

Three Sermons

Imam 'Ali

Three Sermons of Imam 'Ali

translation by Khazeh Fananapazir

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Sermon of the Gulf
[Khutbih-i-Tutunjiyyih]

of the Imam 'Ali
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General Introduction

The Founders of World Religions, the Manifestations of God, relate their claims and their utterances to the language and beliefs of the peoples to whom they come. The Manifestations transcend to a variable degree as They see fit to a wider context: e.g. Jesus Christ stated at the outset: "Think not that I have come to destroy the Law and the Prophets. I have not come to destroy but to fulfil." The Qur'án repeatedly states that it confirms the Gospel and the Torah, affirming that the Prophet's advent has been mentioned in the Torah and the Evangel. The Bábí and Bahá'í Revelations are also intimately related to the Islamic background and the Judaeo-Christian heritage. As the Guardian says, "[The Bahá'ís] must strive to obtain from sources that are authoritative and unbiased a sound knowledge of the history and tenets of Islam, the source and background of their Faith, and approach reverently and with a mind purged from pre-conceived ideas the study of the Qur'án which, apart from the sacred scriptures of the Bábí and Bahá'í Revelations, constitutes the only Book which can be regarded as an absolutely authenticated repository of the Word of God."^[1]

But what is most remarkable is the frequent reference to particular

verses and traditions (hadiths) of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. For example, there are many references to the Messianic passages of Isaiah. The passages of Matthew 24 and St John's reference to the Comforter and the Spirit of Truth are innumerable. From the Qur'án we have multiple references to the "Meeting with God" or "attaining to the Presence of God" on the Day of Judgement.

The Particular Significance of the Sermon of the Gulf [Khutbih-i-Tutunjiyyih or Khutbatu't-Tutunjiyyah]

One reference stands unique in that Bahá'u'lláh Himself calls it the Qutb, or "Pivot," around which "all the glad tidings of the past revolve." That is in a passage from a sermon that was delivered by the Imam 'Ali (d. 656 AD) called the "Sermon of the Twin Gulfs," the "Khutbah" of "Tutunjiyyah." This Narration was referred to by Henri Corbin as the "prone sur ou entre deux golfes". The author of the book that contains the Sermon of the Two Gulfs, Hafiz Rajab al Bursi, held a very high view of the station of the Imams, highly evocative of the position held by Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kazim, the precursors of the Bábí Cause at a later century. At the time of the Safavi renaissance of Shi'ih Islam, Bursi was considered to have exaggerated views of the station of the Imams. But the writings of Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsa'i and Siyyid Kazim Rashti^[2] also accorded a very high station to the Imams. They are referred to as "Mazahir," the "manifestations of God's names and attributes," by Shaykh Ahmad in his Sharh az-Ziyarat. In this regard Husayn the Son of the Imam Ali (the Author of this Sermon) is addressed to in a Tablet of Visitation revealed by Bahá'u'lláh as the One through Whom the Command of the Letters "B" and "E" came to be realised. He is also referred to as the Mystery of Revelation in the World of God's Command [jabarut]. Both the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh affirm in their writings the validity of these traditions which have their provenance from Bursi. Further, in the Kitáb-i-Iqán Bahá'u'lláh, in expounding the twin

cardinal principles of the Unity of the Prophets and infinity of the Revelatory Process (the Iqan reference to this is given below), adduces further references which are to be found only in Bursi, the source of the Sermon of the Two Gulfs. Bahá'u'lláh's Writings thus not only affirm the importance of these utterances of the Imam 'Ali but also assert the central and seminal anticipation of this Sermon which was fulfilled by His Advent. He says, in a Tablet starting with the words "the essence of praise..." (jawhar-i hamd), that the Sermon under our consideration as the "blessed sermon of Tutunjiyyah" and refers to it as having shone forth from dayspring of absolute sanctity and guardianship". He says that it has not been commented on in the wondrous Persian tongue and that the purpose of the Imam 'Ali in this sermon has been the announcement of the Promise "Anticipate ye the Advent of Him Who was the speaker with Moses on Mount Sinai." Bahá'u'lláh then goes on to say that this promise is the Pivot [qutb] around which all wisdom and utterance revolve. With this precise promise all the peoples have been vouchsafed the glad tidings of the Manifestation of God. Bahá'u'lláh then goes on to say that in this day the Speaker of the Mount is manifest and that the Speaker gives call to this utterance "Verily I am God."

The Sermon of the Twin Gulfs is important for Bahá'í studies on several grounds, including:

It shows how in the pre-Bábí/Baha'i Era various skills of interpretation were needed to overcome the various objections that were raised to its high theophanic claims. Further that these interpretative skills have continued to be needed.

As He asserts Himself in the Tablet of Jawhar-i-hamd ("The Essence of Praise") and the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf the Tutunjiyyah is a source text of the claim of Bahá'u'lláh to be the Speaker on Sinai.

The Commander of the Faithful (Imam Ali)--peace be upon him--

moreover, saith in the Khutbiy-i-Tutunjiyyih: "Anticipate ye the Revelation of Him Who conversed with Moses from the Burning Bush on Sinai."^[3]

Siyid Kazim and the four approaches of the divines before and at the same time of the Babi/Baha'i Revelations

Siyid Kazim Rashti showed great respect for this Sermon and wrote a very large commentary on it, which is one of his longest works. He says that the Tutunjiyyih is the pre-eminent instance of the Wisdom that "Not everything that a man knoweth can be disclosed nor can everything that he can disclose be regarded as timely, nor can every timely utterance be considered as suited to the capacity of those who hear it." He divides the ulama into four different groups in relation to this sermon and, interestingly, this subdivision was germane to all religious classes in the fervour of millennial expectation.

The first group rejects the likes of these traditions and has dropped them from the view of credibility, saying that these traditions are based on a single line of narration (akhbar ahad) and thus cannot be the basis of law or action. These traditions, they say, all are in the book of Bursi and since the latter was charged with extreme views in his day this should militate against their acceptance. Another reason they would be unacceptable in that they attempt to elevate the contingent above the level of contingency. They appear also to assert divine Lordship of a created being necessitating also that the Godhead devolves divine powers to the created being all of which would contravene the Qur'anic text which says: "is there any Creator other than God? Show me then what they have created. He is the One Who has created you Who will put you to death and will resurrect you. Does He have any partners?"^[4]

The second position that Siyyid Kazim in his celebrated Sharh

mentions existed with regard to the hermeneutics of this Sermon. This position suggested one should remain non-judgmental about it on the grounds that these types of utterance exist but that human mind cannot comprehend it.

The third position in regard to these sermons is the position held by the monists and the admirers of Ibn Arabi in Shī'ih Islam such as Mullá Muhsin Fayd. Fayd-e-Kashanui says: "When the effulgences of the Essence of God (dhat) overpower any one such that person's entity, actions, attributes are all obliterated in the rays of oneness with the Divine Essence in this state he will see himself one with all Essences. In this state the light of the distinguishing mind becomes subsumed under the Light of Pre-existent Essence and all contingency is lifted up. Then Fayzi Kashani says:" This explains the utterance of 'Ali in the Sermon of the Tutunjiyyah: I am the First Adam and the First Noah."

The fourth group -- and Siyyid Kazim Rashti considers himself of this group -- are those who accept this essential belief: namely they recognise the one being as having many "stations" and these "stations" are the "treasuries" of that entity's existence. God says: "There is nothing of which We do not have that thing's treasures [khazaa'in]." Qur'án 15:21 "Our First is Muhammad, Our Last is Muhammad, our all is Muhammad." Siyyid Kazim states that his hermeneutic principle is the verse of the Qur'án: "Creation has many modes [atwaar] of existence." [71:14] These include a mode of brevity and expansion; a mode of simplicity and the mode of complexity; and modes of imagination and abstraction. As to the first group, i.e. those who attributed the sermon to the heresy of extremism, Siyyid Kazim says their views are hasty and erroneous inasmuch as there are many similar utterances that are universally accepted by the Shī'ites. Examples are the prayer of the month of Rajab included in all Shī'ite anthologies; acceptance of the

innumerable references to the Imams as "Hand of God, the Eye of God, Whose utterances are of God"; and the traditions of the two Jabirs. The same argument applies to the second group who are the hesitants in regard to their acceptance. As to the monistic sufistic explanations, here too Siyyid Kazim and indeed before him Shaykh Ahmad dispute pantheistic conclusions because rationally their arguments would entail alteration and transformation in the essence or Dhat of God and this position is untenable.

