

# Shoghi Effendi's Translation of Terms Related to Law in the Bahá'í Scripture

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The goal of this paper was to find out whether there was any pattern within Shoghi Effendi's translation of terms related to the word "law". In this section of the paper, I have search the translations of Bahá'u'lláh's writings by Shoghi Effendi and found instances where some word has been translated by Shoghi Effendi as "Laws" or "Law". I found that some 8-10 different words were translated by Shoghi Effendi in this way:

1. *Sharí'ah* – Sharí'at – plural *Shará'í'*
2. *Shar'*
3. *Hukm* – plural *Aḥkám*
4. *Námús* – plural *nawámís*
5. *Qánún* – plural *qawánín*
6. *Aṣl* – plural *uṣúl*
7. *Amr* – plural *awámir*
8. *Hadd* – plural *ḥudúd*
9. *Sunna* – plural *sunan*
10. *Farḍ* – plural *furúd*

In the following, these words are considered in more details. In each case, the word is given followed by a dictionary definition and some words indicating the roots of the word and

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how it came to mean “law” in Shoghi Effendi’s translations. There is then some indication of whether the word occurs in the Qur’an and how it is used there. This is followed by one or more quotations, showing instances where Shoghi Effendi has translated this word as “law” or “laws”. And following that, one or more quotations in which Shoghi Effendi has translated this word in some other way.

1. *Sharí’ah* – *Sharí’at* – holy law. This is the usual word in Islamic Law for the holy law which has been derived from the Qur’an and Traditions – derived from root meaning “to go along a path”. Thus the implication is that by following the *Sharí’ah*, one is following the path of Muḥammad,

There is one Qur’anic occurrence of this term: “And now have We set thee (O Muḥammad) on a clear road (*sharí’ah*) of (Our) commandment; so follow it, and follow not the whims of those who know not.” [Q 45:18]

In the writings of Bahá’u’lláh, this term appears in the following passages, which have been translated by Shoghi Effendi:

I implore Thee by Them Who are the Tabernacles of Thy Divine holiness ... to grant that Thy servants may not be kept back from this **Divine Law** (*sharí’ah*) ... [PM 27]

Gather them, then, together around this **Divine Law** (*sharí’ah*), the covenant of which Thou hast established with all Thy Prophets and Thy Messengers, and Whose ordinances Thou hast written down in Thy Tablets and Thy Scriptures. [PM 106]

And yet no one hath paused to reflect that if the promised Qa’im should reveal the law (*sharí’at*) and ordinances (*aḥkám*) of a former Dispensation, why then should such traditions have been recorded, and why should there arise such a degree of strife and conflict that the people should regard the slaying of these

companions as an obligation imposed upon them ... ? [KI 245]

Where is He Who hath the authority to transform the Faith (*sharí`ah*) and the followers thereof? [KI 240]

Let your principal concern be to rescue the fallen from the slough of impending extinction, and to help him embrace the ancient Faith (*bih sharí`at-i baqá*) of God. [GWB 316]

Behold the absurdity of their saying; how far it hath strayed from the path (*sharí`at*) of knowledge and understanding! [KI 136-7]

... others accused Him of being “the one that withholdeth the people from the path (*sharí`at*) of faith and true belief” ... [KI 215]

And after Him there appeared from the Ridvan of the Eternal, the Invisible, the holy person of Salih, Who again summoned the people to the river of everlasting life (*bih sharí`at-i qurb-i báqiyyih*). [KI 9]

In another sense, by the terms “sun”, “moon”, and “stars” are meant such laws and teachings as have been established and proclaimed in every Dispensation (*sharí`at*). [KI 38]

... this generation still waiteth in expectation of beholding the promised One who should uphold the Law of the Muhammadan Dispensation (*sharí`at-i furqán*). [KI 239]

Hence, it is clear and manifest that by the words “the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven” is intended the waywardness of the divines, and the annulment of

laws (*aḥkám*) firmly established by **divine Revelation** (*sharí`at*) ... [KI 41]

