

Baha'i Apocalypticism: The Concept of Progressive Revelation

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Department of History of Religion at the Faculty of Theology Lund University

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Through their appearance the Revelation of God is made manifest, and by their countenance the Beauty of God is revealed. Thus it is that the accents of God Himself have been uttered by these Manifestations of God [. . .] Know of a certainty that in every Dispensation the light of Divine Revelation hath been vouchsafed unto men in direct proportion to their spiritual capacity. - Bahá'u'lláh (1862)

If the religions are true it is because each time it is God who has spoken, and if they are different it is because God has spoken in different "languages" in conformity with the receptacles. Finally, if they are absolute and exclusive, it is because in each of them God has said "I". - Frithjof Schuon (1963)

Revelation . . . is a Divine communication shaped to the interests and values of a particular society at a particular time . . . Divine communication might not be perfectly received and understood . . . either by the original recipient or by others who transmit and interpret it later. Bearing these two features in mind, one might think that God will communicate different things to different peoples, and will in all probability be able to communicate more of the ultimate Divine purpose to some people than to others. - Keith Ward (1995)

Contents

Preface

I. Introduction

II. Background.

1. The religious context

2. The philosophical context

III. Literature Review

IV. Methodology

1. Research-questions and hypotheses.

2. Methodological problems

A. The Material.

B. The Method

V. Apocalypticism and Dimensions of Revelation

1. Problems of definition

2. A structural approach to revelation

3. Dimensions of revelation

4. Apocalypticism and revelation operationalized.

VI. Bahá'í Apocalypticism

1. Theology - the source of revelation.

2. Cosmology - the instrument of revelation

3. Universal and Specific Revelation - two means of revelation

A. Universal Revelation.

B. Specific Revelation

4. Prophetology - the mediation of revelation

A. The Prophets, Messengers, or Manifestations of God.

B. The nature of the Manifestation of God.

C. The Manifestation of God between God and man

D. The Manifestation of God as Educators and Physicians

VII. The Concept of Progressive Revelation

1. Texts of Identification - the esoteric dimension.

A. Identification with previous Manifestations of God

B. Identification with God

C. The Identity of the Manifestations of God

2. Texts of Elaboration - the exoteric dimension

A. The rise and fall of a religion

B. The continuity and succession of religions

C. The differences between the Manifestations of God and the concept of progress

D. The cyclical scheme .

E. The Bahá'í Cycle and the concept of progress.

VIII. Summary and Conclusions.

IX. Discussion

Appendices.

I. Bahá'í Apocalypticism - The Vertical Axis

II. Progressive Revelation - The Horizontal Axis

III. Progress or decline?

Abbreviations of Sources

Bibliography.

Preface

The present study is purely a structural and ahistorical approach to Bahá'í-apocalypticism and the concept of progressive revelation, but I am fully aware of the importance of studying the possible origins and influences (religious and philosophical) pertinent to this field. However, it was necessary to limit the scope of this master's thesis (licentiats uppsats), and since my research in this area is still incomplete, I have decided to more fully examine this vital section in my Ph.D. dissertation. Consequently, the forthcoming Ph.D. dissertation will complement this structural approach with a general historical criticism. I will then make a preliminary investigation of the possible historical influences on the concept of progressive revelation from various religious (e.g., the concepts of revelation and prophetology in Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Mandeism, Manichaeism, Islám, and Bábism) and philosophical traditions and contexts (especially the idea of progress in Europe during the 18-19th centuries).

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