The exalted Báb quoted the famous verse of the Tutunjiyyah re the anticipation of the Speaker of Sinai in his Seven Proofs. In the writings of Mirza Abu'l-Fadl the Sermon of the two Gulfs is referred to frequently but this matter has not been discussed previously. Thus in his Fara'id page 308 he writes that the sanctified reality of Most Great Spirit is single and one and it does not ontologically become plural or multiple because the "Mirrors" are multiple nor should it epistemologically be allowed to become so.

Herein follows the translation of this Khutbah. The Imam asserts belief in the divine unity and that there is no deity but the One God and the Prophethood of Muhammad but adds the necessity of loyalty to the Imamate as the repository of salvation. This point has echoes throughout religious scripture. Of especial interest for those with knowledge of Christian Scriptures, Jesus claimed eternal life included both belief in Him as well as God:

"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3)

The first paragraph of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas refers to this mighty and primary theme. 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, Who representeth the Godhead in both the Kingdom of His Cause and the world of creation."^[5]

A brief explanation of the "I"

The Imam 'Ali then makes a series of statements all commencing with the pronoun "I": "I am the First I am the Last. I was with Noah. I am the Builder I am the destroyer. I am the Agent whereby Jesus spoke in His Cradle. I am the Word the Word through Which all things were consummated." Bahá'u'lláh has explained that these utterances refer to the World of Command or Revelation ('Aalam-i Amr) [c.f. Who representeth the Godhead in the World of Revelation and Creation both the Iqan and the Aqdas.]

The title Tutunjiyyih itself is a reference to the passage wherein the Imam says: "I am the One that standeth upon the Two Tutunjs [Gulfs]." Siyyid Kazim explains that these two gulfs represent the Gulf of Prophethood and the Gulf of Wilayat, or Imamate. In the Athar-i Qalam-i Á'lá volume 2 Bahá'u'lláh says that the utterances of the Sermon were taught to Imam 'Ali by the Messenger of God (Muhammad) [tilka kalimatun 'allamahu Rasul'ullah], so that although Ali utters these statements in fact it is the Prophet who utters them. The key verse of prophecy that the Manifestation to be anticipated is the Speaker on Sinai is a clear reference to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh being at once the "essence, the promise, the unifier, and the reconciler" of all previous revelations and that in unnumbered passages He claimed His utterance to be the Voice of Divinity the Call of God Himself.^[6] It is eschatologically focused because all the previous Faiths have spoken of the coming of the "Lord of the Vineyard", the "Day that hath seen the coming of the Best-beloved Him Who through all eternity hath been acclaimed the Desire of the World." Shoghi Effendi explains that this Dispensation will mark the last and highest stage in the stupendous evolution of man's collective life on this planet.^[7]

Sermon of the Gulf

[Khutbih-i-Tutunjiyyih]

Texts And Translation

translation of the Sermon of the Gulf ("Al-Khutbah al-Tutunjiyyah") of Imam 'Ali as printed in Hafiz Rajab al-Bursi's Mashariq Anwar al-Yaqin fi Asrar Amir Mu'minin (Beirut: Dar al-Andalus 1978 pp 160-170)

The sermon (khutbah) [delivered by Imam 'Ali] which is designated That of the Gulf (al-Tutunjiyyah) has an exterior level (zahir) which is elegant (aniq) and an interior level (batin) which is deep ('amiq). Let him who reads it beware lest he think ill of it for therein something of the sanctity of the Creator (tanzih al-Khaliq) is reflected which no one of the creatures can bear. The Commander of the Faithful [Imam 'Ali] delivered it between Kufah and Medina. He said:

Praise be to God Who hath rent asunder the firmaments (al-ajwaa) and opened the atmosphere (al-hawa) and suspended the vast expanses of the universe and caused the Splendour (diyaa) to shine, and quickened the dead and caused the living to die. I give Him praise such praise as shone and became uplifted, a praise that was radiant and effulgently luminous, a praise that ascendeth to heaven in its sending there and which goeth to the high sphere (jaww) unto its equinoctial summit (i'tidaaluhu). He created the heavens without pillars (bila da'aaim) and set them upright without supports. He then adorned the heavens with light-giving planets and caused to be imprisoned in the spheres many a dark cloud. He created the oceans and the mountains upon the collision of concomitant ever-

flowing currents: He opened their gates and their mighty waves were huge! I give praise unto Him and to Him all praise is due. I testify that there is no God but Him and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and His Messenger and that God chose him from the Supreme Company and sent Him unto the Arab peoples and He was appointed--He that was truly guided Himself--to guide others--He was indeed Talismanic and of the essence (hulaahilan Telasmiyyan). Muhammad raised up the evidences and sealed the Messages and Moslems obtained sight from Him. God manifested His Religion through Him, may the salutation of God be upon Him and His Pure Family.

People! turn ye repentantly unto My faction (shi'ah) and adhere to a pledge of fealty to Me. Remain steadfast and persevering in the Faith with the best certainty. Adhere steadfastly to the Successor of your Prophet in Whom resides your salvation and in Whose love on the Day of Resurrection is your safe haven! In Me resides the Hope and I am the One to be hoped for. I am the One that standeth upon the Two Gulfs! (tutunj) I am the One that looketh unto the Twin Rising-Places [or "Orients"] and the Twin Setting Places [or "Occidents"]. I truly did see with My own eyes [the Bounty of] God and the Paradise! And this was as the seventh Heaven was moving in its orbit and there in the great surging seas were the stars and their own orbits. I saw also the earth rolled up as a short garment would be rolled up and it was within a shell on the right sided Gulf which faces the East and the Twin Gulfs.

Further out there are the Twin Bays (khaliij) of water as if they are to the left of the Twin Gulfs and I saw that the Circle that embraces these and the Paradise and all that there is therein were naught but a ring on the finger of Thy Lord. And in truth I saw the Sun when it was setting and it was like unto a bird that seeketh its nest. And if it were not for the friction of the head of Paradise and the mixing up of the Twin Gulfs and the Music of the spheres all that are in heavens and

the earth would hear the ebullition of heat caused by the Sun's descent into the Black water--and that is the Warm Fountain. I know of the wonders of God's Work what no one knows but God and I know what has been and what will be and what has been in the First Sprinkling with those who preceded the First Adam. All was disclosed (kushifa) for Me^[8] and I knew and all was taught Me and I have learnt.

So hearken and do not raise a clamour. Were it not for My fear that you might say "'Ali has become possessed or apostatised from His Faith" I shall disclose unto you what and whereat they are and what you shall encounter on the day of Resurrection. All that knowledge was entrusted unto Me and thus I knew and the knowledge of all this was hidden from all the Prophets except the Lord of this Dispensation (Shari'ah)^[9] of yours (Peace be upon Him and His Family). He taught Me His knowledge and I taught Him My knowledge.

Verily We are the Warners from immemorial times and We shall be unto everlasting Warners from God. Through Us will perish He that is going to perish and by Us have obtained salvation all that have obtained salvation and you shall not encompass that ability that is Ours. By the righteousness of Him Whose power causeth the seed to germinate and Who breatheth the spirit of life into all things, by Him Who alone hath power and grandeur! To Me have the winds and the air and the birds of air been conquered; the world and all that is therein was presented to me but I turned away from it. I turned upside down the world and it was tilted away from Me. How can subsequent events overcome Me?

I know all that is above the supreme Paradise and that which is below the seventh Ocean, that which is in the highest heavens and that which is between them and that which is below them. All this

knowledge is derived from an all-embracing knowledge and not from chronicled knowledge. I swear by the Lord of the Great throne! If I wished I could inform you of your forefathers and all your predecessors as to where they were, and from whom they were and where they are now and how they came to be where they are! How many of you are eating the property of his brother and is drinking of the fountainhead of his father and yet he longeth for him and wishes that they were with him! O would that you knew! O would that ye knew! When that which is hidden be manifest and that which is in the breasts were attained and conscience were to disclose its hidden things, I swear by God you will have returned to clay, and you will have had your "returns," and how many signs there are between these "returns" how many those that have died or that have been slain. (I know those that are in the crow of birds and those that are in the belly of beasts and all mankind are between those that have already gone and those that are being urged on). And if it were to be revealed to you all that is with Me from time immemorial unto the end that has no end you shall truly see many and wondrous events, many strange handiworks and all that I comprehend.

