

## THE STRUCTURE OF EXISTENCE IN THE BĀB'S TAFSĪR AND THE PERFECT MAN MOTIF

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The figure of the Bāb, Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad Shīrāzī, and the movement associated with his name have been the object of renewed scholarly interest over the last 20 years or so. Some excellent scholarship on the latter has been published recently and has thrown considerable light on the social history of the Bābī religion, contributing much to the task of placing the Bāb and his movement within the context of early to mid-19th century Iranian history.<sup>1</sup> We also have a fair understanding of the broad religious motifs that are connected with the rise, propagation and eventual demise of Bābism. Features of the ancient Iranian motif of Perfect Man may be discerned in the Bāb who claimed, as Shī'ī Messiah, the authority to change Islamic religion. The changes envisioned by the Bāb were so radical that it may be questioned whether Bābism was an attempt at reformation rather than transformation. In any case, the timing for such a claim could not have been more exquisite, coming as it did precisely at the millennium of orthodox 12er Shi'ism. We know, in fact, that the Bāb was not the only (though perhaps the most successful) millenarian figure who put forth such claims at this time.

Whatever success Bābism may have had, we also know, was due in large part to the prior spread of the ideas and veneration of Shaykh Ahmad al-Aḥsā'ī (d.1826). The vast majority of the Bāb's first followers were devotees of what has come to be called Shaykhism. Shaykhism had become very popular throughout Iran and for a number of reasons, some of which remain obscure, had attracted the favour and allegiance of, among others, a sizable segment of the Iranian merchant class. There is some evidence that Shaykhism was used by this class as a means of protesting

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<sup>1</sup> Abbas Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal: the Making of the Babi Movement in Iran 1844-1850*. Ithaca, 1989; Moojan Momen, "The Social Basis of the Bābī Upheavals," *IJMES* 14 (1983), pp.157-83; idem., *The Bābī and Bahā'ī Religions, 1844-1944. Some Contemporary Western Accounts*. Oxford, 1981.

both official religious policy and personalities as well as official government policies.<sup>2</sup> Important as they obviously are, these matters need not detain us beyond observing that this widespread support was to function, after the fact, as a kind of *preparatio* for the new religion: many Shaykhis and Shaykhī sympathizers would eventually convert to the cause of the Bāb. In time, the religion of the Bāb would become transformed in Iran into a large and, until recently, thriving Bahā'ī community. Corbin and others have written extensively on the Shaykhī movement so that we now have a substantial, though incomplete, analysis of its literature -- a literature that may be considered a synthesis of Islamic theological, philosophical, and mystical traditions.<sup>3</sup> The teachings of the leaders of this movement preserve and propound a distinctive spirituality perhaps best described as a latter-day version of primitive Islamic gnosticism.

The writings of the Bāb (as distinct from the history of Bābism) have not yet attracted the same scholarly attention. Inasmuch as his movement had such a profound influence on Iran in the 19th century, it is important that we gain a better idea of the religious ideas contained in his writings and the relationship between these ideas and Islamic religion in general and Shī'ism in particular. But more interesting perhaps for historians of religion, a study of his works, particularly the earliest ones, will help chart the relatively recent re-enactment of a process long recognized in the historical development of a religious tradition. I am of course referring to the process whereby "heresy" eventually becomes "orthodoxy".<sup>4</sup> One particularly interesting feature of these writings is the way in which the Bāb has used the language of Islamic mystical philosophy to express his own religious vision as it had developed at the time of the work under discussion. This vision entails a number of features common to apocalyptic literature in general: a concern with cosmology and primordial events, the recollection of the past, the employment of a peculiar type of *ex eventu* scriptural interpretation/prophecy, persecution, the description of and judgement upon the forces of good and

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<sup>2</sup> Mangol Bayat, *Mysticism and Dissent: Socioreligious Thought in Qajar Iran*. Syracuse, 1982.

<sup>3</sup> E.g., Henry Corbin, *En Islam iranien*. Paris, 1971-2, vol. 4, pp. 203-300; Vahid Rafati, *The Development of Shaykhi Thought in Shi'i Islam*. Ann Arbor (UMI), 1979.

