrested and imprisoned, and in 1845 he appeared before a joint Sunni-Shi'ite tribunal in Baghdad - an unusual reconciliation of Sunni and Shi'ite *ulama*. The tribunal issued a *fatwa* condemning the Bab as blasphemous and an outright unbeliever; however, because of internal disagreement between the Sunni and Shi'i parties Ali Bastami was spared a death sentence. See MacEoin 1982; Momen 1982.

7 They frequently commence with the Arabic vocative particle *ya* or its extended form *ya ayyuha al-*.

The final two paragraphs of the *Surat al-mulk* again underline the global scope of the Bab's 1844/1260 message. They are addressed to 'the servants of the All-Merciful' and to all the 'people of the earth'. In addressing the people of the earth later in another *surah* of the *Qayyum al-asma'* (No. 59), the Bab states that through the power of God his book and message has pervaded both earth and heaven. The 'Mighty Word of God', relating to the supreme messianic testimony, has been firmly established throughout the East and the West (*Qayyum al-asma'* 59: 234; cf. Bab 1976: 59-60).

Also worth noting at this point is the fact that in *Qayyum al-asma'* 53, God addresses the Bab with the following words:

Be ye patient O Qurraat al-'Ayn (loosely, 'the Apple of his Eye'), for God hath indeed pledged [guaranteed], to [establish] Thy might [sovereignty] over [all the countries (lit. 'izz'ala al-bilad) and over those that dwell therein' (*Qayyum al-asma'* 53: 208, cf. Bab 1976: 57).

In his early and partly lost, neo-qur'anic *Kitab al-ruh* (The Book of the Spirit, 1845, see MacEoin 1982: 61, 189), the Bab again has an address to all of 'the people of the earth'. Many later paragraphs of this work are also addressed to the worldly 'concourse' while within *surah* 2: there is an address to the assemblage of all of 'the *jinn* and men'.

In his *Persian Bayan* from 1848, *wahid* 5 (p. 158) the Bab stated that every past religion was fit to become universal and that it was the incompetence of the followers which prevented its universal adoption. A thorough reading of the Bab's many writings makes it obvious that he anticipated his 'pure religion' (*al-din al-khalis*, see *Qayyum al-asma'* 1: 4) becoming universal as he did that of the many successive future Babi messiah figures known as *man yuzhiru-hu Allah* ('Him whom God shall make manifest') (*Persian Bayan, wahid* 5; *Kitab-i panj sha'an* 314-15, cf. 397).

The anticipated Shi'i-Babi *jihad* predicted in numerous traditions of the Prophet Muhammad and the Imams, was never realized in worldly terms as discussed above. Neither 'kings' nor the 'sons of kings' rose up for any *jihad* episode called for in the Bab's first major

8 This has also been noted in a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effend dated Feb. 10<sup>th</sup> 1932 and cited in *Living the Life* (National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the UK 1972: 11).

book. Even the later Babi upheavals (1848-1852) appear never to have been actualized by a specific call of the Bab for *jihad*. While *jihad* activity remained a distinct, future theological possibility for the Bab, it never came to have any concrete, militaristic realization. As time went on the Bab tended more and more in the direction of a demythologized reading of Islamic apocalyptic (Lambden 1998).

From, at latest, the time of the Persian and Arabic Bayans and *Dal'il-i Sab'ih* (Seven Proofs, c. 1848), the Bab generally demythologized Islamic apocalyptic eschatology though he never abandoned the vision of the universal spread of his religion or that of the Babi messiah, the *man yuzhiru-hu Allah* (The One Whom God shall make manifest). However, he never totally ceased using *jihad* language until his execution in July 1850.

In what is probably the last substantial work of the Bab, the *Haykal al-din* (The Temple of Religion, 1850) the waging of a kind of holy war is spelled out when the Bab states that a future Babi king should, as a manifestation of the 'wrath of God' (*qahr Allah*), put all non-Babis to death. This drastic measure, which does not quite go along with the developed Baha'i image of the Bab, would in principle result in instant Babi globalization! It is, though, fully in line with the implications of one of the tablets of 'Abdu'l Baha.<sup>9</sup>

### The Abandoning of Jihad

Twenty years after the Bab's 1260/1844 messianic disclosure in late April-early May 1863, Baha'u'llah continued transforming Babism into a movement for peace realized without concrete holy war. As a devout Babi he argued in his *Kitab-i Iqan* (Book of Certitude, 1862), that the sovereignty of the Bab as the Qa'im was destined to be more like that of Jesus Christ than Muhammad. It was a 'spiritual', unworldly sovereignty not a concrete theocratic rule established by warmongering followers.