I am the Master (sahib) of the First Creation before the First Noah, and if you were to know what was between Adam and Noah of wondrous events that I wrought and of nations that I caused to perish. And the true Word of Thy Lord was fulfilled in them and evil is that which they worked" I am the Master of the First Flood! I am the Master of the Second Flood! I am the Master of the Deluge of Iram! I am the Master of the Secret Mysteries! I am the Lord of 'Ad and its gardens! I am the Lord of Thamud and its wondrous signs! I am the One that destroyed it, I am the One that caused the Earthquakes! I am the One that caused their Return and their Perdition! I am the Builder of those civilisations and their Destroyer! I cause their Expiry and I cause them to be quickened! I am the First and the Last! I am the External and Manifest and I am the Internal and Hidden! I am with

the Cycle (kawr) before the Cycle began! I am the Companion of the Dispensation (dawr) before the Dispensation started! I was with the Pen before the Pen and I am with the Tablet prior to the Tablet being revealed! I am the Lord of the First Pre-existence! I am the Lord of Jabulqa and of Jabulsa! I am the Master of Highest Stage (rafrāf) and of Bahram! I am the One Who organised existence when there was no heaven as you have them now nor earth as you know it now!

The Son of Suwairama said: "Are you, are you indeed that One?!"

'Alī replied: "I am, I am that One! There is no other God But God Who is My Lord and the Lord of all created things. Unto Him belongs the Creation and the World of Revelation (amr). He it is Who has ordained all matters in His Wisdom and heavens and earth are upraised in His Power. Methinks the weak ones amongst you are saying; "Is this not the son of Abu-Talib Whom the forces of Syria had overshadowed yesterday and He would not go out to fight them and sent them Muhammad and Ibrahim?" But truly and assuredly I shall fight Syria many times and I shall slay them many times. I shall fight their armies at Siffin and I shall bring a new life unto the believer until that thirst for justice in my chest be allayed. I shall fight for 'Ammar Yassir and for Uways of Qaran many times. Let none say when? How? and in what manner? and with whose assistance? How shall it be when you shall see the Master of Syria saweth men with saws and cutteth them with trowels? But I shall make him taste a painful retribution.

But rejoice now for the cause of all creation reverts unto Me on the morrow. Let not this claim appear extravagant inasmuch as We have been vouchsafed the knowledge of all fates and of all tribulations. and the knowledge of interpretation and of the Revelation and the decisive Discourse (Faslu'l-Khitab) and knowledge of all future calamities and catastrophes. There is nothing whose knowledge escapes Us. This is truth and I shall see this One [pointing to Husayn,

Peace be upon Him] when His Light shall flow forth of His eyes and I shall be present with Him a lengthy time that shall witness earthquakes and eclipses. They that are believers will revolt in His company from every corner. I swear by God! If I wished I would tell you of their names every one of them and their descent from both parents, until the Day of whose time is promised.

Then 'Ali said: "O Jabir! You are with the Truth now and you shall be with the True One hereafter and in that true Cause you shall die.

O Jabir! When the Bell shall cry loud, when the stupor of the Nightmare shall enshroud men, when the Cow shall speak, on that day there shall happen wondrous, exceedingly wondrous Events, when the Fire shall be ignited in My sight, when the Banner of the House of 'Uthman shall appear in the Black Valley, when Basra shall be thrown into confusion and they shall seek to conquer each other and each party shall seek the other, when the armies of Khurasan shall begin to move, and when Shu'ayb the son of Salih of Tamim shall be followed in Taliqan, and Sa'id of Shusha shall be obeyed in Khuzistan, and the banner shall be raised up by the Amalekites of the Kurds, and the Arabs shall seek victory over Armenia and the Slavs, and Heraclitus shall submit to the patriarchs of Sinan in Constantinople, anticipate ye then the Revelation of the Speaker of Mount Sinai.^[10] This will appear with manifest signs visible unto all, clearly perspicuous to them.

O but how many a wondrous sign I seek not to mention and how many indications I have left undivulged! for I cannot find one who can bear them. I am the One Who ordered Satan to bow down Adam!^[11] I am the One Who raised Idris to a high station. I am the Agent whereby Jesus was enabled to speak in His cradle while yet a Babe! I am the One who flattens the valleys and Who sets the Earth to order and I am the One Who has divided it into five parts, namely, land,

sea, mountains, built, and unbuilt. I am the One Who separated the Red Sea from Tarjim, and separated Aqim from Him. I separated all from all! I am Tirathia, Janbutha, Barhilion, Aliuthoutha.^[12] I bring out of the Ocean that which is stored in it that it shall be cleared away by the horses and men. take from it what you desire and leave what you wish to leave. He then gave 'Ammar-ibn-Yassir 12000 men who loved God and His Apostle and each had 12000 battalions of angels to support them saying: Rejoice for you are the best of brethren to each other for after this there shall be a star (tarfatan) through which ye shall know some of the expounded matter. The Mysteries of Evidence shall become clear to you when Bahram and Keyvan (stars) shall rise together and become conjoined with exactness. When shakings and earthquakes shall succeed each other swiftly and banners shall be lifted up from the shores of Oxus to the Desert of Babylon know ye then that I am the One Who causeth the winds the blow, I am the One Who lifts your oppressions!

I am the Master of the Mount Sinai! I am that Manifest Light! I am that Perspicuous and dazzling Evidence (that light of which an infinitesimal part was disclosed unto Moses) and all that was vouchsafed unto Me by God the Lord Of Glory.

I am the Master of the Gardens of eternal delight! I am the One that causeth the Rivers to flow from the Water that emanates from the divine current, and other Rivers which are of milk, and Rivers of pure Honey, and Rivers that flow with wine, a delight unto those who partake. I am the One that hath overshadowed hell when it was made to blaze and have overlooked its several compartments: firstly the Hell of Sa'ir when it blazeth forth then the Hell of Saqar and its fire and lastly the nethermost Hell which has been preserved for the transgressor all of these have been preserved in the Valley of Desolation. Again I swear by the Lord Who bringeth Dawn, He Who is the Lord of all creation! Within it is kept eternally both Jibt and

Taghut and their servants and whomsoever disbelieveth in the Lord of this world and the Kingdom on high.

I am the Maker and Sustainer (sani') of all the Regions of this world by the Command of the One Who is the All-Knowing the All-Wise. I am the Word through Which all things are consummated and through which the Universes are brought into being. I am the One Who has made the regions of the earth to be four and the islands to be seven: the Region of the South to be the Depository of all Bounty, the Region of the North to be Powers and Sovereignty, the Region of Sheba to be the Seat of earthquakes, and the Desert Region to be the Seat of many a catastrophe. So Woe unto the cities from those transgressors who will come to destroy and pervert justice. Woe shall be when calamities come to transpire from that Government of eunuchs, imbeciles, and effeminate rulers. On that Day all Regions will bring forth false claimants claiming falsehoods. Oh! On that Day expect eagerly your Supreme salvation and you shall see men accepting it by troops. On that Day God will make of the gravel of Najaf treasures of gold and all of that will be sprinkled where the believer shall step his foot on it and with that same dust of gold the unbeliever and the hypocrite shall be exchanged and bartered. Then shall the value of red ruby be as nothing and similarly other jewels and pearls. This shall be a most evident sign and when it shall transpire the Light of God shall shine and His Glory (Bahá') shall be effulgent and all that you wish for shall be made manifest and all that is your highest desire shall become apparent.

O You who in your desires resemble cattle and the beasts of the field! How shall it be with you when the banners of the sons of Kenan shall come upon you and also that of 'Uthman the son of 'Anbatha in the battle fields of Syria? Know truly that shall never be discerned by one related to Umayya or to 'Ady."

Then He wept loudly (the salutations of God be upon Him!) and later

exclaimed; "O alas for the nations! Soon shall some hypocrites say that 'Ali claimed Lordship (rububiyyat) for Himself but you should bear witness thus: "'Ali truly is a created Being, a Servant, nourished of divine sustenance and he that denies this let him be accursed of God."

Imam 'Ali then descended and said; "I take refuge unto him Who hath the Kingdoms of earth and Heaven! I seek succour from Him Who possesses all Power and Grandeur, all Sovereignty and Authority from all that I fear and pray to avoid!" O people! None shall utter these words but when tribulations and calamities befall him the same will God dissipate through this prayer."

Jabir said: "Only those Words?" and the Imam 'Ali added thereunto another thirteen words and left.

