

## Celestial Fire

# Bahá'u'lláh as the Messianic Theophany of the Divine Fire (*átar, ádar, átash*) in Zoroastrianism<sup>1</sup>

Farshid Kazemi

Open your inner eye, that ye may behold the celestial  
Fire (*'átash-i yazdan*).<sup>2</sup>

– Bahá'u'lláh, *Tabernacle of Unity*, 68

## Introduction

The French Islamo-Iranologist and philosopher Henry Corbin (d. 1978), in his four-volume magnum opus *En Islam Iranian* (In Iranian Islam) whilst discussing the Zoroastrian motif of the divine Fire in the works of the Persian philosopher Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi (d. 1191), called al-Maqtul (the Slain) and the Shaykh al-Ishráq (the Master of Illumination), wrote:

Just as each species is the theurgy and image of a Light among the victorial Lights, a Light from which they emanate and which governs them, so also Fire, the luminous Fire (*nar dhat al-nur*), not the infernal Fire, is the theurgy of the Archangel Ordibehest (one of the seven amahraspands, Avestan Arta-Vahishta). Movement and heat ... are the manifestational form (*mazhar*) of the Light: they have no other cause than the Light. However, they reach their highest degree in the Fire.<sup>3</sup>

In the last portion of this terse passage, Corbin observes that it is “movement and heat,” that “are the manifestational forms of Light,” and that “they have no other cause than the Light,” but that “they reach their highest degree in the Fire.” This insight of Corbin provides an ideal framework for our discussion of the motif of the Mazdean celestial Fire (and other Zoroastrian motifs) in the Bahá’í scriptural corpus, as it precisely maps the complex coordinates of the various components of this topos, namely the dialectic of movement and heat, light and fire.

One of the foundational philosophical premises at the heart of Bahá’í ontology is that the structure of *being* and *existence* (*wujud*) is one of *process* and *becoming* rather than static and fixed.<sup>4</sup> Thus ‘being’ as such is ‘becoming’, and is manifested in history in a dialectical relationship, of existence and essence, matter and form. This foundational vision of a dynamic and dialectical ontological *process*,<sup>5</sup> in the writings of the Iranian prophet Mirzá Husayn-‘Alí Núrí, Bahá’u’lláh (d. 1892) – the founder of the Bahá’í Faith – is often typified by the symbolism of Fire (New Persian *atash*), which via its attribute/quality ‘heat’ (*hararat*), is the cause of motion or movement (*harakat*) and hence the very foundation of the world of existence. Among the various symbolic imaginaries, Fire, due to its dynamic nature, is one of the symbols of the Primal Will (*mashiyyat awaliyya*) in the Bahá’í writings, the active and dynamic agent (*fa’íl*) through which all things/beings come into existence in a perpetual or processual creation.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the greatest mytho-symbol at the heart of Bahá’í metaphysics *par excellence* is none other than this Primal Will – which is the pre-existential reality of the prophets, termed Manifestation(s) of God (*mazhar iláhî*) in Bahá’í lexicon, (also variously called in the texts as the Command (*amr*) or Word of God (*kalimat allah*, Greek *logos*) – who is at once both the perpetual motive force behind the genesis of the cosmos (cosmogony) and the unfoldment of sacred history or hierohistory (termed in Bahá’í lexicon as *progressive revelation*) as such.<sup>7</sup>

In many of his significant tablets to Zoroastrians, Bahá’u’lláh makes a startling and profound eschatological enunciation, namely that he is the messianic theophany of the divine Fire (*atash*) foretold in the Mazdean scriptures.<sup>8</sup> This Fire which is at

once the symbol and theurgy of Truth (*asha/arta*) in Zoroastrianism, is according to Bahá'u'lláh, manifested (*mazhar*) in his person; thus effectively enunciating that he is the messianic theophany or the locus of the manifestation (*mazhar*) of the primordial divine Fire in Mazdeanism. This enunciation, however profound, forms only the first layer of his spiritual and divine hermeneutics (*ta'wil iláhi*) (see below), as Bahá'u'lláh in one hermeneutical turn deploys both a cosmogonic and messianico-eschatological register to the Mazdean Fire, by equating the Primal Will (*mashiyyat awaliyya*) with the celestial Fire in Zoroastrianism. In other words, the Primal Will whose symbol is this celestial Fire in Zoroastrianism has appeared in the 'person' of Bahá'u'lláh.

In Zoroastrianism, this divine Fire (*átar*) is personified as a primordial being or divinity in the oldest portion of the Avesta (Zoroastrian scriptures), namely the *Gáthás*. It is in the Avesta that this Fire is endowed with the profoundly theophanic epithet entitled, "the Son of Ahura Mazda," which is at once co-extensive with the divine Truth (*asha*) (there is one instance in which they are co-terminus) and forms with it a *syzygy*, a twin, or dualitude. This Fire is also intimately connected to another profoundly sublime concept in Mazdaism, namely to the luminous light of *Khvarnah* (literally 'Glory'), the Light of Glory or Divine Glory. It is precisely this *Khvarnah*, as we shall see, which is linked to the very name of Baha'(-Allah), apropos his claim to be the theophanic locus or manifestation (*mazhar*) of the Mazdean Fire, and the very embodiment of the *farr iláhi* or the "Divine Glory." This is precisely the same *Khvarnah* that shone resplendent in the prophet Zarathustra himself, and it is the *Araeo Glorea* of the Mazdean messianic figure *par excellence*, the savior called in the texts – Saoshyant (He who will bring benefit), who is at times referred to as, "He who hath the appearance of the Sun." It is the Saoshyant, possessed of the fiery *Khvarnah*, who will usher in the renovation, the transformation and transfiguration of the world at the end of time, "the making brilliant of Creation" or *farshokart / farshigard* (Avestan *frasho-kereti*, Pahlavi *frashegird*). Thus according to Zoroastrian apocalyptic imaginary, it is precisely the divine Fire (*atar*) and Truth (*asha*) that shall be 'embodied' or "made flesh" as it were, in a 'person' at 'the end of time', and who shall judge

the world by means of his luminous and spiritual radiance, symbolized at once as the Fire and the *Khvarnah*, and shall be victorious (*Vahram/Bahram*) over the forces of darkness or the Lie (*druj*), through the forces of light or the Truth (*asha*).

While Bahá'í scholarly literature on the Zoroastrian apocalyptic imaginary have largely focused on Bahá'u'lláh as the appearance of the messianic figure called Shah Bahram Varjivand in some Pahlavi texts,<sup>9</sup> yet the apocalyptic expectation of the coming of the luminous and divine Fire (*atar*) in the *Gáthás* and later Zoroastrian sources (such as the Pahlavi texts), and their relation to Bahá'u'lláh's messianic claims have effectively gone unnoticed and remain a virtual *terra incognita* (See Below).<sup>10</sup> Indeed, in light of the tremendous importance that this theme has upon the study of Bahá'u'lláh's messianic self-conception and its relation to Zoroastrian apocalyptic imaginary, it is surprising that no studies have as yet appeared in elaborating the significance of this motif (and other constellation of motifs) and its deployment in Bahá'u'lláh's *oeuvre*.<sup>11</sup> In this study, I will rely on a number of translated and previously untranslated Persianate tablets of Bahá'u'lláh to Zoroastrians, where he deploys a mystico-messianic hermeneutics (*ta'wil*) of the Zoroastrian scriptures, in which he proclaims at once to be the cosmogonic primal Fire (who is the cause of creation), and the messianic epiphany of the Mazdean apocalyptic or eschatological Fire (*atar*) in *person*. I will undertake my analysis in light of some of the relevant material from the *Gáthás*, the Younger Avesta, and later Zoroastrian scriptural corpora, such as the Pahlavi texts, that point to this eschatological expectation and cosmogonic function of the Zoroastrian divine Fire.

## Bahá'u'lláh as the Theophany of the Divine Fire (*átar*) in Zoroastrianism

Last night, from the cypress branch, the nightingale sang, in Pahlavi notes, the lesson of spiritual stations.<sup>12</sup>

– Hafiz (d. 1389/90)

In a collection of the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Zoroastrians called *Yárán-i Pársí* (Zoroastrian or Persian Friends), we find a few of the many tablets Bahá'u'lláh wrote to Zoroastrians and believers of Zoroastrian heritage, throughout his ministry. Such tablets as the tablet to the Zoroastrian notable Mánakjí Saḥib (*Lawh-i-Mánakjí Saḥib*) and the Tablet of the Seven Questions (*Lawh-i-Haft Pursish*),<sup>13</sup> – which were composed mostly in the so-called “pure Persian” or *pársí-ye sáreh* – are perhaps among the outstanding examples of the Persianate tablets of Bahá'u'lláh.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, there is an evident intertextuality between these works of Bahá'u'lláh and Zoroastrian sacred texts, though they are more phenomenological in scope, rather than citations and references to specific scriptural texts. It is within the larger cycle of these Zoroastrian tablets, that we often encounter Bahá'u'lláh alluding to himself with characteristic Zoroastrian symbols and motifs, such as the celestial or heavenly Fire (*atash, nar*), Light (*roshanaee, nur*), Radiance (*partow*) and Solar imagery (*khorsheed, aftar, shams*), among other symbols of divine luminosity, illumination, and radiance, so often encountered in Zoroastrian and Manichean (the so-called ‘Religion of Light’) texts. Indeed, it is at the beginnings of many of these tablets that there is an extended doxology or doxophany, in which the reality of the Word of God (*kalimat allah*), or the Primal Will of God (*mashiyyat awaliyya*) – the pre-existent reality of the Manifestation – is alluded to symbolically as the Primal Light, the Primal Fire, the pre-eternal Sun.

In many of these Zoroastrian tablets, Bahá'u'lláh explicitly identifies himself with the Mazdean sacred Fire and its apocalyptic or messianic advent. Bahá'u'lláh states “open your inner eye, that ye may behold the celestial Fire (*‘atash-i yazdan*, literally the ‘Fire of God’) [i.e., himself].”<sup>15</sup> Indicating that organs of spiritual apperception are required, rather than sense perception, to behold this celestial Fire hypostasized and personified as his-*self*. In another emblematic passage Bahá'u'lláh writes:

Today the Sun of the Word of God (*goftar-i yazdan*) is resplendent above the horizon of Utterance (*bayan*) and with an emanation (*tajallí*) from its divine emanations,

the heart of the people of the world are made refulgent and luminous. The Fire which imparteth Love (*'átash-i mohabat afrooz*), is today manifest and resplendent in the world [i.e., himself].<sup>16</sup>

Here Bahá'u'lláh deploys Solar symbolism whilst alluding to the pre-existential Word of God (*goftar-i yazdan*), evoking the centrality of the Sun and its imagery in Zoroastrian as well as Manichean literary corpora, and states that the Fire (*atash*) from which love emanates or which is the source of love, is today made manifest and shines resplendent in the world through his being. In another hermeneutical turn, Bahá'u'lláh whilst deploying the motifs of light and darkness, emblematic of Zoroastrianism, refers to himself as the messianic appearance of the Mazdean Light. In *Lawh-i-Mánakjí Sahib* he writes, "At a time when darkness had encompassed the world, the ocean of divine favor surged and His Light was made manifest, that the doings of men might be laid bare. This, verily, is that Light which hath been foretold in the heavenly scriptures [i.e., Zoroastrian scriptures]."<sup>17</sup> Indeed, here Bahá'u'lláh by referring to himself as the Light that became manifest whilst darkness reigned, at once evokes Zoroastrian symbolisms of light and darkness, which simultaneously recalls the imagery of the Johannian Logos, "In him [λόγος, logos] was life and the life was the light [φως, phos] of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1: 4-6, 9-10). The Logos of John itself has been influenced by the logos doctrine of Philo and Heraclitus, whose conception of Logos as Fire has clear Zoroastrian influences. (For further relations of the relation of the logos to fire and light, see below.)

Perhaps one of the most significant hermeneutics of Mazdean Fire found in the Bahá'í textual corpus that must be mentioned here, and which as we shall see profoundly corresponds to one of the symbolic registers of Fire in the Zoroastrian scriptures (see below), is that the Holy Spirit (*ruh al-quds*), also termed the Most Great Spirit (*ruh al-'azam*), is identified with the Zoroastrian Sacred Fire. What is of profound interest for our theme is that in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh the visionary logic and symbolic imagery of the Holy Spirit, is personified in a feminine figure called, the "Maid of Heaven" (*huriyya* or

*huriyyat al-firdows*). It is this heavenly Maiden, symbolized at once with the Mazdean Fire, who appeared to Bahá'u'lláh in an oneiric encounter whilst in prison, in the so-called Black Pit (*siyah chal*), which according to Bahá'í liturgical calendar, is the moment of the birth of his divine revelation and mission. Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith (*wali amrullah*) writes, “the “Most Great Spirit,” as designated by Himself [Bahá'u'lláh], and symbolized in the *Zoroastrian*, the *Mosaic*, the *Christian*, and *Muhammadan Dispensations* by the *Sacred Fire*, the *Burning Bush*, the *Dove* and the *Angel Gabriel* respectively, descended upon, and revealed itself, personated by a “Maiden,” to the agonized soul of Bahá'u'lláh (emphasis added)” [GPB 238-239]. In another similar passage Shoghi Effendi notes that the Most Great Spirit (*ruh al-'azam*) is, “that same Spirit which, in the *Zoroastrian*, the *Mosaic*, the *Christian*, and *Muhammadan Dispensations* had been symbolized by the ‘*Sacred Fire*’, the ‘*Burning Bush*’, the ‘*Dove*’, and the ‘*Angel Gabriel*’” (emphasis added) [CF 100]. It is precisely this sacred fire, which in *Zoroastrianism* is the Holy Spirit, and is personified in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh as a Maiden, a luminous being of light, the heavenly ‘Twin’ or *alter ego* of Bahá'u'lláh. Thus the Mazdean Fire and the Maid of Heaven are co-terminous and refer to the same phenomenon, or more precisely *noumenon*, in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh, namely to the Holy Spirit (*ruh al-quds*), and the Most Great Spirit (*ruh al-'azam*). Indeed, it is this “Sacred Fire,” which in *Zoroastrianism* is identified as the Holy Spirit, and who is personified in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh as a Maiden, and typified by the feminine figure of *Daena* in *Mazdaism*, and as the Maiden of Light in *Manichaeism* (see below).<sup>18</sup>

Perhaps an early precedent to Bahá'u'lláh's self-identification with the *Zoroastrian* sacred Fire may be found in *Manichaeism*, the religion of the Iranian Gnostic-prophet Mani (d. 277), the so-called “Apostle of Light.”<sup>19</sup> Indeed, there is a profound resemblance and correspondence between Bahá'u'lláh's own multi-messianic claims and Mani's prophetic claims:

Wisdom and deeds have always from time to time been brought to mankind by the messengers of God. So in one age they have been brought by the messenger called

Buddha to India, in another by Zardusht [Zarathustra] to Persia, in another by Jesus to the West. Thereupon this revelation has come down and this prophecy has appeared in the form of myself, Mani, the envoy of the true God in the Land of Babylon.<sup>20</sup>

In the religious literature of Manicheism, which was composed in several languages, including Middle Persian, we find an interesting identification of the Living Self/Soul (Middle Persian *griv zindag*) to the Zoroastrian sacred Fire. In a Manichean text called the Recitation of the Living Self (*Gwysn 'yg Gryw Zyndg*), the Living Self states:

I am the fire that Zarathustra kindled  
 And he bade the righteous to kindle.  
 From the seven consecrated, sweet smelling fires  
 Bring to me, the Fire, purified fuel.<sup>21</sup>

Concerning this hymn Klimkeit states that, "it interprets the sacred water and sacred fire of the Zoroastrian cult in a Gnostic sense."<sup>22</sup> Here the Living Self identifies itself with the Zoroastrian fire, and proclaims to be the appearance of the sacred Fire consecrated by Zarathustra. In one of the Hymns to the Living Soul, Mani himself is identified with the Living Soul/Self, "Praise to you, Living Soul, holy, holy, Lord Mar Mani!"<sup>23</sup> Indeed, Mani is often given a lofty and theophanic status in the Manichean writings. In the Bema hymns, Mani is addressed as the (beautiful) "form that was created by the Word" (of the Father of Light)... as the divine Word that has assumed visible, incarnate form."<sup>24</sup> This same Living Soul/Self in Manichean myth is also referred to in various ways as the Cross of Light, the Five Elements or Limbs, the Soul, the Youth, and the Suffering Jesus (*Jesus Pitiblis*). There are three figures of Jesus in the Manichaen writings, they are, Jesus the Splendour, the Suffering Jesus (*Jesus Pitiblis*), and Jesus the Messiah, or the prophet of history. The relationship of the three figures of Jesus in Manichean writings, are not always clear, and at times, they are interchangeable with each other. Mary Boyce notes that, "the three concepts of Jesus are not always kept



wholly distinct.”<sup>25</sup> Indeed, Bahá'u'lláh in his vast corpus of writings often refers to himself as the “Youth.” In the Arabic *Lawh Mallah al-Quds* or Tablet of the Holy Mariner, in which the Maiden figures prominently, Bahá'u'lláh refers to himself as *al-fata al-'iraqi* or the “Iraqi Youth” (“the Arabian Youth,” in Shoghi Effendi’s rendering), and in the Persian tablet of the same name, this title is given its full force in terms of the Persian character of the “Youth,” by the opening words of the tablet, “He is the non-Arab, the Persian, the Iraqi” (*huwwa al-'ajami al-farsi al-'iraqi*) (see below).<sup>26</sup>

In the Manichaen writings, the Maiden of Light, the Suffering Jesus, the heavenly Twin, the Light/Great Nous, and the divine Glory (*farrah*), namely the Zoroastrian Khvarnah, all symbolize and designate the same reality, namely Mani’s angelic Twin, his heavenly self or *alter ego*. In a Hymn of Praise to Mani it is written:

We bend our knees in deep veneration, we worship and praise the mighty God, the praised King and Lord of the Worlds of Light, worthy of honor, according to whose wish and will you (Mani), our exalted God, did come to us.

We worship Jesus, the Lord, the Son of Greatness, who has sent you, blessed one, to us. We worshipt the exalted Maiden (of Light), the bright Twin, who was your comrade and companion in every battle.

We worship your great Glory (*farrah*), our Father, Apostle of Light, oh Mani, oh Lord!<sup>27</sup>

In this hymn the Maiden of Light, the Twin, and the divine Glory (*farrah*) are identified with Mani, the “Apostle of Light.” Indeed we encounter this Maiden of Light again and again, as the heavenly Self or ‘Twin’ (*syzygos*) of Mani. In a Parthian prayer to Mani, we read:

... Great Maitreya, noble Messenger of the gods, interpreter of the religion, ... Jesus – Maiden of Light, Mar Mani, Jesus – Maiden of Light – Mar Mani, have [mercy] upon me, oh merciful Bringer of Light!<sup>28</sup>

The imagery of the “Maid of Heaven” (*huriyya al-firdows*) the personification of the Holy Spirit in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh is also often filled with images of light (*nur*), splendor (*munawar*) and illumination (*ishraq*). Indeed, the Maiden of Light, which is Mani's heavenly Twin, and the Mazdean Fire, are identical to the Maid of Heaven in Bahá'u'lláh's oeuvre and acts as a signifier for his heavenly Twin or *alter ego*. Bahá'u'lláh recounts the moment of divine revelation and the epiphany of the Holy Spirit, personified as a “Maiden” in this manner:

While engulfed in tribulations I heard a most wondrous, most sweet voice, calling above My head. Turning My face, I beheld a Maiden – the embodiment of the remembrance of [the name of] My Lord – suspended in the air before Me. So rejoiced was she in her very soul that her countenance shone with the ornament of the good-pleasure of God, and her cheeks glowed with the brightness of the All-Merciful. Betwixt earth and heaven she was raising a call which captivated the hearts and minds of men. She was imparting to both my inward and outward being tidings which rejoiced my soul, and the souls of God's honored servants. Pointing with her finger unto My head, she addressed all who are in heaven and all who are on earth, saying “By God! This is the Best-Beloved of the worlds, and yet ye comprehend not, and the power of His sovereignty within you, could ye but understand... [SLH 185]

Thus, it may be said that the Manichean Maiden of Light, and the Mazdean celestial Fire, are therefore conceptually co-extensive with the ‘Maid of Heaven’ in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh,<sup>29</sup> a reality designated in his oeuvre by various symbolic imaginaries such as *inter alia*, the Primal Will (*mashiyat awaliyya*), First Intellect (*aql al-awwal*), Word of God (*kalimat allah*), Command of God (*amr allah*) and the Holy Spirit (*ruh al-quds*), all designating the same divine reality and sublime entity. Indeed, the source of Mani's revelation is designated as his ‘Twin’ or heavenly self, but has also been referred to as the “Living Paraclete” who appeared to him and gave him the knowledge of all things, as it states in the *Kephalaia*, “Thus did

the Paraclete disclose to me all that has been and all that will be.” As there seems to be an apparent discrepancy between these figures, namely the twin, and the Living Paraclete, Widengern states, “here the celestial Messenger is called the ‘Living Paraclete.’ Western sources say that Mani described himself as the Paraclete Predicated by Jesus in the Fourth Gospel. On the basis of the foregoing, this assertion cannot be impugned. But, how can it be then that it is the so-called ‘twin’ who comes to Mani as his higher self? Precisely because the Living Paraclete, who is the Holy Ghost [Spirit], is the same as the ‘twin.’”<sup>30</sup> Here again the Living Paraclete, the Twin, and the Holy Spirit, are identified with Mani’s own higher self.<sup>31</sup> The appearance of the Living Paraclete which revealed the knowledge of all that has been and all that will be also recalls a description of the revelatory source of Bahá’u’lláh’s knowledge of all things, which he states appears to him “in the form of a tablet”:

Thou knowest full well that We perused not the books which men possess and We acquired not the learning current amongst them, and yet whenever We desire to quote the sayings of the learned and of the wise, presently there will appear before the face of thy Lord in the form of a tablet all that which hath appeared in the world and is revealed in the Holy Books and Scriptures. Thus do We set down in writing that which the eye perceiveth. Verily His knowledge encompasseth the earth and the heavens.<sup>32</sup>

Indeed, this passage recalls the Irano-gnostic heritage discussed above, and this description in Bahá’u’lláh’s oeuvre is another symbolic epithet of the Maid of Heaven, the Primal Fire, the Holy Spirit, all designating his heavenly self, his twin, or *alter ego*. In an important passage the convergence of all these symbolic imaginaries for the same spiritual reality are further illuminated by Bahá’u’lláh:

Whenever I chose to hold My peace and be still, lo, the Voice of the Holy Spirit, standing on My right hand, aroused Me, and the Most Great Spirit appeared before My face, and Gabriel overshadowed Me, and the Spirit

of Glory stirred within My bosom, bidding Me arise and  
break My silence. [GPB 100]

The motif of the appearance of a 'suspended' written tablet also figures in the celebrated Syriac or Coptic Gnostic fable, the *Hymn or Song of the Pearl*, composed sometime in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE. The *Song* recounts the life of a Parthian Prince, designated as the "Youth" (like Mani and Bahá'u'lláh)<sup>33</sup> who 'descends' to Egypt, at the request of his royal parents, to acquire the pearl which is guarded by a fierce dragon. He strives in vein to keep his identity a secret from the dwellers of this foreign land. Whilst in the inn where he stays, he is given an extremely rich meal after which he falls into a deep slumber. Soon the tidings of his son's predicament, reaches his father and the King calls the magistrates and princes to compose a tablet with a sign and seal by the feduatories, the Queen and the King. The tablet, inscribed on fine silk assumes the form of a marvelous bird, an eagle/falcon<sup>34</sup> whose melodious voice awakens the Prince from his sleep:<sup>35</sup>

And serving as messenger,  
the letter was a letter sealed by the king with his right  
hand  
against the evil children of Babylon and the savage  
demons of the Sarbug labyrinth.  
It rose up in the form of an eagle, the king of all winged  
fowl;  
it flew and alighted beside me and became speech.  
At its voice and the sound of its rustling  
I awoke and rose from my sleep.  
I took it, and kissed it, broke its seal, and read.  
And the words written on my heart were the letter for  
me to read.<sup>36</sup>

Here the letter/tablet, which symbolically appeared as an eagle, is the very words written in the heart of the Prince. The letter/tablet is the Princes' own self or twin. Towards the end

of the *Song*, when the Princely “youth” sets out upon his return voyage to his heavenly homeland, the letter accompanies him much like the Daena in Zoroastrianism:

On my way the letter that awakened me was laying like a  
women on the road.

