



A Critique of Six Examples of Qur'anic Citation in the Bahá'í Sect¹

Rouhollah Najafi ²

Abstract

A thousand years after the death of Imam Ḥasan al-‘Askarī and the beginning of the period of occultation, a cleric from Shiraz named Sayyid ‘Alī Muḥammad announced the end of the occultation and declared himself first to be the Qā'im and later a prophet. After his execution, Mīrzā Ḥusayn ‘Alī Nūrī continued the movement and likewise claimed to be the promised prophet. In this way, the Bahá'í religion emerged and added a new dimension to interreligious and theological disputes. In their efforts to promote Bahá'í teachings, Bahá'í missionaries have at times appealed to verses of the Qur'an. These citations concern issues such as the return of Jesus, the future clarification of the Qur'an, the Prophet Muḥammad's covenant regarding future prophets, the destruction of false prophets, the coming of messengers after the end of the Islamic community, and the return of the Islamic cause to God within a thousand-year period. This article examines six such examples in order to evaluate the validity of Qur'anic citation within Bahá'í discourse. The study argues that Bahá'í interpreters frequently depart from the apparent meanings of the Qur'anic verses and from established interpretive principles, instead relying on highly remote interpretations in an attempt to challenge the doctrine of the finality of Prophethood.

Keywords: Qur'an, Finality of Prophethood, Bahá'í Faith, Interpretation, Hermeneutics.

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² . Associate Professor of Quranic Studies, Kharazmi University, Karaj, Iran.
(r.najafi@khu.ac.ir).



1. Statement of the Problem

Sayyid ‘Alī Muḥammad Shīrāzī, known as the Báb, and Mīrzā Ḥusayn ‘Alī Nūrī, known as Bahá’u’lláh, are regarded as the founders of the Bahá’í Faith. The Báb announced his claim in 1260 AH in Shiraz, while Bahá’u’lláh declared his mission in 1280 AH in Baghdad (Mutlaq, 2012, p 556). Both figures modeled their claims on the prophetic paradigm familiar within the Abrahamic traditions. Bahá’ís maintain that the appearance of the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh fulfilled promises made by earlier prophets concerning future manifestations (Golpāyegānī, n.d, p 16). The Báb presented a book known as the *Bayān*, while Bahá’u’lláh authored the *Aqdas* (Ibid, p 12–13).

According to Kasravī, Sayyid ‘Alī Muḥammad studied under Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī, although Bahá’ís have generally denied this claim and insist that the Báb did not study under any teacher apart from attending a traditional school (Kasravī, 1944, p 25). The Báb was executed in 1266 AH in Tabriz (Ibid, p 34), and Bahá’u’lláh died in 1309 AH (Golpāyegānī, n.d, p16), after spending the last twenty-four years of his life in Acre (Ibid, p 13). Bahá’í missionaries argue that just as the Prophet of Islam challenged his opponents by saying, “Bring a surah like it,” the “First Point” (the Báb) similarly challenged humanity by saying, “Bring a verse like it,” thereby rendering all people incapable of matching even a single verse of his revelation (Ibid, p 656).

In support of their beliefs, Bahá’í writers have occasionally cited Qur’anic verses. Some of these citations are so weak that they scarcely deserve discussion, while others warrant careful analysis and critique. The present study therefore seeks to examine selected examples of Qur’anic citation in Bahá’í thought. The central questions are: Which Qur’anic passages do Bahá’ís invoke in support of their doctrines? And to what extent do these interpretations withstand scholarly scrutiny?

2. Detailed Examination of the Examples

In its attempt to challenge the doctrine of the finality of Prophethood, the Bahá’í movement has appealed to Qur’anic passages concerning the return of Jesus and the covenant taken from prophets regarding future messengers. In addition, Bahá’í interpreters have attributed to the Qur’an certain ideas that are not explicitly found in the text, such as the future appearance of the *Bayān*, the worldly destruction of false prophets, the coming of messengers after the end of Islam, and the return of the Islamic dispensation to God

within a thousand-year period. The following sections examine these claims in detail.

2.1. The Return of Jesus after the Prophet of Islam

According to the Qur'anic verse, "...they certainly did not kill him; rather, God raised him unto Himself..." (Qur'an, 4: 157–158), Jesus was not killed by his enemies but was raised by God. The subsequent verse states: "There is none among the People of the Book but will surely believe in him before his death..." (Qur'an, 4: 159). The possible meaning of the verse suggests that the pronoun in "before his death," like the pronoun in "believe in him," refers to Jesus. Al-Ṭabarī, therefore interprets the verse as meaning that all the People of the Book will believe in Jesus before his death, namely at the time of his descent (Ṭabarī, n.d, v 6, p 30).