Addendum

Two important quotations from Bursi (the compiler of the above Hadith) which Baha'u'llah quotes in the Kitab-i-Iqan and again emphasise the point of the reliability of Bursi as a narrator are the following:

Furthermore, among the "veils of glory" are such terms as the "Seal of the Prophets" and the like, the removal of which is a supreme achievement in the sight of these base-born and erring souls. All, by reason of these mysterious sayings, these grievous "veils of glory," have been hindered from beholding the light of truth. Have they not heard the melody of that bird of Heaven,⁽¹⁾ uttering this mystery: "A thousand Fatimihs I have espoused, all of whom were the daughters of Muhammad, Son of Abdu'llah, the 'Seal of the Prophets?'" Behold, how many are the mysteries that lie as yet unravelled within the tabernacle of the knowledge of God, and how numerous the gems of

His wisdom that are still concealed in His inviolable treasures! Shouldst thou ponder this in thine heart, thou wouldst realize that His handiwork knoweth neither beginning nor end. The domain of His decree is too vast for the tongue of mortals to describe, or for the bird of the human mind to traverse; and the dispensations of His providence are too mysterious for the mind of man to comprehend. His creation no end hath overtaken, and it hath ever existed from the "Beginning that hath no beginning"; and the Manifestations of His Beauty no beginning hath beheld, and they will continue to the "End that knoweth no end." Ponder this utterance in thine heart, and reflect how it is applicable unto all these holy Souls.

and

Likewise, strive thou to comprehend the meaning of the melody of that eternal beauty, Husayn, son of Ali, who, addressing Salman, spoke words such as these: "I was with a thousand Adams, the interval between each and the next Adam was fifty thousand years, and to each one of these I declared the Successorship conferred upon my father." He then recounteth certain details, until he saith: "I have fought one thousand battles in the path of God, the least and most insignificant of which was like the battle of Khaybar, in which battle my father fought and contended against the infidels." Endeavour now to apprehend from these two traditions the mysteries of "end," "return," and "creation without beginning or end."^[13]

Both the above quotations indicating utterances of "high Imamology" are from the self-same Bursi in his book *Alfayn* as quoted by the late Ishraq Khavari.

Khazeh Fananapazir 16 July 2000.

Notes:

- [1] Advent of Divine Justice page 49. On the attitude of the Bahá'í Faith towards its parent religion see also Promised Day is Come 109.
- [2] Bahá'u'lláh called Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsa'i and Siyyid Kazim Rashti the "twin resplendent lights," Nurayn Nayyirayn
- [3] Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 42.
- [4] Qur'an 35:3.
- [5] Baha'u'llah, The Kitab-i-Aqdas, page 19.
- [6] Shoghi Effendi, World Order of Baha'u'llah 113.
- [7] World Order of Baha'u'llah 163.
- [8] Or, in the S.K. version, "All was rendered possible (kuyyifa) for Me."
- [9] Muhammad.
- [10] Note this key utterance: "...anticipate ye then the Revelation of the Speaker of Mount Sinai."
- [11] Or, "I was present when Satan was ordered to bow down to Adam."
- [12] This sounds very close to Alitheia, "Truth," in Greek. Other terms seem also to be Greek sounding.
- [13] Baha'u'llah, The Kitáb-i-Iqán, pages 166-168.

-- End --

Submitted by and posted with permission of translator;
edited, annotated, and formatted by Mehdi Wolf

The Sermon of Ma'rifat bin-Nuráníyyat
[Recognition with Luminousness]
of 'Alí ibn 'Abú-Tálib,
the First Imám

Translated by Khazeh Fananapazir

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Introduction:

This significant sermon in Shi'ih Islám, often quoted by Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'í and Siyyid Kazím-i-Rashtí, is here translated for the first time in English. This sermon, or hadith, is known as the Ma'rifat bin-Nurániyyat [Recognition with Luminousness] and its subject is the true station of the Imámate. In the traditions of the Twelver Branch of Islám or Imámí Shi'ism, there are several narrations such as this one which have tremendous theological importance, and, down the centuries, they have had a magnetic effect in religious thought.

In the first page of His commentary on the Khutbah-i-Tutunjiyyah (Sermon of the Gulf), Siyyid Kazím-i-Rashtí mentions one of these amazing documents as being the hadith of recognizing the Imáms with Luminousness [hadith ma'rifatihim bin-nurániyyat]. Muhammad Majlisí states that he and his father, Muhammad-Taqí Majlisí, had

read this hadith in an ancient source.

The interest for Bahá'í studies is that this tradition is referred to in Bahá'u'lláh's Book of Certitude: "Likewise, the Imáms of the Muhammadan Faith, those lamps of certitude, have said: 'Muhammad is our first, Muhammad our last, Muhammad our all.'" (Bahá'u'lláh: The Kitáb-i-Íqán, p.153). The particular phrase quoted by Bahá'u'lláh occurs in this hadith.

My translation follows the Bursí rendition: Hafíz Rajab al-Bursí's Masháriq Anwár al-Yaqín fi Asrár Amir Mu'minin (Beirut: Dar al-Andalus, 1978).

Khazeh Fananapazir

The Sermon of Ma'rifat bin-Nuráníyyat

[Recognition with Luminousness]

This is that which Salmán^[2] and 'Abú Dharr³ related of the utterances of the Commander of the Faithful, 'Alí -- Peace be upon Him!

'Alí said:

He whose acceptance of my guardianship is based on external reality more than internal truth, he is that one "whose balance will be light" ⁴ Those whose scale will be light, their souls will be in perdition. ⁵ O Salmán! The faith of no believer will attain perfection unless and until he recognizeth Me with luminousness. If he attaineth unto this, then he hath truly attained faith; he is the one whose heart is tested with true faith, whose breast is dilated in true Islám and whose faith is

based on discernment. He who is convicted of shortcoming in this cognition -- he will be a doubter, immersed in disbelief.

O Salmán! and O Jandáb! ⁶ In truth, recognition of Me in luminousness is the recognition of God, ⁷ and Recognition and knowledge of God is indeed knowledge of Me; this is what is meant by sincere devotion. ⁸ Mankind was not ordered by God to seek naught except to attain unto this unity. ⁹ They were commanded to worship but One God. ¹⁰ And they have been commanded no more than this: "To worship God, offering Him sincere devotion, being true (in faith), to establish regular prayer; and to practice regular charity; and that is the Religion Right and Straight." ¹¹

"Worshipping God" is belief in Divine Unity. "Sincere devotion" and "being true in Faith" ¹² is confession of the Prophethood of the Prophet. "Establishing Prayer" is my Guardianship and Friendship. ¹³ He who pledges fealty and friendship unto Me hath truly established the obligatory prayer. Yet, this matter is hard, exceedingly hard! "Regular charity" in the above verse is confession to the Imámate. All this is the true religion. ¹⁴

The Holy Qur'án hath testified that true Faith is recognition of divine unity and confession to both the Prophet and the Imámate. He who attaineth unto both hath fulfilled his faith. A true believer is the one who does not reject any matter pertaining to Us, for God Himself hath dilated His Breast such that He may accept all. He will not doubt or be mistrustful. He who cavileth why and wherefore becometh a disbeliever. We are, verily, the Cause of God! ¹⁵

O Salmán! O Jandáb! ¹⁶ Verily, God hath made me His Trustee over His creation and His Vicegerent on His earth, in His territories, and over His servants. He hath given Me what no artist can depict and no

man of understanding can truly comprehend. If thou wert to know Me in this fashion, thou shalt attain unto true belief. ¹⁷

O Salmán! God, exalted be He saith: "Nay, seek God's help with patient perseverance and prayer: it is indeed hard except to those who bring a lowly spirit." ¹⁸ "Patient perseverance" is Muhammad and "Prayer" is my Wilayat. ¹⁹ Thus, that is why God hath declared it is hard. He doth not reveal the Two ²⁰ are hard. In truth, My Guardianship is perplexing only to those who bring a lowly spirit. These latter are they who have sought discernment using the light of My guidance.

O Salmán! We are the Mystery of God ²¹ that shalt not remain hidden. We are His light that shalt never be extinguished, His Grace that is expected from none other save Him. Muhammad is our first, Muhammad our last, Muhammad our all! ²² Muhammad is our first, Muhammad our last, Muhammad our all. He who recognizeth Us in this regard hath, in truth, consummated his Faith.

O Salmán, and O Jandáb! Muhammad and I were the Light that was voicing forth the divine eulogy before any other reality started to praise Him. We were the cause of illumination unto all creation. This one Light was divided by God into two portions, the Chosen "Mustafa" ²³, and His Vicegerent, "Murtada" ²⁴, and vouchsafed unto creation. God, exalted be His Glory, said to each half, "Be Muhammad!", "Be 'Alí!" ²⁵ It is thus that the Prophet said: "I am from 'Alí and 'Alí is from Me. None can give forth My Trust but Myself and 'Alí." ²⁶ This refers to our unity in the worlds of Light and Spirit. Similar is this divine utterance: "and If He dieth or is slain." ²⁷ "Dieth" refers to the passing away of the Prophet. "Slain" refers to the martyrdom of the Successor ²⁸, for the Two are one Entity, one Signification and one Light. Their unity is in purpose and attributes.