Were men to meditate on these words which have flowed from the Pen of the Divine Ordainer, they would, one and all, hasten to embrace the truth of **this God-given, and ever-enduring Revelation** (*bih sharí`at-i báqiyyih iláhiyyih*), and would testify to that which He Himself hath solemnly affirmed. [GWB 82]

1b. *Shará`i`* – *al-shará`i`* – *sharáyi`* – plural of Sharí`ah. These are other terms from the same root as sharí`ah and are translated by Shoghi Effendi thus:

These “clouds” signify, in one sense, the annulment of laws (*aḥkám*), the abrogation of **former Dispensations** (*shará`i`*), the repeal of rituals and customs (*qawá`id va rusúm*) current amongst men [KI 71-2]

Aside from these things, before his partaking of the reviving waters of faith, he had been so wedded to the traditions (*ḥudúdat*) of his forefathers, and so passionately devoted to the observance of their customs (*ádáb*) and laws (*shará`i`*), that he would have preferred to suffer death rather than violate one letter of those superstitious forms and manners (*umúr taqlídiyyih*) current amongst his people. [KI 155]

In such a manner hath the Kitáb-i-Aqdas been revealed that it attracteth and embraceth all the divinely appointed **Dispensations** (*sharáyi`*). [Bahá`u`lláh in GPB 216]

In all the Divine **Dispensations** (*sharáyi`*), the eldest son hath been given extraordinary distinctions. Even the station of prophethood hath been his birthright. [Bahá`u`lláh in GPB 148]

They clamored that He Whose advent the Bible had foretold must needs promulgate and fulfil the laws (*sharáyi'*) of Moses, whereas this youthful Nazarene, who laid claim to the station of the divine Messiah, had annulled the laws (*ḥukm*) of divorce and of the sabbath day ... [KI 18]

... and the dispensations of Thy providence have been promulgated (*shari'at al-shará'i'*) unto the followers of all religions. [PM 60]

1c. *Shar'ah* – This term is sometimes used as an alternative to *sharí'ah*. Historically this and *shar'* were the original form of the word used and Cantwell Smith has shown how the word used moved from meaning an ethical obligation of Muslims to follow the path set by God to meaning a legal obligation to act in a certain way because that is what the *sharí'ah* says.

In Qur'an the word *shar'atan* occurs in 5:48:

To each among you have we prescribed a law (*shar'atan*) and an open way (*minhajan*).

*Shoghi Effendi's translations:*

Thou shouldst, moreover, arise to enforce the law of God amongst them, that thou mayest be of those who are firmly established in His law (*shar'*). [GWB 234]

Among the utterances that foreshadow a new Law (*shar'*) and a new Revelation (*amr*) are the passages in the "Prayer of Nudbih" ... [KI 240]

Did He not speak a different language, and reveal a different Law (*shar'*)? [KI 150]

1d. *Shara'a* – verb – to legislate, enact, also to go along a path

Qur'an:

He has ordained for you (*shara`a lakum*) of religion what He enjoined upon Noah ...

*Shoghi Effendi's translations:*

We have, then, called into being (*shárá`ná*) a new creation, as a token of Our grace unto men. I am, verily, the All-Bountiful [GWB 29-30]

Gather ye around that which We have prescribed (*shárá`náhu*) unto you ... [ESW 55]

1e. *Tashrī`* – legislation. This word does not appear in the Qur'an.

*Shoghi Effendi's translations:*

This House of Justice enacteth the laws (*maṣḍar-i tashrī`st*) and the government enforceth them. The legislative body (*tashrī`*) must reinforce the executive (*tanfīdh*), the executive (*tanfīdh*) must aid and assist the legislative body (*tashrī`*) so that through the close union and harmony of these two forces, the foundation of fairness and justice may become firm and strong [WT 14-5]

2. *Hukm* – (legal) judgement, decision, regulation, rule. Comes from the same root as *hákim* – judge – thus signifies a judgement as made by a judge (or by God as the Judge).