Abu'l-Faḍl Golpāyegānī, a prominent Bahá'í missionary, raises an objection here. He argues that it is contradictory to maintain, on the one hand, that the expression "Seal of the Prophets" (*Khātim al-Nabiyyīn* or *Khātam al-Nabiyyīn*) means that no prophet will come after Muḥammad, while at the same time affirming that Jesus will descend at the end of time (Golpāyegānī, n.d, p 304). In his view, if Jesus returns with the same prophetic attributes he possessed before, then he remains a prophet sent after the Prophet of Islam for the guidance and governance of humanity (Ibid). He further asks: even if Jesus were to govern according to Islamic law, would titles such as "Prophet of God," "Spirit of God," and "Word of God" cease to apply to him? (Ibid). To clarify this discussion, it must first be noted that the phrase "*Khātim al-Nabiyyīn*" or "*Khātam al-Nabiyyīn*" appears in the verse: "Muḥammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of God and the Seal of the Prophets..." (Qur'an, 33: 40). Among the ten canonical Qur'anic readers, only 'Āṣim read *Khātam* with a fatha on the tā', while the others recited *Khātim* with a kasra (Ibn Mihrān, n.d, 358).

Beyond the ten canonical readers, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Sha'bī, and Zayd ibn 'Alī are also reported to have read it with a fatha (Abū Ḥayyān, 2010, v 7, p 228). Commentators describe the kasra reading as the majority reading (Abū Ḥayyān, 2010, v 7, p 228; Ibn 'Āshūr, 1984, v 22, p 47). In addition, it is reported that 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd used to recite: *wa lākin nabiyyan khatama al-nabiyyīn* (Farrā', 2010, Vol. 2, p 655; Ṭabarī, n.d, Vol. 22, p 23), meaning: "Rather, he is a prophet who brought the prophets to an end." Here, *Khātim* with a kasra functions as the active participle of *khatm*, meaning one who concludes or finishes something. For this reason, al-Farrā' and al-Ṭabarī considered Ibn Mas'ūd's reading to support the kasra reading (Ibid).

By contrast, *Khātam* with a fathā literally means “signet ring,” which in earlier times was used to seal letters. It is reported from Anas ibn Mālik that the inscription on the Prophet’s ring read: “Muḥammad, Messenger of God” (Ibn Sa’d, 1990, Vol. 1, p 368). Another narration from Anas states that when the Prophet wrote a letter to Caesar or to the Romans, he was told that such letters would not be accepted unless sealed. The Prophet therefore commissioned a silver ring engraved with the words “Muḥammad, Messenger of God” (Ibid, Vol. 1, p 365).

Accordingly, in the fathā reading, the Prophet of Islam is likened to a signet ring among the prophets. Such a ring was not merely decorative; it also served to identify the sender, authenticate the message, and seal the document against alteration. Thus, the image of the signet ring conveys four meanings: adornment, identification, authentication, and completion.

Because of these multiple associations, the fathā reading is less explicit than the kasra reading in conveying the finality of Prophethood. Some historical reports support this distinction. It is narrated that a man once said to Mughirah ibn Shu‘bah: “Peace be upon Muḥammad, who is *Khātim al-Anbiyā*’ (with kasra), after whom there is no prophet.” Mughirah replied: “It is sufficient to say *Khātam al-Anbiyā*’ (with fathā), for we used to speak of the coming of Jesus. When he appears, he is both before and after Muḥammad” (Ibn Abī Shaybah, 1988, Vol. 5, p 337). This report indicates that Mughirah viewed the return of Jesus as incompatible with a strict understanding of finality. For him, *Khātim* with kasra clearly implied the end of Prophethood, whereas *Khātam* with fathā did not necessarily do so. Thus, he who did not believe in the finality of prophethood, chose the fathā form in describing the Prophet. Similarly, a report attributed to ‘Ā’ishah states: “Say *Khātam al-Nabiyyīn* (with fathā), but do not say that there will be no prophet after him” (Ibid, Vol. 5, p 336). This narration likewise suggests that she distinguished between the two readings.