They are different in Their corporeal entity and their Names. But in the world of spirit, They are One Spirit. In Spirit, He said, "Thou art the Spirit within My Limbs." In the world of bodies, He saith: "Thou art of Me and I am of Thine. Thou shalt inherit after Me."

Again, there is the Divine Utterance: "Send ye blessings on Him and salute Him with all respect."²⁹ "Sending blessings on Him" refereth to Muhammad. "Salute Him" refers to the Successor. No benefit shall accrue unto thee if thou sendest blessings unto the Messenger and His Message if they are not coupled with saluting His Successor in His Wiláyat.

O Salmán! O Jandáb! Muhammad was the One speaking and I was the One silent. Inevitably, in every Dispensation, there is the One Who speaketh and the One Who is silent.³⁰ Muhammad is the Master of Ingathering³¹ and I am the Master of Resurrection.³² Muhammad is the Warner³³ and I am the "guide."³⁴ Muhammad is the Lord of Paradise and I am the Lord of the Return. Muhammad is the Lord of the Pool³⁵ and I am the One entrusted with the Banner.³⁶ Muhammad is the Lord of the Keys³⁷ and I am the Lord of Paradise and Fire. Muhammad is the Lord of Revelation and I am the Lord of Inspiration. Muhammad is the Lord of signs and I am Master of the miracles. Muhammad is the Seal of the Prophets³⁸ and I am the Seal of the Successors.³⁹ Muhammad is the Master Who raised the Call and I am the One entrusted with both the Sword⁴⁰ and Sovereignty. Muhammad is the Most Generous Prophet and I am the Straight Path. Muhammad is the One mentioned in the verse as "most kind and merciful"⁴¹ and I am the One alluded to as "Most High, Most Great."⁴²

O Salmán! God, exalted be He, saith: "He causes the Spirit to descend upon any Servant He willeth."⁴³ This Spirit but descends

unto the One entrusted with the Command and the Decree. I give life unto the dead. I know what is in the heavens and what is on the earth. I am, in truth, the Perspicuous Book.⁴⁴ I give life unto the dead and with Me is the knowledge of all that is in the heavens and the earth. I am the Perspicuous Book. O Salmán! Muhammad is the Upraiser of the Proof,⁴⁵ and I am the Proof of the One True God unto His creatures. It is this Testimony that empowered the Spirit of God⁴⁶ to ascend unto heaven. I am the One who enabled Noah to sail his Ark. I was present with Jonah in the belly of the Whale.⁴⁷ I argued with Moses in the sea.⁴⁸ I caused earlier peoples to suffer loss; I bestowed the knowledge of the Prophets and Saints and Their Decisive Utterance unto them. With Me is the Prophethood of the Prophet Muhammad completed. I caused rivers and oceans to flow and caused fountains to burst forth. I caused the world to be revolutionized and I bring about the Chastisement of the Day of Overshadowing Gloom.⁴⁹ I am Khidír Who taught Moses.⁵⁰ I taught David and Solomon.⁵¹ I am Dhu'l Qarnayn.⁵² I am the One who raised the Firmament⁵³ and flattened the Earth.⁵⁴ I am the Summoner from a near Place.⁵⁵ I am the Creature on the Earth.⁵⁶ The Prophet addressed Me saying: "O 'Alí! Thou art the One endowed with the Two stations. Thou art present both in the Beginning and the End." O Salmán! The One slain with Us will not die. The One Who is in Occultation from amongst Us is never absent. None can compare with Us. I am the One Who spoke through the Utterance of Jesus when He was still cradled.⁵⁷ I am Noah. I am Abraham. I am Sálíh Who possessed the She-Camel as His Sign.⁵⁸ I am the One Who causeth the Commotion.⁵⁹ I am also the Trembling.⁶⁰ I am the Protected Tablet⁶¹ and in My possession is all Its Knowledge. I appear in Appearances⁶² as God willeth. He that seeth Them seeth Me. He that seeth Me seeth Them. In all truth, We are the Light of God that changeth not and His effulgence that is

not extinguished. O Salmán! The honour of every Sent One is through Us, but do not call us Lords; praise Us as thou willeth. Salvation and Perdition both are effected through Us.

O Salmán! He that believeth in all truth as I have expounded it is truly a believer whose heart hath been tested and proven. He that doubteth and hesitateth, he hath reneged on the Faith, although outwardly he sayeth that he believes in the Wiláyat.⁶³ I, and the Guides of My Family, the Imáms, are the Hidden Mystery of God⁶⁴ and His Guardians.⁶⁵ Our Cause is One, Our Mystery is One and Our Unity is absolute. If thou maketh distinctions, thou wilt be among the ones lost. We appear and have Our Manifestation in every age as the All Merciful willeth. All woe betide the One Who denieth Us! None shall gainsay these except the one whose heart, eyes and hearing are sealed.

O Salmán! I am as the Father of every believer. I am the Catastrophe.⁶⁶ I am the Approaching Calamity. I am the Inevitable. I am the Impending One.⁶⁷ I am the Deafening Trumpet Blast.⁶⁸ I am the Supreme Test. We are the Signs, the Significances and the Countenance of God.⁶⁹ When My Name was written on the Throne, It attained Its Serenity. When It was inscribed on the firmaments, They were upraised. When written on the Earth, It was adorned. When It was inscribed on the Wind, It carried with It fruition. When written on the Lightning, It caused it to shine. When written on the Oasis, It brought nourishment. When inscribed on the Light, It caused it to be Luminous. When inscribed on the Clouds⁷⁰, It generated Their Outpouring Grace, and when inscribed on the Thunder⁷¹, it made the Thunder quiescent. That Name caused the Night⁷² to be deep in its darkness, and when inscribed on the Day⁷³, It made It luminous and radiant.⁷⁴

- 1.) Proofread, edited, and annotated by Mehdi Wolf, Japan, 2001
- 2.) Salmán-i-Farsí (Salmán the Persian), known as Salmán the Good, one of the faithful Companions of the Prophet (PBUH). He came from Jayyan, near Isfahán, and was raised as a Magian, and later became a Christian. Sold as a slave, he was brought to Yathib (Mecca) by his master and attained the presence of the Prophet. He was immediately attracted to Islám. He was a deeply learned and ascetic man, with a strong command of the scriptures of many religious traditions. 'Alí said of him that he was like Luqman the Wise. As he knew both Arabic and Persian, he translated parts of the Qur'án into his native tongue, becoming the first to undertake such a task. He was also an innovative military strategist, displaying his skill most notably during the battle of Khandaq, in which he proposed the digging of a trench around Madinah to keep the Quraysh army at bay. For a time, he served as governor of al-Mada'in (Ctesiphon) near Baghdád. According to the most reliable history, it was there that he passed away in 35 A.H (around 656 A.D.). Bahá'u'lláh mentions him briefly in the Kitáb-i-Iqán, p. 65. It is especially important to note that the Báb, in the Bayán-i-Farsí (Wahid 5, Báb 11), notes that he was one of only three souls (the other two were 'Abú Dharr and Miqdád) who remained truly faithful to the Covenant of Islám. [MF's note, based on information from Companions of the Prophet, Vol.1, by 'Abdu'l-Wahid Hamid, and from a personal e-mail from KF, dated Monday, March 19, 2001.]
- 3.) Jundub 'ibn Junadah, known as Abú Dharr Al-Ghifari, was a shepherd of the Ghafari tribe which lived in the Waddan valley, near Mecca. He was known for his courage, his calmness and his far sightedness and also for the repugnance he felt against the idols which his people worshipped. Hearing of the new Prophet, he journeyed to Mecca and was taught the new Faith by 'Alí and attained the presence of Muhammad (pbuh). Upon returning to the Waddan, he converted a large number of his tribe. After the battle of Khandaq, he was accepted as a personal servant of the Prophet, Who was greatly pleased with him. After the passing of Muhammad, because of his sharp criticism of the worldliness of the Muslim community, 'Uthmán, the third Sunni Khalif, sent him to Rubdhah, a small village near Madinah, where he lived a life of renunciation. It was there that he died in 32 A.H. (about 653 A.D.). According to tradition, the Prophet (pbuh) had said, "The earth does not carry nor the heavens cover a man more true and faithful than 'Abú Dharr." Bahá'u'lláh calls him "a prince of the nations" (Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 19). [MF's note, based on information from Companions of the Prophet,

Vol.1, by 'Abdu'l-Wahid Hamid, and from two personal e-mails from KF, both dated Monday, March 19, 2001.]