And as she awakened me with her voice so she guided  
me with her light as if she were an oracle.<sup>37</sup>

Indeed, the Mazdean parallels with the figure of Daena – the feminine angelic figure or “maiden,” that accompanies the soul on its post-mortem celestial voyage – are clear in this text. Thus, in a similar vein the tablet which appears to Bahá’u’lláh is his own *self* or heavenly twin, and at once signifies the Maid of Heaven, the Holy Spirit, the Most Great Spirit, the Pen (*al-qalam*), all of which act as symbolic signifiers for Bahá’u’lláh’s own self. Indeed, in an *invocatio* or prayer Bahá’u’lláh refers to his heavenly and pre-existential reality as an archetypal divine sealed book that speaks:

This, verily, is the Day wherewith Thy Scriptures, and Thy Books, and Thy Tablets, have been adorned. And He Who now speaketh is, in truth, the Well-guarded Treasure, and the Hidden Secret, and the Preserved Tablet [*al-lawh al-mahfuz*], and the Impenetrable Mystery, and the Sealed Book [*al-kitab al-mamhur*].<sup>38</sup>

Thus, Bahá’u’lláh by referring to himself as the “Sealed Book,” recalls the sealed letter of the King, which appeared in the form of an eagle/falcon to the “youth,” the Parthian Prince in the *Song of the Pearl*. As we shall see the symbol of the eagle or falcon will have further hermeneutical ramifications in the writings of Bahá’u’lláh and its association with the Khvarnah in Zoroastrianism (see below).

The Angel or ‘Heavenly Twin,’ or *syzygos* of Mani, which the *Firhist* of Ibn al-Nadim (d. 995) in Arabic calls *al-Taum* (derived from the Syriac word *tauma*, meaning ‘twin’)<sup>39</sup> appeared to him twice in his life, first at the age of 12, and then at the age of 24. This topos of two, doubling, or twin revelations is precisely repeated in the prophetic career of Bahá’u’lláh. Bausani refers

to this motif of the twin revelations whilst discussing the two “revelations” of Mani, and notes that, “the ‘double’ initial revelation [is] recorded in a number of religions, including the recent Bahá’ism...”<sup>40</sup> Shoghi Effendi, who often deploys the term “twin” in many of his English letters and communications to the Bahá’í world, in one of his talks points out the mysteries of the appearance of *twin* or two sacred personages, structures, and events in the Babi-Bahá’í revelations and states, “In the Cause of God everything is twin.”<sup>41</sup> Indeed, the motif of twin revelations of Bahá’u’lláh, one hidden (*batin*) and one open (*zahir*), is consonant with this symbolic register of the motif of “twins” in Irano-gnostic universe of thought. The first hidden epiphany, as we have seen, occurred in the *siyah chal* (Black Pit) dungeon in Tehran in 1853, and the second open revelation occurred in 1863 in the Garden of Ridvan outside Baghdad. The two 12 days (12+12=24) pertaining to the commencement of Bahá’u’lláh’s revelation and his open declaration at the garden of Ridvan, are significant as they fall into this same symbolic motif of the “twin.” Indeed, according to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá the doubling of 12 from previous religious cycles to 24, signifies the “greatness” of the Bahá’í revelation, and in his exegesis of the twenty-four elders in the visionary Apocalypse of John of Patmos states that, “in this glorious manifestation there are twenty-four [elders], double the number of all the others, for the greatness of this manifestation requires it” [SAQ 57]. In this precise sense, the Bahá’í revelation may be termed the religion of the “twin” *par excellence*.

Another precedent to Bahá’u’lláh’s claim to be the theophany of the Mazdean celestial Fire may be found among the Nusayris. Indeed, among the esoteric Shi’ite sect of Nusayris (also called the Alawis), who are often considered to be part of the so-called “*ghulat*” (extreme Shi’ites) and whose doctrines display clear Zoroastrian influences, the figure of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, the cousin and son-in-law of the prophet, and the first Shi’i Imam, is identified with the heavenly Fire in Zoroastrianism. Indeed, the Nusayris believe in seven manifestations of God from Able to ‘Ali, which is said to have taken place in seven cycles or periods, namely the cycle of Abraham, the Arab, the cycle of Muhammad and the Persian cycle in which ‘Ali manifested himself. In Persian Nusayri texts ‘Ali is entitled *Numayr*, which

means fire.<sup>42</sup> In Nusayri texts such as *Risala fi al-Siaqa* by Al-Khasibi, it is written that ‘Ali had previously manifested himself to the Persians:

The Most High [‘Ali] deposited his wisdom with the Persians [i.e., Zoroastrians] and then left, being pleased with them. He promised to return to them. He is the one who said that God Almighty has deposited His mystery with you [the Arabs], manifested Himself amongst you, and destined you to receive it. But you have lost it while the Persians have preserved it even after its disappearance, by means of fire and light, in which He manifested Himself.<sup>43</sup>

Here ‘Ali is associated with fire and light, through which he manifested himself among Zoroastrian Persians, and through which, namely the Mazdean fire, his mystery was preserved. Another Nusayri author al-Tabarani states:

The Persians have sanctified fire, from which they await the manifestation of the deity. This manifestation will take place among the Persians, for they never cease to keep lighted the fire from which they await this same manifestation, and the accomplishment of the promise of the deity in that event.<sup>44</sup>

Thus, according to these Nusayri texts the manifestation of God will take place among the Persians, and it will be through the fire, which is identified with ‘Ali. This has obvious and clear resonances with Bahá’u’lláh’s own claim to be the manifestation of the Mazdean Fire, and clearly reaches back to the same Iranognostic spiritual universe. It is possible that Bahá’u’lláh, during the Istanbul/Edirne period in Ottoman Turkey (1863-1867-8), and the ‘Akka period in Palestine (1868-92), may have come into contact with members of the Nusayri community, who largely live in Syria, as well as in Turkey and Palestine. Thus, the Nusayris preserve within their doctrines elements of Iranian and Zoroastrian thought, and conceive of the eschatological promise of the manifestation of the divine Fire among the Persians – a claim perfectly exemplified in Bahá’u’lláh’s own claims to be the manifestation and theophany of the Mazdean Fire (*atash*).

Fire and its consequent light, have often symbolized the divine theophany or epiphany of God and Divine self-manifestation and self-revelation in many religions. In the Hebrew scriptures Fire is referred to in the Sinaitic episode, where God, in an Angelophany (or theophany), “appeared in a flame of fire [*esh*] out of the midst of the bush” [Ex 3:2]; in another instance God went before the Israelites, “by day in a pillar of cloud [*ammud 'anan*]... And by night in a pillar of fire [*ammud 'esh*] to give them light” [Ex 13:21].<sup>45</sup> Intimately linked to this concept of Cloud (Hebrew *'anan*, Arabic *'amma*)<sup>46</sup> and Fire is the concept of the Divine Presence or *Shekinah* with that of God’s Glory (*kevod*, also spelled *kavod*),<sup>47</sup> “Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting, for the cloud rested [*shakhan*] upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle” [Ex 40:35]. In another instance in Ezekiel’s vision of God’s Glory (*kevod*), we read, “upon the likeness of the throne,” “was a likeness with the appearance of a man,” and “with the appearance of the fire with brightness all around,” “this was the appearance of the likeness of the Glory [*kabed*] of the Lord” [Ezk 1:26-28]. Hence in the Hebrew Bible the Glory of God or *kevod elohim*, is likened to the appearance of a man, who has the appearance and luminosity of fire. Jackson notes the striking similarity of the Persian *Khvarnah*, with the *Shekinah*, stating, “The doctrine of this flaming majesty [*khvarnah*] has an analogy in the *Shekhina* of the Jews.”<sup>48</sup> It must be recalled here that such texts as the Book of Ezekiel were composed in Second Temple Judaism after the Babylonian exile, and when the Jews had come into contact with Persians and had been living under Persian rule for some time.<sup>49</sup>

In the New Testament, Jesus, also states, “I shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with Fire [*pyr*]” (Mt 3:11, Lk 3:16) and the book of Hebrews declares, “for our God is a consuming fire” [Heb 12:29], and in the visionary narrative of the Apocalypse of John of Patmos, which as we shall see has explicit Zoroastrian influences, Jesus in his parousia is envisioned with an imagery of fire not unlike Ezekiel’s vision of God’s Glory, “His eyes were as a flame of fire,” and “his name is called the Word [*logos*] of God” [Rev 19:12] and “fire came down from God out of heaven” [Rev 20:9]. Here the Logos is depicted with the imagery of Fire, characteristic of Zoroastrianism. Scholars



such as David Flusser have noted that the Apocalypse of John has explicit Zoroastrian influences, especially from a Judeo-Greek apocalyptic text or apocalypse called the *Oracle of Hystaspas*, which has its provenance in a Zoroastrian source or sources. Indeed, many references to the topos of Fire in John's Apocalypse have their origin in the apocalyptic text of the *Oracle of Hystaspes*.<sup>50</sup> The *Oracle of Hystaspes* is a Jewish apocalypse written in Greek, largely transmitted by the Church Father Lactantius in his *Divine Institutions*, and has been demonstrated to have a clear Zoroastrian provenance and to have influenced to a great degree the Apocalypse of John of Patmos. Indeed, there are several references in which the Fire symbolism of the *Oracle of Hystaspes* has clear parallels with the Apocalypse of John, and point to their Zoroastrian heritage. For instance the final apocalyptic end described in the *Oracle* is accompanied by fire, as it states, "Cities shall be utterly overthrown, and shall perish; not only *with fire* and the sword..."<sup>51</sup> Also, at the apocalyptic end fire emanates from "a great prophet" (*magnus propheta*) who is sent forth from God, and "if anyone shall endeavour to injure him, *fire shall come forth out of his mouth* and shall burn that man. By these prodigies and powers he shall turn many to the worship of God."<sup>52</sup> In another instance, speaking of the "coming of the King (*regis*)" – the messianic figure in the text whom the early Christians such as Lactantius considered to be Jesus – who "shall descend with a company of angels to the middle of the earth (*in medium terrae*, i.e. Jerusalem) and there shall go before him an *unquenchable fire*..."<sup>53</sup> Yet, another clear Zoroastrian parallel is the evocation of the followers of truth (*ashvan*) vs. the wicked or followers of the lie (*dregvan*) at the end of time, "When these things shall so happen, then the righteous and the followers of truth shall separate themselves from the wicked..."<sup>54</sup> Finally, in the book of Acts of the Apostles, we read, "And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" [Acts 1:3-5]. The "tongues of fire," act as a signifier for the illumination of the Holy Spirit descending upon the hearts of the apostles.

In the Qur'an as well, Fire and Light – which is an attribute of fire – has been employed in describing God. The famed

'Light verse' is perhaps the most emblematic example of the association of light with God.

God is the light (*nur*) of the heavens and the earth. The likeness of His light is a niche within which is a lamp in glass, the glass like unto a shining star lit from a blessed tree, an olive, neither of the East nor of the West, its oil nearly glowing though fire had touched it not. Light upon Light. God guides to His light whomsoever He wills.<sup>55</sup>

In another passage of the Qur'an it states in one instance "the Fire of God (*nar allah*) kindled roaring over the hearts covered down upon them, in columns (*'amadin*) outstretched" [Qur'an 104:6-8]. Note again the reference to the Columns (*'amadin*) of Fire, which we saw earlier in the Hebrew Bible. In early esoteric Shi'ite traditions attributed to the Imams this imagery of light associated with the Prophet Muhammad or the *Nur Muhammadi* is extended to the whole complex of the motif of the Fourteen Pure Ones, the Prophet Muhammad, Imam 'Ali and all the Imams, as well as the daughter of the Prophet, Fatima, namely the pleroma of the Fourteen Pure Ones (*chahárdah ma'súmín*) – a complex that has such close parallels with the light imagery of Zoroastrian and Manichean texts, that their influence on these early traditions (*ahadith/akhbar*) cannot be contested. In Twelver Shi'ism the promised one, the Qa'im/Mahdi, in the hermeneutics of the Imams is interpreted as the Fire. In a Tradition attributed to Ja'far al-Şádiq, in the hermeneutics of the first part of Qur'an 74:31, {We have appointed only angels to preside over the Fire (*má ja'alná aşháb al-nár illá malá'ika*)}, the sixth Imam stated, "The Fire is the Qa'im (*fa-l-nár huwa al-qá'im*), peace be upon him, who has kindled his light and (the light of) his appearance for the peoples of the east and the west (i.e. for the whole world) (*qad anára daw'ahu wa-khurújahu li-ahl al-sharq wa-al-gharb*). The angels are they who possess the knowledge of the family of Muḥammad (*wal-malá'ika hum alladhína yamlikúna 'ilm ál Muḥammad*), may the blessings of God be upon them."<sup>56</sup> Here, in the hermeneutics of the Imams, the Shi'ite faithful are symbolically interpreted to represent the "angels," who have knowledge of the Imams. This esoteric hermeneutics is, as we

shall see, continued in the Bahá'í writings in relation to the Bahá'í faithful, the people of Baha' (see below).

One particular image in early esoteric Shi'ite Traditions ascribed to the Imams is the Column of Light, the *columna gloriae*, which as we saw earlier was mentioned in the Hebrew Bible and the Qur'an. It is this Column of Light which appears earlier in the Manichean literature and may very well have influenced them; called variously the Column of Glory (*umud al-subh*) or Pillar of Fire or Light, and which is significantly mentioned in one of the tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, in a visionary encounter with the heavenly Maiden or Maid of Heaven (see below). Indeed we encounter a Colum of Light or 'amud min naur (or 'amud al-nur) in early Shi'i cosmology and cosmogony, in which it acts as one of the sources of the gnosis of the Imams. The earliest Shi'i Traditions relate that the pre-existential reality of the Prophet and the Imams were in the form of a Column of Light, dwelling in worlds ('awálim) of light, before the creation of the world, and subsequently made its voyage from Adam to the Imams, and eventually will culminate in the Day of Resurrection. In these traditions, reference is made to 'amud min naur, or the Column of Light, which is precisely what their reality or light is derived from, in pre-existence, where Prophet Muhammad and the Imams exist as silhouettes of light (*ashbáh*) before the creation of the world. In one such tradition the Prophet states:

We were silhouettes of light until God wanted to create our form; He transformed us into a column of light (*sayyarana 'amuda nurin*) and hurled us into Adam's loins; then he made us be transmitted through the loins of fathers and wombs of mothers... and when He had us reach the loins of 'Abd al-Muttalib [the grandfather of both the Prophet and 'Ali], He divided the light into two and placed half in the loins of 'AbdAllah [the Prophet's father], and the other half in the loins of 'Abu Talib [the Prophet's uncle and the father of 'Ali], Amina [the Prophet's mother] received in her breast the half that was for me, and she brought me into the world; likewise Fatima, the daughter of Asad [the mother of 'Ali] received in her breast that half that was

for 'Ali, and he begot al-Hasan and al-Husayn... Thus this light will be transmitted from imam to imam until the Day of Resurrection.<sup>57</sup>

This voyage of the Column of Light, the *columna gloriae*, in early esoteric Shi'ite sources is also comparable to the light of the *Khvarnah* in Zoroastrianism, in which it is transmitted as a luminous and fiery seminal fluid,<sup>58</sup> and is linked to the birth of the prophet Zarathustra (see below). The Manichean influence may also be witnessed in Tayyibi Isma'ilism, in which the Column of Light plays an important imamological and eschatological function. According to Tayyibi gnosis the soul of the faithful initiate (*mustajib*) is said to make a spiritual ascension or voyage from spiritual rank to rank (*hadd*) and this "ascension toward the superior hadd is caused by the magnetism of the column of light ('*amud min nur*, or *al-'amud al-nurani*), the summit of which reaches into the pleroma of the archangels and towards which the souls of the believers are drawn."<sup>59</sup> The great Iranian Sufi Sahl b. Abdullah at-Tustari (d. 283/896), who was one of the teachers of the famed Sufi martyr Mansur al-Hallaj (d. 309/922), also refers to the Column of Glory, and may have been influenced either by Manichean sources or more likely by such Shi'ite Traditions as noted above. Gerhard Böwering, in his excellent study of the role of the prophet Muhammad in Tustari's work writes:

God in His absolute oneness and transcendent reality, is affirmed by Tustari as the inaccessible mystery of divine light which yet articulates itself in the pre-eternal manifestation of the "likeness of His light, "*mathlau nurihi*, that is, "the likeness of the light of Muhammad," *nur Muhammad*. The origin of the *nur Muhammad* in pre-eternity is depicted as a luminous mass of primordial adoration in the presence of God which takes the shape of a transparent column, '*amud*, of divine light and constitutes Muhammad as the primal creation of God. Thus, explaining the terminology of the Light-verse, Tustari says: "When God willed to create Muhammad, He made appear a light from His light. When it reached the veil of the Majesty, *hijab al-'azamah*, it bowed in prostration before God. God

created from its prostration a mighty column like crystal glass of light that is outwardly and inwardly translucent.<sup>60</sup>

The Manichean Column/Pillar of Light/Glory has further profound parallels in Jewish mysticism and esotericism, namely Kabbalah, and may have influenced such texts as the *Zohar*. There is a veritable list of affinities between the Manichaean and the Zoharic vision of the Pillar of Glory/Light, as Moshe Idel has noted, “1. The concept of a pillar that is luminous is found in both the *Zohar* and in Manicheism. 2. Both Manicheans and the circle of the *Zohar* share the view that a pillar of light or of glory leads souls to paradise. 3. The pillar of glory is identical to the perfect man in Manichaean sources. In the *Zohar*, ‘*amuda*’ *de-’emtza’ita*’ is related to Adam, as both are symbols of the sefirah of Tiferet.”<sup>61</sup> This is only a few of the similarities between the Manichean and Zoharic Column of Light, but their affinity with the Shi’ite Column of Light is also evident.

In one of Bahá’u’lláh’s tablets, *Ishraqat* (Splendors: literally the radiance of the rising sun), the Maiden is personified as the embodiment of Trustworthiness standing upon a Pillar of Light (*‘amud min al-nur*):

One day of days We repaired unto Our Green Island [*jazirat al-khadrá’*]. Upon Our arrival, We beheld its streams flowing, and its trees luxuriant, and the sunlight playing in their midst. Turning Our face to the right, We beheld what the pen is powerless to describe; nor can it set forth that which the eye of the Lord of Mankind witnessed in that most sanctified, that most sublime, that blest, and most exalted Spot. Turning, then, to the left We gazed on one of the Beauties of the Most Sublime Paradise, standing on a pillar of light [*‘amud min al-nur*], and calling aloud saying: ‘O inmates of earth and heaven! Behold ye My beauty, and My radiance, and My revelation, and My effulgence. By God, the True One! I am Trustworthiness and the revelation thereof, and the beauty thereof. I will recompense whosoever will cleave unto Me, and

recognize My rank and station, and hold fast unto My hem. I am the most great ornament of the people of Baha, and the vesture of glory unto all who are in the kingdom of creation. I am the supreme instrument for the prosperity of the world, and the horizon of assurance unto all beings.' Thus have We sent down for thee that which will draw men nigh unto the Lord of creation. [TAB 122]

Since Kamran Ekbal has discussed the Manichean parallels of the Column of Glory/Light or Pillar of Fire with the writings of Bahá'u'lláh, there is no reason to cover that ground again here.<sup>62</sup> However, what is seldom noted is the location or topography of this visionary encounter, referred to by Bahá'u'lláh as "Our Green Island" or *jazirat al-khadrá'*. Shoghi Effendi in his hermeneutics of the above passage states, "In one station the intent is the Garden of Ridvan [in 'Akka], and in another, it is a spiritual interpretation of the station of Trustworthiness."<sup>63</sup> It is well known that the Green Island refers to the Garden of Na'myan in the vicinity of 'Akka, which Bahá'u'lláh later suggestively (re)named the Garden of Ridvan (Paradise), but what is never mentioned is that it is also an allusion to certain Shi'ite traditions concerning the Green Island (*jazirat al-khadrá'*) beyond the White Sea, the land or earth of visions, which is associated with Paradise, and where the Twelfth Hidden Imam, the awaited Qa'im/Mahdi, is said to have resided and where the Shi'ite faithful may voyage and encounter him. Corbin sums up the symbols in a narrative concerning the Green Island, by an "Iranian shaykh, 'Ali ibn Fazel Mazandarani, toward the end of our thirteenth century, an experience recorded in the *Account of strange and marvelous things that he contemplated and saw with his own eyes on the Green Island situated in the White Sea*":

The account of the Green Island allows us an abundant harvest of symbols: (1) It is one of the islands belonging to the son of the Twelfth Imam. (2) It is that island, where the Spring of Life gushes, in the shade of the Tree of Paradise, that ensure the sustenance of the Imams followers who live far away, and that sustenance can only be a "suprasubstantial" food. (3) It is situated in

the west, as the city of Jabarsa is situated in the west of the *mundus imaginalis*, and thus it offers a strange analogy with the paradise of the East, the paradise of Amitabha in Pure Land Buddhism; similarly, the figure of the Twelfth Imam suggestive of comparison with Maitreya, the future Buddha; there is also an analogy with Tir-na'n-g, one of the worlds the Afterlife among the Celts, the land of the West and the forever ever young. (4) Like the domain of the Grail, it is an interworld that is self-sufficient. (5) It is protected against and immune to any attempt from outside. (6) only one who is summoned there can find the way. (7) A mountain rises in the center; we have noted the symbols that it conceals. (8) Like Mont-Salvat, the inviolable Green Island is the place where his followers approach the mystical *pole* of the world, the Hidden Imam, reigning invisibly over this age- the jewel of the Shi'ite faith.<sup>64</sup>

In fact it was 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the son of Bahá'u'lláh who acquired this "Green Island" for his father, so that after forty years of consecutive imprisonment and exile from Iran, his father may find therein a measure of peace, as he well knew that Bahá'u'lláh loved the verdant beauty of nature. In one of his tablets 'Abdu'l-Bahá states, "Praise be to God who made the center of His Splendour and Dawning-place of His Lights, and the horizon of His signs and the center of His mysteries the Exalted Horizon (*ufuq-i al-'ala*) and the Kingdom of Abha (*malakut al-abha*'), and the Supreme Paradise and the Green Island (*jazirat al-khadrá*'), and the inhabitants of Jabalqa and the City of Jabarsa..."<sup>65</sup> Here the symbols of the earth of visions is realized messianically on the plain of history, in 'Akka<sup>66</sup> in the Garden of Ridvan (Paradise) which is transfigured into the visionary topography of the "Green Island," the *visio samargadina*, and can only be perceived as such with "the eyes of fire,"<sup>67</sup> as Corbin puts it, namely through the organ of visionary apperception activated by the Holy Spirit, whose symbol is the Fire. Already before his outward declaration in the Baghdad period, Bahá'u'lláh gestures towards a spiritual hermeneutics of the expectation of the Shi'ite Hidden Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi, the presumed son of Hassan al-Askari,

who had remained in occultation, according to Shi'ite doctrine, for at least a thousand years. Bahá'u'lláh writes in the *Gems of Divine Mysteries* (*Jawahir al-Asrar*):

All that thou hast heard regarding Muḥammad the son of Ḥasan – may the souls of all that are immersed in the oceans of the spirit be offered up for His sake – is true beyond the shadow of a doubt, and we all verily bear allegiance unto Him. But the Imáms of the Faith have fixed His abode in the city of Jábulqá, which they have depicted in strange and marvellous signs. To interpret this city according to the literal meaning of the tradition would indeed prove impossible, nor can such a city ever be found. Wert thou to search the uttermost corners of the earth, nay probe its length and breadth for as long as God's eternity hath lasted and His sovereignty will endure, thou wouldst never find a city such as they have described, for the entirety of the earth could neither contain nor encompass it. If thou wouldst lead Me unto this city, I could assuredly lead thee unto this holy Being, Whom the people have conceived according to what they possess and not to that which pertaineth unto Him! Since this is not in thy power, thou hast no recourse but to interpret symbolically the accounts and traditions that have been reported from these luminous souls. And, as such an interpretation is needed for the traditions pertaining to the aforementioned city, so too is it required for this holy Being. When thou hast understood this interpretation, thou shalt no longer stand in need of "transformation" or aught else.