<sup>4</sup> See Peter Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions*. Cambridge, 1987.

evil, and concern with otherworldly beings.<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of this paper we will be concerned primarily with cosmology insofar as this is implied in the ontological theory known as the Unity of Being (*wahdat al-wujūd*) associated with the name of Ibn 'Arabī (d.1240) and his school. The purpose of this paper is to point out the way in which the language and concerns of *wahdat al-wujūd* were employed by the Bāb for his own particular purpose. Before turning to the Bāb's writing, it is necessary to briefly recount the main outlines of *wahdat al-wujūd* and to introduce a number of those key terms that are used when it is discussed by his commentators. In this we will be concerned exclusively with selected terms that occupy an important place in the Bāb's work under discussion here. *Wahdat al-wujūd*

For Ibn al-'Arabī and his followers, the Oneness of God's Being and the consequent oneness of everything that exists dominate all other considerations. In their eyes, being or existence belongs only to God; only God truly *is*. Other things exist in a derivative or illusory manner; but ultimately, to the extent they do exist, their existence is God's own Being, which is One. There cannot be two existents in any real sense, so all existent things are theophanies of the One Being. Since Being is One Reality, all things are one to the very extent that they partake of existence.<sup>6</sup>

Central to an elaboration by his followers of this basic spiritual apperception (one that was to provide the inspiration for much of Ibn 'Arabī's writings throughout his life) is the motif of presences (sing. *hadra*). The various presences account for the various degrees of existence as they are manifested or as they operate in the world. They describe an ontological hierarchy from the highest to the lowest through which Abstract or Absolute Being acquires form or "entification". This hierarchy is headed by Pure Being (*al-wujūd al-mutlaq*), also called the "Essence" (*Dhāt*), or the

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<sup>5</sup> Other elements common to apocalyptic literature, such as cosmic transformation, resurrection, concern with the afterlife may be read "between the lines" of the present work but would become more prominent, in their own distinctive way, in later writings. For a recent discussion of the nature of apocalypse see John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity*. Crossroad: New York, 1989.

<sup>6</sup> Chittick, "The Five Divine Presences," *Muslim World*. 72 (1982), p. 108.

"unseen He-ness" (*ghayb al-huwiyya*). The human mind is incapable of knowing or saying anything meaningful about this level. In fact, al-Qūnawī (d.1274), known as Ibn 'Arabī's foremost disciple, held that Absolute Being is too exalted to be referred to as a level or "presence".<sup>7</sup> Later commentators, such as al-Farghānī (d. ca. 1300), were willing to designate it as such, namely as the level or "presence" of Exclusive Unity (*aḥadiyya*). This is "God" as he knows Himself. It is only at the next stage, the stage of Divinity (*ulūhiyya*), also known as the level of the Inclusive Unity (*al-wāḥidiyya* or *al-waḥdāniyya*), or the level of God's comprehensive knowledge, that Pure Being expresses itself through the divine names and attributes. This "disagreement" amongst Ibn 'Arabī's followers has led to the presences being sometimes counted as five and sometimes as six. What is important is that the remaining levels of being, those of the spirit, the soul, the body, together with the divine level, culminate in the "presence" of the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*). The idea of the Perfect Man then is intimately bound up with such discussions, even if it is not explicitly mentioned in the course of them.<sup>8</sup> The true nature of the Perfect Man will, of course, differ depending upon how the highest levels of Being are understood. In short, if the stage beyond entification is maintained as a "presence" then the Perfect Man acquires some of the characteristics of an "Incarnation". The Perfect Man embraces all levels of existence and in this embracing provides a means of communication amongst them. The Perfect Man is the mediator between God (however construed) and the World, between the Unseen and the seen. He is sometimes referred to as the *isthmus* (*barzakh*) between the two. He is the mirror by which and in which creation sees God and the eye by means of which God sees creation. It is only through the Perfect Man that the world acquires existence and knowledge.

The process by which Being is mediated throughout all these levels is *tajallī*: the self-manifestation of Being. *Tajallī* occurs to and in the various places of manifestation (*mazāhir* "theophanies") as they are ranged in their own respective hierarchical positions throughout the universe. Prior to the ontological event of manifestation, these things are non-existent, except in the "mind" of God as

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<sup>7</sup> Chittick, p.111.