Another narration reports that Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī was teaching Qur’anic recitation to Ḥasan and Ḥusayn when Imam ‘Alī passed by and instructed him to teach the verse with the reading *Khātam al-Nabiyyīn*, that is, with a fathā on the tā’ (al-Suyūṭī, n.d, v 6, p 618). This suggests that Imam ‘Alī also distinguished between the two readings, although the exact reason for his preference remains unclear. In the history of Qur’anic readings, it is a well-known and recurring pattern that an alternative reading is proposed in place of the primary and original reading of words, driven by certain motives and beliefs. Based on this pattern, two hypotheses can be proposed for this

instance as well. According to the first hypothesis, the original reading was with *kasrah*, and some reciters proposed the reading with *fatha* to clear a path for the return of Jesus. Conversely, the second hypothesis states that the original reading was with *fatha*, and some reciters suggested the reading with *kasrah* to emphasize the finality of prophethood. Among these two, the first hypothesis appears more plausible, as textual analysis of the verse demonstrates that the expression *Khātim al-Nabiyyīn* signifies the finality of prophethood. The phrase immediately follows the statement that Muḥammad is “not the father of any of your men.” Had the Prophet possessed a surviving son, it would have been natural to expect Prophethood to continue through his lineage, as occurred with earlier prophetic families. David and Solomon were both prophets, and the Qur'an says: “And Solomon inherited David...” (Qur'an, 27: 16). Likewise, Abraham was the father of Isaac and Ishmael, both prophets, while Jacob and Joseph continued the same prophetic lineage. The verse therefore establishes a connection between Muḥammad's lack of a male heir and the conclusion of Prophethood with him. This contextual relationship becomes strongest when *Khātim al-Nabiyyīn* is understood to mean “the final prophet.” For this reason, the *kasra* reading is preferable, since its indication of finality is clearer and more directly connected to the surrounding verses. Even in the case of the *fatha* reading (*Khātam*), the most coherent interpretation is that the Prophet resembles the seal ring precisely in bringing prophethood to completion. Without this aspect, the connection between the clauses of the verse becomes significantly weaker.

The Bahá'í objection ultimately rests on the claim that the return of Jesus, while he still retains his prophetic status, contradicts the doctrine of finality. One response to this objection is that the Qur'an itself may be understood as affirming the death of Jesus in the same manner as other prophets. Two verses are especially relevant here: “When you took me, you were the watcher over them” (Qur'an, 5: 117), and “Indeed, I will take you and raise you unto myself” (Qur'an, 3: 55).

Under this interpretation, the “raising” of Jesus refers not to bodily ascension but to exaltation in rank after death. Likewise, in the verse “There is none among the People of the Book but will surely believe in him before his death...” (Qur'an, 4: 159), the pronoun in “his death” may refer not to Jesus but to each individual among the People of the Book. In other words, every person will come to recognize the truth about Jesus at the moment of death, when ultimate realities become clear. If the expression “Seal of the Prophets” indeed signifies the finality of Prophethood, and if the return of Jesus appears

to conflict with this doctrine, then the doctrine of finality itself provides reason to reject the theory of Jesus's bodily return and instead affirm his death. Even if one were nevertheless to accept Jesus's return, this still would not support the claims of the Báb or Bahá'u'lláh. Jesus's reappearance would not constitute a new Prophethood, since his prophetic mission began long before the Prophet Muḥammad. His return would therefore not add another prophet to the chain of prophecy. Finally, even if one assumes that the determining factor in finality is not the beginning of Prophethood but the duration of earthly life, an exception in the specific case of Jesus would not justify extending the same exception to others. The acceptance of Jesus's return does not logically entail acceptance of every later prophetic claim. There is no necessary connection between recognizing the possible return of Jesus and accepting the claims advanced by the Báb or Bahá'u'lláh. Indeed, even before the Prophet of Islam, when the door of Prophethood was still open, not every claimant to prophecy was accepted. The claims of false prophets were rejected then, just as they may be rejected now, regardless of whether one considers the door of Prophethood open or closed.

2.2. The Promise of the Qur'an's Clarification in the Future

The Holy Qur'an addresses the Messenger of Islam, saying: "Do not move your tongue with it to hasten its recitation. Indeed, upon us is its collection and its recitation. So when we have recited it, then follow its recitation. Then indeed, upon us is its clarification" (Qur'an, 75:16–19). In promoting the claims of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, these verses have sometimes been cited as evidence. According to Golpāyegānī, God in this passage undertakes the clarification (*bayān*) of the Noble Qur'an, and such divine clarification can occur only through revelation. Therefore, he argues, this clarification can only be realized through a later manifestation (Golpāyegānī, n.d, p 363).