Know then that, inasmuch as all the Prophets are but one and the same soul, spirit, name, and attribute, thou must likewise see them all as bearing the name Muḥammad and as being the son of Ḥasan, as having appeared from the Jábulqá of God's power and from the Jábulqá of His mercy. For by Jábulqá is meant none other than the treasure-houses of eternity in the all-highest heaven and the cities of the unseen in the supernal realm. We bear witness that Muḥammad, the



son of Ḥasan, was indeed in Jábulqá and appeared therefrom. Likewise, He Whom God shall make manifest abideth in that city until such time as God will have established Him upon the seat of His sovereignty.<sup>68</sup>

Hence Bahá'u'lláh's allusion to the Green Island in which he had a vision of the personification of Trustworthiness in the form of a luminous Maiden, at once contains multiple messianic allusions drawn from Mazdean, Manichaen, and Shi'ite sources, all of which are emblematic of the spiritual universe of Iran.

In the Mazdean liturgy of prayer, the Zoroastrian faithful pray five times during the twenty-four hour period, whilst standing in the presence of Fire, whether an actual fire, a lamp, the Sun, the Moon, or any source of light and luminosity.<sup>69</sup> Hence the point of adoration for the Zoroastrian faithful is the outward manifestation of the divine Fire, which is at once the *syzygy* of Asha (Truth/Order). The Báb in the Persian Bayan, as well, enjoined every believer to face the Sun on Friday and to recite a specified prayer to it and similarly to recite a monthly prayer to the Moon. The Báb writes:

While facing the sun on Friday, say this verse so that you will attain the presence of the sun of reality on the day of resurrection: "Verily, the glory (*al-Bahá'*) of God be upon your rising, O rising sun! Testify to that which God hath testified of His Own Self: Verily, there is no God but Him, the Almighty, the Best-Loved."<sup>70</sup>

The Zoroastrian liturgy of prayers to be recited before the presence of a source of fire such as the sun (and the moon) is clearly apparent in this liturgical enunciation of the Bab. However, these exoteric (*zahir*) supplications by the Bab, at once point to an esoteric (*batin*) and messianic dimension. Indeed, Bahá'u'lláh states that the esoteric and messianic significance of this liturgical supplication of the Bab, acts as an encoded signifier to his own name, that is *Baha'*, and to his messianic status as the promised one of the Bayan. He writes:

Someone wants to know the secret of what was revealed to him that came before me [the Bab] regarding the sun and his standing while facing it. Blessed is the one who asked this question and wanted to know what was concealed from the hearts of the worlds. Say: I swear by God that what he meant by the sun is my beauty that has shown forth from behind the clouds with great lights. Because we made the sun to be the greatest of our signs between heaven and earth, he stood facing it, submissive to my Self, the Inaccessible, the Powerful, the Most High. When he rose facing it during the first part of his day, he spoke a word for which there is no loftier or greater in God's knowledge, if you be of those who know. When he gazed upon it, he said, and his word is the truth, "Verily, The glory (*al-Bahá'*) of God be upon your rising, O rising sun! Testify to that which God hath testified of His Own Self: Verily, there is no God but Him, the Almighty, the Best-Beloved." This was so that all would attain certain knowledge of the inmost secret through the appearance of the sun and testify to that which God has testified, that there is no God but Him, the Almighty, the Best-Beloved.

...He [the Bab] disclosed the Greatest Name [*baha'*] so that everyone would bear witness on the day of revelation to what he had seen. This word is mentioned as one of the fundamentals of the divine commands revealed in the Bayan and each soul in this day must turn toward God on Friday and utter these words, calling to mind the beloved of the world.<sup>71</sup>

Here the Báb's invocation to the sun, which contains the Greatest Name *al-Bahá'*, according to the hermeneutics of Bahá'u'lláh, becomes a reference to himself, and by glorifying and supplicating the rising of the visible sun, the Báb effectively gestures towards the advent of the rising of the invisible Sun of Reality, namely the figure of Bahá'u'lláh. In many of the writings of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh the Sun and Moon act as symbols of the divine Light, at once typifying the pre-existential Primal Will of God, which in the lexicon of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are often referred to as the Sun of

Truth/Reality (*shams-i haqiqat, shams al-haqiqqa*), the Sun of the Word of God (*shams-i kalamey-i ellahi, shams-i kalimat allah*). Indeed, in Shi'ism the two symbols of the Sun and Moon represent respectively, the Prophet Muhammad and Imam 'Ali, exemplified in the famed Tradition, "I am the Sun and 'Ali is the Moon,"<sup>72</sup> that is, the Sun signifies the station of Prophethood or the Primal Will, and the divinely ordained Guardianship or *Walaya*, reflecting the light of the Sun of Prophethood, symbolized as the Moon. This would not have escaped the early Bábí votaries, who mainly ranked among the Shaykhis, and who were long steeped in the traditions of the Imams. Indeed, Bahá'u'lláh in his commentary on the Qur'anic Surah of the Sun "Tafsír-i-Súriy-i-Wa'sh-Shams" (Surah 91) writes, "Know thou that whoso clingeth to the outward sense of the words, leaving aside their esoteric significance, is simply ignorant."<sup>73</sup> He then provides several hermeneutic registers for the term 'Sun' in that verse, which confirms that one of the meanings of the Sun is the "Primal Will," and goes on to state that by the verse, "'By the moon when it followeth it!'" The moon signifieth the station of guardianship [*walaya*], which followeth the sun of prophethood, that is, it appeareth afterward, to vindicate the cause of the prophet among God's servants."<sup>74</sup>

In the preamble of the tablet to Mánakjí Sahib, Bahá'u'lláh identifies the pre-existent or primal Word of God, with the primal or first Light through which all things have come into being:

This dewdrop, which is the Primal Word of God (*nakhusteen guftar-i kerdegar*), is at times called the Water of Life, in as much as it quickeneth with the waters of knowledge them that have perished in the wilderness of ignorance. Again it is called the Primal Light (*roshanai-ye nakhusteen*), a light born of the Sun of divine knowledge, through whose effulgence the first stirrings of existence (*junbesh-i nakhusteen*, the primal movement) were made plain and manifest.<sup>75</sup>

It is clear from the above that "existence" which is literally "the first movement" of creation is ascribed to the Primal Light, which is the same as the Primal Word of God. In a similar

passage Bahá'u'lláh writes, "This movement was made manifest in creation from the heat of the Word of God. Whosoever hath attained unto this heat, hastened to the path of the Friend, and whosoever remained deprived became despondent, a despondency that hath no end."<sup>76</sup> This primal Light or Fire, which is co-terminus with the Primal Will, is the cause of heat through which all of existence is set in motion. Abdu'l-Bahá in a short tablet to a Zoroastrian believer states, "The soul of the world and the movement of existence is from the essence of the [heavenly] Fire..."<sup>77</sup> It is here that the dialectic of fire and light, of heat and movement are related at once to the existentionation of the cosmos and its perpetual motion. In a profound series of theophanic utterances related to divine radiance so often encountered in Mazdean and Manichean texts, Bahá'u'lláh proclaims, "Today the Light is speaking, the Fire is conversing and the Sun of Truth is shining."<sup>78</sup> Here in no uncertain terms Bahá'u'lláh claims to be the personification, embodiment, and epiphany of the Mazdean Fire.

Now among these Persianate Tablets to Zoroastrians, which continue the same motif(s) of Fire, Light, Heat, and Movement, one stands out as the *locus classicus* par excellence, as it is here that Bahá'u'lláh at once unequivocally identifies himself as the appearance of the divine Fire (*atash*) foretold in the Zoroastrian scriptures; whilst simultaneously equating this Mazdean celestial Fire with the pre-existential Primal Will as the cause or motive force which has brought all creation into existence. In this Tablet called *Lawh-i Dustan-i Yazdani* (Tablet of the Divine Friends), whose recipient remains unknown, Bahá'u'lláh in one profound turn accomplishes several hermeneutical registers for the divine Fire in Zoroastrianism. Since this portion of the tablet will act as the locus for our analysis, I shall cite it here in full and begin to explore it in greater detail:

Ascent and descent, stillness and motion [*harikat*], have come into being through the Will of the Lord of all that hath been and shall be. The cause of ascent is lightness, and the cause of lightness is heat [*hararat*]. Thus hath it been decreed by God. The cause of stillness is weight and density, which in turn are caused by coldness. Thus hath it been decreed by God. And since He hath

ordained heat to be the source of motion and ascent and the cause of attainment to the desired goal, He hath therefore kindled with the mystic hand that [True] Fire [*'átash-i haqiqi*]<sup>79</sup> that dieth not and sent it forth into the world, that this divine Fire [*'átash-i illahiyya*] might, by the heat of the love of God, guide and attract all mankind to the abode of the incomparable Friend. This is the mystery enshrined in your Book [Avesta] [*in ast sirr-i kitáb-i shuma*] that was sent down aforetime, a mystery which hath until now remained concealed from the eyes and hearts of men. That primal Fire [*'átash-i ágház*] hath in this Day appeared with a new radiance and with immeasurable heat. This divine Fire burneth of itself, with neither fuel nor fume, that it might draw away such excess moisture and cold as are the cause of torpor and weariness, of lethargy and despondency, and lead the entire creation to the court of the presence of the All-Merciful. Whoso hath approached this Fire hath been set aflame and attained the desired goal, and whoso hath removed himself therefrom hath remained deprived.<sup>80</sup>

There are two important hermeneutical registers or narratives to be noted in the above passage, first a more philosophical narrative, and second a more mytho-symbolic one:

1. Fire as the symbol of the Primal Will of God, who via heat is the agent or cause of motion/movement and hence of creation (cosmogony),<sup>81</sup> and
2. This Primal Will which is symbolized as the divine Fire, is sent into the world (i.e., Bahá'u'lláh), and was foretold as a messianic expectation in Zoroastrian scriptures (messianism/eschatology).<sup>82</sup>

First let us turn to the hermeneutics of Bahá'u'lláh related to his symbolic identification of himself as the fulfillment of the messianic expectation of the divine Fire in Zoroastrianism. A comparative analysis of the motif of Fire in these Zoroastrian Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh with the Zoroastrian scriptures will enable us to perceive that indeed they have their counterpart, their *syzygy* as it were, in the Zoroastrian texts themselves. In

particular, we will look at the Gathas (meaning Songs or Hymns), which are considered to be the words of the prophet Zarathustra himself. Indeed, the Gathas are unanimously considered by scholars to be the prophet Zoroaster's own words. They are couched in an ancient mantic poetry, which have caused many difficulties for scholars translating the Gathas. It is no wonder then that the translations of the Gathas are at times so varied and different from one another.<sup>83</sup> The other parts of the Avestan Yasna or the Acts of Worship, and the Yashts are called respectively the Younger Avesta.

Now, before we explore the monumental hermeneutical edifice that Bahá'u'lláh has raised round the motif of the Mazdean Fire, it is important to see what other scholars have said in their respective commentaries regarding the above passage. To our knowledge only two scholars have referenced the above text, namely Faridu'ddin Radmehr<sup>84</sup> and Christopher Buck. Since Radmehr refers to the first portion of this paragraph dealing with its philosophico-cosmogonic elements only, without discussing its Zoroastrian context, we shall deal with it in another section. However, Buck has referenced the above passage in its messianic and eschatological context, but only cites part of the passage, namely the portion which reads: "this is the mystery enshrined in your Book that was sent down aforetime, a mystery which hath until now remained concealed from the eyes of men."<sup>85</sup> Buck reads this passage in light of his discussion of the prophecy of Sháh Bahrám Varjivand, whereby this "mystery" (*sirr*) becomes a reference to Sháh Bahrám. However, it is clear from the full context of the passage cited above, that the "mystery" or "secret" (*sirr*) in this instance does not refer to Sháh Bahrám, but to the divine Fire (*atash*). Bahá'u'lláh significantly refers to this Fire as a "mystery" foretold in the Mazdean sacred texts, indicating that it has remained hidden until now. However, the expectation of Sháh Bahrám was neither a mystery nor a secret, in fact it was a widespread messianic expectation in nineteenth century Iran, as noted by Buck himself.<sup>86</sup> Thus the secret effectively contained in the Zoroastrian scriptures, according to Bahá'u'lláh, is a messianic secret, which is none other than the promise of the appearance of the divine Fire, which now stands revealed (i.e., himself).

In many of his tablets to Zoroastrians Bahá'u'lláh again and again alludes to that which had hitherto remained 'hidden' (*mastur*) in the Mazdean scriptures, but which has now been revealed via subtle allusions and references in his writings. In one instance, whilst speaking about the tablets which have been revealed in honor of Zoroastrians Bahá'u'lláh writes:

In these days Tablets have been revealed especially for the people of Zarathustra [i.e. Zoroastrians]. And that which has been hidden (*mastur*) up to now in their Books (*kutub*), has been mentioned therein (*madhkúr*). But unless and until that which belongs to them does not become known (*ma'lum nashavad*), no one will understand the references of the words of the Revealer of Verses [i.e., Bahá'u'lláh].<sup>87</sup>

In the above text Bahá'u'lláh significantly indicates that all that was hidden (*mastur*) up to now in the Zoroastrian scriptures has been mentioned in his writings and that unless and until that which belongs to Zoroastrians (i.e., their sacred texts), does not become known or understood (*ma'lum nashavad*), no one can appreciate the subtle references and allusions in his writings to Zoroastrians. But, what is it that was hidden in the Zoroastrian scriptures? And what is it that must become known first, in order to properly appreciate such references? Indeed, as indicated by Bahá'u'lláh in the previous passage, one such hidden secret or *mystery* is precisely the promise of the messianic advent of the divine Fire (*atar/atash*) – a promise first alluded to in the *Gathas*, as well as other Zoroastrian texts such as the Younger Avesta, and the later Pahlavi texts. Hence, presumably it is this motif and similar constellation of motifs in Mazdean scriptures that must become more widely read and studied, that such references as alluded to by Bahá'u'lláh in his tablets to Zoroastrians, may be better appreciated and understood.

In another tablet to a Zoroastrian believer Bahá'u'lláh refers to this same secret or mystery with the significant Persian term *ráz* (secret, mystery):

The radiance of the world-conquering Sun hath illuminated the world and has bestowed freshness to this age of despondency, happy is the eye that hath seen and recognized. Ask from the self-sufficient Lord, so that He may shine upon you the mystery (*ráz*) of His Day, and may vivify you with a new life. He is the Able, the Knowing.<sup>88</sup>

The mystery or secret (*ráz*) here is the appearance of Bahá'u'lláh, which is referred to as His Day, or the Day of God, or the divine spring-time or Naw-Ruz (New Day). It is interesting to note here that in some of the Middle Persian or Pahlavi texts in the Sassanian period (3<sup>rd</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century CE), which received their final form sometime from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> CE, the Persian term *ráz* meaning “secret,” or “mystery” (which is semantically co-terminus with *sirr* in Arabic), is used at times to signify precisely “the secret of eschatology”<sup>89</sup> in its broadest sense of both individual and universal. Apart from this, there is an important occurrence of *ráz* in a text, which is related to the seventh day of creation in Genesis, as it states, “for this same secret the Jews rest on the day of Sabbath even now.”<sup>90</sup> Shaked avers that “the ‘secret’ here is the reason that God rested on the seventh day after He had created the world,”<sup>91</sup> but he does not elaborate as to what this secret “reason” entails.<sup>92</sup> What seems to have escaped Shaked and is important to note here is that in the Zoroastrian calendar out of the seven holy days or festivals, the 7<sup>th</sup> and final holy day, is the festival called the New Day or *Naw Ruz* (the spring-equinox), “prefiguring annually the future ‘New Day’ of eternal bliss,”<sup>93</sup> that is to say of *frashgird* (the making brilliant of creation), and which is precisely associated with Truth (*asha*) and Fire (*atar*) (see below). Indeed, these seven festivals were associated with one of the seven creations and its divinity in the Pahlavi texts, as Boyce states:

The six feasts are assigned to a creation and its divinity in the order given in the Zoroastrian creation myth... the sixth being that of mankind, which was under the especial care, through his Holy Spirit, of Ahura Mazdá... The seventh [creation], that of fire, which quickens all the others, was under the guardianship of Asha ... and its feast is Nowruz itself.<sup>94</sup>



Thus, as we have seen in both the Gathas and in the Pahlavi texts, Fire is the originating cause of creation, and acts as the cause of movement that sets existence into motion (this will be more fully developed in the section on Mazdean Fire: see below). Indeed, there are profound messianic overtones in aspects of the Zoroastrian calendar and its relation to Fire/Truth and their correspondences to the Babi-Bahá'í calendar called the *Badí'* (meaning New, Wondrous, Unique) calendar, and the name *Baha* (Glory, Light, Splendor, Beauty). Some scholars have noted the overall resemblance of the *Badí'* calendar to the Zoroastrian liturgical calendar, as Walbridge states, "The Báb's [also Bahá'u'lláh's] calendar resembles the Zoroastrian calendar much more closely than the Muslim one, being a solar calendar with non-lunar months and with months and days named after divine attributes."<sup>95</sup>

Indeed, there is a profound homology and correspondence between the Zoroastrian calendar, with the name of divinities or angelic entities (*yazatas*, *izads*) which have their counterpart, their *syzygy*, in the Babi-Bahá'í calendar, in the divine names and attributes of God (*asma' wa sifat-i illahi*), which is effectively those of the Manifestation of God.<sup>96</sup> The Zoroastrian calendar may be considered therefore, as a sort of messianic cryptogram containing an allusion, a secret (*raz*), a "hierophantic sign," as Corbin puts it, heralding the coming of the New Day or Naw-Ruz, that is the appearance of the Divine Fire as the Saoshyant, which is encoded into the month and the days set aside for Fire (*atar*, *aḍar*, *azar*), which is numerically the number nine (See Figure 1 and Figure 2).<sup>97</sup> Indeed, nine is precisely the numerical value of the divine name *Baha'* according to the Arabic *abjad* system<sup>98</sup> – in which each Arabic letter of the alphabet represents a numeric value – and nine is associated with the days and months that are presided over by the divine Fire (*atar/aḍar/azar*) in the Zoroastrian liturgical calendar, and *Baha'* is the divine name presiding over the year nine in the *Badí'* calendar, and it is precisely the divine name

*Baha'* which is linked with *Naw Ruz* and linked to the element of Fire. Thus the heavenly and divine Fire as symbolized in the Zoroastrian calendar, is co-incident and co-terminus in every particular with the divine name *Baha'* in the *Badi'* calendar. Here again the Most Great Name or *Baha'* is co-extensive with the divine Fire in Zoroastrianism (See Figure 1<sup>99</sup> and Figure 2), and as we shall see, becomes the embodiment of the Mazdean divine Fire and Light of Glory or *Khvarnah* (see below).<sup>100</sup>

Thus as we have seen, Bahá'u'lláh's spiritual hermeneutics locates the divine (Primal) Fire as a messianic secret or mystery foretold in the Zoroastrian scriptures. Now we must first ascertain in more detail if in fact the Zoroastrian scriptures, and the Gathas in particular, do contain an expectation of the coming of the divine Fire, namely as a messianic figure in eschatological times, and second to see if in the Gathas and other Zoroastrian sources (i.e., the Pahlavi texts) this divine Fire is the primal cause of existence or creation.

| <b>The 7 Holy Days of Obligation</b>                           | <b>The 30 Days of the Month</b>        | <b>The 12 Months of the Year</b>                     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| 7 <sup>th</sup> Holy Day<br>21 March<br>English Name "New Day" | 9 <sup>th</sup> day<br>Avestan<br>Atar | 9 <sup>th</sup> month<br>(November/December)<br>Adar |
| Younger Avestan/<br>Middle Persian<br>No Roz                   | Pahlavi<br>Adar                        | Pahlavi<br>Adar                                      |
| Associated Amesha<br>spenta<br>Asha Vahishta (Best Truth)      | New Persian<br>Azar                    | New Persian<br>Azar                                  |
| Associated creation<br>Fire                                    | English<br>Fire                        | English<br>Fire                                      |

**Figure 1: Zoroastrian Calendar**

| Name of Day and Month                                                              | Holy Days                             | Year Name and Number                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> day/month<br>21 March<br>Associated element: Fire<br>Creative Word | Naw Ruz<br>21 March                   | Year 9 from the cycle<br>of 19 years  |
| Arabic name<br>Bahá                                                                | Arabic name<br>Bahá                   | Arabic name<br>Bahá                   |
| English name<br>Splendor or Glory                                                  | English name<br>Splendor or<br>Glory  | English name<br>Splendor or Glory     |
| Numerical value<br>( <i>abjad</i> ) 9                                              | Numerical<br>value ( <i>abjad</i> ) 9 | Numerical value<br>( <i>abjad</i> ) 9 |

Figure 2: Bábí/Bahá'í Calendar

## Mazdean Fire: From Cosmogony to Eschatology

There is perhaps no single religion that lights the imagination with the symbol of a holy and sacred Fire, than the religion of ancient Iran, namely Zoroastrianism.<sup>101</sup> The symbolism of a sacred Fire permeates all aspects of Mazdaism, from its sacred texts, to its liturgy, from its cosmology and cosmogony, to its messianism and apocalyptic-eschatology. Indeed, it cannot be gainsaid that Fire in all its manifestation is one of the quintessential symbols of Mazdaism *par excellence*. So much so, that for centuries, Zoroastrians were polemically referred to as “Fire worshipers” (*atash parast*). It was to such misconceptions that the great poet Firdowsi (d. 1020) spoke to when he wrote these lines in his Book of Kings (*Shahnameh*):

[Hushang’s] ancestors had their religion, their spiritual practice.