<sup>8</sup> See for example the reference to al-Jandī (d.ca. 1300) in Chittick, p. 122.

pre-existent archetypes (*al-a'yān al-thābita*). According to their own capacities for true existence they acquire a measure of being. Even here, however, they represent only "potential being" (*wujūd imkānī*) as distinct from Absolute Being (*wujūd mutlaq*).<sup>9</sup> It is through their own love and knowledge of Being/God that this potential being takes on life and acquires greater existential intensity through (conscious) participation, however limited, in Being. This love and knowledge is implied by the single word *walāya*, which, as it happens, denotes authority and allegiance. In the writings of the Bāb, the greater one's devotion to the Imām's authority (*walāya*), (a devotion nourished by love and knowledge of them), the greater will be one's participation in existence. Such love and knowledge is stimulated first by one's pre-existence as an object of God's knowledge. Thus for all existent things (*mawjūdāt*), *walāya* (knowledge and love) accrues "to them through them" (*la-hum bi-him*).

This all too brief description of *wahdat al-wujūd* will serve to provide some background for the following examination of the Bāb's writings. It should be repeated that one of the main objects of the *wahdat al-wujūd* theory is to account for the place of the Prophet as Perfect Man. It should also be born in mind that it was al-Farghānī's classification of the presences into six separate levels that has, according to Chittick, exercised the most widespread influence and that "in order to maintain five Presences and avoid having to expand them to six, the all comprehensive ontological level to which he refers [namely, the level of the Perfect Man] was often ignored."<sup>10</sup> This may help to explain why the epithet Perfect Man does not directly figure in the earliest extant *tafsīr* of the Bāb.

The Bāb first proclaimed himself the focus of an Islamic apocalypse in 1844/1260. Until recently, it had long been thought that the Bāb's first major work was the one through which he made this proclamation, namely the *Tafsīr sūrat Yūsuf*, known as *Qayyūm al-asmā'*. This book, cast in the form of a commentary on the 12th chapter of the Qur'ān, is mainly concerned with establishing the author's messianic authority. Although it is quite long it contains very little of what might be called a clear and systematic doctrinal statement. Its style and contents, called by some an "unintelligible

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Ibn Sīnā's distinction between *Wājib al-wujūd* and *Imkān al-wujūd*.

<sup>10</sup> Chittick, p. 119-20.

rhapsody,"<sup>11</sup> may be briefly described as an invocation of symbols and imagery, structured around the Qur'ānic material, in a powerful and lyrical testimony to a new advent.

Thanks to some recent, diligent bibliographic research we have learned that in fact the first major composition by the Bāb was indeed a commentary on the Qur'ān, but one of a character strikingly different from the *Qayyūm al-asmā'*.<sup>12</sup> This earlier work, entitled the *Tafsīr sūrat al-Baqara*, which exists only in manuscript, is a commentary on the first two chapters of the Qur'ān.<sup>13</sup> Though it is quite unusual *vis-à-vis* the greater tafsīr tradition, it is far more expository of "doctrine" and belief than the later work. It is therefore enormously valuable in shedding light on the nature of the Bāb's thought as it had developed prior to the time of his claim to be the centre of the long-awaited *zuhūr* of 12er Shī'ism.

The Bāb begins this earlier *tafsīr* by acknowledging his Shaykhī teacher, the recently deceased leader of the Shaykhīyya, Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī (d.1843) in affectionate terms, (*mu'allimī 'azīzī*). Indeed, he tells us that he was inspired to compose this commentary upon learning of the Sayyid's death. We should not be surprised, therefore, to discover in this work strong traces of the same Islamic gnosticism that characterizes Shaykhī literature. Central to all of the Bāb's writing in this early work, is the figure of the Imām / Prophet and the institution of spiritual guardianship or *walāya*. This institution represents both the circumference of the Bāb's religion and its centre. Under its heading, and only under its heading, do all other religious topics acquire their meaning and value.<sup>14</sup> The word carries a cluster of meanings such as guardianship, friendship, authority, love, allegiance, and line of descent. Emphasis on *walāya* in the Bāb's first

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<sup>11</sup> E.G. Browne quoted in B.T. Lawson, "Interpretation as Revelation: The Qur'an Commentary of Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad Shīrāzī, the Bāb (1819-1850)," in A. Rippin (ed.) *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'ān*, Oxford, 1988, pp.223-253 (p.224).

<sup>12</sup> Denis MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bābī Doctrine and History, A Survey* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992)

<sup>13</sup> All references to this work are to a photocopy of a manuscript from the library of the late H.M. Balyuzi. This work will be cited as *Baq*, followed by a page number.