There are multiple occurrences of this word and its derivatives in the Qur'an (e.g. 3:79, 5:43, 5:50, 6:57, 6:62, etc.).

*Shoghi Effendi's translations:*

Thus hath the sun of My **commandment** (*ḥukm*) shone forth above the horizon of My utterance ... [Bahá'u'lláh in ADJ 33]

Thus hath the **decree** (*ḥukm*) been irrevocably fixed by Him Who is the All-Wise. [Bahá'u'lláh in PDC 41]

None of the many Prophets sent down, since Moses ... ever altered the **law** (*ḥukm*) of the Qiblih. [KI 51]

## 2b. *Aḥkám* – plural of *ḥukm*

*Shoghi Effendi's translations:*

A Youth from Bani-Hashim shall be made manifest, Who will reveal a new Book and promulgate a new law (*aḥkám*) ... [KI 241]

... and the annulment (*naskh*) of laws (*aḥkám*) firmly established by divine Revelation (*sharí`at*) ... [KI 41]

... they idly contend that the law (*aḥkám*) formerly revealed, must in no wise be altered. [KI 240]

Think not that We have revealed unto you a mere code of laws (*al-aḥkám*). [GWB 332]

## 3. *Námús* – from Greek *nomos* = Latin *lex* – meaning law, rule, honour. It is non-Quranic.

*Shoghi Effendi's translations:*

O kings of the earth! **The Most Great Law** (*al-námús al-akbar*) hath been revealed in this Spot ... [KA 18]

Love is the **most great law** (*al-námús al-a`zam*) that ruleth this mighty and heavenly cycle ... [Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá 27]

Thine iniquity hath made **Gabriel** (*al-námús al-akbar*) to groan, and hath drawn tears from the Law of God (*sharí`at Alláh*) ... [ESW 81]

### 3b. *Nawámís* – plural of *námús*

*Shoghi Effendi's translations:*

The animal is the captive of nature and cannot transgress the rules (*qawánín*) and laws thereof (*nawámís tabí`at*) ... all other beings, whether of the mineral, the vegetable or the animal world, cannot deviate from the laws of nature (*nawámís tabí`at*) ... [TAF 10]

4. *Qánún* – plural *qawánín* – from the Greek – canon, established principle, basic rule, towards the end of the 19th century it was being used by secular reformers to indicate secular law, e.g. in their argument that society should be run by the rule of law rather than the whims of a despot. Bahá'u'lláh rarely uses this word. It is non-Quranic.

*Shoghi Effendi's translations:*

These principles (*usúl*) and laws (*qawánín*), these firmly-established and mighty systems, have proceeded from one Source, and are rays of one Light. [ESW 13]

[N.B. In the Tablet to Dr. Forel 'Abdu'l-Bahá frequently uses *qánún-i tabí`at* for laws of nature.]

Also *qánún* and words derived from it are used by 'Abdu'l-Bahá for laws of the Universal House of Justice:

And inasmuch as the House of Justice hath power to enact laws (*qawánín*) that are not expressly recorded in the Book and bear upon daily transactions (*mu`ámilát*), so also it hath power to repeal (*násikh*) the same. Thus for example, the House of Justice enacteth today a



certain law (*mas'ali'í qánúní*) and enforceth it, and a hundred years hence, circumstances having profoundly changed and the conditions having altered, another House of Justice will then have power, according to the exigencies of the time, to alter that law (*mas'alih qánúní*). This it can do because that law formeth no part of the divine explicit text. The House of Justice is both the initiator and the abrogator of its own laws. [WT 20]

It enacteth all **ordinances** (*qawánín*) and regulations (*aḥkám*) that are not to be found in the explicit Holy Text. [WT 14]

5. *Aṣl* – plural *Uṣúl* – means root or trunk and therefore has come to mean foundation, principles. Thus it means law in the sense of foundational principles. There are three Quranic occurrences of this word and its plural but only with the meaning of root of a tree.