Worshiping Izad [God] was the way they pursued.

At that time fire with its beautiful color [was to them],  
 What stone in the *mihrab* is now to Arabs [Muslims].  
 Fire was placed in the heart of stones in order for  
 [Divine] light to spread from *it* throughout the  
 world.<sup>102</sup>

The adoration and worship of Fire stretches into the immemorial past among the Indo-Iranians, and in all probability had its origins in the cult of the hearth fire like such divinities as the Vedic Agni (fire). Similarly Fire among the ancient Iranians was the visible manifestation of the divinity called *Atar*, and was worshiped via the hearth fire in liturgical ceremonies that made offerings to the divinity. The term used in the *Gáthás* for Fire is *átar*, (Avestan *átar*, Middle Persian *ádar* or *ádur*, New Persian *átash*) the etymology of which remains unknown.<sup>103</sup> Also as Skjærø notes, “In the Old Avesta, divine beings are referred to as “lords” (*ahura*, Old Indic *asura*), among them the heavenly fire, Ahura Mazda’s son...”<sup>104</sup> (12). Indeed, *Atar* is one of the many but significant divine entities or beings called *yazatas* or *izads* (The Adorable Ones) in Zoroastrianism, and which Zoroastrian tradition designates as “angels” (*fereshtegan*).<sup>105</sup>

The Gathas (Songs or Hymns), which are considered to be the prophet Zoroaster’s/Zarathustra’s own words, may be dated approximately to 1500-1000 BCE and form the oldest portion of the Avesta often called the Old Avesta. They are couched in an ancient mantic poetry, which have caused many difficulties for scholars translating them. It is little wonder that the translations of the Gathas are at times so varied and different from one another.<sup>106</sup> The other parts of the Avestan Yasna or the Acts of Worship, and the Yashts are called respectively the Younger Avesta, and were formed before the Achaemenid dynasty, perhaps during the Median period around 700-550 BCE. Finally, the later Middle Persian or Pahlavi texts belong to the Sassanian period (3<sup>rd</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century CE), and received their final form sometime from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> CE.

Before examining the motif of the divine Fire in the Zoroastrian scriptures, one of the most important aspects of

Zoroastrianism that must be mentioned at the outset is its profound mytho-logic, in which, there is a simultaneous “mythical and theologico-philosophical” narrative functioning side by side. Indeed, as Alessandro Bausani notes, “Sufficient attention has not been paid to this “style” of Mazdaic Scriptures. This is true not only of the later Pahlavi books but also of Avesta itself.”<sup>107</sup> Indeed, Wolfson’s definition of the mythologic operative in dreams, is apropos with regard to the logic of Zoroastrian texts, as he states, “mythologic – ... should not be construed as privileging either logical or mythical patterns of discourse, rendering one subordinate to the other...”<sup>108</sup> It is precisely due to this mytho-logic operative in Mazdean imaginary, that the attributes of God or Ahura Mazda “are not (be they eternal or created) intelligible concepts; rather they are themselves ‘persons’ or ‘angels.’”<sup>109</sup> Indeed, Bausani is in agreement with Corbin when he states, “the Mazdean, instead of putting to himself the questions: “What is Time? What is Earth? What is Water?,” asks: “*Who is Time? Who is Earth? Who is Water?*”<sup>110</sup> Indeed, it is precisely here that the Mazdean question becomes *Who is Fire?* rather than *What is Fire?* As Bausani notes, “The problem lies in rightly interpreting the verb *is*: in which sense *are* these images of vision what they represent? Certainly they are *not* angels in the Biblical and the Qur’anic sense of mere messengers or servants of God; Corbin compares them rightly with the *dii-angeli* of Proclus.”<sup>111</sup> This Fire (*atar*, *adar*, *atah*) in Mazdean texts, as we shall see, is precisely a divine “person,” an angelic primordial being, who is personified as the ‘Son’ of Ahura Mazda, and His most Holy Spirit (*amesha spenta*). In this precise sense, Fire is not conceived of as a concept or abstraction, but rather as a “person,” one of the creative “angelic” cohorts of Mazdean cosmology and cosmogony. It is crucial to bear in mind this unique mytho-logic operative in the “style” of the Mazdaic scriptures, throughout this section.

Fire (*atar*) in the *Gáthás* plays (both a cosmogonic, as well as) an important apocalyptic-eschatological role – particularly at the *eschaton* or ‘end of time.’<sup>112</sup> In Yasna 43:4, it states, “Yes, I shall (truly) realize Thee to be both brave and virtuous, Wise One, if Thou shalt help me (now) with the very hand with which Thou dost hold those rewards Thou shalt give, *through the heat of Thy truth-strong fire*, to the deceitful and to the

truthful..."<sup>113</sup> This passage gestures towards the eschatological function of fire/atar at the end of time. Indeed, Insuler in his note to this verse relates the rewards which Ahura Mazda will give through "*the heat of Thy truth-strong fire*" to "the time of the final judgment" to the "deceitful and to the truthful,"<sup>114</sup> namely to the *ashavan* and *dregvan*. This passage is profoundly significant as it links Truth/Order (*asha*) with Fire, to which we shall return to in due course.

In another significant passage of the *Gathas*, the observation noted above, namely the reversal of *What* with *Who* in Mazdean mytho-logic, becomes directly evident in relation to the Fire, "Yes I have already realized thee to be virtuous, wise lord, when he attended me with good thinking. To his question, "*whom dost thou serve?*" I then replied: "*Thy fire. As long as I shall be able, I shall respect that truth is to have a gift of reverence*" (Yasna 43:9).<sup>115</sup> Indeed, it is precisely to the question of "*whom do you serve,*" that Zoroaster responds, "Thy fire," thereby personifying the fire, but also pointing to his identification with the fire and truth, a *unito mystica*, with his own heavenly counterpart or twin. Here again Fire is associated with Truth/Asha, and is considered to be its visible manifestation. In Yasna 47:6 it states, "Wise Lord together with this *virtuous spirit* [spenta mainyu] Thou shalt give the distribution of the good to both factions *through Thy fire*, by reason of the solidarity of piety and truth. For it shall convert the many who are seeking."<sup>116</sup> What is important in this passage is the unmistakable link between the Fire of Ahura Mazda, and His Virtuous Spirit or Holy Spirit (*spenta mainyu*); and indeed the locution "it will convert the many who are seeking," has clear messianic overtones, as it is the Fire who will "convert the many," at the final judgment.

In the Yasna Hapniahitni (The Yasna of the Seven-Chapters) which is as old as the *Gathas* (1000-1500 BCE), the divine Fire is explicitly identified with Ahura Mazda's Holy Spirit, "As fire Thou art a joy to the Wise Lord... as the Most Holy Spirit art thou a joy to him – for this is thy most efficacious name."<sup>117</sup> Another translation of the same Yasna 36:3 reads:

You are indeed the Fire of the Wise Lord.

You are indeed his most bounteous spirit.  
 We approach you O Fire of the Wise Lord,  
 With what is the most powerful of your names.<sup>118</sup>

Here we see that the Fire is identified with Ahura Mazda's most Bounteous Spirit, which is variously translated as the Virtuous Spirit or Holy Spirit (*spenta maniyu*). It is through this most powerful of God's names, Fire (*atar*), which is synonymous with the Holy Spirit that the faithful worshiper approaches God. It is of profound interest here to note that the divine Fire, which is here referred to as the "Most Powerful of Your Names," is not unlike the concept of the Greatest of all names, the *shém há mephorash* of Jewish tradition,<sup>119</sup> and the Greatest Name of God (*al-ismu'llah al-a'zam*) in Islam, and may well have its Mazdean homologue in the divine Fire. The notion of God's Greatest Name or the Most Great Name has a long heritage in the Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions and seems to have its ancient counterpart in the Gathas of Zarathustra regarding the Fire as the most powerful name of Ahura Mazda. Indeed, it is precisely in the name *Baha'* – termed as 'the most great name of God' by Bahá'u'lláh (*al-ismu'llah al-a'zam*) – which means at once glory/light/splendor/beauty that we shall see the very epiphany and theophany of the divine Fire in Zoroastrianism – a Fire which is at once 'the most great name of God', and the essence of the symbol of *Khvarnah* or the Light of Glory. In this precise sense, it is this Fire typified by the luminous light of the *Khvarnah* that shall accompany the Messianic figure, the Saoshyant, at the *eschaton* (see below).

In a veritable list of similar passages in the Gathas, the eschatological appearance of Fire (*Atar*) and its connection with *Asha* may be noted (*italics* are added for emphasis):

Yasna 34:4 Now, we wish *Thy fire*, Lord, *which possess strength through truth [asha]* and which is the wisest, forceful thing, to be of clear help to Thy supporter but of visible harm, with the powers in its hands, to Thy enemy, Wise One.

Yasna 31:19 This knowing world-healer has listened [Zarathustra], he who has respected the truth, Lord, being one who has mastery over his tongue at will for the true speaking of the (proper) words when the distribution in the good shall occur to both factions through *Thy bright fire*,<sup>120</sup> Wise One.

Yasna 46:7 *Whom hast Thou appointed as guardian for me*, Wise One, if the deceitful one shall dare to harm me? *Whom other than Thy fire* and Thy (good) thinking through whose actions one has nourished the truth, Lord?

Yasna 51:9 The satisfaction which Thou shalt give to both factions through *Thy pure fire* and molten iron, Wise One, is to be given as a sign among living beings, in order to destroy the deceitful and to save the truthful.

In the Younger Avesta, the divine Fire or Atar is personified with the sublime and theophanic title, the “Son of Ahura Mazda” (*Atars puthra Ahurahe Mazda*) (Fire, the Son of God). Thus we read:

Yasna 2. To Fire, the son of Ahura Mazda. To you, O Fire, son of Ahura Mazda. With propitiation, for worship, adoration, propitiation, and praise.

Yasna 2:12 With this libation and Baresman I desire for this Yasna you, the Asha-sanctified Atar, the Son of Ahura Mazda, the master of Asha, with all Fires.

Yasna 62: 1. I offer my sacrifice and homage to thee, the Fire, as a good offering, and an offering with our hail of salvation, even as an offering of praise with benedictions, to thee, the Fire, O Ahura Mazda's son! ...  
6. And may'st thou grant me, O Fire, Ahura Mazda's Son! that whereby instructors may be (given) me, now and for evermore, (giving light to me of Heaven) the best life of the saints, brilliant, all glorious. And may I have experience of the good reward, and the good



renown, and of the long forecasting preparation of the soul.<sup>121</sup>

It is evident from the above passages that Fire (*atar*) is personified as a “being,” ‘the son of Ahura Mazda,’ who, like God, is at once the object of love and worship for the faithful. Fire, is the “most adorable of the most adorable” of the *Yazatas*, and considered the primary *way* and *intermediary*, by which the faithful are to draw near the object of their worship, namely God (Ahura Mazda). This personification of Fire as the Son of Ahura Mazda is profoundly significant, as it already adumbrates the coming of the divine Fire as a ‘being’ who is precisely manifested as Asha (Truth), the messianic figure at the *eschaton*, namely the Sayoshant, and not simply an element or an abstraction symbolizing divine judgment at the end of time.

It is worth mentioning here that the term ‘Son of God’ which is applied to the Mazdean Fire, may have influenced, early on, the theophanic title of Jesus as the ‘Son of God’ in the New Testament, which has no precise precedence in the Jewish scriptures (i.e., Hebrew Bible).<sup>122</sup> Indeed it may be argued that this title in its Christian context may owe more to the Zoroastrian heritage of the “Son of God” than to Judaism, for in all of the Jewish scriptures nowhere can we discover references to a Messiah, who is at once ‘divine’ and the creator of the world and is referred to with the epithet ‘Son’ of God. The great Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria (50 CE), calls the Logos the “Son of God,” and the “only begotten son of God,”<sup>123</sup> and the first manifestation of God, but Philo’s Logos doctrine does not conceive that the Logos could become ‘embodied’ in a ‘person’ or to be “made flesh.” But, this is precisely what we discover in Zoroastrianism, namely Fire personified as the ‘Son of God’ and who shall appear at the end of time, ‘embodied’ as it were, in the Zoroastrian savior.

The designation ‘Son of God’ and its relation to Fire, the Holy Spirit, and Truth/Order in Zoroastrianism lend themselves to a comparative analysis with the lexicon of the New Testament, which refer to Jesus in similar terms. For instance, Jesus was asked by Pontus Pilate as to who he was, and he states, “I am the Truth,” effectively enunciating to be the “embodiment” or incarnation of Truth, just as the Gathas

foretold the embodiment of the Truth in the eschatological final judgment. In another place, Jesus states, "I am the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6), and in another instance turning to his disciples he states, you shall be baptized by the "Holy Spirit and by Fire," thereby equating fire with the Holy Spirit, precisely as it is found in the Zoroastrian scriptures. Indeed, the Logos of John 1:1, which appears in the "flesh," namely Jesus of Nazareth, is the "Light, which shineth in darkness, but the darkness comprehendeth not," again evokes classic Zoroastrian motifs of light and darkness. The New Testament concept of the virgin birth of Jesus is likely more related to the Zoroastrian conception of the virgin birth of the Sayoshant, than to any references or precedents in the Jewish scriptures (see below). Indeed this should be of no surprise, as the influence of Iranian motifs, especially apocalyptic and eschatological motifs, on Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, Manichaeism, and Islam, are well known, and have received general scholarly consensus among Iranologists.

Now let us see how in the Gathas (and other Zoroastrian texts), the divine Fire (who is called the Son of God) is intimately linked with the divine Truth/Order called Asha<sup>124</sup> (Avestan, *Arta*, *Asha* or *Asha Vahishata*, Best Truth, Middle Persian, *Urduwahasht* or *Urdibehesht*, which can also be translated as Order, Righteousness, cosmic and moral order) and the 'Virtuous Spirit' (*Spenta Mainyu*) which may also be translated as the 'Holy Spirit,' through which all of creation comes into being.<sup>125</sup> Asha is one of the six Archangelic beings or Amesha Spentas (Ahura Mazda himself being the seventh – forming together a divine Heptad), which all have a corresponding element, "these six Amesha Spentas are also the archangelic emblem-personification of the primordial elements: Earth (*Spenta Armaiti*), Cattle (*Vohu Manah*), Fire (*Asha*), Metals (*Khshathra*), Water (*Haurvatat*), Plants (*Ameretat*)."<sup>126</sup> Indeed, as Bausani perceptively points out, these Amesha Spentas or archangelic beings "are the elements not as allegories of them, but as living personal symbols, as "Lords of the Species." The concept of Ratu, Lord of the Species, is present everywhere in Mazdaic books. The Lord of the Species "Woman" is, for instance, the mythico-historical Daena, 'religion'..."<sup>127</sup> Hence, Asha does not only allegorize or

symbolize Fire, but *is* the Fire, insofar as it is its Lord of the Species. Indeed, it was Suhrawardi who equated the Platonic Forms with the Zoroastrian Angelic entities (*yazatas*),<sup>128</sup> and who “designates them the “lords of the species” (*arbáb al-anwá’*) (see Harawi, *Anváriyyih*, pp. 41-42), an expression which Bahá’u’lláh confirms in a Tablet in which He explains the meaning of the “active force” [*fa’íl*] mentioned in the Tablet of Wisdom. In that Tablet, He says: “The intention of the active force is the lord of the species, and it hath other meanings” [*Áthár-i-Qalam A’lá*, vol. 7, p. 113].”<sup>129</sup>

Indeed, all of the seven Amesha Spentas form together a kind of *unio mystica* which is alluded to in Yasht 19:16.

Who are all seven of one thought, who are all seven of one speech, who are all seven of one deed; whose thought is the same, whose speech is the same, whose deed is the same, whose father and commander is the same, namely, the Maker, Ahura Mazda.<sup>130</sup>

It is important to note also that in the Gathas the Holy Spirit, Fire, and Asha are all linked together. As it states, “A person shall bring to realization the best... according to the single understanding: the Wise One is the Father of Truth (*aša*). Wise Lord, together with this virtuous spirit [*spenta maniyu*] Thou shalt give the distribution in the good to both factions through *thy fire*” [*Yasna* 47:2, 6]. It is precisely by the Virtuous Spirit or Holy Spirit, which is here linked with Asha/Truth, that the Wise Lord shall distribute good or justice to both factions through His Fire. This passage is precisely in the context of eschatology, when Fire will appear and act as a judge through which good or justice will be distributed to the *ashavan* or followers of truth, and to the *dregavan* or the followers of falsehood. Stanly Insler in his comments to the translation of the Gathas states, “Fire was considered to be a manifestation of truth. Therefore worship of the fire was worship of the truth.”<sup>131</sup> Similarly Mary Boyce states: “Zoroaster ... apprehended fire as the creation of Aša Vahišta (q.v.), and ... saw fire as the instrument of God’s judgment at the Last Day.” Indeed it was to remember this fact that the prophet Zarathustra states in *Yasna* 43.9: “At the

offering made in reverence (to fire) I shall think of truth (*aša*) to the utmost of my power.”<sup>132</sup>

Now let us look further into the Gathas to see if this divine Truth/Order/Asha which forms with Fire a dualitude or *syzygy*, has a conceptual parallel like that of the Primal Fire as the active agent through whom all creation comes into being (i.e., the cosmogonic cause), and who will be embodied in the world as a Saviour, the Saoshyant, in eschatological times (much like the tablet(s) of Bahá'u'lláh to Zoroastrians). In Gatha 48:6 it states, “And the Wise One shall increase the plants for her through Truth [*asha*], He who is to be Lord at the birth of the foremost existence.”<sup>133</sup> Here the pre-existence and personification of Asha is described as “He,” “who is to be Lord at the birth of the foremost existence.” This title ‘Lord of foremost existence’ may be related to both cosmogony and eschatology, namely to the notion of *Frashegird* or the making “brilliant” or “luminous” of creation at the end of time. Indeed, most scholars have noted that Asha is part of the creative/cosmogonic principle of Ahura Mazda, as Boyce puts it succinctly:

As the hypostasis of what should be in the physical sphere, i.e., order, regularity, Aša is present “in the beginning, at creation,” when Ahura Mazdá fixed the course of sun, moon and stars (Y. 44.3). It is through him that Ahura Mazdá made the plants grow (Y. 48.6), and he has the epithet “world-furthering,” *fradá t.gaétha*- [Y. 33.11].

Thus Asha is a pre-existent being that was present “in the beginning at creation,” and that it is *through* him that God set the cosmos in order (i.e., sun, moon, and stars), and that it is *through* Asha that things grow (i.e., plants and other existent things) and have their existence. Indeed, this recalls the Logos (often translated as Word, which also means Order, or Logic, and is the conceptual cognate of Asha) in John 1:1, which was there “in the beginning,” and through whom all things were created, just as it is with Asha. Furthermore, the cosmogonic epithet “world-furthering,” *fradá t.gaétha*” is further testimony to the eternal creative agency of Asha. Hultgård also in reference to the above passage in Yasna 44: 3-5 also notes that,

“the oldest Avestan texts, the Gathas, pay homage to Ahura Mazda as father and “creator” of the universe (Y. 44: 3-5; the word *datar* meaning here “one who sets [chaos] into order”).”<sup>134</sup> What is interesting is that the Avestan word *datar*, which is one of the masculine noun *r* stems literally meaning ‘giver’, is related to the word *atar* in the same stem – the adjectival form of nominative singular *atarsh* (*átarš*) – which is precisely the word for fire.<sup>135</sup> Indeed here we have an early linguistic relation of Truth/Order (*asha*) with Fire.