4.) Qur'án 7:9. (Note: Qur'anic references in this article may be mismatched, since the present editor used the Yusef 'Alí version, and not the version favoured by the translator. [KF's note, added to by MW].)

5.) See Qur'án 23:103 and 101:8 [MW's note].

6.) Abú Dharr. [KF's note]

7.) Arabic: Ma'rifat Alláh [KF's note].

8.) Or "pure religion" (ad-Dín al-Khális). See Qur'án 7:29, 39:2, 3, 40:14 [KF's note, modified by MW].

9.) Tawhid [KF's note].

10.) Qur'án 9:31 and 98:5 [KF's note].

11.) Qur'án 98:5 [MW's note].

12.) Arabic: haneef [KF's note].

13.) waláyat or wiláyat. [KF's note]

14.) Arabic: za_likad dinul qay yimu. See Qur'án 30:30. [KF's note, modified by MW.]

15.) Arabic: Nahnu Amru'lláh. [KF's note]

16.) Abú Dharr [KF's note].

17.) Arabic: Imán [KF's note].

18.) Qur'án 2:45. [KF's note]

19.) Guardianship/Friendship [KF's note].

20.) A subtle point is being made here. In the cited verse (2:45), "patient perseverance" is sabr, a masculine noun, which requires a masculine pronoun. Yet, "prayer" is salát, which is feminine. The pronoun used in the verse (i.e. "it is indeed hard") is feminine, and thus could only refer to the aforementioned feminine noun. 'Alí then proceeds to connote salát with acceptance of his Wilayat or Guardianship, which, according to this interpretation, is exceedingly more difficult to attain than recognizing the Prophethood of Muhammad, (pbuh). [MW's note, based on an E-mail message from KF to the present editor, dated Saturday, March 17th, 2001].

21.) Arabic: Simu'lláh. [KF's note]

22.) This exclamation cited in the Kitáb-i-Íqán, p.153. 23.) "He who is chosen as an Envoy" (i.e. the title of Prophet Muhammad, PBUH) [KF's note from an E-mail message to the present editor, dated Thursday, March 15th, 2001; adapted by MF.]

24.) "He in whom God is pleased" (i.e. the Title of the Imám 'Alí, upon Him be Bahá'u'lláh, the glory of God) [KF's note from an E-mail message to the present editor,, adapted by MF.]

25.) The imperative used in both cases is Kún. "Be" or "Exist".) (i.e. the

letters "B" and "E") [KF's note from an E-mail message to the present editor,, adapted by MF.]

26.) This is reference to the verse in the divine Qur'án: "Our Selves anfansaná wa anfusakum.) ourselves, and yourselves" Qur'án 3:61].

The quote from Muhammad, (PBUH) given here is also from al-Bursi's Masháriq Anwár al-Yaqín fi Asrár Amir Mu'minin (Beirut: Dar al-Andalus, 1978) as well as from other sources. MF's note, based on information provided by KF in a personal e-mail, dated Thursday, March 15th, 2001].

27.) The verse cited is: "Will it be that, when he dieth or is slain" (Qur'án 3:144). [KF's note, adapted by MW]

28.) Reference to the assassination of Imám 'Alí in 661 A.D. [MF's note].

29.) Qur'án 33:56. [MW's note]

30.) In the Bahá'í Dispensation, these are Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá', respectively, for the latter rarely took up His blessed Pen during the time of His Father. [MF's note.]

31.) Qur'án 42:7 and 64:9 [MW's note]

32.) Qur'án 6:128, reference to the Qur'anic verses that eschatologically there will be a Day of Ingathering and a Day of Resurrection [KF's note].

33.) This alludes to Qur'án 13:7: "But thou art truly a warner, and to every people a guide" [KF's note, modified by MF.]

34.) Qur'án 16:89 [MF's note].

35.) "Lord of the Pool" (Arabic: sáhib al-hawz) is a well-recognized title of 'Alí. "Pool" refers to the pool of refreshing water in Paradise which the sincere believers will drink from. See Qur'án 15:45, 37:45 and 76:5-6. [MW's note, based on information provided by KF in a personal E-mail to the present editor, dated Thursday, March 15th, 2001.]

36.) i.e. the Banner of Victory in the latter days. [MW's note, based on information provided by KF in a personal E-mail to the present editor, dated Thursday, March 15th, 2001.]

37.) Qur'án 38:50. See also Qur'án 6:59, 39:63 and 42:12. [KF's note, modified by MW].

38.) Qur'án 33:40 [MW's note]

39]

Arabic: Wasiyys. "Seal of the Successors" is another title of 'Alí. Most interesting point is made here because, after 'Alí, there were, in fact, ten more Wasiyys, or eleven if the Qá'im is included. So clearly, this means that "Seal" does not indicate "last" temporally. On this subject, see Seena Fazel and Khazeh Fananapazir, "A Bahá'í Approach to the Claim of Finality in Islám", Journal of Bahá'í Studies, 5:3 (1993). [KF's note, modified by MW.]

40.) No Qu'ránic references, but in the Súriy-i-Vafá, Bahá'u'lláh speaks of His Name as the "Sword of His Revelation between heaven and earth ... through which truth is separated from error, even from now until the Day when mankind shall stand before the Lord of the worlds." See Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed After the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. pp.185-6 [MW's note].

41.) Qur'án 9:128 [KF's note].

42.) Qur'án 42:4 [MF's note].

43.) Qur'án 40:15 [KF's note].

44.) Qur'án 27:1, 28:2. It is interesting and of profound insight that Bahá'u'lláh confirms these passages in His last major work, the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, by quoting the Imám 'Alí as saying: The Commander of the Faithful (Imám 'Alí) hath said: "I am He Who can neither be named, nor described." And likewise He hath said: "Outwardly I am an Imám; inwardly I am the Unseen, the Unknowable." Abú-Ja'far-i-Túsí hath said: "I said to Ábí 'Abdi'lláh: 'You are the Way mentioned in the Book of God, and you are the Impost, and you are the Pilgrimage.' He replied: 'O man! We are the Way mentioned in the Book of God, – exalted and glorified be He – and We are the Impost, and We are the Fast, and We are the Pilgrimage, and We are the Sacred Month, and We are the Sacred City, and We are the Kaaba of God, and We are the Qiblih of God, and We are the Face of God.'" Jabir hath said that Abú-Ja'far – peace be upon him – spoke to him as follows: "O Jabir! Give heed unto the Bayán (Exposition) and the Má'ání (Significances)." He – peace be upon him – added: "As to the Bayán, it consisteth in thy recognition of God – glorified be He – as the One Who hath no equal, and in thy adoration of Him, and in thy refusal to join partners with Him. As to the Má'ání, We are its meaning, and its side, and its hand, and its tongue, and its cause, and its command, and its knowledge, and its right. If We wish for something, it is God Who wisheth it, and He desireth that which We desire." (Bahá'u'lláh, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 112-113). [KF's note.]

45.) Qur'án 4:174 [MW's note].

46.) Jesus Christ. [KF's note.]

47.) The story of Jonah is briefly recounted in Qur'án 37:139-148 [MF's note].

48.) Qur'án 18:37: "His companion said to Him, in the course of the argument with him: 'Dost thou deny Him Who created thee out of dust?' " [KF's note.]

49.) Qur'án 26:189: "Then the punishment of a day of overshadowing gloom seized them, and that was the Penalty of a Great Day." [KF's note.]

50.) Qur'án 18:78. In the Khutbat'ul-Iftikhár (The Sermon of Glorification), the Imám claims the station of the companion to Khadír. In Islamic tradition, Khadír was a servant of God who had been taught special knowledge and was sent to be a companion and teacher to Moses (see Qur'án 18:65-82; Bukharí,

Vol. 1, Bk 3, #74, 124 and also Vol. 9, Bk. 93, #570) [MF's note].

51.) Cf. Qur'án 21:79. [KF's note].

52.) Cf. Qur'án 18:83. The Arabic phrase Dhul-Qamayn literally means "two-horned one" or "lord of two ages." Anything with duality is suggestive of the two natures of these Immaculate Souls (such as the Imáms); while treading on earth, they walk in the immensity of space and heaven. Bahá'u'lláh writes of such souls: These ancient Beings, though delivered from the womb of their mother, have in reality descended from the heaven of the will of God. Though they be dwelling on this earth, yet their true habitations are the retreats of glory in the realms above. Whilst walking amongst mortals, they soar in the heaven of the divine presence. Without feet they tread the path of the spirit, and without wings they rise unto the exalted heights of divine unity. With every fleeting breath they cover the immensity of space, and at every moment traverse the kingdoms of the visible and the invisible. (Bahá'u'lláh: The Kitáb-i-Íqán, Page: 67) [MF's note, based on information provided by KF in a personal E-mail to the present editor, dated Thursday, March 15th, 2001.]