<sup>14</sup> For a general discussion of the word see Hermann Landolt, "Walāya," *Encyclopedia of Religion*, (Eliade, ed.) New York, 1987, vol. 15.

friendship, authority, love, allegiance, and line of descent. Emphasis on *walāya* in the Bāb's first book depends heavily on the theories of Ibn 'Arabī, (himself influenced here by the earlier Iranian, al-Hakīm al-Tirmidhī, b. in Khurasān in the 3rd/9th century, d. ca. 285/898), as these theories had been given their distinctive Shī'ī reading by such men as Rajab al-Bursī, Haydar Āmulī and Ibn Abi Jumhūr in the 14th and 15th centuries. By the time the Bāb was writing, circa 1840, Shī'ī mystical philosophy had reached its highest culmination in the work of Mullā Ṣadrā (d.1640). This had in turn been severely criticized by Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsā'ī who objected to a number of Ṣadrā's formulations. The purpose of this criticism, for the present discussion, is to preserve the Prophet and the Imāms as representatives of the highest plane to which the human being may have access. We will leave aside the question of whether or not al-Ahsā'ī fully understood Ṣadrā's philosophy and simply assume that he perceived there a threat to what he considered right belief. The Bāb, who shared Shaykh Ahmad's preoccupation with the "utterness" of the Imāms, was not a professional scholar. He was in the first place a merchant, but a merchant with more than a casual interest in religious studies. Therefore, this book by the Bāb is much less scholastic than other typically Shaykhī works. The only two literary sources referred to in it are the Qur'ān and the (admittedly vast body of) Traditions (*akhbār*) sacred to Shī'ism. Apart from the mention of Kāzim Rashtī, and one fleeting reference to a work by Muhsin Fayḍ Kāshānī, the Bāb mentions no other learned work or personality. However, as will be seen presently, the ideas found in the Tafsīr are conveyed through the standard technical terminology of the distinct tradition of Islamic mystical philosophy mentioned above.

The Tafsīr treats a wide variety of topics; the subject of the structure of existence has been singled out for special attention because of its fundamental importance for all other topics, particularly the question of the Perfect Man theme with which it has a characteristic and distinctive, if unspoken, relationship. This relationship may be summarized as follows. True existence (*wujūd*) belongs to God alone. But, by virtue of their special relationship to God, the Prophet and the Imāms enjoy a degree of existence. It is only by devotion to the Family of God (*āl allāh* in the Bāb's somewhat distinctive usage), namely the Prophet and the Imāms, that the average human being acquires any existence whatsoever. In a passage reminiscent of the one quoted above, the Bāb

affirms that all things other than God are non-existent:

He is not comparable with anything, and there is no knowledge from Him directly, neither by inspired intuition (*kashf*) nor by discursive proof (*istidlāl*), because whatever is other than Him is non-existent (*ma'dūm*) by comparison with Him. "And He is God. He was and nothing was with Him. He is now as He was." <sup>15</sup> So how can He be known by one who does not exist? Nevertheless, He is known, insofar as such is possible, in the contingent world [viz. through the Prophet and the Imāms]. "There is no distinction in this knowledge except that [the Imāms] are His servants and His creation." <sup>16</sup> He is known by means of signs, and is witnessed by means of tokens. This knowledge is the proper understanding of the transcendence (*tanzīh*) of the Living, the Ancient. At the level of contingency nothing else is possible." <sup>17</sup>

The point here is that the only connection between the "non-existent" world and true existence is the Prophet and the Imāms, the bearers of divine guardianship or *walāya*. It is therefore through this spiritual authority that the average human being acquires any existence at all. And such existence is in direct proportion to the degree one has acknowledged the authority of the Imāms through an ever renewed assent to the sacred covenant. In the Qur'ān, of course, the primordial covenant is depicted as the day God extracted from the loins of Adam the "seeds" of all future generations and confronted them with the question: AM I NOT YOUR LORD? (Qur'ān 7:172): the *yawm al-mithāq*. In the context of the Bāb's *Tafsīr*, this primordial covenant is reflected in the famous event at Ghadīr Khumm when, according to Shī'ī tradition, the Prophet named 'Alī as his rightful successor, Caliph and Imām. The Bāb, as a Shī'ī Muslim, sees the history of the

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<sup>15</sup> *Hadīth Qudsī* plus words ascribed to Junayd (d.910). One of several standard Sufi dicta repeated frequently and fluently throughout this work of the Bāb's.