Now it is in the same important hymn of the Gathas, namely Yasna 43, that a link is established between Truth/Asha and the Saoshyant, meaning “He who will bring benefit,” and his ‘embodiment’ on earth at the time of the renovation or *frashgird*. Indeed, as Shakad has noted “One of the clear eschatological terms in the Gáthás is Saošyant, the future benefactor, a term which may have originally applied to Zoroaster himself (e.g., Y. 46.3; cf. Boyce, 1975, pp. 234 ff.).”<sup>136</sup>

Yasna 43:16 Therefore, Lord, this Zarathustra chooses that very spirit of Thine which indeed is the most virtuous of all, wise one. “May *truth* [Asha] be embodied and strong with breath. May there be piety under the rule of Him who has the appearance of the sun. May He dispense through His good thinking (each reward).”<sup>137</sup>

Here the messianic and eschatological hope of the coming of Asha is clearly stated by the prophet Zarathustra himself, that “Asha may be embodied” or become ‘flesh’ as it were, and be “strong with breath,” namely as a living and breathing human being, who is later identified with the Saoshyant or the savior in Zoroastrianism. The messianic name, Astvat-ereta, “he who embodies Asha,” was given to the Saoshyant and developed from this very last passage of Yasna 43:16. As Boyce states,

Zoroaster’s community held ardently to hope in the coming of this man [Astvat-ereta], to whom was given the title Saošyant, “He who will bring benefit,” and gradually it came to be believed that he would be born of the seed of Zoroaster himself, miraculously

preserved at the bottom of a lake, where it is watched over by the *fravašis* (see *Frawahr*) of the just. When *Frašō.kərəti* is near, it is held, a virgin will bathe in this lake and become with child, and will bear a son, the Saošyant; and a name was fashioned for him, Astvat-ereta, "He who embodies righteousness [*asha*]." This name is evidently derived, with a small dialect difference, from Zoroaster's own words in *Y.* 43.16: *astvaṭ ašəm hyáṭ* "may righteousness [*asha*] be embodied."<sup>138</sup>

Indeed the Saoshyant, who is entitled Astvat-ereta, will radiate the luminous and fiery *Khvarnah* or Light of Glory, which does not only accompany kings, but prophetic and messianic figures, including Zoroaster himself. As Boyce further notes:

Astvat-ereta will be accompanied, as his father was before him, and as all righteous kings and heroes are, by X<sup>v</sup>arənah, Divine Grace (see *Xwarrah*), and it is in *Yašt* 19, which celebrates X<sup>v</sup>arənah, that the extant Avesta has most to tell of him. There the worshippers declare: "We sacrifice to the mighty ... kingly X<sup>v</sup>arənah ... which will accompany the victorious Saošyant ... so that he may make existence new again, not ageing, not dying, not decaying" [*Yt.* 19.88-89].<sup>139</sup>

Now in the Middle Persian or Pahlavi texts, both cosmogonic and eschatological functions of the divine Fire are further elaborated. Indeed, the cosmogonic aspect of the divine and celestial fire becomes more pronounced in the Pahlavi text called *Bundahišn* (Creation), as J. Duchense-Guillemin states, "In Mazdean orthodoxy when Ohrmazd creates the world, he produces at first, from Infinite Light, a *form of fire, from which all things are to be born*. This form of fire is, "bright, white, round, and visible from afar.... [emphasis added]"<sup>140</sup> This is the passage of the *Bundahišn* that Duchense-Guillemin refers to, "Ohrmazd fashioned forth the form of His creatures from His own self, from the substance of light – in the form of fire, bright, white, round, visible afar."<sup>141</sup> Here we have a pre-existent being in the "form of fire" through which all things are created and which has a clear cosmogonic function. It is

interesting to note that this fire is linked with Ohrmazd himself and is created from the substance of his own light. Guillemin points out that another Pahlavi text gives “the name of this giant body, or form of fire... in the *Datistan-i Danik* [it is written]... that ‘Ohrmazd, the Lord of all things, produced from Infinite Light, a form of fire whose name was that of Ohrmazd and whose light was that of fire.’”<sup>142</sup> In his reflection on this enigmatic passage Duchense-Guillemin states: “Ohrmazd creating a body which is called Ohrmazd – what can be the meaning of this? It seems to me that everything becomes clear if we are prepared to consider the phrase as a clumsy adaptation of a Zurvinite one which said in effect: Zurvan creates Ohrmazd – not forgetting that in Manichaeism, Ohrmazd is the name of Cosmic Man, issued from the supreme god Zurvan.”<sup>143</sup> But, though Duchense-Guillemin is correct in his reading that there seems to be a Zurvinite influence on this otherwise orthodox Mazdean cosmogony, yet there is an ancient precedent in the Avesta, in which the “form of fire,” especially the ritual fire, is conceived symbolically as the “shape” or “body” of Ahura Mazda. In the Yasna of the Seven Chapters, in Yasna 36: “the ritual fire is addressed as Ahura Mazda’s most beautiful shape”:

We proclaim, O Wise Lord, That these lights are your most beautiful shape of shapes, since that highest of the high was called the sun.<sup>144</sup>

In another Pahlavi text, the Denkard (Acts of Religion), a similar cosmogonic function of the Fire is deployed, with clear Neo-Platonic influences. As Mansour Shaki puts it, “Blending traditional tenets with Neo-Platonic doctrine, the passage recounts that the creator first fashions from the Endless Light the all-embracing form of fire (*âsrô-kerp*), which emanates two instruments of equal creative powers: the Spirit of the Power of the Soul (*mênôg î waxš nêrôg*) and the Spirit of the Power of Nature (*mênôg î chihr nêrôg*).”<sup>145</sup> Hence, even in the scheme presented in the Denkard, which is a mixture of Neo-Platonic emanationism with traditional Mazdean cosmogony, the “form of fire” is what brings the process of emanation and hence creation into being. Just as in Mazdean cosmogony the luminous divine Fire is at the origin or beginning of creation and is the means by which creation is existentiated, so also, Fire

figures as the quintessential feature of the drama of the end, at the *eschaton*, and the renovation (*frashgird*) of the world. Indeed, the Pahlavi texts speak of the eschatological appearance of the Fire at the end of time as a “person” or a human figure. In the *Zatspram* or *Zadspram* we read, “In the end, manifest and plain, there will be seen by night and in the atmosphere a form of fire, in the shape of a man, conceived by the spiritual gods, riding as it were, a fiery horse, and fearful (to behold): and they shall be freed from doubt.”<sup>146</sup> Here a similar “form of fire” which at the beginning of creation, in pre-existence, brought forth the creation of all things (cosmogony), appears in the “shape of a man,” at the end of time (eschatology), as a savior riding upon a horse. Indeed, this passage recalls the figure of Logos in the Apocalypse of John riding upon a white horse, and is evocative of the *Oracle of Hystapes*, and may have been influenced by it.

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called “The Word of God.” [Rev. 19:11-13]

Indeed, the Word of God or Logos in the Apocalypse of John, whose eyes are like “flames of fire” has clear Zoroastrian overtones. It is also worth noting that this vision of Christ or the Word of God is regarding his second appearance or *parousia*. In another instance, Hultgård also paraphrases a portion of *Wizidagiha-i Zadspram*, stating that, “the great fire is likened to a huge human figure holding in his hand a tree with the branches above and the roots below. The branches will take the righteous and bring them to paradise the roots will seize the wicked and drop them in hell [WZ 35:40, 44].” Thus, the symbolism of the “great fire,” “in the shape of a man,” a *theos anthropos*, alludes to a messianic figure, a *soter* or savior, the Saoshyant, who will come at the end of the Zoroastrian *aeon* (age), and through whom the “righteous” will enter paradise and the “wicked” into hell: a classic motif attributed to Fire as



divider of the *ashavan* and *dreagvan* at the final judgement, that as we have seen, goes back to the Gathas themselves. This form or shape of fire is also mentioned in a Manichaean text in Middle Persian called *Shapuragan* in the context of eschatology and the end of the *aeon*. It describes in vivid terms the eschatological Day of Judgment, in which “the Great Fire ascends to the heavens in the *chihr* (i.e., shape) of Ohrmazd-bagh (The Primordial Man).”<sup>147</sup> Thus in Mazdaism and Manichaeism, the heavenly and celestial Fire is visualized as a sacred *person*.

In Iranian apocalyptic imaginary there is a sublime correspondence between the beginning (cosmogony) and the end (eschatology), as Hultgård has observed: “One cannot understand Persian Apocalypticism without taking into consideration its context within cosmic history. There is an inner coherence between the beginning and the end that is unique to the Iranian worldview.”<sup>148</sup> Kreyenbroek also notes this homology of the beginning with the end in Mazdean thought stating that, “in Zoroastrian eschatology as it developed since the time of the Prophet [Zarathustra], the Last Things have come to mirror the First things [Cosmogony] am lost completely, although in a compressed form.”<sup>149</sup> In his brief description of the stages of cosmogony in the Pahlavi texts he states, in the early creation “Fire brings movement” and towards the “End of Time” “Fire and Molten metal cleanse the world...”<sup>150</sup> In this precise sense, the dialectic of fire and movement is linked in Zoroastrianism to cosmogony, just as it is in Bahá’u’lláh’s Persianate tablets. In fact, Kreyenbroek observes that of the various “elements of eschatology, only the cleansing flow of molten metal, has no obvious counterpart in the cosmogony. As it plays an important role in the Gathas, it seems likely that its presence in Zoroastrian eschatology goes back directly to Zarathustra’s teaching.”<sup>151</sup> It is in this Mazdean sense that Jesus in the Apocalypse of John states, “I am the First or the Beginning (*alpha*) and the Last or the End (*omega*)” [Rev. 1:17; 2:8; 22:13]. Indeed, Bahá’u’lláh in a similar manner correlates the beginning with the end, he states, “Know thou that the end is like unto the beginning. Even as thou dost consider the beginning, similarly shouldst thou consider the end, and be of them that truly perceive. Nay, rather consider the beginning as

the end itself, and so conversely, that thou mayest acquire a clear perception" [TB 183]. 'Abdu'l-Bahá' also states that in all the great spiritual cycles "the origins and ends are the same" [BWF 400] Namely that each cycle of divine revelation begins by the Manifestation of the Primal Will, symbolized here by the celestial Fire, and ends with its appearance again on the plain of history. Thus cosmogony mirrors eschatology and *vice versa*, and each cycle of the self-revelation and theophany of the Primal Will, is itself a microcosm of the process of cosmogony. As it is abundantly clear in the Mazdean context the world comes into being through the divine Fire and ends by the coming of Fire, which personified and embodied as the salvific appearance of Truth/Asha in the form of the Saoshyant, will radiate the Fire of the divine "Glory," namely the *Khvarnah*.

### **Bahá'u'lláh as the Fire and Light of the Divine Glory (*Khvarnah*)**

There is a profound correspondence and sublime homology between Zoroastrianism and the Bahá'í faith<sup>152</sup> – these *twin* religions of the soil of Iran, "the earth of Light" – which may be gestured at the outset of this section by an emblematic episode in the life of Bahá'u'lláh, in which he states to his prison interrogators in 'Akka, who upon insisting as to his name and native home land exclaimed: "My name is Bahá'u'lláh (Light of God), and my country is *Nur* (Light)." <sup>153</sup> It is here that Bahá'u'lláh in a sublime hermeneutical turn simultaneously reveals the spiritual correspondence, the *syzygy*, between his heavenly abode, and his earthly homeland, a land which is the realm of spiritual Light(s) in the pleroma of the world of *Lahut*, and which in the sacred topography of this world, and the coordinates of the world of *Nasut* (the physical world), is the land of Iran (often referred to in our texts as *mahd-i amr'ullah* or the cradle of the Cause of God), in the province of Mazandaran called *Nur* (Light). Indeed, it is in the very name of Baha' (Allah) that we shall discover the manifestation of the divine Fire, not least typified by one of the most sublime concepts in all of Mazdeanism, namely the *Khvarnah*.

One of the aspects of the divine Fire in Zoroastrianism is the sublime concept of *Khvarnah*, the “Divine Glory” or “Light of Glory,” as Corbin calls it.<sup>154</sup> *Khvarnah*, the Avestan term for ‘Splendour’ or ‘Glory’ (Old Persian *farnah*, middle Persian *khwarr*, new Persian *khurrah* or *farr*), is derived from *khvar*, ‘to shine, to illuminate’, and was translated into Greek as *doxa* or glory. This luminous and radiant glory is not only characteristic of Yima (Jamshid), the first king in Mazdean mytho-history (and of Royal light of kingly authority and legitimacy in general), and Zarathustra as the prophet of God, but also of the future messianic savior(s), the Saoshyant(s). In iconography, it is typified by the luminous halo or *Aura Gloriarum* of kings and priests (such as the relief of Kartir at *Naqsh-i Rostam* and *Naqsh-i Rajab*) in Zoroastrianism, and which influenced the iconography of Buddhism (the halo behind the head of the Buddha), Christianity (the halo represented behind Jesus Christ in paintings and icons), and Islam (represented by both a halo and flames of fire emanating from behind the head of prophet Muhammad in miniatures and paintings).

The relation of *Khvarnah* to the sacred Fire, has often been noted by various scholars, for example, Jackson states, “the essence of fire manifests itself in the form of the *huvarenah* [*khavarnah*]...”<sup>155</sup> In many of the passages of the Avesta *Khvarnah* is a “power of luminous and fiery nature.”<sup>156</sup> For instance it is in Yasht 10:127 that the “‘strong’ (*uyra-*) *xvarənah-* of the *kauui-* is identified with a “blazing fire” (*átarš yōupa.suxtō*) that precedes Mithra in his chariot.”<sup>157</sup> Indeed, all the three great sacred Zoroastrian fires of ancient Iran, namely “Farnbág, Gušnasp, and Burzén-Mihr,” were thought to be the visible manifestation of “the divine “Glory of Fire” (Av. *atarə xvarənah-*) which is the hypostasis of the power and “glory” in all fires (see Bd. 18.15).”<sup>158</sup> It is in one of the Pahlavi scriptures, the *Revayat*, that another link is established between the Fire and Daena, as it states, “the spirit of Fire itself, will be present “with the other Amēšaspands” to receive the righteous soul at the Činvat Bridge.”<sup>159</sup> Here it is the Fire, like the Daena the heavenly twin of the soul, who will be the one to receive the soul of the righteous in its post-mortem heavenly voyage. As Corbin states, “that is why Daena is also Xvarnah [*Khvarnah*], personal Glory and Destiny, and as such is ‘thine Aeon, thine

Eternity.”<sup>160</sup> Thus, the soul’s archetypal counterpart, its twin, is at once Daena and *Khvarnah*, and may be linked to what ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has termed “the heavenly spirit” or the “spirit of Faith” (*ruh-i iman*), which may be linked to the concept of Daena (the Maiden) signifying at once religion, the soul’s double/twin, and a maiden.<sup>161</sup> In his discussion of five types of spirit Abdu’l-Bahá states, “The fourth degree of spirit is the heavenly spirit; it is the spirit of faith and the bounty of God; it comes from the breath of the Holy Spirit, and by the divine power it becomes the cause of eternal life. It is the power which makes the earthly man heavenly...” [SAQ 144]

Indeed, as we have seen the celestial Fire is linked to the radiance of the Zoroastrian savior or Saoshyant, and the flaming majesty or glory that is *Khvarnah*, which accompanies all the Zoroastrian saviors, including Zoroaster himself, and whose being permeates and radiates the Light of Glory (*khvarnah*). The *Denkard* (Acts of Religion), one of the Pahlavi texts, describes in mytho-poetic terms the birth of the prophet Zarathustra in which three days prior to his birth, his mother, Frin, became so radiant and luminous that the whole village was immersed in light. The inhabitants thought that a great fire had been set ablaze and hurriedly evacuated the village. But, upon their return they came to find a boy full of brilliance had been born. When the mother of Zarathustra was fifteen, she irradiated light wherever she moved. The *Denkard* explains that the sublime radiance that emanated from her was due to the *Khvarnah* that dwelt in her.<sup>162</sup> In another Pahlavi text the *Zádspram*, “Zoroaster’s *xwarrah* [*Khvarnah*] is said to have descended from heaven and become manifest “in the form of fire” (*pad átaxš éwénag*) at the moment of his birth (5.1, 8.8).”<sup>163</sup> The motif of this supra-natural splendor or light, which accompanied the birth of Zarathustra, is also evident in Islamic Sira narratives concerning the birth of Muhammad. According to Ibn Ishaq, when the mother of prophet Muhammad, Amina, was pregnant with him, she witnessed in a dream that a light radiated from her belly to the castles of Syria.<sup>164</sup>

The dramatic setting of the revelation of prophet Zarathustra is also characterized by the supra-natural splendour of the heavenly Fire that radiated upon the mountain where the

prophet had retired. The Greek philosopher Dion Chrysostom of Prusa (d. 112), “mentions the highest peak on which Zarathustra retired in order to “live in the way that was his own,” and where a ceremony of ecstasy, invisible to the eyes of the profane, unfolds in a setting of fire and supernatural splendor.”<sup>165</sup> Indeed, this event has its similitude in Bahá’u’lláh’s own retirement to the mountains of Sulaymaniyyah in Iraqi Kurdistan (after his epiphanic encounter with the luminous Maiden (*huriyya*), the symbol of the Holy Spirit and his own self or ‘Twin’), where some of his sublime poetical outpourings such as the *qasída-i izz-i varqaiyya* or “the Ode of the Dove” were penned, at the request of Naqshbandi Sufis, among whom Bahá’u’lláh lived at the time.

Now, it is precisely in one of the poems of the Baghdad period (1853-63), penned during his two-year retirement to the Sulaymaniyyah mountains that Bahá’u’lláh states that he is the Divine Light of Glory (*farr iláhi*):

That King, through whose Command the world is  
recreated,

From whose breath, Christ’s spirit came to life.

That Divine Light of Glory (*farr iláhi*), from whose  
Decree, the Holy Spirit, is made a humble servant.<sup>166</sup>

Here Bahá’u’lláh identifies himself, in the third person, with the Zoroastrian *farr iláhi* or Divine Light of Glory, and which is also at once personified and symbolized in his person and name, *Baha’*. This is the clearest textual basis for Bahá’u’lláh’s claim to possess the *farr iláhi* or the Divine Light of Glory. In fact, Bahá’u’lláh’s messianic claim to be the appearance of the Mazdean divine Fire is precisely co-extensive with being the manifestation of *Khvarnah*, for as we have seen, *Khvarnah* is the victorial Fire, and it is precisely this Fire which will symbolically radiate from the Zoroastrian savior. Indeed it is in the Arabic verbal noun *Baha’*, meaning at once, splendour, glory, radiant light, and beauty, that the term *Khvarnah*, *Khurrah*, *farr* itself becomes translated and transferred into Arabic as *Baha’*. This is accomplished through the mystical lexicon of Suhrawardi, the Shaykh al-Ishraq. In this respect the work of this great martyr

philosopher of Iran, acts as a spiritual bridge – a chintvat bridge as it were – between Mazdean and Islamic Iran, to the Bahá'í faith. It is worth citing an extended passage in Corbin's *In Iranian Islam*, in which he discusses the translation of *Khvarnah* as *Baha'*, in Suhrawardi's *Hikmat al-Ishraq* (the Philosophy of Illumination):

Other terms make as many allusions to these “sources of the Light of Glory” [*Khvarnah*] during the course of the book. As we have stated, the book of Oriental Theosophy [*Hikmat al-Ishraq*] begins with a radical reform of Logic and finishes with a sort of memento of ecstasy, captured in two lyrical psalms. It is a question of “wanderings that went knocking on the portal of the great halls of the Light” and an encounter towards which “Angels who draw others to the Orient” advance and pour Water that springs from the “Source of Beauty” (*Yanbû al-bahâ*). We already noted above (page 59), that *the word Xvarnah [Khvarnah] is translated exactly by the Arabic bahâ (beauty, flash, splendor)*. “Sources of Beauty,” on this page is therefore equivalent to *Yanâbî al-Khurrah*, the Sources of the Light of Glory, from the magnificent account of his personal confession. The qualification given to the Angels illustrates even better that, to Suhrawardi's mind, *Xvarnah* and *Ishrâq*, Light of Glory and Light of the Orient, Source of *Xvarnah* and Oriental Source, are mutually interchangeable terms. Water and Light<sup>167</sup> are traditionally also mutually interchangeable as sources of Life and Knowledge. We encounter the expressions “Sources of Life” and “Sources of Light and Life” on other pages. The Source is itself not an object of knowledge but that what makes it gush forth [emphasis added].<sup>168</sup>

Here, as Corbin observes, the term *Khvarnah* in Suhrawardi's lexicon becomes “*translated exactly by the Arabic Baha'*,” and that the “Sources of Beauty” (*Yanbu al-Bahâ*), and the Sources of the Light of Glory, namely *Yanabi al-Khurrah*, become mutually interchangeable terms. In one of the Persianate tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, he states that by his manifestation, “...the

luminous rays of the Imperishable world are resplendent (*ishraq*) from the Dawning-place of the Will (*mashriq-i iradih*) of the Merciful.”<sup>169</sup> That is to say, that through his appearance the primal Will shines resplendent in the world. Such texts not only recall Zoroastrian motifs of celestial light and divine radiance, but at once evoke the mystical lexicon so characteristic of the school of *Ishraq*, the illuminationist philosophy of Suhrawardi. Thus here through the medium of the Suhrawardian corpus, we have a precise cognate in the translation of the term *Khvarnah* into the Arabic *Baha'*, a translation which is perfectly exemplified in the very name of Baha'(Allah), who claims to be the manifestation and theophany of the Mazdean divine Fire, and he who embodies and radiates the divine Light of Glory, the “Victorial Fire,” namely the *Khvarnah*.

In another ingenious turn Bahá'u'lláh mystically alludes to himself as the embodiment of *Khvarnah* by evoking one of the ancient symbols associated with the Light of Glory, namely the royal Falcon (*shah-baz*). In the Table to Manakji Sahib Bahá'u'lláh states:

The Tongue of Wisdom [*kherad*] proclaimeth: He that hath Me not is bereft of all things. Turn ye away from all that is on earth and seek none else but Me. I am the Sun of Wisdom [*aftab-i binesh*] and the Ocean of Knowledge [*darya-ye danesh*]. I cheer the faint and revive the dead. I am the guiding Light [*roshanaee*] that illumineth the way. I am the royal Falcon [*shah-baz*] on the arm of the Almighty. I unfold the drooping wings of every broken bird and start it on its flight.<sup>170</sup>

The obvious allusion to the art of falconry notwithstanding, in this passage to the Zoroastrian literati Manakji Sahib, Bahá'u'lláh, by referring to himself as the royal Falcon (*shah-baz*), is subtly proclaiming to his interlocutor — who presumably would know the symbolic association of the Falcon with *Khvarnah* — that he is the *Khvarnah*, the divine Light of Glory.<sup>171</sup> Indeed, in Iranian textual and iconographical sources the falcon is the symbol of the *Khvarnah par excellence*. In certain Kushan coins (1-2 CE) the *Khvarnah* is represented, not only as a human figure with flames of fire radiating from it, but

also as a “bird of prey, whether eagle or falcon.”<sup>172</sup> It was in Yasht 19:34-35 that *Khvarnah* assumed the form of a bird and abandoned Yima (Jamshid), as the Yasht states, “...*Khvarnah* was seen to depart from him [Yima] in the shape of a bird... *Khvarnah* went from shining Yima... in the shape of a hawk [*varegna*].”<sup>173</sup> Another iconographical source that represents the *Khvarnah* is in Persepolis, exemplified by the bird like winged-disk on the Achaemenid brick-panels, which evokes the “metamorphosis” of the *Khvarnah* into a falcon. The term *varegna* which has variously been translated as falcon, hawk, or eagle, may be best rendered into English as falcon. Sodovar examining many textual and iconographical sources of the *Khvarnah* concludes that, “these sources all tend to confirm the association of flacons – rather than eagles – with the *khvarnah*.”<sup>174</sup> Finally, in one of the iconographies of the *Khvarnah*, in which it is depicted as a falcon, the falcon is carrying in its claws two pearls (see the Song of the Pearl above). Indeed, in the Qur’an the maidens of paradise – *huriyya*, are likened “unto hidden pearls” [Qur’an 56:23], a symbol associated at once with the *Khvarnah* and the Daena (Maiden) in Zoroastrianism and with the Maid of Heaven in Bahá’u’lláh’s oeuvre. Thus, in this precise sense, Bahá’u’lláh is the royal Falcon, which is the *Khvarnah* and the embodiment of *Khvarnah*, the bearer of the *Aura Glorae*, the Divine Fire and Light of Glory: the visible manifestation of the divine and celestial Fire. It is precisely this Divine Light or Glory that was to accompany the Saoshyant, the messianic figure of Zoroastrianism *par excellence*, who is to appear at the end of the *aeon* and shine resplendent with its light.