9 This tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha can be found in the compilation *Makatib-i Hazrat-i 'Abdu'l-Baha*, vol. 2: 266, and reads in part, 'In the Day of the manifestation of His Holiness the Exalted One (= the Bab) the striking of necks [cf. Qur'an 8: 12], the burning of books and treatises (*kutub va avraq*), the demolition of buildings and the universal slaughter (*qitl-i amm*) of all except such as believed and were steadfast was clearly enunciated.'

From the very outset of his post-Baghdad mission, Baha'u'llah abrogated outer *jihad* waged by means of the sword.

In a highly Arabized Persian letter of Baha'u'llah, dated 1293/1876 he speaks of three 'words' (principles) which he announced at the time of his 1863 Ridvan declaration on the outskirts of Baghdad. The very first word was the abrogation of Islamo-Babi *jihad*:

On the first day that the Ancient Beauty [Baha'u'llah] occupied the Most Great Throne in a garden (orchard, *bustan*) which has been designated Ridvan, the Tongue of Grandeur uttered three blessed proclamations (1) The first of them was that in this [Baha'i] theophany [dispensation] (*zuhur*) the [use of the sword (*sayf*) [in holy war] is put aside (*murtafi*).<sup>10</sup>

These fundamental aspects of post-1863 Baha'i doctrine were categorically affirmed and repeated in the decade later *Kitab-i Aqdas*, the 'Most Holy Book' of Baha'u'llah (1992: 76) and in numerous supplementary tablets. In the *Tablet of Bisharat*, the very first Glad-Tiding, like the first 'Word' uttered at the time of the Ridvan declaration, is as follows:

O people of the earth!

The first Glad-Tidings which the Mother Book hath, in this Most Great Revelation, imparted unto all the peoples of the world is that the law of holy war (*jihad*) hath been blotted out from the Book... (Baha'u'llah 1978: 21).

Distinctly echoing the Isaiah 2: 4, Baha'u'llah also desires, according to the *Bisharat*, that 'weapons of war [Isaiah = 'swords'] throughout the world may be converted into instruments of reconstruction [Isaiah = 'ploughshares'] and that strife and conflict may be so removed from the midst of men and shall learn war no more' (Baha'u'llah 1978: 23, cf. Isaiah 2: 4 and Micah 4: 1-2).

10 Refer to the Persian text reproduced in Iran National Baha'i Manuscript Collection, 44: 225f. The other two 'words' were (2) that no new theophanological claimant would appear for a millennium (1,000 years) and (3) at that time [of this Ridvan announcement] there was a divine self-revelation (*tajalli*) upon all of the Divine Names. On a fourth supplementary 'word', see further Iran National Baha'i Manuscript Collections, [Tehran] 44: 226.

For the former Babi, Baha'u'llah, the Bab's promise of the theocratic sovereignty of God can only be befittingly realized when wholly detached from militaristic 'holy war' activity. For Baha'is non-violent religion should be propagated through the peaceful means of religious exposition (Ar. *bayan*) characterized by spiritual *hikma* ('wisdom') such as would maintain peace and unity in the diversity of humankind. Thus, in Baha'u'llah's understanding of *jihad*, the (Islamic) non-militaristic 'greater' *jihad*, the conquering of the lower self, becomes foundational for the greater *jihad* propagated with utterance of *hikma*. This, Baha'is believe, can peacefully transform the whole world and all humankind.