<sup>16</sup> *Khabar* of the Imāms, variously ascribed.

<sup>17</sup> *Baq.* 10.



Muslim community as archetypal. The refusal of the majority of Muslims to accept 'Alī as Caliph was not merely an event in the religio-political life of the *umma* in 632 CE. Rather it was of such supreme importance that its true significance must be understood within a "metahistorical" context.<sup>18</sup> It is, therefore, this "later" event at Ghadīr Khumm that acquires all of the cosmic and ontological significance associated with the Qur'ānic verse mentioned above. Those who are beyond the pale of this metaphysical covenant are indeed completely non-existent.

Explaining the command of God to the angels: BOW YOURSELVES TO ADAM!, [Qur'ān 2:34] the Bāb says that the esoteric interpretation (*tafsīr al-bātin*) reads the speaker of the command to be not God but Muhammad, while the angels are the seeds of all created things (*dharr al-ashyā' fī mashhad al-ūlā*), an explicit reference to the language of Qur'ān 7:172.<sup>19</sup> The act of prostration is the confession of servitude to the *walāya* of God, which is equated with allegiance to 'Alī, and the disavowal of all else.

The Qur'ānic Adam, here, is none other than 'Alī. At this level *walāya* is also characterized as the *walāya* of the Exclusive Unity (*aḥadiyya*) belonging to 'Alī. 'Alī, then, is the symbol of primordial belief (*īmān*). The angels, as mentioned above, are taken as the seeds or potential of all created things destined to develop into actuality. They are also referred to as the pre-existent apparitional forms (*ashbāh*) and the ontic shadows (*azilla*). The primordial drama had its historical re-enactment or analogue on the day of al-Ghadīr when Muhammad appointed 'Alī as his successor. At that time the ANGELS were Salmān, Abu Dharr and Miqdad, the stalwart supporters of 'Alī and the historical nucleus of Shī'ism.<sup>20</sup>

At Qur'an 2: 62, the term Absolute Walāya (*al-walāya al-mutlaqa*) is associated with the entire Family of God (*āl allāh*), because they are sanctified servants who do nothing of their own wills,

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<sup>18</sup> See Corbin.

<sup>19</sup> *Baq.* 131. The term *mashhad al-ūlā* is determined by the fact that *al-ūlā* ("pre-existence") is one of three technical terms which refer to separate historico-spiritual cycles. The other two are *al-dunyā* and *al-ākhirā*. These words occur in a verse of a visitation prayer for the Imāms and are commented upon at length by Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsā'ī in *Sharḥ al-Ziyāra al-Jāmi'a al-Kabīra*. Tehran, 1276 [1859] pp.68-70.

<sup>20</sup> *Baq.* 131.

but rather the will of God.

SURELY THEY THAT BELIEVE, AND THOSE OF JEWRY, AND THE CHRISTIANS, AND THOSE SABAEANS, WHOSO BELIEVES IN GOD AND THE LAST DAY, AND WORKS RIGHTEOUSNESS - - THEIR WAGE AWAITS THEM WITH THEIR LORD, AND NO FEAR SHALL BE ON THEM, NEITHER SHALL THEY SORROW.

The WORKS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS mentioned in this verse therefore are described as being all included in the act of recognizing the requirements of Absolute *Walāya*, so that it is quite logical that we are told that THEIR WAGE AWAITS THEM WITH 'Alī. In the context of the verse itself, the suggestion is that even non-Muslims are implicated in the responsibility of recognizing 'Alī. This offers an indication of the way in which "absolute" (*mutaqa*) is to be understood here. Rather than "nonidentified", or "abstract", as is the case when applied to the utmost level of Being by Ibn 'Arabī's commentators (cf. *mutlaq*), the adjective is used to mean "without exception," "non-negotiable". It is 'Alī to whom allegiance is due, and this to the absolute exclusion of all others.