Incidentally, there is a profound homologue between the falcon and *Símurgh*, the fabulous and great “Saéna bird,” which “derives from Avestan *mərəϑō saēnō* ‘the bird Saéna’, originally a raptor, either eagle or falcon, as can be deduced from the etymologically identical Sanskrit *s,yena*,”<sup>175</sup> meaning falcon. Indeed, the Saéna is conceptualized as a colossal falcon, “which has its perch on the Tree of All Seeds or of All Healing’ (Yt. 12:17), and which by its great weight and the beating of its wings breaks the twigs of this tree and scatters its seeds, which wind and rain then carry over the earth”<sup>176</sup> Indeed, in Yasht 14.41 “*Vərəθrayna* [Wahram/Bahram], the deity of victory,



wraps *x<sup>v</sup>arnah* [*Khvarnah*]... round the house of the worshipper... like the great bird Saéna, and as the watery clouds cover the great mountains, which means that Saéna will bring rain.”<sup>177</sup> In this precise sense, the luminous *Khvarnah*, the royal Falcon, and the *Símurgh* are all symbolically co-extensive with one another. It is here that in a profound hermeneutical turn, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states that the mytho-poetic figure of the *Símurgh*, symbolically signifies none other than Bahá’u’lláh. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in a tablet to one of the believers who resided in Shemiran, which lies on the slopes of the Alborz mountain outside the City of Tehran, states:

But, the change of weather in Shemiran is due to the Bird of Love in the vicinity of the All-Merciful. That place is not the dwelling place of birds; it is the dwelling-place of the ‘*Anqa*’ of the East, and the nest of the *Símurgh* of Mount Qaf. For the Blessed Beauty... resided for one year during the summer season, in that pure and fragrant grove...<sup>178</sup>

In this passage ‘Abdu’l-Bahá at once makes the ‘*Anqa*’ and the *Símurgh* co-terminous,<sup>179</sup> and provides a mystical interpretation of Bahá’u’lláh as the *Símurgh*, and indicates that the weather of Shemiran, which was once cold and inhospitable, has become mild and pleasant, due to Bahá’u’lláh’s presence in that region for a time. In another tablet ‘Abdu’l-Bahá provides a further hermeneutical register to the *Símurgh* and its legendary dwelling-place on the mystical Mount Qaf in Islamic literature and Sufi discourse. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá refers to the Báb who was imprisoned in Chehriq, in Northwestern Iran in the province of Azarbaijan, and continues to state that “for a time His Holiness Zoroaster also travelled and sojourned in those regions [i.e., Azarbaijan]. And Mount Qaf, which hath been mentioned in Narrations and Traditions, is none other than Qafqaz [the Caucasus], and it is the belief of Iranians [i.e., Zoroastrians] that it is the nest of the *Símurgh*, and the dwelling place of the ‘*Anqa*’ of the East.”<sup>180</sup> Here, in a unique linguistic turn, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá equates Mount Qaf with the Qaf in the name of Qafqaz or the Caucasus in the Azarbaijan region of Iran. Indeed, another profound homologue may be found in the mystical and

visionary treatises of Suhrawardi, particularly the Persian treatise, 'The Símurgh's Shrill Cry' (*Safír-i Símurgh*):

This treatise... is called 'The Simurgh's Shrill Cry.' It would not be detrimental to recall, by way of an introductory preface, something of this bird's conditions and place of habitation. Those who have been illuminated have shown that every hoopoe that abandons his nest in springtime and plucks his feathers with his beak and sets off for Mount Qaf will fall under the shadow of Mount Qaf within the span of a thousand years of [the time referred to in the text], 'one day with thus Lord is as thousand years, of those which ye compute [Koran, 22:47]. These thousand years, in the calendar of the People of Reality, are but one dawning ray from the orient of the Divine Realm [*Mashriq-i Lahut-i Azam*]. During this the hoopoe becomes a Simurgh whose shrill cry awakens those who are asleep. The Simurgh's nest is on Mount Qaf. His cry reaches everyone, but he has few listeners; everyone is with him, but most are without him.<sup>181</sup>

Indeed, the description of the Símurgh by Suhrawardi is consonant with the Bahá'í concept of hiero-history or "progressive revelation," in which once about every thousand years or so, a Manifestation of God (*mazhar iláhí*), symbolized here as the Símurgh, appears and inaugurates a new religious dispensation or spiritual cycle. Now it is also noteworthy that the last sentence in which Bahá'u'lláh states, "I unfold the drooping wings of every broken bird and start it on its flight" (see above), recalls the great mystical epic of Faríd ud-Dín 'Attár (c. 1142 – c. 1220) the *Conference of the Birds* (*Manteq at-Tayr*), in which the Hoopoe (*hudhud*)<sup>182</sup> leads the birds upon a spiritual voyage towards the King of the birds, the Símurgh, where through perhaps one of the greatest mystical puns in Persian poetics, only thirty birds remain, literally *sí* (thirty) *morgh* (bird[s]), who thereby see themselves mirrored in the Símurgh. Here the *sī*-murch (thirty birds) encounters its own heavenly double, its twin, in the Símurgh. In this precise sense, the symbolism of 'Attár's poetics may be read not as a union of the soul with the Divine *per se* (which is a characteristic reading

of the dramatic *dénouement* of the epic), but rather as a subtle gesture towards the Mazdean motif of the soul's encounter with its heavenly twin.

Now just as we have seen with the divine Fire (*atar*), the *Khvarnah* or the Light of Glory, is also endowed with cosmogonic and eschatological functions in the Zoroastrian scriptures. In Yasht 19:10 it is written that Ahura Mazda possesses the *Khvarnah* in order to "create all the creatures."<sup>183</sup> Corbin refers to the sublime and luminous entity of the *Khvarnah*, as an "Energy," which has been "operative from the initial instant of the formation of the world until the final act announced and forecast in the technical term *Frsahkart*, which designates the transfiguration to be accomplished at the end of the Aeon by the Saoshyants or Saviors..." Indeed, in Yasht 19 it states that it is through the *Khvarnah*, that "Ahura Mazda has created the many and good ... beautiful, marvelous ... creatures, full of life, resplendent."<sup>184</sup> Thus, it is in such texts as Yasht 19, dedicated to the *Khvarnah*, that the cosmogonic function of this divine Fire of Glory is explicitly confirmed.

Although, the *Khvarnah* is often related to the sacral authority of kings and of spiritual and temporal sovereignty, it is not exclusive to prophets and kings. Human beings are also endowed with the *Khvarnah*, and "at the final, eschatological renovation (*frasha*), this supernatural light [*khvarnah*] will adorn all of them: "the great light appearing as coming forth from the body will shine continually over the earth... and this light will be their garment, resplendent, immortal, exempt from old age."<sup>185</sup> Indeed, according to Bahá'í mystical hermeneutics, these beings of light, who will accompany the Saoshyant, and will radiate the *Khvarnah* or the Light of Glory, are the people of Baha' (*ahl-i baha*), who are the beings of Light, which is precisely the etymological meaning of *Bahá'í*: namely the followers of the Light/Glory or beings of Light/Glory. As 'Abdu'l-Bahá' states:

The Lord of Hosts [i.e., Bahá'u'lláh] hath descended with the army of lights and angels of heaven [i.e., Bahá'ís] and depressed the armies of darkness! He sent His angels to all directions, with a call of the trumpet of realities and meanings, instructions and teachings!

Therefore, O people of the earth, appreciate the opportunity, in this new century, wherein the lights have been revealed by the Glorious Lord!"<sup>186</sup>

Note here the profound Zoroastrian motifs of Light and Darkness, and the association of the faithful, namely Bahá'ís, with angelic beings and the *army of light*. It is these faithful who are created from the "earth of Light," namely the earth of *Baha'*, and whose being is the ontological co-incidence of their outer (*zahir*) and inner (*batin*) being. This spiritual creation, at once new and primordial, are the creatures of light foretold in the Mazdean scriptures, as Corbin sums up a portion of Yasht 19, "the creatures who are to come from the world of light and, in the form of Saoshyants, renew earthly existence, making it an existence with the nature of Fire, when all creatures will possess an incorruptible body of luminous Fire."<sup>187</sup> It is they who are referred to in the verse by Bahá'u'lláh, "Some know Us and bear witness, while the majority bear witness, yet know Us not" [TB 13]. This gnosis (*'irfán*) of Baha is what distinguishes the faithful of love, the people of Baha, from the rest who bear witness outwardly, yet inwardly do not know, for they lack the gnostic vision bestowed by the "eyes of fire". Thus it is they who are created from the radiance of the supernal Light, and from "the form of Fire made visible" on the plain of history, namely Bahá'u'lláh, the divine Light of Glory, the embodiment of the Mazdean Fire and of *Khvarnah*. In the spiritual hermeneutics of the Bahá'í textual universe, these beings of light as Saoshyants, then become symbolized as the people of Baha', who along with the savior Saoshyant (i.e., Bahá'u'lláh), will bring about the spiritual transfiguration and renovation of the cosmos, the making-brilliant or wonderful of creation (*frashgird*), which may be symbolically identified with the Order of Bahá'u'lláh (*nazm-i Baha*) and his Wondrous New Order (*nazm-i Badí*).

Thus as we have seen throughout this study, the mystico-messianic hermeneutics of Bahá'u'lláh find their correspondence and analogue in the conceptual coordinates of the celestial Fire (*atar, adar, atash*) in Mazdean scriptures, from the Gathas to the Palavi texts. The Mazdean heavenly Fire is not only equated with Truth/Order (*asha*), but forms with it a *syzygy* or dualitude, a bi-unity; and who is therefore represented in the

Zoroastrian mytho-logic as a ‘person,’ a ‘being,’ albeit a meta-physical and meta-temporal being, who is at once the cause of the existentionation of the cosmos, and who will become “embodied” or made resplendent in the world as a ‘person,’ and who is expected to appear at “the end of the millennium” as the Saoshyant, to make brilliant (*frashgird*) and radiant all of creation, precisely through the light and luminosity of his divine and primordial Fire — a Fire which is intimately and simultaneously connected to the sublime concept of *Khvarnah* or the divine Light of Glory, the Victorial Fire, and with the person and name of Baha’ (Allah).

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## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The present study will form a portion of a larger project provisionally entitled, *The Primordial Fire: From Zoroastrianism to the Baha’i Faith*. The completion of this paper was interrupted in 2009, until a brief respite in the summer of 2012 allowed me the opportunity to finally complete it. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Kamaran Ekbal and Moojan Momen for their valuable comments on an earlier draft of this paper and for their thoughtful editorial suggestions. Finally, I particularly would like to thank Dr. Iraj Ayman for his kind encouragement and generous invitation to present an earlier form of this paper at the 2009 ‘Irfan Colloquium in Santa Cruz, California.
- <sup>2</sup> Bahá’u’lláh, *Tabernacle of Unity* (Bahá’i World Centre, 2006) 68. For the original Persian, see *Yaran-i Parsi: Majmu’ih-i-Alwah-i-Mubarakih Jamal-i ‘Aqdas Abha va Hadrat-i ‘Abdu’l-Bahá bi Iftikhar Bahá’íyan-i-Parsi* (Bahai Verlag: Germany, 1998-155 B.E.) 3. All the published tablets of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to Zoroastrian believers are collected in this single volume.
- <sup>3</sup> Henry Corbin, *In Iranian Islam, Vol. 2: Suhrawardi and the Persian Platonists* (English translation by Hugo M. Van Woerkmon, 2003) 81. Electronically published at <http://www.scribd.com/doc/9664772/Henry-Corbins-In-Iranian-Islam-Vol2>. For a critical appraisal of the work of Corbin, see Steven M. Wasserstrom, *Religion After Religion: Gershom Scholem, Mircea Eliade, and Henry Corbin at Eranos*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1999); also, Vahid Brown, “A Counter-History of Islam: Ibn ‘Arabi within the Spiritual Topography of Henry Corbin,” *Journal of Ibn Arabi Society*, Volume XXXII, Autumn 2002. For a response to some of the critiques, see Maria E. Subtelny, “History and Religion: The Fallacy of Metaphysical Questions (A Review Article).” *Iranian Studies*: March 2003, 36(1): 91-101. Also, Nile Green, ‘Between Heidegger and the Hidden Imam: Reflections on Henry Corbin’s

Approaches to Mystical Islam', in M.-R. Djalili, A. Monsutti & A. Neubauer, *Le monde turco-iranien en question*, coll. Développements, Paris, Karthala; Genève, Institut de hautes études internationales et du développement, 2008, pp. 247-259.

For the significance of Corbin to Babi-Bahá'í studies see, Ismael Velasco, 'A For the significance of Corbin to Babi-Bahá'í studies see, Ismael Velasco, 'A Prolegomenon to the Study of Bábí and Baha'í Scriptures: The Importance of Henry Corbin to Bábí and Baha'í Studies,' *Baha'í Studies Review*, Vol. 12, 2004.

<sup>4</sup> The notion of 'process' in Islamic philosophy may be considered to have originated with the Persian philosopher Sadr al-Din Shirazi (d. 1640), known as Mulla Sadra, and his notion of essential motion (*al-haraka fi'l-jawhar*), often translated as 'substantial motion' (*al-haraka al-jawhariyya*). This concept was later developed further into a complete process metaphysics by Shaykh 'Ahmad al-Ahsai (d.1826), whose profound works form the immediate conceptual background to Bábí and Baha'í philosophy. The Sadrian term *harakat-i jawhariyya* is also often encountered in the Baha'í writings. See, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Má'idíyi-i Asmání*, 'Abdu'l-Hamid Ishráq Khávarí. (Tehran: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 129 B.E) 5:51-2. Also, Fádíl-i-Mázindarání, *Amr va Khalq*, Vol. 1. (Tehran: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1954-55) 123-4. For a still valuable study of Sadra's philosophy, see Fazlur Rhaman, *The Philosophy of Mullá Sadrá*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975). On Shaykh 'Ahmad's dynamic metaphysics see, Idris Hamid, *The Metaphysics and Cosmology of Process According to Shaykh 'Ahmad al-Ahasa'í: Critical Edition, Translation, and Analysis of Observations of Wisdom* (PhD thesis, State University of New York, Buffalo, 1998). For a brief discussion of Shaykh Ahmad's critique of Sadra on this notion see Christain Jambet, *The Act of Being: The Philosophy of Revelation in Mulla Sadra*, translated by Jeff Fort, (New York: Zone Book, MIT Press, 2006) 191-227.

<sup>5</sup> Nader Saeidi notes this *dialectic* core of Baha'í philosophy in his, "A Dialogue with Marxism," *Circle of Unity*, Anthony A. Lee, editor. (Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 1984) 235-256. See, also cf. *Logos and Civilization*. I shall have occasion to discuss the ancient roots of this dialectical motif of the Mazdean Fire and its influence on the great pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus, whose writings influenced modern philosophers such as Hegel, Nietchze, etc. in a seprate chapter.

<sup>6</sup> For a short, but useful discussion of the Primal Will, see Keven Brown, "A Brief Discussion of the Primal Will in the Baha'í Writings," *Baha'í Studies Bulletin* 4:2 (January 1990) 22-27.

<sup>7</sup> For the concept of manifestation, see Juan Cole, "The Concept of Manifestation in the Bahá'í Writings," *Baha'í Studies* 9 (1982), pp. 1-38. Available online: [http://bahai-library.com/cole\\_concept\\_manifestation](http://bahai-library.com/cole_concept_manifestation). See also Nader Saiedi, *Maḡhariyyat* (Doctrine of Manifestation) (Canada: Persian Institute for Bahá'í Studies, 1995).

- <sup>8</sup> Interestingly, perhaps the only other precedent for this identification with the Zoroastrian sacred Fire may be found in Manicheism (See Below).
- <sup>9</sup> Christopher Buck, “Bahá’u’lláh as Zoroastrian savior,” in *Bahá’i Studies Review* 8, 1998. Idem, “The Eschatology of Globalization: The Multiple-Messiahship of Bahá’u’lláh Revisited,” in *Studies in Modern Religions, and Religious Movements and the Bábí-Bahá’í Faiths*, ed. Moshe Sharon (Leiden: Brill, 2004).
- <sup>10</sup> Aside from Buck’s work, there are several works in Persian that deal with Bahá’u’lláh as the eschatological expectations of Zoroastrianism, but they do not discuss Bahá’u’lláh’s claim to be the fulfillment of the messianic and apocalyptic expectation of the Mazdean Fire. See, Neshat Anwari, “Bishárat-i Asho Zartusht dar bareh-ye do Zohur-i Akhar al-Zaman,” in *Mahbúb-i ‘Alam* [The Beloved of the World] (‘Andalíb Editorial Board, 1992–93) 103-122. See also, ‘*Andalíb* magazine number 49, pp. 26-31; and number 83, pp. 74-77.
- <sup>11</sup> There is one general survey of the symbolism of Fire in Bahá’u’lláh’s oeuvre, but it contains no references to the Zoroastrian tablets of Bahá’u’lláh referring to this motif. See Manuchehr Salmanpour, *Mafahim-e Nar dar Athar-i Haḍrat-i Bahá’u’lláh* (The Concept of “Nár” (Fire) in the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh), *Safínihi-yi ‘Irfán* 2 (Darmstadt: Asri Jadid Publishers, 1999) 31-49. Another important Fire symbolism in Bahá’u’lláh’s oeuvre is related to the mysteries of the Sinaitic episode. See, Stephen Lambden’s excellent study, “Sinaitic Mysteries: Moses/Sinai motifs in the Babi/Bahai Writings.”
- <sup>12</sup> Divan-e Hafiz, ghazal 486. See Meisami, Julie Scott (May, 1985). “Allegorical Gardens in the Persian Poetic Tradition: Nezami, Rumi, Hafez.” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 17(2), 229-260. It is interesting to note that Bahá’u’lláh often refers to himself in many of his writings as the ‘Nightingale’ (*Bulbul*) and the ‘Rose’ (*Goš*), evoking classic tropes and motifs of the Beloved, so often encountered in Persian mystical and classical poetry, and thereby gesturing towards the messianic appearance of the Nightingale and the Rose of the mystic lovers (i.e., himself). See Bahá’u’lláh, *Lawh-i Bulbul-i Firaq, Athar-i Qalam-i A’la* Vol. 4 (Tehran: Baha’i Publishing Trust, 1968), pp. 363-367. For a provisional translation see, Juan R. Cole, Nightingale of Separation. Available here: <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~jrcole/bahai/nightsep/nightsep.htm>
- <sup>13</sup> For a brief discussion of these two Tablets see, Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh*, vol. 3 (London: George Ronald, 1983) 270-4.
- <sup>14</sup> These were composed in “pure” Persian at the request of Mánakjí Şahib, however, many of the other tablets to Zoroastrian believers also contain Arabic portions.
- <sup>15</sup> Bahá’u’lláh, *Yaran-i Parsi*, 3. Bahá’u’lláh, *Tabernacle of Unity* 68.
- <sup>16</sup> Provisional translation, Bahá’u’lláh, *Yaran-i Parsi* 1. All provisional translations are mine, unless otherwise noted.
- <sup>17</sup> Bahá’u’lláh, *Tabernacle of Unity* 8. Bahá’u’lláh *Yaran-i Parsi*, 21.

- <sup>18</sup> For an excellent study of the Zoroastrian motif of Daena and its relation to the concept of the 'Maiden' in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh see, Kamran Ekbal, "Daena-Den-Din: The Zoroastrian Heritage of the 'Maid of Heaven' in the Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh," *Scripture and Revelation* (ed. Moojan Momen), Baha'i Studies Vol III, (George Ronald, Oxford: 1997) 125-169. Idem, *Angizeh-i Huriyya ya Daena va Deen va rad payi Mazdisna dar Lawh-i Mallah al-Quds* (The Maid of Heaven and the Tablet of the Holy Mariner), *Safinih-yi 'Irfán 2* (Darmstadt: Asri Jadid Publishers, 1998) 110-123. Some aspects of the motif of Light from Zoroastrian and Manichean texts related to the motif of the 'Maid of Heaven' is discussed by Ekbal in pages 142-147. We shall have occasion to discuss further the motif of the Fire and the Maid of Heaven (*huriyya*) later (See Below).
- <sup>19</sup> Manfred Hutter whilst discussing the motif of "progressive revelation" in the Baha'i faith states, "The idea that there is a succession of prophets and divine revelations in the history of religions, is not a phenomenon limited to the Baha'i religion. In the religious history of Iran, it was formulated by the religious founder, Mani (216 – 277). Bahá'u'lláh himself was hardly aware of Mani as a representative of a lost religion. Mani's teachings of a successive revelation only indirectly influenced Bahá'u'lláh via the mediation of Islam." See Manfred Hutter, *Handbuch Bahá'í: Geschichte-Theologie-Gesellschaftsbezug* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag, 2009) 119. Hutter's observations generally seem apt, but I would only add that it was an Islam tinged with Shi'ite gnosis and *bateni* elements, which were influenced by Manichaeism early on.

The term often used for Manicheans in Arabic sources is *al-Zindiq'* or dualists (and more generally has come to mean heresy), and was coined in a heresiographical context. To my knowledge there is no mention of Mani in any of the published Baha'i sacred texts. However, since only a small fraction of the vast corpus of Baha'i scriptures have been published to date, it is not impossible that such a mention may come to light in the future. In light of the variety and voluminous questions asked from Bahá'u'lláh, Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi during their lives, it would be curious that no one would have asked about Manichaeism and its founder Mani. However, in an early anti-Bahá'i polemic one of the charges brought against Bahá'u'lláh was that his religion bore a close resemblance to that of Mani's. In Mirza Abu'l Fazl's monumental *apology* called *al-Fara'id*, this charge is mentioned and refuted in light of the fact that similar charges were levelled against the prophet Muhammad, who was similarly accused of having styled his revelation with that of Mani's. See Mirza Abu'l-Fadl Gulpaygani's *al-Fará'id* (Cairo: Matba'ah Hindiyah, 1315 A.H./1897) 432-33.

Among the Manichaean relations with Islam, the title of prophet Muhammad, the 'Seal of the Prophets or Apostles' (*khatam al-nabiyyin*) is of note (Qur'an 33:40), and is thought to have been a title espoused by Mani, especially by some "Islamic authors [that] ascribed to Mani the claim to be the Seal of the Prophets." Werner Sundermann, "Manichean



Eschatology,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. VIII, Fasc. 6, pp. 569-575; online at: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/eschatology-ii> (accessed on 25 August 2012). See also, G. G. Stroumsa, “‘Seal of the Prophets.’ The Nature of a Manichaean Metaphor,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 7, 1986, pp. 61-74.

- <sup>20</sup> Mani, *Shapuragan*, cited in al-Biruni, *Kitab al-athar al-baqiya* ed. C. E. Sachau (Leipzig, 1878) 207, also translated by Sachau, *The Chronology of Ancient Nations* (London, 1879) 190.
- <sup>21</sup> Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, *Gnosis on the Silk Road: Gnostic Texts from Central Asia*. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993) 50.
- <sup>22</sup> Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, *Gnosis on the Silk Road* 50.
- <sup>23</sup> Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, *Gnosis on the Silk Road* 44.
- <sup>24</sup> Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, *Gnosis on the Silk Road* 83.
- <sup>25</sup> Mary Boyce, *A Reader in Manichaean Middle Persian and Parthian*. (Leiden: 1977 (Acta Iranica 9a), 10.
- <sup>26</sup> Ishraq-Khavari *Ma'idih-yi Asmani*, 4:340. For both the Arabic and Persian of this tablet, see pp. 335-341; for the translation of Shoghi Effendi, see *Bahá'í Prayers* (Wilmette, Illinois, USA: Bahá'í Publishing Trust 1985) 221-229. For other tablets that employ the motif of the “Youth” by Bahá'u'lláh, see *Lawh-i Ghulam al-Khuld* 'Abdu'l-Hamid Ishraq-Khavari, ed., *Ayyam-i Tis'ih* (Tehran: Mu'assasah-i Milli-yi Matbu'at-i Amri, 1973) 92-99; for a translation of this tablet, see John Walbridge. “Bahá'u'lláh's 'Tablet of the Deathless Youth': Text, Translation, Commentary.” *Translations of Shaykhí, Bábí and Baha'í Texts*, Vol. 1, no. 7 (October, 1997), online at [http://bahai-library.com/bahauallah\\_lawh\\_ghulam\\_khuld](http://bahai-library.com/bahauallah_lawh_ghulam_khuld). For the whole motif of the Divine Being or God as a “Youth,” see Josef van Ess, *The Youthful God: Anthropomorphism in Early Islam* (Tempe, Ariz., 1988) 1-20.