A well-known Persian Baha'i prayer of Baha'u'llah underlines the relationship between human unity and the 'kingdom' returning to God. It reads:

God grant that the light of unity may envelop the whole earth and that the seal *al-mulk li-llahi* (the Kingdom is God's) may be stamped on the brow of all its peoples. (Baha'u'llah 1983: 11)<sup>11</sup>

In the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* Baha'u'llah confidently announces that through his presence the kingdom of God is realized independently of any *jihad* activity:

O kings of the earth! He Who is the sovereign Lord (*al-malik* lit. Ruling One, King) of all is come. The Kingdom is God's (*al-mulk li-lahi*), the omnipotent Protector, the Self-Subsisting. (Baha'u'llah 1992: 48; author's reference to the Arabic)

The above citation is centered upon words derived from the Arabic root M-L-K (indicative of possession, dominion and kingship, etc.) illustrates that the divine *mulk* (kingdom, rule), the sovereignty of God, had potentially or spiritually been realized in view of his messianic status as kingly Ruler and architect of a peace centered religion. The realized eschatology of Baha'u'llah presupposed that, independent of any militaristic *jihad* activity, the kingdom of God was universally realized through the establishment of his spiritual sovereignty.

11 Persian text in *Muntakhabati az Athar-i Hadrat-i Baha'u'llah*, Hofheim-Langenhaim: Baha'i Verlag, No. 7: 11.

### The Closing of the Circle

Though there are important pacifist aspects to the Babi religion, the Bab never actually abandoned the *jihad* concept as associated with the globalization of Babism under the messianic Qa'im, a future Babi king or as achieved by *man yuzhiru-hu Allah* (Him Whom God shall make manifest). It is a significant doctrine having connotations of universalism and divine victory throughout his mission.

From the outset Baha'u'llah categorically abrogated *jihad*, advocating instead a pacifist attitude to the propagation of (middle) Babism of the nascent Baha'i religion. However, he made this transformation to be both a continuation and a break with the Babi doctrines of *jihad* and globalism. In an Arabic Tablet to a certain (unidentified) 'Ali, partially published in the compilation *Ma'idih-yi Asmani*, Baha'u'llah states,

We indeed lifted up the *hukm al-sayf wa'l-sinan* (decree of the sword and spears) and We decreed that victory (*al-nasr*) be through exposition [of the sacred Word] (*al-bayan*) and that which comes out from the tongue. He indeed is the Sublime (*Ma'idih* 4:18) (Baha'u'llah 1972: 18).

Some 20 years after the Bab's communicating the *Surat al-mulk* (*Surah* of the Dominion), in the *Qayyum al-asma'*, Baha'u'llah penned his 70 page wholly Arabic *Surat al-muluk* (The *Surah* of the Kings). Its preamble begins on distinctly universal lines, with an address to 'the concourse of the kings of the earth', the *ma'shar al-muluk*, (Baha'u'llah 1968: 4). This probably alludes to the *Qayyum al-asma'* 1: 34, which also was addressed to 'the concourse of the kings', cf. above. Baha'u'llah further calls their attention to the 'story of 'Ali' (the Bab = 'Ali Muhammad Shirazi) who came with a 'glorious and weighty Book' (= the *Qayyum al-asma'*?). Baha'u'llah continues to admonish the kings as persons who failed to heed the Bab as the *Dhikr-Allah* (Remembrance of God), referring to the Bab after the terminology of the *Qayyum al-asma'*. The kings who rejected the Bab should not be heedless of the counsel of Baha'u'llah through whom true *mulk* 'sovereignty' has been established:

Beware not to deal unjustly with anyone that appealeth to you and entereth beneath your shadow. Walk ye in the fear of God, and be ye of them that lead a godly life. Rest not on your power, your armies, and treasures. Put your



whole trust and confidence in God, Who hath created you, and seek ye His help in all your affairs (*Surat al-muluk*, verse 10).

Many other passages in the writings of Baha'u'llah in one way or another bear upon the undesirability of *jihad*, the folly of warfare and the necessity of peace, collective security, and the means for the globalization of his religion. Only a few examples have been cited here.

The *Surat al-muluk* (The *Surah* of the Kings) stands as the early central proclamation of globalism among the writings of Baha'u'llah. The similarity of its title with the first *surah* of the *Qayyum al-asma'*, the *Surat al-mulk*, and the many references to the Bab's message in 1845, show that Baha'u'llah's globalism is deeply imbedded in Shi'i and Babi eschatology, while at the same time it radically transcends the idea of globalisation by the sword.

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