It appears that, based on the implication of *thumma* ("then") as indicating delay and succession, he maintains that the clarification of the Qur'an must occur in a later dispensation and through another prophetic manifestation. In this regard, Bahá'í missionaries assert that many of the secrets of the Qur'an remained hidden prior to the advent of the Bahá'í Faith, and that in the present age, by divine command, the veils concealing these mysteries have been lifted (Mutlaq, 2012, p 251). Within Islamic Qur'anic exegesis, however, two different interpretations of these verses have been proposed, one well known and widely accepted, and the other relatively uncommon. According to the famous interpretation, this passage concerns the Prophet's recitation of the Qur'an, and the pronoun "it" in the phrase "Do not move

your tongue with it” refers to the Qur'an itself (Ṭabarī, n.d, Vol. 29, p 222; Ibn 'Aṭīyyah, 2001, Vol. 5, p 404; Ibn al-Jawzī, 2001, Vol. 4, p 371). It is narrated from Ibn 'Abbās that whenever revelation descended upon the Prophet, he would move his tongue along with it, and so God revealed this verse (Bukhārī, 2001, Vol. 6, p 163). According to this understanding, the Prophet's eagerness to memorize the revelation caused him to recite simultaneously with the Angel of Revelation. The verses were therefore inserted into the middle of the surah, without any direct thematic connection to the surrounding passages, in order to restrain the Prophet from hastening in receiving the revelation and to assure him that the collection, recitation, and clarification of the Qur'an were guaranteed by God.

Nevertheless, this interpretation faces a difficulty, namely that the verses before and after this passage concern the Resurrection (*Qiyāmah*). Neither the word “Qur'an” is explicitly mentioned, nor is the Qur'an the apparent subject of discussion. One response to this problem is that the Qur'an itself contains many examples in which the referent of a pronoun is not explicitly stated. For example, in the verse: “Indeed, We sent it down on the Night of Decree” (Qur'an, 97:1). The pronoun in “sent it down” refers to the Qur'an, despite the fact that the Qur'an is not explicitly mentioned. Similarly, in the phrase “Do not move your tongue with it,” the presence of the Qur'an in the minds of the audience renders an explicit mention unnecessary. Furthermore, to address the apparent lack of thematic continuity between the discussion of resurrection and the discussion of Qur'anic recitation, it may be argued that the Qur'an at times shifts from one subject to another without maintaining strict thematic continuity. Muḥammad Jawād Mughniyyah regarded the transition to the topic of Qur'anic recitation in this sūrah as fully consistent with the general style of the Qur'an. According to him, the Qur'an often moves from one topic to another regardless of whether an obvious connection exists between them (Mughniyyah, 1990, Vol. 7, p 471). The word al-Qur'an itself means “recitation” or “reading” (Ṭabarsī, 1995, v 10, p 197). Ibn 'Abbās is reported to have interpreted the phrase “follow its recitation” as meaning “act according to the Qur'an” (Ibn al-Jawzī, 2001, Vol. 4, p 371). According to narrations from Qatādah and Ḍaḥḥāk, the phrase refers specifically to following the rulings of the Qur'an and its lawful or unlawful commands (Ṭabarsī, 1995, Vol. 10, p 197). In this interpretation, the command is limited to legal rulings and does not extend to doctrinal or narrative passages. Another interpretation holds that the phrase “when we have recited it, then follow its recitation” means: “When we have completed

its recitation, then you begin to recite” (Mughniyyah, 1990, Vol. 7, p 471). This latter interpretation appears more appropriate, since the surrounding discussion concerns the manner of recitation itself.

On the other hand, a lesser-known interpretation of these verses maintains that they refer not to the Prophet, but to the human being on the Day of Resurrection reading his own record of deeds (*kitāb al-a‘māl*) (Fakhr al-Rāzī, 2004, Vol. 30, p 201). According to this interpretation, the addressee of the verses is not the Prophet but “man” (*al-insān*), who is mentioned in the preceding verses (Ibid). The preceding verses state that on that Day, man will be informed of what he has sent forth and left behind, and that he will bear witness against himself even if he presents excuses (Qur’an, 75:13–15). On this basis, “its collection” refers to the gathering of a person’s deeds. The phrase “follow its recitation” means that a person acknowledges and confesses his deeds after God recites them to him. Likewise, “its clarification” refers to the explanation of those deeds and the degrees of punishment associated with them (Fakhr al-Rāzī, 2004, Vol. 30, p 201). Fakhr al-Rāzī attributes this interpretation to al-Qaffāl, a fourth-century AH scholar (Ibid).