*Shoghi Effendi's translations:*

...these divines who are still doubtful of, and dispute about, the theological obscurities of their faith, yet claim to be the exponents of the subtleties of the law of God (*uṣúl iláhiyyih*), and the expounders of the essential mysteries of His holy Word. [KI 83]

It behoveth you, O Ministers of State, to keep the precepts of God (*uṣúl Alláh*), and to forsake your own laws (*uṣúlikum*) and regulations ... [GWB 123]

Say: What! Cleave ye to your own devices (*uṣúlikum*), and cast behind your backs the precepts of God (*uṣúl Alláh*)? [GWB 124]

Have ye clung unto the promptings of your nature (*uṣúl anfusikum*), and cast behind your backs the statutes of God (*uṣúl Alláh*)? [ESW 49]

If your rules and principles (*uṣúlikum*) be founded on justice, why is it, then, that ye follow those which accord with your corrupt inclinations ... [GWB 124]

6. *Amr* – plural *awámir*: commands, orders (- also Faith, Cause); comes from the same root as *amír*, commander or ruler and thus means law as that which issues from the ruler or king (or from God as Ruler or King); also has a plural form *umúr* in which case it has the meanings: affairs, matters. This word and its derivatives occur numerous times in the Qur'an (e.g. 2:210, 3:128, 3:152, 3:154, etc.).

*Shoghi Effendi's translations:*

Thus hath His ordinance (*al-amr*) been sent down from the Kingdom of Him Who is the Most Exalted, the All-Wise. [GWB 278]

He Who is the Lord of Lords is come overshadowed with clouds, and the decree (*al-amr*) hath been fulfilled by God, the Almighty, the Unrestrained. [Bahá'u'lláh in PDC 31]

This Book is a heaven which We have adorned with the stars of Our commandments (*awámir*) and prohibitions. [Bahá'u'lláh in GPB 216]

... and enable him to remain a while in the island of Cyprus, and associate with Mirza Yahya, perchance he may become aware of the fundamentals of this Faith (*aṣl-i amr*) and of the source of the Divine laws and commandments (*maṣḍar-i awamir wa ahkám*). [ESW 121]

The first duty prescribed by God for His servants is the recognition of Him Who is the Day Spring of His Revelation and the Fountain of His laws (*maṭla' amrihi*), who representeth the Godhead ... [GWB 330-31]

The second is strict observance of the laws (*awámir*) He hath prescribed ... [GWB 290]

Aid Thou His Majesty the Shah to execute Thy laws (*awámirika*) and Thy commandments (*ahkámika*) ... [ESW 139]

7. *Hadd* – plural *hudúd* – this word signifies an edge, boundary, or limit, and hence has come to mean ordinance, legal punishment. It occurs in the Qur'an, where the plural is used in the sense of the limits set by God (e.g. 2:187, 2:229).

*Shoghi Effendi's translations:*

Reflect, how single-handed and alone they faced the world and all its peoples, and promulgated the Law of God (*hudúd Alláh*)! [KI 45]

They whom God hath endued with insight will readily recognize that the precepts laid down by God (*hudúd Alláh*) constitute the highest means for the maintenance of order in the world and the security of its peoples. [GWB 331]

Respect ye the divines amongst you, They whose acts conform to the knowledge they possess, who observe the statutes of God (*hudúd Alláh*), and decree the things God hath decreed in the Book. [Bahá'u'lláh in PDC 111]

Say: O people be obedient to the ordinances of God (*hudúd Alláh*), which have been enjoined in the Bayan by the Glorious, the Wise One. [Tablet of Ahmad]

Lay not aside the fear of God, O kings of the earth, and beware that ye transgress not the bounds which the Almighty hath fixed (*hudúd Alláh*). [GWB 250]

8. *Sunnah* – plural *sunan* – customary practice or procedure; came to mean in Islam the practice of the Prophet Muhammad – hence Sunni Muslims are those who follow the practice (sunna) of the Prophet. It is non-Quranic.