Such is the nature of the Bāb's transformation of the abstract terminology of high Islamic theosophy, where *mutlaq* denotes the non-differentiated, infinitely unknowable divine essence, into a "confessional language". The implications of the Bāb's use of these terms may be briefly summarized as follows. The "exclusivity" of the term *aḥadiyya* sometimes translated as the "Divine Exclusive Unity," and the "inclusivity" of *wāḥidiyya* "Inclusive Unity" have also acquired a sectarian or confessional meaning in addition to their original (purely?) ontological meaning. Whereas for Ibn 'Arabī and his school the terms refer to different modes or presences of the Absolute, one ontologically prior to the other, they are used here to describe the more exclusive unity of the Shī'a in contrast with the greater or more Inclusive Unity of the larger Muslim community. This usage is reminiscent of earlier terminology used by the Shī'a to distinguish themselves from other Muslims, for example "elite" (*khaṣṣ*) and "common" (*'amm*). In the following passages it is clear that the original meaning is also preserved and that the Bāb wishes us to see a direct relationship between ontology and belief. In this way the apocalyptic themes of "cosmology" and "judgement of good and

evil" entail and amplify each other.

At Qur'ān 2:83, the philosophically determined term Universal *Walāya* (*al-walāya al-kullīyya*) occurs.

AND WHEN WE TOOK COMPACT THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL: 'YOU SHALL NOT SERVE ANY SAVE GOD; AND TO BE GOOD TO PARENTS, AND THE NEAR KINSMAN, AND TO ORPHANS, AND TO THE NEEDY; AND SPEAK GOOD TO MEN, AND PERFORM THE PRAYER, AND PAY THE ALMS.' THEN YOU TURNED AWAY, ALL BUT A FEW OF YOU, SWERVING ASIDE.

The Bāb says that God is speaking about His TAKING COMPACT with *all* created things in the eight paradises, to recognize the *walāya* of 'Alī. <sup>21</sup> The first of these paradises is the Sea of Unity (*lujjat al-wahda*), and is characterized by the command: YOU SHALL NOT SERVE ANY SAVE GOD "without any reference". <sup>22</sup> That this level corresponds in some ways to the level of absolute transcendence of Being is born out elsewhere in the *Tafsīr* where the Bāb describes the eighth paradise as that which is isolated (*fī khalwa*) from all paradises and all paradises are isolated from it. <sup>23</sup> In the second paradise the COMPACT was taken by means of recognizing the Universal *Walāya* of the PARENTS, i.e., Muhammad and 'Alī, who are respectively, the symbols of universal fatherhood and motherhood. Such recognition, the Bāb says, is in reality the GOOD mentioned in the verse, because to do good means to do good to all according to what each merits. The GOOD which these particular PARENTS deserve has only been hinted at, because were the Bāb to openly describe it (*bi'l-tasrīh*), the prattlers/naysayers (*mubtīlūn*) would doubt it. <sup>24</sup> The centrality of 'Alī in his reading of the Qur'ān is further illustrated in the Bāb's commentary on Qur'an 2:54.

AND WHEN MOSES SAID TO HIS PEOPLE, 'MY PEOPLE, YOU HAVE DONE

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<sup>21</sup> *Baq.* 223. On the hierarchy of paradises in this work see B.T. Lawson, "The Qur'ān Commentary of the Bāb," Unpublished thesis, McGill, 1987, pp.146-186.

<sup>22</sup> *bi-lā ishāra*. a brief quotation from the Hadīth Kumayl.

<sup>23</sup> *Baq.* 9.

<sup>24</sup> *Baq.* 224.

WRONG AGAINST YOURSELVES BY YOUR TAKING THE CALF; NOW TURN TO YOUR CREATOR AND SLAY ONE ANOTHER. THAT WILL BE BETTER IN YOUR CREATOR'S SIGHT, AND HE WILL TURN TO YOU; TRULY HE TURNS, AND IS ALL-COMPASSIONATE.'

[This verse means] WHEN 'Alī SAID TO those who abandoned the vast sea of his *walāya*, 'YOU HAVE DONE WRONG AGAINST YOURSELVES' by your lingering in the lesser sea of the veils of glory (*bahr al-subuhāt*)<sup>25</sup> and allusions. So turn away from THE CALF by taking that which will direct you to the *tawhīd* of your Lord and return to the divine *walāya* (*al-walāya al-ilāhīya*) by turning away from the love of anything but it. And slay your worldly egos (*innīyātakum al-imkāniyya*) which have veiled you from attaining to your Creator. Because my *walāya* is the vast sea of the Exclusive Unity (*ahadiyya*). And THAT WILL BE BETTER FOR YOU IN YOUR CREATOR'S SIGHT.<sup>26</sup>

Here the negative attributes of the human soul are indicated, a theme repeated often in the *Tafsīr*. For example, in the commentary on Qur'ān 2:14 THEIR SATANS is glossed as *anfusi-kum*.<sup>27</sup> At Qur'ān 2:44 the Bāb says that those who have FORGOTTEN THEMSELVES are those who live in the (lesser) Inclusive Unity (*wāhidiyya*) even though God taught them that "the

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<sup>25</sup> Another reference to the Hadīth Kumayl.