This theory relies heavily upon the contextual flow of the verses and deserves further development. According to this interpretation, a person becomes aware of his deeds through a written record. Hastening to read the record is a form of evasion and excuse-making. Thus, the mention of human excuse-making in the preceding verses serves as a contextual clue connecting them to the discussion of reading the record of deeds. On this basis, the antecedent of the pronoun in “Do not move your tongue with it” is the record of deeds itself. Although the “Book of Deeds” is not explicitly mentioned, the preceding expression “what he has sent forth and what he has left behind” already implies the totality of a person’s deeds, making the pronoun intelligible. Comparison with other Qur’anic verses further strengthens this interpretation, since the reading of the record of deeds on the Day of Resurrection is explicitly mentioned elsewhere. For example: “And We have fastened every man’s fate to his neck, and on the Day of Resurrection We shall bring forth for him a book which he will find spread open. Read your book...” (Qur’an, 17:13–14). Likewise: “And the Book will be placed, and you will see the guilty fearful of what is in it, and they will say: ‘Woe to us! What kind of book is this that leaves nothing small or great except that it has counted it?’ And they will find present whatever they did” (Qur’an, 18:49).

In Sūrat al-Qiyāmah, the distinctive point is that God Himself undertakes the recitation of humanity's record of deeds. Human beings then read their records only after and in accordance with God's recitation. Thus, the phrase *fa-ittabi' qur'ānahu* ("then follow its recitation") corresponds to *iqra' kitābak* ("read your book") in Sūrat al-Isrā', both referring to the reading of one's deeds. Likewise, the expression *jam'ahu* ("its collection") resembles the expression *aḥṣāhā* ("it has counted it precisely"), since both convey the idea of gathering and recording every deed without omission. Similarly, the phrase "Then indeed upon us is its clarification" parallels the verse "they will find present whatever they did," because clarification here means the manifestation and exposure of deeds. On the Day of Resurrection, God will bring human deeds out from concealment into full manifestation. Human actions will not merely be recited privately to their doers; rather, they will be openly displayed. In Qur'anic usage, *bayān* (clarification or disclosure) stands in contrast to *kitmān* (concealment), as reflected in the verse: "God took a covenant from those who were given the Scripture that they should make it clear to the people and not conceal it" (Qur'an, 3:187).

The strength of this lesser-known interpretation over the famous one lies in its reliance upon the internal context of the verses themselves, whereas the more common interpretation depends primarily on external reports concerning the occasion of revelation. Internal textual evidence should generally be preferred over external reports, particularly since reports concerning occasions of revelation may contain error or fabrication. In any case, regardless of which interpretation is adopted, the claim advanced by Bahá'í missionaries remains unsupported. If the verses are understood as referring to the reading of deeds on the Day of Resurrection, then the phrase "Then indeed upon us is its clarification" concerns the manifestation of human deeds, not the clarification of the Qur'an. In that case, the entire foundation of the Bahá'í argument collapses. Even if the passage is interpreted as referring to the Prophet's recitation of the Qur'an, the verses merely state that the clarification of the Qur'an rests with God. They contain no indication whatsoever of a future prophet or messenger.

The Qur'an itself was revealed gradually. Consequently, later passages often clarified and elaborated upon earlier ones. Although the particle *thumma* indicates sequence and interval, this interval does not necessarily imply the passing of the Prophet's era. Rather, the clarification may occur within the Prophet's own lifetime, as later revelations explain earlier ones. It is also possible that *thumma* here indicates not temporal delay, but simply

progression to another point. On this reading, the meaning would be that, in addition to the collection and recitation of the Qur'an, or, according to the second interpretation, the manifestation of human deeds, their clarification, likewise belongs to God alone.

2.3. The covenant of the Messenger of Islam to affirm future prophets

The Qur'an mentions a covenant that God took from the Prophets. The terms of the covenant are that after He grants you the Book and Wisdom, then a Messenger comes to you confirming what is already with you, you must definitely believe in him and support him (Qur'an, 3:81). Furthermore, in another *Sūrah*, it is stated on God's behalf that we took a covenant from the Prophets, and from you (Muhammad), and from Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, son of Mary. We took from them a solemn covenant (Qur'an, 33:8). The content of the Prophets' covenant isn't specified here, and it may be claimed, based on interpreting the Quranic verses in relation to one another, that the content of the Prophets' covenant in *Sūrat al-Aḥzāb* is the same as the content of their covenant in *Sūrat Āl 'Imrān*. The expression "from you" in *Sūrah* 33 explicitly counts the Messenger of Islam among the Prophets who made the covenant. The Qur'an discusses the covenant of the Prophets only in these two instances, and if we consider these two to refer to a single covenant, then the Messenger of Islam cannot be excluded from the general category of "the Prophets" in *Sūrah* 3; rather, he must be considered an affirmer of later Messengers.