*Shoghi Effendi's translations:*

Ponder in thine heart the revelation of the Soul of God that pervadeth all His Laws (*al-sunan*) ... [GWB 160]

Empower me, then, O my God, to be reckoned among them that have clung to Thy laws (*sunanika*) and precepts (*ḥudúdátika*) for the sake of Thee ... [PM 299]

9. *Farḍ* – plural *fará'id* – duty, obligation, ordinances. This word and its derivates occur in the Qur'an (e.g. 2:197, 28:85, 33:38, etc.)

*Shoghi Effendi's translation:*

Where is He Who is preserved to renew the ordinances and laws (*al-fará'id wa al-sunan*)? [KI 240]

It could be argued that this last one, *farḍ*, should not appear on the list as it appears to translate “ordinances” rather than “laws”. If one to exclude *farḍ* and also to count *shar'* and *sharí'ah* as one, since they are from the same root, then the list is eight long. If one include either it become nine and if one includes both it becomes ten.

## Legal Terms in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas

In the second part of this presentation, we will carry out the mirror of the above analysis and look at the cluster of words in English which we have found above to be associated with the word “law” in Shoghi Effendi's translations (law, commandment, ordinance, statutes, precepts) and see what

words in the Arabic text of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas (including Questions and Answers) have been translated by these terms.

### 1a. Law

81. O kings of the earth! **The Most Great Law** (*al-námús al-akbar*) hath been revealed in this Spot, this scene of transcendent splendour.

98. Various petitions have come before Our throne from the believers, concerning laws (*no word*) from God, the Lord of the seen and the unseen, the Lord of all worlds. We have, in consequence, revealed this Holy Tablet and arrayed it with the mantle of His Law (*al-amr*) that haply the people may keep the commandments (*aḥkám*) of their Lord.

10. ANSWER: All are charged with obedience to the Kitáb-i-Aqdas; whatsoever is revealed therein is the Law of God (*ḥukm iláhí*) amid His servants. The injunction on pilgrims to the sacred House to shave the head hath been lifted.

31. QUESTION: Concerning the sacred verse: “The Lord hath prohibited ... the practice to which ye formerly had recourse when thrice ye had divorced a woman.”

ANSWER: The reference is to the law (*ḥukm*) which previously made it necessary for another man to marry such a woman before she could again be wedded to her former husband ...

76. QUESTION: Concerning observance of the Fast by people engaged in hard labour during the month of fasting.

ANSWER: Such people are excused from fasting; however, in order to show respect to the law of God (*ḥukm Alláh*)

and for the exalted station of the Fast, it is most commendable and fitting to eat with frugality and in private.

100. ... In this regard, a law (*ḥukmī*) was revealed in the Land of Mystery, temporarily awarding the missing heirs' inheritance to the existing heirs until such time as the House of Justice shall be established ...

101. QUESTION: Concerning the law (*ḥukm*) on treasure trove.

Q&A 106: exalted station. Well is it with him who in the Day of God hath laid fast hold upon His precepts and hath not deviated from His true and fundamental Law (*qánun*).

## 1b. Laws

1. The first duty prescribed by God for His servants is the recognition of Him Who is the Dayspring of His Revelation and the Fountain of His laws (*maṭla` amrihi*) ...

4. Say: From My laws (*ḥudúdí*) the sweet-smelling savour of My garment can be smelled, and by their aid the standards of Victory will be planted upon the highest peaks.

5. Think not that We have revealed unto you a mere code of laws (*al-aḥkám*). Nay, rather, We have unsealed the choice Wine ...

7. ... Whenever My laws (*al-aḥkám*) appear like the sun in the heaven of Mine utterance, they must be faithfully obeyed by all, though My decree be such as to cause the heaven of every religion to be cleft asunder. He doeth what He pleaseth. He chooseth ...