<sup>26</sup> *Baq* 185. The terminology in this section shows some distinct parallels with the *Tafsīr al-Sāfi* (Fayd-i Kāshānī, Litho, Iran, 1856) although none of the *hadīths* in the corresponding passage have been quoted. It is possible that the Bāb composed this part of the *tafsīr* while reading Sāfi, e.g.: p.31, line 10: thirty days of fasting; line 11: "forty nights" = twenty nights and twenty days; line 24: "they wronged themselves concerning the *walāya* of Muhammad and 'Alī, and their people the pure, even so, God pardoned them"; line 27, God tells Moses about the excellence of Muhammad and his brother and Trustee 'Alī, and the Shī'a; p.32, line 4: God caused those who worshipped the calf to hesitate (*waqafa allāh*). See also Hāshim al-Bahrānī, *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, Tehran, 1375 [1955], v.1, pp.96-8 #1 & p.98 #2; 'Abd 'Alī al-Huwayzī, *Tafsīr Nūr al-Thaqalayn*. Qumm, 1383-1385 [1963-1965], v.1, p.68, #197 for a variant of this last.

<sup>27</sup> *Baq* 62

Truth is with 'Alī".<sup>28</sup> 'Alī is referred to as the sign of the *nafs* of God, and even though this sign is created (*makhluq*), there is no distinction between it and the One who created it (*munshi'-ha*).<sup>29</sup>

In his interpretation of Qur'ān 2:45 the Bāb again employs the term *inniya* ("ego") to describe that which must be completely effaced in order that the servant become a place for the appearance (*mazhar*) of the Inclusive Unity, here apparently positive, and become TRULY HUMBLE.<sup>30</sup> At Qur'ān 2:34, in the course of a very long commentary<sup>31</sup> on the important figure of Iblīs and his refusal to bow before Adam, the Bāb makes the following comments.

God has placed the manifestations (*mazāhir*) of His sovereignty in all things. To manifest knowledge (*'ilm*) he has appointed Adam as the agency of received lordship, and Iblīs has been appointed as the agency of polytheistic ego throughout all the worlds.... The believers are the victorious angels, in them is the dimension of lordship while the dimension of ego is absent from them.

At Qur'ān 2:35, in which Adam and his wife are forbidden to approach the TREE, the following comment is made:

That is the Muhammadan Tree in which the sign of the Exclusive Unity appears. And

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<sup>28</sup> Reference to the well-known *hadīth*: "The truth is with 'Alī and 'Alī is with the Truth, it turns wherever he turns," cited in full by the Bāb, *Baq.* 16.

<sup>29</sup> *Baq.* 172-3. A reference to another frequently cited Shī'ī *hadīth*: "There is no difference between God and the Imāms except they are His creation." *Usūl al-Kāfī*, vol.1 p.0000.

<sup>30</sup> *Baq.* 173. Nūr 'Alī Shāh speaks in similar terms about the level of Inclusive Unity; see Michel deMiras, *La méthode spirituelle d'un maître du Soufisme iranien. Nūr 'Alī Shāh, circā 1748-1798*. Paris, 1973, pp.324-25. Cf. also the verse ascribed to Hallāj:

*baynī wa baynaka 'annīyun yuzāhimunī Farfa' bi-'anniyika 'annīyi min al-bayni*  
(*Akhbār al-Hallāj*, p.76) The verse is translated as:

Entre moi et Toi, il y a un "je suis" qui me tourment, Ah! ôte par Ton "Je suis", mon "je suis" hors d'entre nous deux.  
(*ibid.*, French text, p.93.)

<sup>31</sup> *Baq.* 131-150, or approximately 1/15 of the entire commentary.

it is the highest aspect of the Will. *Adam al-ūlā* and HER MATE <sup>32</sup> APPROACHED IT through knowledge (*'ilm<sup>an</sup>*), not deed (*lā 'amal<sup>an</sup>*), and thus BECAME WRONGDOERS.