53.) Qur'án 55:7 [KF's note].

54.) Qur'án 84:3 [KF's note].

55.) Qur'án 50:41. According to Mirzá 'Abú'l-Fadl's Fara'id, "The Place Near" is Palestine in relation to Arabia [KF's note].

56.) Translation of the Arabic dábba; it refers to one Who should arise on the earth, although he is not of the earth or from the earth, and lead men to God. [KF's note, from a personal E-mail to the present editor, dated Thursday, March 15th, 2001; adapted by MW.]

57.) Qur'án 19:30-33. [MF's note].

58.) Qur'án 7:73. [MF's note].

59.) Qur'án 79:6-7: "One Day, everything that can be in commotion will be in violent commotion, Followed by oft-repeated (commotions)." [KF's note.]

60.) See Súrah 99. [KF's note.]

61.) Qur'án 85:22. See also Prayers And Meditations By Bahá'u'lláh: "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, and the Impenetrable Mystery, and the Sealed Book." [MF's note]

62.) i.e. Theophanies. [KF's note]

63.) Guardianship and Vicegerency. [KF's note].

64.) Qur'án 26:6 [MF's note].

65.) Qur'án 6:61 and 74:31. Interestingly, Bahá'u'lláh refers to the members of the Houses of Justice as the "guardians appointed of God for all that dwell on

earth." See the Kitáb-i-Aqdas K30 [MF's note].

66.) Qur'án 101:1 and 69:4. [MF's note].

67.) 40:18: "Warn them of the Day that is (ever) drawing near, when the hearts will (come) right up to the throats to choke (them)." [KF's note.]

68.) Qur'án 80:33: "when there comes the Deafening Noise: That Day shall a man flee from his own brother." [KF's note.]

69.) Among other titles, Bahá'u'lláh refers to the Imáms as "those unquenchable lights of divine guidance". See the Kitáb-i-Iqán, p.144 [MF's note].

70.) Qur'án 30:48. [MF's note].

71.) Qur'án 13:13. [MF's note].

72.) Qur'án 36:37. [MF's note].

73.) See, e.g. Qur'án 92:2. [MF's note].

74.) And in the Qur'án: "What can such expect but that God should come down to them overshadowed with clouds?" And in the tradition of Mufaddál it is said: "The Qá'im will lean His back against the Sanctuary, and will stretch forth His hand, and lo, it shall be snow-white but unhurt. And He shall say: 'This is the hand of God, the right hand of God, that cometh from God, at the command of God!'" In whichever manner these traditions are interpreted, in that same manner let them also interpret that which the Most Sublime Pen hath set down. The Commander of the Faithful (Imám 'Alí) hath said: "I am He Who can neither be named, nor described." And likewise He hath said: "Outwardly I am an Imám; inwardly I am the Unseen, the Unknowable." Abú-Ja'far-i-Túsí hath said: "I said to Ábí 'Abdi'lláh: 'You are the Way mentioned in the Book of God, and you are the Impost, and you are the Pilgrimage.' He replied: 'O man! We are the Way mentioned in the Book of God, – exalted and glorified be He – and We are the Impost, and We are the Fast, and We are the Pilgrimage, and We are the Sacred Month, and We are the Sacred City, and We are the Kaaba of God, and We are the Qiblih of God, and We are the Face of God.'"

Jabir hath said that Abú-Ja'far – peace be upon him – spoke to him as follows:

"O Jabír! Give heed unto the Bayán (Exposition) and the Má'ání

(Significances)." He – peace be upon him – added: "As to the Bayán, it consisteth in thy recognition of God – glorified be He – as the One Who hath no equal, and in thy adoration of Him, and in thy refusal to join partners with Him. As to the Má'ání, We are its meaning, and its side, and its hand, and its tongue, and its cause, and its command, and its knowledge, and its right. If We wish for something, it is God Who wisheth it, and He desireth that which We desire." Moreover, the Commander of the Faithful (Imám 'Alí) – peace be

upon him -- hath said: "How can I worship a Lord Whom I have not seen?"
And, in another connection, he saith: "Nothing have I perceived except that I
perceived God before it, God after it, or God with it." O Shaykh! Ponder upon
the things which have been mentioned, perchance thou mayest quaff the
Sealed Wine through the power of the name of Him Who is the Self-
Subsisting, and obtain that which no one is capable of comprehending.
[Bahá'u'lláh, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p.113-114) Ma'rifat bin-Nurániyyatr
]

-- End --

Sermon of Glorification

by Imam Alí ibn 'Abu-Talib

Translated by Khazeh Fananapazir.

Originally written as Khutbat'ul-Iftikhár.

Introduction

This is a translation of the Sermon of Glorification [*Khutbat'ul-Iftikhár*] uttered by the Imám 'Alí.^[1]

The Imám 'Alí uttered these three Sermons: *Tutunjiyyih*, *Nurániyyat* [Recognition through Luminousness^[2]], and *Iftikhár* in the language of the World of Command [*'Alam-i-Amr*], all attributing the workings of the Will of God [His Primal Will] in the World of Creation. The Author of the Bahá'í Revelation, Bahá'u'lláh, says that this world is sanctified above plurality:

Similar statements have been made by 'Alí. Sayings such as this, which indicate the essential unity of those Exponents of Oneness, have also emanated from the Channels of God's immortal utterance, and the Treasuries of the gems of divine knowledge, and have been recorded in the scriptures. These Countenances are the recipients of the Divine Command, and the day-springs of His Revelation. This Revelation is exalted above the veils of plurality and the exigencies of number. Thus He saith: "Our Cause is but one." Inasmuch as the Cause is one and the same, the Exponents thereof also must needs be one and the same. Likewise, the Imáms of the Muhammadan

Faith, those lamps of certitude, have said: "Muhammad is our first, Muhammad our last, Muhammad our all." (Bahá'u'lláh: *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, Page: 153)

This illustrious sermon is another luminous example of this mighty theme and as it has never been rendered in English before. I present it as promised. Please God, may it see the light of day!

Original text in *Masháriq Anwár al-Yaqeen*, compiled by Háfiz Rajab al-Bursí, pages 164-166. Dar al-Andalus, Beirut, 1978.

The Sermon of Iftikhár

by the Imám 'Alí, as narrated by Asbagh, the son of Nubáta.

The Imám 'Alí said:

I am the brother of the Messenger of God and the Heir to His knowledge, the treasury of His wisdom, and the Companion of His secret. There is not a letter revealed by God in any of His Books whose intention does not point towards me. He hath vouchsafed unto me the knowledge of what was from eternity and what will happen unto the Day of Resurrection. To me hath been vouchsafed the knowledge of past and future generations and their genealogies. And to Me hath been given a thousand keys to a thousand doors. The knowledge of the destinies of all things hath been granted unto me. All these Gifts shall continue to flow through my Appointed Successors (*wasí's*) as long as day is followed by night and night followed by day and until all things return to God. For verily, He is the True Inheritor of all things.

Unto me, too, hath been vouchsafed the Path, the Balance, the

Banner, and the Kawthar. I am the one who shall face the children of Adam on the Day of Judgement and shall bring them to account and shall direct them to their habitations. And verily, I am the punishment of fire meted unto the damned. These are the bounties of God unto me. And should anyone deny that I shall return after the Return^[3], or deny that I shall come back after the *Raj'at*^[4], or should anyone reject the truth that I shall appear again, even as I have done from the beginning that hath no beginning or even unto the end that hath no end, he, verily, hath denied the truth of all of Us. And verily I say unto you, he who denies any one of Us, hath denied God. I am the one who hath summoned you; I am the companion of your prayers and invocations. I am the Lord of retribution, and I am the Master of the signs and the Lord of the wondrous symbols of guidance. I am cognisant of the mysteries of creation; I am the One who brought the iron unto Men^[5]. I am forever new and forever pre-existent, the One who brought the Angels from out of their habitations, the One who pledged an everlasting covenant with your spirits on the dawn of creation and Who, on that day, asked, through the will of God, the Self-subsisting, these words: "Am I not your Lord?" I am the Word of God [*Kalimat'u'lláh*] which hath been uttered in the world of creation, the Object of the covenant that hath been promised in the prayers and salutations which lie in the reality of all created things. I am the name that hath been invoked by orphans and by widows, the door to the city of knowledge and the refuge of patience and forbearance. I am the upraised flag of God, the companion of the banner of divine praise, the Lord of infinite bounty and of infinite grace. But should I tell you all that I am, you would doubtless disbelieve Me. For I am also the slayer of oppressors, the treasury of divine favours in this world and of the next. I am the master of the believers, the guide of those who seek the way. The truth is Mine and certitude is at My side. Leadership is Mine and the righteous shall follow Me. I am the first to acknowledge faith, the Cord of God that shall not be broken, the One who will raise the world to justice even as it hath been

brought low by oppression. I am the companion of Gabriel and the archangel Michael is beside Me. I am the tree of guidance, and the essence of righteousness. I shall gather together the world of creation through the Word of God that gathers together all things. I give life unto humanity and I am the treasury of all divine commands. To Me hath been given the Luminous Pen and the Crimson Camel^[6].