7. ... Whoso hath inhaled the sweet fragrance of the All-Merciful, and recognized the Source of this

utterance, will welcome with his own eyes the shafts of the enemy, that he may establish the truth of the laws of God (*al-aḥkám*) amongst men.

26. ... Thus have the billows of the Ocean of Utterance surged, casting forth the pearls of the laws (*al-aḥkám*) decreed by the Lord of all mankind.

29. ... These, verily, are the Laws of God (*ḥudúd Alláh*); transgress them not at the prompting of your base and selfish desires.

45. ... We school you with the rod of wisdom and laws (*al-aḥkám*), like unto the father who educateth his son, and this for naught but the protection of your own selves and the elevation of your stations.

45. ... By My life, were ye to discover what We have desired for you in revealing Our holy laws (*awámiriná al-muqaddasah*), ye would offer up your very souls for this sacred, this mighty, and most exalted Faith.

96. O Most Mighty Ocean! Sprinkle upon the nations that with which Thou hast been charged by Him Who is the Sovereign of Eternity, and adorn the temples of all the dwellers of the earth with the vesture of His laws (*aḥkám*) through which all hearts will rejoice and all eyes be brightened.

120. ... Thus have We exhorted you in most of Our Epistles and now in this, Our Holy Tablet, above which hath beamed the Day-Star of the Laws (*aḥkám*) of the Lord, your God, the Powerful, the All-Wise.

142. Verily, He revealed certain laws (*al-aḥkám*) so that, in this Dispensation, the Pen of the Most High might have no need to move in aught but the glorification of His own transcendent Station and His most effulgent Beauty.

Since, however, We have wished to evidence Our bounty unto you, We have, through the power of truth, set forth these laws (no word) with clarity and mitigated what We desire you to observe. He, verily, is the Munificent, the Generous.

148. ... Such are the laws (*ḥudúd*) which God hath enjoined (*farāḍat*) upon you, such His commandments (*awámir*) prescribed unto you in His Holy Tablet; obey them with joy and gladness, for this is best for you, did ye but know.

166. ... Though he was occupied both night and day in setting down what he conceived to be the laws and ordinances of God (*aḥkám Alláh*), yet when He Who is the Unconstrained appeared, not one letter thereof availed him, or he would not have turned away from a Countenance that hath illumined the faces of the well-favoured of the Lord.

42. ANSWER: In the laws (*aḥkám*) revealed in Persian We have ordained that in this Most Mighty Dispensation the residence and the household furnishings are exempt — that is, such furnishings as are necessary.

## 2. Commandment, Commandments

65. ... And in this We have yet other purposes. Thus hath Our commandment (*al-amr*) been ordained.

70. Should a woman be divorced in consequence of a proven act of infidelity, she shall receive no maintenance during her period of waiting. Thus hath the day-star of Our commandment (*al-amr*) shone forth resplendent from the firmament of justice.

72. ... Thus, by His mercy, hath the commandment (*al-amr*) been recorded by the Pen of justice.



97. ... O people! Deal not faithlessly with the Right of God, nor, without His leave, make free with its disposal. Thus hath His **commandment** (*al-amr*) been established in the holy Tablets, and in this exalted Book.

108. ... Thus hath the sun of Our **commandment** (*al-ḥukm*) shone forth above the horizon of Our utterance. Blessed, then, be those who do Our bidding.

138. ... Such is the **commandment** (*amr*) of the Lord, aforesaid and hereafter; beware lest ye choose instead the part of ignominy and abasement.

148. ... Such is the **commandment** (*amran*) which He hath enjoined upon you in this resplendent Tablet.

18. ANSWER: The **commandment** (*ḥukm*) regarding ablutions must, in any case, be observed.

38. ANSWER: According to the **commandment** (*ḥukm*) revealed in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, both parties must be content; unless both are willing, reunion cannot take place.