Also relevant is Omid Ghaemmaghami's excellent study, ‘Numinous Vision, Messianic Encounters: Typological Representations in a Version of the Prophet's *ḥadīth al-ru'yá* and in Visions and Dreams of the Hidden Imam,’ *Dreams and Visions in Islamic Societies*, Edited by Alexander D. Knysh and Özgen Felek (New York: Suny Press, 2012) 51-76. For the motif of the Youth in the Báb's oeuvre, see Omid Ghaemmaghami, “A Youth of Medium Height: The Báb's Encounter with the Hidden Imam in Tafsír Súrat al-Kawthar,” in *A Most Noble Pattern: Collected Essays on the Writings of the Báb, Alí Muhammad Shírází (1819-1850)* (Oxford: George Ronald, 2012) 175-195.

- <sup>27</sup> Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, *Gnosis on the Silk Road* 137.
- <sup>28</sup> Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, *Gnosis on the Silk Road* 163.
- <sup>29</sup> For a similar discussion and observation on the Manichaean Maiden of Light and the Baha'í Maid of Heaven see, Kamran Ekbal, “Daena-Den-Din.”

- <sup>30</sup> Geo Widengren, *Mani and Manichaeism*. Hisotry of Religions Series, trs. Charles Kessler (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston 1965) 27.
- <sup>31</sup> The Paraclete also appears in Bahá'u'lláh's oeuvre in several hermeneutical registers, in one of which Bahá'u'lláh is the advent of the Paraclete, see Stephen Lambden, "Prophecy in the Johannine Farewell Discourse: The Advents of the Paraclete, Ah.mad, and the Comforter (*Mu'azzí*)," *Scripture and Revelation* (ed. Moojan Momen), Baha'i Studies Vol III, (George Ronald, Oxford: 1997) 69-124.
- <sup>32</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablet of Wisdom (Lawh-i Hikmat) in Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, 148. The words of Mani in the the *Kephalaia*, cited above, "Thus did the Paraclete disclose to me all that has been and all that will be," has a profound resonance with the words of Bahá'u'lláh in this tablet, "there will appear before the face of thy Lord in the form of a tablet all that which hath appeared in the world..." (see above).
- <sup>33</sup> Widengren states, "In the *Syriac Song of the Pearl...* the Son-Redeemer is portrayed as the *youth*, the young prince. This was the model for the Manichaean Redeemer in his symbolic aspect of 'sripling' or *youth*" (emphasis added). Geo Widengren, *Mani and Manichaeism* 49.
- <sup>34</sup> We shall have occasion to discuss this motif of the eagle/falcon as related to the Mazdean *Khvarnah (farr)* the Light of Glory, and to Bahá'u'lláh's own name and his symbolic idenfication as the royal falcon (see below).
- <sup>35</sup> Geo Widengren, *Mani and Manichaeism* 12-13.
- <sup>36</sup> Willis Barnstone and Marvin Meyer *The Gnostic Bible: Gostic Texts of Mystical Wisdom from the Ancient and Medieval Worlds*. Edited by (Boston: New Seeds, 2003) 391. Two older translations of the *Song of the Pearl*, one by G.R.S. Mead, and the other by William Wright may be found on the Gnostic Society Library. Available online: <http://gnosis.org/library/hymnpearl.htm>
- <sup>37</sup> Barnston and Mayer, *The Gnostic Bible* 392. Mayer and Branston note that this portion is based on the Greek recension and not the Syriac, f7.
- <sup>38</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh* 284. For the notion of the Speaking Book in Shi'ism which is an appellation of the Imams, with a similar Gnostic heritage, see M. Ayoub, 'The Speaking Qur'án and the Silent Qur'án: A Study of the Principles and Development of Imami Shi'i *tafsir*,' in Andrew Rippin (ed.), *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'án*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988) 177-98.
- <sup>39</sup> Geo Widengren, *Mani and Manichaeism* 26. Regarding the motif of the twin Widengren states, "The designation 'twin' is that given to the celestial double of the deligated prophet. Through the descent of his heavenly self he is appointed to his apostleship. This line of thought, originating in Iran, was common to Gnosticism generally and was later to play a considerable part in Islamic ideas." Cf. 26.
- <sup>40</sup> Alessandro Bausani, *Religion in Iran: From Zoroaster to Bahá'u'lláh* (Bibliotheca Persica, 2000) 84.

- <sup>41</sup> Dhikru'llah Khadem, *The Vision of Shoghi Effendi*, 117-18. For instance, the twin heralds: Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i (d. 1242/1826) and Sayyid Kazim Rashti (d. 1259/1843); twin Manifestations: the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh; twin individual successors: 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi; twin institution of the Administrative Order: the Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice, etc.
- <sup>42</sup> Matti Moosa, *Extremist Shiites: The Ghulat Sects* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1988) 332. For an important study of Nusayris, see M. M. Bar-Asher, and A. Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-'Alawī Religion: an Enquiry into its Theology and Liturgy*, (Leiden: Brill, 2002).
- <sup>43</sup> Cited in Moosa, *Extremist Shiites* 334.
- <sup>44</sup> Cited in Moosa, *Extremist Shiites* 334.
- <sup>45</sup> On this Pillar or Column of Fire, especially in its Manechean, Shi'i and Baha'i context see below.
- <sup>46</sup> For the concept of the Cloud, see Stephen Lambden's study of 'ama in the Babi-Bahá'i writings, 'An Early Poem of Mirza Husayn 'Alí Bahá'u'lláh: The Sprinkling of the Cloud of Unknowing (Rashh-i 'ama),' *Baha'i Studies Bulletin* 3.2 (1984) 4-114.
- <sup>47</sup> The Persian word *kabood* meaning 'blue' or dark or deep 'blue' is related to the Hebrew word *kavod*.
- <sup>48</sup> A. V. William Jackson, *Zoroastrian Studies: The Iranian Religion and Various Monographs* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1928) 57.
- <sup>49</sup> Though there is some scholarly consensus that there are certain Zoroastrian "influences" on Judaism, it is important to note that influences were never one way, and that rather than speaking of "influences," it is better to speak of a crossfertilization or symbiosis, which would be a more accurate characterization of the relationship between Zoroastrianism and Judaism through out their long history. For an excellent series of scholarly monographs related to contacts between Iran and Judaism, see the series edited by Shaul Shaked, *Irano-Judaica* five volumes (1982- present).
- <sup>50</sup> See David Flusser's excellent study, 'Hystaspes and John of Patmos,' *Irano-Judaica: Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture Throughout the Ages*, edited by Shaul Shaked, (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute for the Study of Jewish Communities in the East, 1982) 12-75.
- <sup>51</sup> Flusse, 'Hystaspes and John of Patmos' 24.
- <sup>52</sup> Flusse, 'Hystaspes and John of Patmos' 26.
- <sup>53</sup> Flusse, 'Hystaspes and John of Patmos' 28.
- <sup>54</sup> Flusse, 'Hystaspes and John of Patmos' 27.
- <sup>55</sup> Qur'an 24:35
- <sup>56</sup> The earliest surviving work to cite this hadith is Sharaf al-Dín 'Alí al-Husaynī al-Astarábadí al-Najafí (d. ca. 965/1558), *Ta'wíl al-áyát al-záhira fí faḍá'il al-'itra al-ṭáhira* (Qum: al-Madrasa lil-Imám al-Mahdí, 1407/1987), vol. 2: p. 735, hadith no. 6. The hadith is also cited in

Muḥammad b. Báqir al-Majlisí, *Biḥár al-anwár* (Beirut: Dár Iḥyá' al-Turáth al-'Arabí, 1403/1983), vol. 24, p. 326, hadith no. 41, though the particle "qad" is dropped in this version. I am grateful to Omid Ghaemmaghami for this source and translation.

<sup>57</sup> See Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shi'ism* (trans. David Streight, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994) 40. Amir-Moezzi does not note the Manichaen parallels of the Column of Light with the Shi'ite sources.

<sup>58</sup> There is a link between these concepts and motifs and the World of Particles (*'alam-i dharr*). See Farshid Kazemi, (2009), "Mysteries of Alast: The Realm of Subtle Entities (*'Alam-i dharr*) and the Primordial Covenant in the Bábí-Bahá'í Writings" *Baha'i Studies Review* 15, pp. 39-66. See also, Mirca Eliad, "Spirit, Light, and Seed," *Occultism, Witchcraft, and Cultural Fashions: Essays in Comparative Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1976) 93-19.

<sup>59</sup> Farhad Daftary, *The Isma'ilis: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 296. For a further discussion of the Manichaen Column of Light in Isma'ilism, see Henry Corbin, *Cyclical Time and Isma'ili Gnosis* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1983) 110-115. For a study of the relationship of Isma'ili philosophical ideas and the Bábí and Baha'i religions, see Farshid Kazemi, "Early Isma'ili Philosophy and the Bábí-Bahá'í Religions." Paper presented at the *Irfan Colloquia* Center for Bahá'í Studies: Acuto, Italy. June 28-July 1, 2009.

<sup>60</sup> Cited in Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985) 125. In another instance, Böwering rightly notes Shi'i influences on these concepts of al-Tustarí, "In his theology, al-Tustarí understood God under the symbol of light (*núr*) on the background of the light verse (*áyat al-núr*, XXIV, 35) and chose the phrase of "the light of Muḥammad" (*núr Muḥammad*) to designate the primal man and prototypical mystic, apparently in vague association with logos speculation and Shí'í terminology. In interretation of [Qur'an] II, 30, and LIII, 13-18, he conceived of Muḥammad as the column of light (*'amúd al-núr*) standing in primordial adoration of God, the crystal which draws the divine light upon itself, absorbs in its core (*qalb Muḥammad*) and projects it unto humanity in the Qur'án." See, Böwering, G. "Sahl al-Tustarí, Abú Muḥammad b. 'Abd Alláh b. Yúnus b. 'Isá b. 'Abd Alláh b. Rafí'." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition. Brill, 2010. Brill Online. Also, see See Gerhard Böwering, *The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980). For a discussion of the Muḥammadan Light (*nur Muḥammadi*) in Shi'ism; see Uri Rubin, 'Pre-Existence and Light: Aspects of the Concept of Nur Muhammad,' *Israel Oriental Studies*, 5 (1975) 62-119.

<sup>61</sup> Moshe Idel, *Ascensions on High in Jewish Mysticism: Pillars, Lines, Ladders* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2005) 124.

- <sup>62</sup> See Kamran Ekbal, “Daena-Den-Din” 130-131, 144-147. Twelver Shi’i, Isma’ili, Sufi, and Zoharic parallels of the Column of Light or Glory are not discussed in Ekbal.
- <sup>63</sup> *Yádnámeh-yi Mesbá’-i Monír*. Edited by Vahid Rafati. (Hofheim-Langenhain: Bahá’i-Verlág, 2006) 239. For similar writings on the Green Island (*Jazirat al-Khazra*) see *ibid*, 238-239.
- <sup>64</sup> Henry Corbin, “Mundus Imaginalis or the Imaginary and the Imaginal” in *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*. Translated by Leonard Fox. (Pennsylvania, Swedenborg Foundation, 1995) 28-29. Also available online: [http://hermetic.com/bey/mundus\\_imaginalis.htm](http://hermetic.com/bey/mundus_imaginalis.htm).
- Omid Ghaemmaghami presented a paper, “From the Jabulqa of God’s Power to the Jabulqa of Superstition: The Twelfth Imam in the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’” at the Irfan Colloquia Bosch Bahá’i School: Santa Cruz, CA, USA, May 19-23, 2010. Also Cf. “To the Land of the Promised One: The Green Isle in Akhbari, Shaykhi, Bábí and Baha’i Topography.” Paper presented at the conference “Messianism and Normativity in Late Medeivel and Modern Persianate World,” Freie Universitat, Berlin, 17-18 September 2010. I have not seen either of these papers.
- <sup>65</sup> Provisional translation ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Yádnámeh-yi Mesbá’-i Monír* 239.
- <sup>66</sup> Indeed, in many Islamic traditions (*ahadith*), both Sunni and Shi’i, the plain of Acre or ‘Akka (or Akko) was considered to be the site of the appearance of the messianic figure of Mahdi/Qa’im and the final apocalyptic cataclysm. In fact, in his text *Epistle of the Son of the Wolf*, Bahá’u’lláh alludes to the fulfillment of these traditions of eschatological expectation regarding ‘Akka (albeit in a mystico-spiritual manner) and ends his text with a veritable list of them. For some of the sources of these traditions see, Moojan Momen “‘Akka Traditions (hadith) in the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf” in *Lights of Irfan*, Volume 4, pages 167-178. The Sufi-mystic Muhyi al-Din Ibn al-‘Arabi (d. 638/1240) in his monumental *Futuh al-Makkiyya* (Meccan Illuminations) states that after the apocalyptic battle in ‘Akka, none survives save one of the Mahdi’s ministers “on the plain of Acre, where Allah will set the divine table [*al-ma’ida al-ilahiyya*] for the vultures and lions.” Cited in Jean-Pierre Filiu, *Apocalypse in Islam*. Translated by M. B. DeBevoise (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011) 33.
- <sup>67</sup> Corbin cited in Steven M. Wasserstrom, *Religion After Religion: Gershom Scholem, Mircea Eliade, and Henry Corbin at Eranos*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1999). 31.
- <sup>68</sup> Bahá’u’lláh, *Gems of Divine Mysteries* (Haifa: Baha’i World Centre, 2002) 36-37. Aside from turning the Hidden Imam into an archetypal figure in this passage, Bahá’u’lláh seems to be deploying a form of *taqiyya* (dissimulation) here in his affirmation of the existence of the eponymous twelfth Imam, the purported “son” of the 11<sup>th</sup> Imam Hassan al-Askari in Twelver Shi’ism. In the later writings of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’

there is a progressive, but categorical denial of the existence of this “son,” the so-called Muhammad al-Mahdi, the Hidden Imam; but the eschatological hope of a messianic figure who will be born in the future is not denied, as that role is said to be symbolically fulfilled by the Bab. See ‘Abdu’l-Hamid Ishraq-Khavari *Ma’idih-yi Asmani*, 8:102; 7:185. Also cf. *Muhadirat* (2 vols. in 1, Hofheim-Langenhain: Baha’i-Verlag, 1987) 813. I am indebted to Kamran Ekbal for the last reference (*Muhadirat*). On the denial of the existence of the Twelfth Imam in the writings of Bahá’u’lláh see, Stephen Lambden’s brief notes, ‘The Babi-Bahá’i Demythologization of Shi’i Messianism,’ available at <http://hurqalya.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/03-Biblical-islam-BBst/IMAM12.HTM>.

Similarly, Armin Eschraghi presented a paper, ‘Identifying Roots and Mechanisms of Religious Prejudice: Bahá’u’lláh’s Writings on the 12th Imám,’ Presented at the *Irfan Colloquia* Session #83, Center for Bahá’i Studies: Acuto, Italy, July 3-6, 2008. Unpublished manuscript. On *taqiyya* in the writings of the Bab, see Vahid Brown, “Secrets Concealed by Secrets: *Taqiyya* as Arcanization in the Autobiographies of the Bab” in *A Most Noble Pattern: Collected Essays on the Writings of the Bab, ‘Alí Muhammad Shirazi* (1819-1850). Edited by Todd Lawson and Omid Ghaemmaghami (Oxford: George Ronald, 2011) 88-104. Also see Kamran Ekbal, “*Taqiyya* iii. Among Bábís and Baha’is,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, available at: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/taqiyya-iii-among-babis-and-bahais> (accessed on 19 August 2012)

<sup>69</sup> Mary Boyce, *Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism*, ed. and trans., (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984) 58.

<sup>70</sup> The Bab, *Arabic Bayan*, 7:17. Provisional translation by William McCants, *Kashkúl: An Anthology of Shaykhi, Babi, and Baha’i Scripture*. Available online: <http://www.kashkul.org/2010/09/20/sun-salutation/>

<sup>71</sup> Bahá’u’lláh, excerpted in *Ma’idih-yi Asmani*, 8:104-5. Provisional translation by William McCants, *Kashkúl*.

<sup>72</sup> Abú al-Qásim Alí b. Muḥammad b. Alí al-Khazzáz al-Qummí al-Rází, *Kifáyat al-athar fi naṣṣ alá al-a imma al-ithná ashar* (Qum: Intishárát-i Bidár, Maṭba at al-Khayyám, 1401/1980-1), p. 41. I am grateful to Omid Ghaemmaghami for locating the source of this hadith.

<sup>73</sup> “Tafsir Surat ‘Wa’sh-Shams,” in Bahá’u’lláh, *Majmu’ih*, Sabri ed., p. 11. ans. Juan R. Cole, “Bahá’u’lláh: Commentary on the Surah of the Sun.” Originally published in *Baha’i Studies Bulletin* 4:3-4 (April 1990), pp. 4-22. Available online: <http://personal.umich.edu/jrcole/shams.htm>

<sup>74</sup> Cole, Bahá’u’lláh: Commentary on the Surah of the Sun.

<sup>75</sup> Bahá’u’lláh *Yaran-i Parsi*, 19; Bahá’u’lláh, *Tabernacle of Unity* 3.

<sup>76</sup> Provisional translation from Bahá’u’lláh, *Yaran-i Parsi*, 13.

<sup>77</sup> Provisional translation from *Yaran-i Parsi*, 191.

<sup>78</sup> Bahá’u’lláh, *Darya-ye Danish*. (NSA of the Baha’is of India, 1988) 111.

- <sup>79</sup> Here I had to amend the translation in the *Tabernacle of Unity*, as it was missing the important term “True” (*haqiqi*) for the “Fire” (*atash*). This is profoundly significant for our theme, as we shall see below, “truth” and “fire,” are invariably linked in the *Gathas* (and other Zoroastrian texts), and here Bahá’u’lláh significantly links the two together. Indeed, Fire in the *Gathas* is called the “truth-strong fire” (See Below).
- <sup>80</sup> Bahá’u’lláh, *Tabernacle of Unity* 71-72; Bahá’u’lláh *Yaran-i Parsi*, 5. This tablet is also translated by Juan R. Cole titled, “Tablet to the Zoroastrians,” from *Majmu’ih-i Matbu’ih-yi Alvah* (Cairo: Sa’adat, 1920/Wilmette: Baha’i Publishing Trust, 1979), pp. 247-251, online at [http://bahai-library.com/bahauallah\\_lawh\\_dustan\\_yazdani](http://bahai-library.com/bahauallah_lawh_dustan_yazdani)
- <sup>81</sup> This philosophical narrative will not be developed here, as a separate study is required to do it full justice. I shall fully develop the relevant conceptual genealogy of the transference of the motif of the Zoroastrian Fire into early Greek philosophy (pre-Socratic), Arabic Hermetica/Alchemy and Islamicate philosophy in a separate article.
- <sup>82</sup> Another hermeneutical register in this passage is the motif of the “heat of the love of God.” Bahá’u’lláh similarly writes regarding the Prophet Zarathustra/Zoroaster: “O Bahram! Thou didst ask concerning His Holiness Zoroaster. Indeed, He came from the presence of God, and He was responsible for the guidance of the people. The fire of love is set ablaze by His hand through the Fire of Divine Love, and His Book came [down] bearing Divine Commandments and Ordinances...” Provisional translation from Bahá’u’lláh, *Yarani Parsi*, 54. Bahá’u’lláh is stating that this primal fire of divine love has again appeared in the world through his manifestation “with a new radiance and with immeasurable heat.” Here Bahá’u’lláh’s spiritual hermeneutics (*ta’wil*) of Zoroaster as the purveyor of the fire of love through the fire of divine love, has a long heritage in Persian classical poetry and the so-called ‘Religion of Love’ (*mazhab-e ‘ishq*). Henry Corbin writes, “This religion of love was and remained the religion of all the minstrels of Iran and inspired them with the magnificent *ta’wil* [spiritual hermeneutics] which supplies a link between the spiritual Iran of the Sufis and Zoroastrian Iran, for according to this *ta’wil* the Prophet of Islam in person proclaims Zarathustra to be the prophet of the Lord of love; the altar of Fire becomes the symbol of the Living Flame in the temple of the heart.” See Henry Corbin, *Alone with the Alone: Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabi* trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969) 100-101. Also a good collection of essays is *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry* (International Library of Iranian Studies), edited by Leonard Lewisohn (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010).
- <sup>83</sup> See, William W. Malandra, “Gathas, ii. Translations” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. X, Fasc. 3, pp. 327-330; available online at: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/gathas-ii-translations>
- <sup>84</sup> Fariduddin Radmehr, *Arbáb-i Hikmat dar Lawh-i Hikmat*. (Ontario: Association for Baha’i Studies in Persian, 2002) 269. Radmehr does not

elaborate on this passage, but just cites it in relation to other cosmogonic passages in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh, particularly those relating to the Tablet of Wisdom (*Lawh-i Hikmat*), in which Bahá'u'lláh quotes directly from portions of the Book of the Secret Creation (*Kitab-i Sirr al-Khaliqa*) attributed to Balinus or (pseudo)Appolonius of Tayna.