Baha'i missionaries have considered the covenant of the Prophets in these two *Sūras* to be one and the same (Āfāqī, 1999, p 100). They argue that the covenant of the Messenger is the covenant of his community, and a covenant was taken from Prophet Muhammad that Muslims must believe in Bahá'u'lláh (Ibid). According to them, it is a divine tradition that God promises previous communities the appearance of a future Messenger (Ibid). In the view of this author, equating the covenant of the Prophets in those two chapters lacks supporting evidence. *Sūrah* 3 is meant to argue with the People of the Book to persuade them to believe in the Messenger of Islam, whereas *Sūrah* 33 does not pursue such an objective. The salient discourse of *Sūrah* 33 is the remembrance of the hardships of the Battle of the Trench, the conduct of the hypocrites during that war, and their behavior regarding the Prophet's marriage to Zaynab. Therefore, the content of the Prophets' covenant in *Sūrah* 33 does not appear to be the affirmation of later Messengers; rather, it is apparent that God took a covenant from His Prophets for the absolute matter of Prophethood itself and for perseverance in the face

of its difficulties. In this way, those who cast doubts on the finality of Prophethood can only cling to the verse regarding the covenant of the Prophets in *Sūrat Āl 'Imrān*. Their argument can be structured as follows: The Messenger of Islam is included within the generality of "the Prophets." Therefore, this covenant was taken from Prophet Muhammad that if, subsequent to him, a confirming messenger arrives, and he must believe in and support this new messenger. The taking of this covenant from the Messenger of Islam is only justified if the arrival of a new messenger is not impossible or forbidden. Therefore, the verse indicates the permissibility of the arrival of new Messengers. If reliance is placed solely on the wording of the verse, the above argument appears sound, as the word "the Prophets" is general, just as Murtaḍā Muṭahharī said in explaining the verse: "We took a covenant from all the Prophets without exception" (Muṭahharī, 1987, p 20). However, observing the overall discourse of *Sūrat Āl 'Imrān* shows that this *Sūrah* is intended to argue with the Jews and Christians to persuade them to believe in the Messenger of Islam. Therefore, the word "the Prophets" refers to the previous Prophets and does not include the Messenger of Islam. Based on this, the "confirming messenger" is only the Messenger of Islam himself. It is evident that since a covenant is taken from the Prophets, their followers are obliged to adhere to it. Thus, the Jews and Christians are obliged to believe in the Messenger of Islam and support him.

Understanding the speaker's intent plays an important role in understanding his speech, and one should not rely on the generality or absolute nature of the words without considering the goal. The speaker's goal in this context is to bring the previous Prophets as witnesses to the Prophethood of the Messenger of Islam, not to consider the Messenger of Islam as an affirmer of later messengers. One might object that the speaker is committed to the necessary implications of his speech, even if he did not explicitly intend them. On this basis, the Messenger of Islam is included in the generality or absolute scope of "the Prophets" and should be considered an affirmer of later messengers, just as previous messengers affirmed him. This conclusion follows from the generality of "the Prophets", even if the speaker did not intend it. This objection is based on ignoring the speaker's intent, and this disregard contradicts the effort to ascertain the speaker's will. The aim of interpretation is to uncover the author's intended meaning, and the interpreter must not depart from the communicative purpose embedded in the speech. Furthermore, even if we do not limit "the Prophets" to those who came before Islam, the verse is still based on a supposition and does not indicate the

occurrence of a new Prophethood after the Messenger of Islam; at most, it only suggests its permissibility or possibility. In addition, the verse makes no mention, near or distant, of a specific individual designated as Bahá'u'lláh. Therefore, the Baha'i missionaries' discussion of Bahá'u'lláh under the verses of the Prophets' covenant is utterly weak.

2.4. The threat of destruction for false prophets

In the Qur'an, God declares that if the Prophet of Islam had fabricated statements against Us, We would have seized him by the right hand, then severed his aorta, and none of you could have protected him from us (Qur'an, 69:44–47). Abū al-Faḍl Gulpaygānī claimed that this verse is explicit that God, the Blessed and Exalted, will never grant respite to any soul who falsely attributes a statement to Him and names a book that he himself composed as divine revelation and calls it God's verses (Golpāyegānī, n.d, p 25). *Gulpaygānī's* intent is that the *Báb* and *Bahá'u'lláh* claimed to be messengers from God and attributed many things to Him. Now, if the two had been false, according to these verses, they should have been destroyed by God. However, God did not destroy them. Thus, the two were truthful in their claim. In the view of this writer, the argument is based on analogy: from the fact such a threat was issued regarding the Prophet of Islam, it is inferred that anyone who makes a similar claim would be subject to the same threat. This analogy is valid if the cause of the threat is merely the false claim of Prophethood and the fabrication against God, and the specific attributes of the Prophet of Islam play no role in this context. The other perspective is that the reason for such a severe threat must be the lying of an actual Messenger of God or the lying of Prophet Muhammad himself due to his specific characteristics. Based on this, the threat cannot be generalized to everyone. Yusuf Sha'ār, in refuting the Baha'i appeal to these verses, stated that the verses in question relate only to the person of Prophet Muhammad (Sha'ār, 1990, p 351). Thus, Sha'ār establishes a distinction between the Prophet and others regarding this threat. The origin of this distinction is that if someone is truly a Prophet and God has given him a proof, obedience to him becomes obligatory upon the people. In this scenario, if he fabricates a lie against God, it is then incumbent upon God to destroy him. However, if a person falsely claims Prophethood or fabricates a lie against God without God having provided him with any proof, it is not necessarily incumbent upon God to seize and destroy him in this world (Ibid, p 352).