Q&A 105. ... Should a father neglect this most weighty **commandment** (*amr*) laid down in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas by the Pen of the Eternal King, he shall forfeit rights of fatherhood, and be accounted guilty before God.

2. ... They that have violated the Covenant of God by breaking His **commandments** (*awámirihi*), and have turned back on their heels, these have erred grievously in the sight of God, the All-Possessing, the Most High.

3. O ye peoples of the world! Know assuredly that My **commandments** (*awámirí*) are the lamps of My loving providence among My servants, and the keys of My mercy for My creatures ...

3. ... Were any man to taste the sweetness of the words which the lips of the All-Merciful have willed to utter, he would, though the treasures of the earth be in his possession, renounce them one and all, that he might vindicate the truth of even **one of His commandments** (*amran min awámirihi*), shining above the Dayspring of His bountiful care and loving-kindness.

4. ... Observe **My commandments** (*ḥudúdí*), for the love of My beauty.

4. ... By My life! He who hath drunk the choice wine of fairness from the hands of My bountiful favour will circle around **My commandments** (*awámirí*) that shine above the Dayspring of My creation.

17. ... Hold ye fast unto His statutes (*awámir Alláh*) and **commandments** (*aḥkámíhi*), and be not of those who, following their idle fancies and vain imaginings, have clung to the standards fixed by their own selves, and cast behind their backs the standards laid down by God.

67. ... Obey ye **My commandments** (*awámirí*), and follow not the ungodly, they who have been reckoned as sinners in God's Holy Tablet.

88. ... Bind ye the broken with the hands of justice, and crush the oppressor who flourisheth with the rod of the **commandments** (*awámir*) of your Lord, the Ordainer, the All-Wise.

98. ... that haply the people may keep the **commandments** (*aḥkám*) of their Lord.

125. Say: True liberty consisteth in man's submission unto **My commandments** (*awámirí*), little as ye know it.

147. ... Keep ye the statutes and **commandments of God** (*ḥudúd Alláh wa sunanihi*); nay, guard them as ye would your very eyes, and be not of those who suffer grievous loss.

186. ... Say: This is the Dayspring of Divine knowledge, if ye be of them that understand, and the Dawning-place of **God's commandments** (*awámirihi*), if ye be of those who comprehend.

### 3. Ordinance

1. ... It behoveth everyone who reacheth this most sublime station, this summit of transcendent glory, to observe **every ordinance** (*má amara bihi*) of Him Who is the Desire of the world.

20. ... Such was the **ordinance** (*ḥukm*) of My Forerunner, He Who extolleth My Name in the night season and at the break of day.

63. ... Such is the **ordinance** (*al-amr*) which, in truth and justice, hath been recorded by the Pen of Revelation.

77. God hath relieved you of the **ordinance** (*má nuzzila* – what has been revealed) laid down in the Bayan concerning the destruction of books.

16. **QUESTION:** Is the **ordinance** (*ḥukm*) that the body of the deceased should be carried no greater distance than one hour's journey applicable to transport by both land and sea?

42. **QUESTION:** The **ordinance** (no word) of Ḥuqúqu'lláh is revealed in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas.

54. **ANSWER:** Her share of the inheritance should be distributed among the seven categories of heirs according to the **ordinance** (*ḥukm*) of the Book.

71. ANSWER: The ordinance (*ḥukm*) of fasting is such as hath already been revealed.

89. ANSWER: Nineteen out of one hundred is established by the ordinance (*ḥukm*) of God.

94. ANSWER: ... This is an ordinance (*ḥudúd*) of God, and he who violateth it is verily of those who have transgressed.

102. ANSWER: The ordinance (*ḥukm*) of God is that real estate which hath ceased to yield income, that is, from which no profit accrueth, is not liable to payment of Huquq.