- <sup>85</sup> See Christopher Buck, "The Eschatology of Globalization: The Multiple-Messiahship of Bahá'u'lláh Revisited," in *Studies in Modern Religions, and Religious Movements and the Bábí-Bahá'í Faiths*, ed. Moshe Sharon (Leiden: Brill, 2004) 148. Buck has dealt in detail with the issue of the identification of Bahá'u'lláh with Sháh Bahrám who is the messianic figure developed in late Pahlavi texts. In his paper, *Bahá'u'lláh as Zoroastrian Savior*, Buck strives to tackle the dilemma of how such late texts as the Pahlavi scriptures can purport to prophecy the coming of a messianic figure called Sháh-Bahrám or Kay Wahram, and then used to legitimate a prophetic or messianic claim such as that of Bahá'u'lláh's.
- <sup>86</sup> See Buck, "Bahá'u'lláh as Zoroastrian savior." Idem, "The Eschatology of Globalization." For Zoroastrian conversions to the Baha'i faith, many of them based on the acceptance of Bahá'u'lláh as the Zoroastrian savior Shah Bahram, See Fereyduun Vahman, "The Conversion of Zoroastrians to the Baha'i Faith," *The Baha'is of Iran: Socio-Historical Studies*. Edited by Dominic Parviz Brookshaw and Seena B. Fazl. Routledge Advances in Middle East and Islamic Studies, vol. 12 (London: Routledge, 2008) pp. 30-48. Also, Susan Stiles Maneck, "Early Zoroastrian conversions to the Bahá'í Faith in Yazd, Iran," from *Iran East and West: Studies in Bábí and Baha'í History*, vol. 2 (Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 1984).
- <sup>87</sup> Provisional translation from Bahá'u'lláh, *Yaran-i Parsi* 55. Similarly in another instance we read: "Know thou, moreover, that We have addressed to the Magians [Zoroastrians] Our Tablets, and adorned them with Our Law.... We have revealed in them the essence of all the hints and allusions (*al-rumuz wa al-isharat*) contained in their Books. The Lord, verily, is the Almighty, the All-Knowing." Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come* 76. See the original text in Bahá'u'lláh, *Yaran-i Parsi* 56.
- <sup>88</sup> Provisional translation from Bahá'u'lláh, *Yaran-i Parsi* 58.
- <sup>89</sup> Shaul Shaked, "Esoteric Trends in Zoroastrianism," in *From Zoroastrian Iran to Islam: Studies in Religious History and Cultural Contacts* (Great Britain: Ashgate Publishing limited, 1995) 212.
- <sup>90</sup> Shaked, "Esoteric Trends in Zoroastrianism" 212.
- <sup>91</sup> Shaked, "Esoteric Trends in Zoroastrianism" 212.
- <sup>92</sup> In what Sholem terms "Jewish and rabbinic Gnosticism," two books of the Hebrew Bible were particularly regarded to contain profound secrets, and were only to be taught to an initiated few: the Account of Creation (*Ma'aseh Bereshit*) in the first chapter of Genesis and the first chapter and tenth chapter of the book of Ezekiel regarding the mysteries of the Throne of Glory or the Account of the Chariot (*Ma'aseh Merkabah*). As it says in the Talmud, "the story of creation should not be expounded before two persons, nor the chapter on the Chariot before one person, unless he is a



sage and already has an independent understanding of the matter.” See, Gershom Sholem, *Kabbalah*, (New York: Meridian, 1978) 12. Interestingly the very same term ‘*raz*’ (secret, mystery) used in the Pahlavi texts, is deployed in these earliest forms of Jewish gnosis, and particularly that of the Apocalyptic genre, which was in particular related to discussions of the divine Glory (*kavod*) and the divine Throne and the mystery of the eschatological self-revelation of God at the *eschaton* or “the end times”. cf. Ibid, 13. Indeed *raz* is a significant Iranian loan word in Hebrew and Aramaic and is attested to in the Book of Daniel (Dan. 2:18; 4:9) and in the Dead Sea Scrolls. For an important study of the contacts and cross-fertilization between Judaism and Zoroastrianism in this period (3<sup>rd</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> century CE) see, Jacob Neusner, *Judaism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism in Talmudic Babylonia*, (Atlanta: Brown University, 1990). Eliot R. Wolfson writes, “Esotericism has informed Jewish spirituality from ancient times. One thinks of the apocalyptic notion of *raz*, which referred to a secret transmitted to select individuals of extraordinary caliber or pedigree. The secret could relate to history, *cosmology*, or *eschatology* [emphasis added].” See, Eliot R. Wolfson, “Introduction to Jewish Mysticism and Esotericism.” Available online at [http://cojs.org/cojswiki/Introduction\\_to\\_Jewish\\_Mysticism\\_and\\_Esotericism](http://cojs.org/cojswiki/Introduction_to_Jewish_Mysticism_and_Esotericism)

For Zoroasterian influences on Jewish apocalyptic, see Norman Cohn, and G. Widengren.

<sup>93</sup> Boyce, *Textual Sources* 18.

<sup>94</sup> See Mary Boyce, “Nowruz” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, available online at: [www.iranica.com/articles/nowruz-i](http://www.iranica.com/articles/nowruz-i) (accessed on 23 December 2009).

<sup>95</sup> John Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*. Baha’i Studies Volume I. (Oxford: George Ronald 1996) 182.

<sup>96</sup> The names of the Badi’ calendar are drawn from the Shi’i dawn prayer (*Du’á Sahar*) for the time of the Fast (Ramadán) by the fifth Shi’i Imám, Muhammad al-Báqir.

<sup>97</sup> As Corbin states, “each Mazdean month, as well as the whole year, is the homologue of the Aeon, the great cycle of the Time-of-long-domination. The “date” is therefore in this case a hierophanic sign: it heralds the end of a millennium, the dawn of a new age...” Corbin, *Celestial Earth* 33.

<sup>98</sup> See, Azartash Azarnoosh; Rahim Gholami. “Abjad.” *Encyclopaedia Islamica*. Editors-in-Chief: Wilferd Madelung and, Farhad Daftary. Brill Online, 2013. For a relevant discussion of the abjad system and the word *Baha’*, see Franklin Lewis, ‘Overview of the Abjad numerological system,’ online at [http://bahai-library.com/lewis\\_abjad\\_numerological\\_system](http://bahai-library.com/lewis_abjad_numerological_system)

<sup>99</sup> For the Zoroastrian calendar see, Boyce, *Textual Sources* 18-20.

<sup>100</sup> For the Badi’ calendar see, John Walbridge, *Sacred Acts* 183-194. Nader Saiedi, *Gate of the Heart* on the Elements see pp. 67-74, on the Badi’ calendar see p. 75.

<sup>101</sup> The oldest reference to the religions own self-designation is *mazdayasna* or the worship of Mazda. Throughout this paper I use Zoroastrianism,

Mazdaism, and Mazdeanism interchangeably. Please note that no effort has been made to standardize the transliteration of Avestan and Middle Persian terms that are cited from other sources. All cited Avestan and Middle Persian terms retain their original transliterated forms.

- <sup>102</sup> Cited in Fatemeh Keshavarz, *Recite in the Name of the Red Rose: Poetic Sacred Making in Twentieth Century Iran* (Columbia, University of California Press: 2006) 36. The interpretation of Firdowsi here is later repeated and elaborated by the founder of the Iluminasionist (Ishraqi) philosophy, Suhrawardi. See, Walbridge. For a brief notice of the so-called fire-earth controversy in this period, see Bausani 216-217.
- <sup>103</sup> Mary Boyce, "Átaš". *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. New York: Mazda Pub. (2002). pp. 1-5.
- <sup>104</sup> Prods Oktor Skjærø, *The Spirit of Zoroastrianism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011)
- <sup>105</sup> It is worth noting that in the Yasna Hapniahitni (The Yasna of the Seven-Chapters), which is as old as the Gathas, Atar is significantly referred to as one of the Amesha Spentas or Bounteous Immortals, Y 1.2: "the Fire of Ahura Mazda, who of the Bounteous Imortals has taken his position most." See Michael Stausberg, *Zoroastrian Rituals in Context* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2004) 298.
- <sup>106</sup> William W. Malandra, "Gathas ii: Translations." *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 2000. Available online: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/gathas-ii-translations>
- <sup>107</sup> Alessandro Bausani, "Pre-Islamic Thought," in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, Edited and Introduced by M.M. Sharif. Published by Islamic Philosophy Online: <http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/hmp/6.htm>
- <sup>108</sup> Elliot R. Wolfson, *A Dream Interpreted Within a Dream* (New York: Zone Books, 2011) 13.
- <sup>109</sup> Alessandro Bausani, "Pre-Islamic Thought."
- <sup>110</sup> Alessandro Bausani, "Pre-Islamic Thought." See also Bausani, *Religion in Iran* 69-70. Also, Henry Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth* (tr. by Nancy Pearson, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977) 5.
- <sup>111</sup> Alessandro Bausani, "Pre-Islamic Thought."
- <sup>112</sup> The question of the antiquity of Zoroastrian apocalyptic is still debated in the scholarly literature, but the tide is now turning towards accepting the antiquity of apocalyptic motifs in the later Pahlavi texts. Indeed, in the following I argue for the antiquity of the motif of the Fire, which also appears in the later Pahlavi texts, both in cosmogonic and apocalyptic contexts. See Boyce, Mary (1984). "On the Antiquity of Zoroastrian Apocalyptic". *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (London: SOAS) 47/1: 57-75; Touraj Daraei, "Indo-European Elements in the Zoroastrian Apocalyptic Tradition," *Classical Bulletin*, vol. 83, no. 2, 2007, pp. 203-213.

- <sup>113</sup> Stanly Insler, *The Gáthás of Zarathustra*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, Atca Iranica I: 1975) 61.
- <sup>114</sup> Insler, *The Gáthás* 61.
- <sup>115</sup> Insler, *The Gáthás* 63.
- <sup>116</sup> Insler, *The Gáthás* 89.
- <sup>117</sup> Richard Charles Zaehner, *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism*, (New York: Phenox Press, 2003) 74-75.
- <sup>118</sup> Stausberg, *Zoroastrian Rituals in Context* 294.
- <sup>119</sup> Josef van Ess, *The Youthful God: Anthropomorphism in Early Islam* (Tempe, Ariz., 1988) 6.
- <sup>120</sup> Insler states, “at the time of the final judgment.” Insler, *The Gáthás* 41.
- <sup>121</sup> Translated by L. H. Mills (from *Sacred Books of the East*, American ed. 1898). Available online: <http://www.avesta.org/yasna/yasna.htm#y54>.
- <sup>122</sup> It is interesting to note here that Bahá’u’lláh himself refers to Jesus as “the Son of God” (see Shoghi Effendi, *World Order* 105), thereby affirming the title ‘Son’ of God as applied in the New Testament to Jesus. Indeed, according to the heremenutics of the Baha’i writings, the title of ‘Son’ may equally be a reference to the divine reality wh7ich inheres in all the ‘Manifestations’ (*mazahir*) of God. Shoghi Effendi states, “It is in a sense attributable – this kind of Sonship – to all the Prophets.” (Shoghi Effendi, *Lights of Guidance*, p 372). In another similar passage Shoghi Effendi states, “As far as their spiritual nature is concerned all Prophets can be regarded as Sons of God...” (See *Lights of Guidance* 491). Thus, according to this hermeneutic the title “Son of God,” which is at once the title of the Mazdean Fire and of Jesus, in so far as it refers to the dimension of the Logos in all the Prophets, all of them, including Bahá’u’lláh, may be designated with the theophanic title the ‘Son of God.’ See *Lights of Guidance* 491).
- <sup>123</sup> Marian Hillar, “The Logos and Its Function in the Writings of Philo of Alexandria: Greek Interpretation of the Hebrew Myth and the Foundation of Christianity,” *A Journal from The Radical Reformation. A Testimony to Biblical Unitarianism*, Vol. 7, No. 3 Spring 1998, Part I pp. 22-37; Vol. 7, No. 4 Summer 1998, Part II pp. 36-53. Available online: <http://www.socinian.org/philo.html>
- <sup>124</sup> For an important study of the relation of Asha and Fire see, H. Lommel, “Symbolik der Elemente in der zoroastrischen Religion,” in *Zarathustra*, ed. B. (Schlerath, Darmstadt, 1976) 266-69.
- <sup>125</sup> The Avasten word Artá is related to the word R̥ta in Vedic Sanskrit which means Order, Truth, Right, etc. In English – itself an Indo-European language – the word ‘right’ is related to the Vedic *r̥ta* and to the Avasten *arta*.
- <sup>126</sup> Alessandro Bausani, “Pre-Islamic Thought.”
- <sup>127</sup> Alessandro Bausani, “Pre-Islamic Thought.”

- <sup>128</sup> See John Walbridge, *The Wisdom of the Mystic East: Suhrawardi and Platonic Orientalism*. (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001) 62-63.
- <sup>129</sup> See Keven Brown. "Creation." The Bahá'í Encyclopedia. Available online: <http://users.sisqtel.net/kevenbrown/creation.html>.
- <sup>130</sup> Translated by James Darmesteter (From *Sacred Books of the East*, American Edition, 1898.) Edited by Joseph H. Peterson, 1995. Available online: <http://www.avesta.org/ka/yt19sbe.htm>
- <sup>131</sup> Insler, *The Gáthás* 63.
- <sup>132</sup> Boyce, Mary (1987), "Ardwashišt," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 2, (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul) 389-390. Available online: *Encyclopedia Iranica* at <http://www.iranica.com>
- <sup>133</sup> Insler, *The Gáthás* 91.
- <sup>134</sup> Hultgård, "Persian Apocalypticism" 44.
- <sup>135</sup> Robert S. P. Beekes, *A Grammar of Gatha-Avestan*, (The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, Leiden: 1988) 122-124.
- <sup>136</sup> Shaul Shakad, Eschatology Iranica.
- <sup>137</sup> Insler, *The Gáthás* 65.
- <sup>138</sup> Mary Boyce, "Astvat-ereta," in *Encyclopedia Iranica* 1987. Available Online: <http://www.iranica.com>
- <sup>139</sup> Mary Boyce, "Astvat-ereta."
- <sup>140</sup> J. Duchense-Guillemin, *Cambridge History of Iran* vol. 3(2), edited by Ehsan Yarshater, 899-900.
- <sup>141</sup> Boyce, *Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism* 47.
- <sup>142</sup> Duchense-Guillemin, *Cambridge History of Iran* vol. 3(2), 899-900.
- <sup>143</sup> Duchense-Guillemin *Cambridge History of Iran* vol. 3(2), 900.
- <sup>144</sup> Stausberg, *Zoroastrian Rituals in Context* 29.
- <sup>145</sup> Mansour Shaki, "Elements, i. In Zoroastrianism." *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Vol. VIII, Fasc. 4, pp. 357-360; available online at: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/elements> (accessed on 23 November 2009).
- <sup>146</sup> R.C. Zaehner, *Zurvan: A Zoroastrian Dilemma* (New York : Biblo and Tannen, 1972). 133.
- <sup>147</sup> Abolala Soudavar, *The Aura of Kings: Legitimacy and Divine Sanction in Iranian Kingship*. Bibliotheca Iranica, Intellectual Traditions Series, No. 10. (Costa Mesa, Mazda Publishers, 2003) 44.
- <sup>148</sup> Anders Hultgård, "Persian Apocalypticism," *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism: The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity*, (London: Continuum Publishing: 2000) 44.
- <sup>149</sup> Philip G. Kreyenbroek, "Millennialism and Eschatology in the Zoroastrian Tradition," in *Imagining the End: Visions of Apocalypse from the Ancient*

- Middle East to Modern America*, ed. Abbas Amanat and Magnus Bernhardsson (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002) 47.
- <sup>150</sup> Kreyenbroek, “Millennialism and Eschatology in the Zoroastrian Tradition” 47.
- <sup>151</sup> Kreyenbroek, “Millennialism and Eschatology in the Zoroastrian Tradition” 47.
- <sup>152</sup> The relation of the Baha’i faith to the spiritual universe of Iran, particularly to Zoroastrianism, Manichaenism, and to a Gnostic mode of thought peculiar to Iran, has seldom been noted by scholars. One of the few exceptions is the excellent study by the Italian Islamicist and Iranologist Alessandro Bausani, namely his magisterial *Religion in Iran: From Zoroaster to Bahá’u’lláh*. The general historical trajectory and continuity of the spiritual universe of Iran, masterfully discussed in Bausani’s work, must be kept in mind throughout this study. Other relevant works are Kathryn Babayan’s, *Mystics, Monarchs and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge: Harvard Middle Eastern Monographs, 2002) especially the epilogue; also relevant is Patricia Crone’s, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
- <sup>153</sup> Hasan Balyuzi, *Bahá’u’lláh: the King of Glory* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1980) 330.
- <sup>154</sup> Corbin, *Spiritual Body* 13.
- <sup>155</sup> Jackson, *Zoroastrian Studies* 157.
- <sup>156</sup> G. Gnoli, “Farr(ah)/ x<sup>ʷ</sup>arənah,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, IX, 1999, pp. 312-19, also available at [www.iranicaonline.org/articles/farraah](http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/farraah). On the Khvarnah see further, Bailey, H. W. *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth-Century Books* (1943). Oxford, 1971. 1-77. Gnoli, Gherardo. “Über das iranische hvarnah-: lautliche, morphologische und etymologische Probleme. Zum Stand der Forschung.” *Altorientalische Forschungen* 23 (1996): 171-180. Gnoli, Gherardo. “Nuove note sullo hvarnah-.” In *Oriente e Occidente. Convegno in memoria di Mario Bussagli*, edited by Chiara Silvi Antonini, Bianca Maria Alfieri and Arcangela Santoro, pp. 104-108. Rome, 2002. Cf. Duchesne-Guillemin, Jacques. “Le ‘Xarənah.’” *Annali dell’Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli, Sezione Linguistica*, 5 (1963): 19-31. Lubotsky, Alexander (1998), “Avestan x<sup>ʷ</sup>arənah-: the etymology and concept,” in Meid, W., *Sprache und Kultur. Akten der X. Fachtagung der Indogermanischen Gesellschaft Innsbruck, 22.-28. September 1996*, Innsbruck: IBS, pp. 479-488.
- <sup>157</sup> G. Gnoli, “Farr(ah),” online at [www.iranicaonline.org/articles/farraah](http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/farraah).
- <sup>158</sup> Mary Boyce, “dur Farnbág.” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. I, Fasc. 5, pp. 473-475; an updated version is available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org> (accessed online at 20 June 2009).
- <sup>159</sup> Boyce, “dur Farnbág.”
- <sup>160</sup> Corbin, *Spiritual Body* 45.

- <sup>161</sup> Bausani, *Religion in Iran* 53.
- <sup>162</sup> Mirca Eliad, "Spirit, Light, and Seed," *Occultism, Witchcraft, and Cultural Fashions: Essays in Comparative Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1976) 103.
- <sup>163</sup> G. Gnoli, "Farr(ah)/ x ar nah."
- <sup>164</sup> Ibn Kathir, *al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya* (The Life of the Prophet Muhammad) Vol. I. tr. Trevor Le Gassick (Reading, UK: Garnet Publishing, 1998) 232. I owe this reference to Kamran Ekbal.
- <sup>165</sup> Corbin, *Spiritual Body* 35.
- <sup>166</sup> Provisional translation from Ishraq-Khavari, *Ma'idih* 4:191-2. No scholarly sources have as yet established a link between Khvarnah and the term Baha'. Ekbal and Lambden in their respective works have made some remarks that the name Baha is related to Khvarnah, but without establishing this link or providing any textual basis in which Bahá'u'lláh claims to be the possessor of Khvarnah or farr. They do not show for instance that Bahá'u'lláh himself has made this link, nor do they link the divine Fire with Khvarnah and thereby connect it to Bahá'u'lláh's pronouncements. See, Lambden, Stephen, 'The word Baha, Quintessence of the Greatest Name of God' in *Baha'i Studies Review* 3:1 (1993). Also, Kamran Ekbal, "Daena-Den-Din: The Zoroastrian Heritage of the 'Maid of Heaven' in the Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh," *Scripture and Revelation* (ed. Moojan Momen), *Baha'i Studies Vol III*, (George Ronald, Oxford: 1997).
- <sup>167</sup> Note also the Water and Light imagery associated with the Primal Will in Bahá'u'lláh's Zoroastrian tablets discussed above (see above).
- <sup>168</sup> Henry Corbin, *In Iranian Islam, Vol. 2: Suhrawardi and the Persian Platonists* (English translation by Hugo M. Van Woerkmon, 2003) 65. Corbin specifically avails himself of H. W. Bailey's excellent work in this respect, on the translation of Khvarnah into Baha'. See especially, pp. 27, 48, 62, 63, 75 in H. W. Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth-Century Books* (Oxford 1971).
- <sup>169</sup> Another translation in *Tabernacle of Unity* 75.
- <sup>170</sup> Yaran Parsi 31; *Tablets* 164-71; *Tabernacle of unity* 9.
- <sup>171</sup> Note here Bahá'u'lláh's self-identification with Light, which precisely precedes his symbolic proclamation to be the royal Falcon.
- <sup>172</sup> G. Gnoli, "Farr(ah)/ x ar nah."
- <sup>173</sup> Mary Boyce, *Textual Sources* 30.
- <sup>174</sup> Abolala Soudavar, *The Aura of Kings: Legitimacy and Divine Sanction in Iranian Kingship*. Bibliotheca Iranica, Intellectual Traditions Series, No. 10. (Costa Mesa, Mazda Publishers, 2003) 22.
- <sup>175</sup> Hanns-Peter Schmid, "Símorg," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 2012, available at: [www.iranicaonline.org/articles/simorg](http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/simorg) (accessed at 15 August 2010).
- <sup>176</sup> Boyce, *A History* 88-89.
- <sup>177</sup> Hanns-Peter Schmid, "Símorg."

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- <sup>178</sup> *Muntakhabati-az Makatib-i-Hadrat-i-'Abdu'l-Bahá*, Hofheim-Langenhain: Bahá'í-Verlag, 2000, vol. 4:15. There are several other hermenutical registers for the Símurgh in the Baha'í textual corpus.
- <sup>179</sup> In an early work of the Andalusian mystic Ibn al-'Arabī, the 'Anqa - often translated as the phoenix - is symbolically associated with the messianic figure of the Mahdi, and the Seal of the Saints. See, Gerald T. Elmore, *Islamic Sainthood in the Fullness of Time: Ibn al-'Arabī's Book of the Fabulous Gryphon*, Leiden and Boston, 1999. Also, Gerald T. Elmore, The "Millennial" Motif in Ibn al-'Arabī's "Book of the Fabulous Gryphon." In *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 81, No. 3, (Jul., 2001), pp. 410-437. For a general overview of 'Anqa in Islamic sources, see Pellat, Ch. "'Anqā'." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Leiden-London, 1960.
- <sup>180</sup> Asadu'llah Fadil Mazandarani, *Amr va Khalq*, repr. 4 vols. in 2, Hofheim-Langenhain: Bahá'í-Verlag, 1985, 2:69.
- <sup>181</sup> W.M. Thackston, *The Mystical and Visionary Treatises of Shihabuddin Yahya Suhrawardi* (London: Octagon Press, 1982) 88; Majmú'a-yi Musannafát-i Shaykh-i Ishraq: Œuvres Philosophiques et Mystiques. ed. Nasr & Corbin . Tome III. Œuvres en Persan. Tehran & Paris, 1970, pp. 314-15.
- <sup>182</sup> It is worth mentioning here one of the hermeneutics of the hoopoe (*hudud*) in Qur'an 27:20-22, noted in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's verbal discourses, "The Hoopoe (*hudud*) was a person that Solomon would send as a messenger. He attained to the apex of fame. He was a lowly bird, but became a renowned and mighty Símurgh." See, Ishraq-Khavari *Ma'idih-yi Asmani*, 2:208.
- <sup>183</sup> Cited in Mirca Eliad, "Spirit, Light, and Seed" 104.
- <sup>184</sup> Henry Corbin, *Spiritual Body* 13.
- <sup>185</sup> *Zatspram*, cited in Mirca Eliade, "Spirit, Light, and Seed" 104.
- <sup>186</sup> Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá* Volume II 288.
- <sup>187</sup> Henry Corbin, *Spiritual Body* 45.