I am the gate-keeper of certitude, the Commander of the Faithful, the friend of Khidir. I am the One who shall conquer Syria and destroy the arrogant. I have existed throughout the past, and, verily, I have never uttered a falsehood. Through a word from Me, truth hath been separated from error, for I speak through divine inspiration and know of the stars and constellations. God hath commanded me to ordain their orbit and vouchsafed unto me their knowledge. With Me are the saffron and crimson coloured flags and I shall remain concealed until the time shall come for My manifestation in a great Cause. Then, shall I grant and withhold as I wish. None can describe Me except Myself, for I shall protect the faith of my Lord. I am the One Whom my Cousin chose, Who was present when His sacred remains were shrouded. I am the Guardian appointed by God, the Most Merciful God, the companion of Khidir^[7] and Aaron, and the friend of Moses and Joshua, the son of Nun. I am the Lord of Paradise, He Who hath caused the rain to fall and the earth to quake and the sun and moon to be eclipsed. I am the Object of the creation of multitudes and it is I who shall slay those who do not believe. Verily, I am the leader of the righteous, the Sacred Fane frequented by all, the upraised firmament, the fathomless ocean. I am the Holy of Holies, the pillar that supports humanity. I am the Possessor of the Greatest Cause. Is there anyone who can speak beside Me? I am fire itself. At a single Word of God, at one utterance of the Prophet, I would put within you My sword's length and send you hurrying unto your next abode. I am the meaning of Ramadán and the night of Qadr^[8] mentioned in the Mother Book. My utterance is decisive, for I

am the Súrah of Praise^[9]. I am the purpose of prayer itself, whether at home or when travelling. I am the purpose of fasting, and the sacred anniversaries in the months of the year. I am the Lord of Resurrection and Judgement, the One who can remove the yoke that lies heavy on the people of Muhammad. I am the Gate through which all shall pass who worship God; I am His worshipper, and one created by Him. I am both the witness and the One witnessed to, the possessor of the green canopy, He Whose name is mentioned in the heavens and the earth, Who is the travelling companion of the Messenger of God throughout the heavens, for with Me is the Book and the sacred Arc. I am the One who befriended Seth, the son of Adam^[10], the companion of Moses and Irám, and all metaphors and analogies pertain unto Me. Who indeed is there to compare with Me? For I am the heaven-sent rain that causeth each blade of green to grow, the Lord of this nether realm Who brings forth the rains when all have lost their hope in its downpour. I am He Who summoneth the mighty lightning and causeth the ocean to rise and swell, the One who speaketh to the sun and causeth the stunning trumpet to blast forth. I am the refuge of all that have obeyed God, and verily, God is my Lord and there is no other God but He. For falsehood offers illusions, but truth giveth thee everlasting sovereignty.

I shall soon depart from amongst you, but be watchful and aware, be on your guard against the tests and tribulations caused by the 'Umayyds and their worldly powers. And after they shall pass away, the kingdom will revert to the 'Abbasids^[11] who will bring both sorrow and happiness to mankind. And they shall build a city called Baghdád, which shall be between the Tigris and the Euphrates. Woe betide men in those latter days, for amongst them will rise the oppressors among My people, who shall build palaces for themselves and courts and tabernacles. For they shall seek supremacy through intrigue and impiety. Two score and two kings shall rule among the children of the 'Abbasids, after whose reign

shall come to pass the Most Great Tribulation on the surface of the earth. Then shall the True Qá'im rise up once more. Then shall I show My Face amongst men, and it shall be as luminous as the face of the moon amid the other stars. But note well the ten signs associated with my coming. The first sign shall be the inversion of banners on the highways of Kúfa^[12]; the second, the abeyance of true worship and the prescribed prayers; the third, the end of true pilgrimage. The fourth sign shall be an eclipse in the lands of Khorasán^[13], the gathering of constellations and the appearance of comets in the sky. There shall be chaos and confusion, massacre, pillage and robbery in the world. Many other signs shall there be too, surpassing all these signs, among which is the sign of wonderment. But when all these signs have passed away, then, verily, shall the Qá'im Himself arise in truth.

O people, sanctify the Lord your God from all similitudes, for every reference to Him fails, and whosoever tries to limit the Creator by description or comparison hath verily disbelieved in His Book, which is the Book of God's Own Utterance.

Then He^[14] said: How great the blessedness of those who love Me and who sacrifice their life in My path and who get exiled because of Me! They truly are the repositories of God's knowledge, nor shall they be put to fear on the Day of the Great Terror.

I am the Light of God, Who can never be extinguished; I am the Mystery of God that can not be concealed.

Notes

^[1] Editing, formatting, and notes provided by Mehdi Wolf.

- [2] This was originally rendered "Recognition with Luminousness", but has been changed to the above at the wonderful suggestion by Stephan Lambden. [- M.W.]
- [3] This is a reference to the name 'Alí-Muhammad (i.e. the name of the Exalted Báb). [- K.F.]
- [4] This is a reference to the Sacred Name, Husayn-'Alí, the name of Bahá'u'lláh, particularly as *Raj'at* refers to the Return of Husayn. [- K.F.]
- [5] Reference to the Súrah of Iron in the Holy Qur'án. [- K.F.]
- [6] Oblique reference to the Thamud, their Prophet Salih and the She-Camel so often referred to in the Holy Qur'án (See e.g. 11:61-65). [- K.F.]
- [7] In Islamic tradition, Khadir was a servant of God who had been taught special knowledge and was sent to be a companion and teacher to Moses (see Qur'án 18:65-82; Bukharí, Vol. 1, Bk 3, #74, 78, 124 and also Vol. 9, Bk. 93, #570). Khadir may not be a reference to a person, but, rather, to the inspirational Source. In this sermon, the Imám 'Alí is, in a sense, the Muse to all those inspired before, similar to Gabriel in the Qur'án (see, e.g. 2:97). [MF's note, based partially on information contained in a personal e-mail received from the translator, dated Wednesday, February 28th, 2001.]
- [8] See Qur'án 97:1-3.
- [9] The first Súrah in the Holy Qur'án and endowed with amazing powers. [- K.F.]
- [10] Seth is named in Genesis as the son of Adam, and he lived for 912 years. (See Gen. 4:25-5:8.) Here, however, the reference is to the notion that Companion (*Sahib*), in a sense, means that the Eternal "I" was with Seth (in Arabic, Shayth, the son of Adam). In Luke, Seth is an ancestor to Christ. [MW's note, based partially on information contained in a personal E-mail from the translator, dated

Wednesday February 21st, 2001].

[11] The family of Abbas, the uncle of Muhammad.

[12] A city near the Euphrates River, 177km south of Baghdád. Formerly a Mesopotamian city, Kúfa was re-founded by the Arabs in 638, and was the capital of the Islamic Empire during the caliphate of the Imám 'Alí. For a time, it also served as the centre for the 'Abbasid caliphate. This and the following references are to catastrophes and spiritual reverses in the fortunes of truth. [MF's note, based on information from the on-line Columbia Encyclopaedia and from a personal e-mail received from the translator, dated Thursday, March 1, 2001.]

[13] A mountainous and arid province in northeastern Irán. The territory served as the capital of the eastern provinces of Islám during the time of the early 'Abbasid Caliphs. Khorásan was first invaded by the Oghuz Turks in 1153 and again in 1157. The Mongols devastated the region between 1220 and 1222. Timur invaded in 1383. [MF's note, based on information from the on-line Columbia Encyclopaedia and from a personal e-mail received from the translator, dated Thursday, March 1, 2001.]

[14] The Imám 'Alí.