17. These are the ordinances (*ḥudúd*) of God that have been set down in the Books and Tablets by His Most Exalted Pen.

166. ... Though he was occupied both night and day in setting down what he conceived to be the laws and ordinances of God (*aḥkám Alláh*) ...

37. QUESTION: In the holy ordinances (*aḥkám*) governing inheritance, the residence and personal clothing of the deceased have been allotted to the male offspring.

63. ANSWER: ... Some years ago a number of the ordinances (*aḥkám*) of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas including that Obligatory Prayer were, for reasons of wisdom, recorded separately and sent away together with other sacred writings, for the purposes of preservation and protection.

#### 4. Statutes

17. ... Hold ye fast unto **His statutes** (*awámir Alláh*) and **commandments** (*aḥkámihí*), and be not of those who, following their idle fancies and vain imaginings ...

45. ... Beware lest, through compassion, ye neglect to carry out the **statutes** (no word) of the religion of God; do that which hath been ...

71. ... Observe ye the **statutes** (*ḥudúd Alláh*) and **precepts** (*sunanihi*) of your Lord, and walk ye in this Way which hath been laid out before you in righteousness and truth.

147 ... Keep ye the **statutes and commandments** of God (*ḥudúd Alláh wa sunanihi*) ...

#### 5. Precepts

2. They whom God hath endued with insight will readily recognize that the **precepts** (*ḥudúd*) laid down by God constitute the highest means for the maintenance of order in the world and the security of its peoples.

29. ... The sincere among His servants will regard the **precepts** (*ḥudúd*) set forth by God as the Water of Life to the followers of every faith ...

62 ... Take ye hold of the **precepts** (*sunan*) of God with all your strength and power, and abandon the ways of the ignorant.

71. ... Observe ye the **statutes** (*ḥudúd Alláh*) and **precepts** (*sunanihi*) of your Lord ...

93: ANSWER: ... Blessed be such men and women as pay heed, and observe His **precepts** (no word).

Q&A: 106: ... Well is it with him who in the Day of God hath laid fast hold upon **His precepts** (*usúl Alláh*) ...

The above analysis enables us to derive a table of what original terms in the text of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas have resulted in these five English words in the translation:

Table of Legal Terms in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas

	Hukm	Amr	Namús	Hudúd	Qánún	Sunan	Uşúl	None*	Total
Law	14.5 <sup>†</sup>	3	1	3	1				22.5
Commandment	5	15 <sup>‡</sup>		1		1			22
Ordinance	8.5 <sup>†</sup>	2 <sup>§</sup>		2				2	14.5
Statutes		1		2				1	4
Precepts				2		2	1	1	6
<b>Totals</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>69</b>

#### NOTES TO TABLE

\* The column "None" indicates where the word appears in English but there is no corresponding Arabic/Persian word in the original.

† In the phrase "Though he was occupied both night and day in setting down what he conceived to be the laws and ordinances of God (*aḥkám Alláh*)," both laws and ordinances appear to have been translated by *aḥkám*, therefore I have given 0.5 to each.

‡ I am counting the occurrence "he might vindicate the truth of even one of His commandments (*amran min awámirihi*)," as one although some may consider it to be two.

§ I have included one occasion in which a construction using the verb *amara* has been translated as "ordinance" ("It behoveth everyone who reacheth this most sublime station ... to observe every ordinance (*má amara bihi*) of Him Who is the Desire of the world.") Some may prefer to omit this.

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## Conclusion

Shoghi Effendi does not seem to have maintained any pattern in his translation of the words associated with “law”. He does not seem to have distinguished any nuances of meaning in the 8-10 Arabic/Persian words that occur in Bahá'í scripture and have been translated by him as “law” or other equivalent terms. Nor indeed does he consistently use such terms as “ordinance”, “commandment”, “statute” or “precept” to designate any particular Arabic/Persian word. He appears to have relied on his literary sensibilities in choosing which words to use when translating this range of words in Arabic/Persian to a parallel range of words in English.