2.5. The Coming of Messengers after the Expiration of the Muslim Community

According to the Qur'an, "For every community there is an appointed term. When their term arrives, they can neither delay it for an hour nor advance it" (Qur'an, 7:34). The Qur'an further states: "O Children of Adam! Whenever messengers come to you from among yourselves, reciting to you My signs, then whoever is mindful of God and acts righteously shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve" (Qur'an, 7:35).

Bahá'í proponents argue that these verses announce that every religious community has a fixed lifespan, and since Islam is also a community, it too must eventually come to an end. To reinforce this interpretation, they point to the subsequent mention of messengers in the emphatic present tense, arguing that the verse alludes to the future coming of new messengers after the expiration of Islam (Roshani, n.d, p 50). According to this reading, Islam possesses a limited duration, and once that duration is completed, a new prophet with a new scripture will emerge and establish a new religious community (Ibid).

The response to this claim is as follows. Sūrat al-A'raf is a Makkan sūrah, and during the Makkan period the primary audience of the Prophet's message consisted of the polytheists of Mecca. The statement that every community has an appointed term serves as a warning to those disbelievers that their reprieve and temporary immunity from divine punishment would not continue indefinitely. Rather, divine punishment would eventually arrive, or the Day of Resurrection would overtake them. Consequently, they were urged to believe in God and affirm His Messenger before the coming of punishment or the arrival of the Last Day. Accordingly, the verse is not speaking about the termination of the Muslim community. Even if, due to the general wording of the verse, one were to include the Muslim community among those possessing an appointed term, that term would refer to the occurrence of the Day of Judgment itself. No event took place in 1260 AH, the year that Bahá'ís identify as the manifestation of the Báb, that could reasonably be interpreted as the end of the Muslim community. On the contrary, the Muslim community has continued its historical existence uninterrupted. Furthermore, the mention of messengers in the following verse does not refer to prophets or messengers after Islam. The context of the passage clearly indicates that the warning concerning the expiration of nations is intended to instill fear in the polytheistic Meccans so that they may believe in the Messenger of Islam. For this reason, the passage continues by exhorting the "Children of Adam" to believe whenever messengers come to them. Like the preceding verse, this verse is concerned with affirming and

establishing the Prophethood of Muḥammad, not with discussing whether new prophets will arise after him. These verses in Sūrat al-A‘rāf appear immediately after the account of Adam’s error and descent to the earth, which explains the universal address, “O Children of Adam!” Nevertheless, the Qur’an’s purpose remains the same: to urge the disbelievers addressed by the Prophet to believe in him. A similar passage appears in Sūrat al-Baqarah following the story of Adam’s descent. God says: “Descend from it, all of you. Then whenever guidance comes to you from me, whoever follows my guidance shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve” (Qur’an, 2:38).

Bahá’í proponents have also appealed to other verses in order to demonstrate the continuity of the divine practice of sending messengers. For example, in Sūrat Ghāfir it is stated: “Exalted in rank, Lord of the Throne, He casts the Spirit of His command upon whomsoever He wills of His servants that he may warn of the Day of Meeting” (Qur’an, 40:15). This verse, however, is likewise concerned with affirming and establishing the Prophethood of Muḥammad and remains silent regarding the permissibility or impermissibility of prophets after him. Nevertheless, Abu’l-Faḍl Golpāyegānī argued from this verse that whenever God wills, He raises a new warner and renews the world through a new divine law (Golpāyegānī, n.d, p 313–314). His argument rests on the use of the present-tense verb *yulqī* (“He casts” or “He sends down”), which he interprets as indicating an ongoing and future-oriented process rather than a past event (Ibid). In response, it should be noted that the prophetic mission of Muḥammad was actively unfolding at the time of revelation. The use of the present tense therefore does not necessarily point to future prophets; rather, it naturally encompasses the present reality of revelation as it was occurring during the Prophet’s own lifetime.

2.6. The Return of the Affair of Islam to God in a Thousand-Year Day

The Qur’an states: “He governs the affair from the heaven to the earth; then it ascends to Him in a day whose measure is a thousand years according to your reckoning” (Qur’an, 32:5). Promoters of the Bahá’í Faith have interpreted this verse as foretelling the end of the Islamic era and as an allusion to the manifestation of the Báb. According to Abu’l-Faḍl Golpāyegānī, “God, exalted be His majesty, first sends down the blessed affair of the manifest religion from heaven to earth, and after its completion and descent, the lights of religion gradually disappear over the course of one thousand years” (Golpāyegānī, n.d, p 37). He further explains: “The descent of the light of religion from heaven to earth can only be conceived through

the revelations sent down to the Prophet of Islam and the inspirations received by the pure Shi'í Imams. This light descended fully during the period extending from the migration of the Seal of the Prophets until the death of the guiding Imams. When Ḥasan ibn 'Alī al-'Askarī died in 260 AH and the period of occultation began, the affair of religion became dependent upon the opinions of scholars and jurists. Gradually disagreements and innovations spread, and the horizon of God's religion became darkened until nothing remained of Islam except its name. After the completion of one thousand years from the Occultation, in the year 1260 AH, the Sun of Truth rose from the horizon of Persia" (Ibid, p 37–38). Another Bahá'í writer asks: "How does God govern the affairs of the earth?" and answers: "Through the teachings and laws that He sends to humanity by means of prophets or Imams" (Mutlaq, 2012, p 171). He then argues that divine guidance began with the advent of the Prophet Muḥammad and concluded with the death of the eleventh Imam, Ḥasan al-'Askarī. According to this interpretation, the effects of divine guidance remained among Muslims for one thousand years after the beginning of the occultation. Once that millennium expired, the heavenly gift returned to its sender. Therefore, to calculate the age of Islam, one must add 260 years to one thousand years, yielding the year 1260 AH, the very year in which the Báb declared his mission and which Bahá'ís regard as the beginning of Bahá'í history (Ibid, p 172).

3. Conclusion

The findings of the present study may be summarized in the following six points:

1. The Bahá'í Faith argues that the return of Jesus, while retaining his prophetic status, is incompatible with the doctrine of the finality of Prophethood. However, even if the doctrine of Jesus's return is accepted on the basis of the Qur'an, such a return would not constitute a new Prophethood, since Jesus's Prophethood preceded that of Prophet Muḥammad.
2. The Bahá'í Faith claims that God has undertaken the clarification (*bayān*) of the Qur'an and that such clarification can only occur through renewed revelation and the advent of a new prophet. In response, it may be said that the Qur'an was revealed gradually, and many of its earlier passages are clarified and elaborated upon in later passages.
3. The Bahá'í Faith further claims that God took a covenant from all prophets, including Prophet Muḥammad, to affirm the coming of later messengers. The response is that the Qur'anic covenant in question

pertains to the prophets prior to Islam and does not include the Messenger of Islam himself.

4. The Bahá'í Faith also argues that, according to the Qur'an, God does not grant false claimants of Prophethood continued existence, whereas the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh both lived and remained active. The response is that the Qur'anic threat of destruction for fabricating lies against God is directed specifically toward the Messenger of Islam and cannot be generalized to all claimants.
5. The Bahá'í Faith claims that the Qur'an announces the expiration of every religious community, including the Muslim community, and subsequently refers to the sending of new messengers. The response is that the "appointed term" mentioned in the Qur'an refers, in the case of the community addressed by Prophet Muḥammad, to the coming of the Day of Resurrection (*Qiyāmah*), which has not yet occurred. Likewise, the Qur'anic references to the sending of messengers are intended to affirm the Prophethood of Muḥammad rather than to predict prophets after him.
6. Finally, the Bahá'í Faith interprets the Qur'anic statement concerning God's governance of affairs over a "thousand-year day" as indicating that the affair of Islam ended in 1260 AH. According to this interpretation, divine guidance descended from heaven until the beginning of the Occultation in 260 AH, after which the affair of Islam returned to God one thousand years later. In response, it should be noted that the Qur'an merely states that God governs the affairs of creation from heaven and that, ultimately, these affairs return to Him on a Day whose measure is a thousand years. This "long day" refers to the Day of Resurrection, not to the appearance of a post-Islamic religion. The Qur'an nowhere foretells the manifestation of a new religion after Islam.

Resources

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