The meaning of their DRAWING NIGH, is a property of potential being (*imkān*) which is the agency of ego that was in them. Thus their DRAWING NIGH means through worldly thoughts (*bi'l-khutūr al-imkānī*) <sup>33</sup> after God had taught them that the Tree of Ego which grows out of the earth has no stability (*qarār*: cf. Qur'an.14:26) [and to] not draw nigh unto it with even a single glance toward it. Because the signs of *tawhīd* are the signs of Muhammad which God manifested to him by means of him (*la-hu bi-hi*). THEN THEY DREW NIGH THIS TREE because of the ego and . . . THEY BECAME WRONGDOERS. This wrong is that which God related to them and is a result of their DRAWING NIGH to the Originator of Origination (*mubdī' al-ibdā'*: viz, Muḥammad, as in the "Muḥammadan Tree"). In all other cases this wrong refers to an impious approach to the depth of the Exclusive Unity, and had the first two not made bold to DRAW NIGH the *mubdī'*: then others would not have committed this sin either. <sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> This grammatical anomaly is a reflex of those verses in the Qur'ān which speak of God's having created mankind from a single soul (*nafs* = feminine noun) AND FROM IT ITS MATE (*wa khalaqa minhā zawjahā*) [Qur'ān 4:1;7:179; cf. 39:6]. By this allusion, the Bāb seeks to identify the "single soul" as Adam. As for Adam *al-ūlā* (*sic* all mss.), it may be seen as deriving from comments such as those ad Qur'ān 2:34 (*Baq.* p.131, cited above) which speaks of the *mashhad al-ūlā* or the "place of witnessing", which pertains to the primordial *yawm*, and where Adam is identified as 'Alī. See the discussion of hierarchies in this work found in B.T. Lawson, "The Qur'ān Commentary of Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad Shīrāzī, The Bāb," Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, McGill University, Montreal, 1987, pp.115-186, and the reference to the eighth or highest heaven as *al-jannat al-ūlā*. The frequency of the adjective in such unlikely places is probably a function of its status as a technical term in Shaykh Ahmad's lexicon.

<sup>33</sup> *Baq.* 151-152. *Khutūr*, (usually *khawātir*) is of course another classical term of Sufi "psychology". According to the Iranian mystic, Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā (617/1220), they are the ideas which occur spontaneously to the soul, particularly in a state of retreat, and may be either divine or satanic in inspiration. This is mentioned in Schimmel, *Dimensions*, p.256.

<sup>34</sup> *Baq.* 152. This appears to be, among other things, an echo of the famous *hadīth*: "The good deeds of the pious ones are the sins of the near ones." For antecedents of such terminology as *mubdī' al-ibdā'* see Henry Corbin, *Trilogie ismaélienne*, (Bibl. Iranienne, 9) Paris and Tehran, 1961.

From such statements it becomes clear that Muhammad is seen as something much more than "prophet" or "messenger" and that God is elevated beyond all discussion. This is obviously not an innovation of the Bāb's, but rather the nature of his piety, a piety with a very long history indeed.<sup>35</sup> And if Muhammad is thus elevated, then the position of 'Alī is also elevated, as has been seen. Another factor that appears to have a determining role in one's participation in true existence is the soul and the degree to which it becomes irradiated by the self-manifestation (tajallī) of God, the Only True Existent. It is, therefore, the "ego" that prevents the soul from participating in true existence represented by the *walāya* of 'Alī. The subject of "ego" (*innīya*) or negative self, recurs in the comparatively short commentaries on a series of verses, which continue the ordeal of Moses in the wilderness with the Children of Israel.<sup>36</sup> The point here is that refusal by the followers of false *walāya* to accept the *walāya* of 'Alī, as announced as binding by the Prophet at Ghadīr Khumm, is a direct result of the ego, specifically "their uprooted, lifeless egos" and "other selfish interests". The first designation takes the modifier from Qur'ān 14:26: AND THE LIKENESS OF A CORRUPT WORD IS AS A CORRUPT TREE UPROOTED FROM THE EARTH HAVING NO STABILITY.

The Qur'ān here is again read, *ex eventu*, as speaking about the fracturing of the Muslim community at the death of Muhammad. The "metahistorical" *al-nuzūl* (translated here as "moyen" rather than "cause") for Qur'an 2:67 is again the famous speech at Ghadīr Khumm, and is read as referring to the historical Moses in only a secondary sense. This reflects the spirit, if not the letter, of earlier Shī'ī commentary, which reads the verse as referring to the "excellence of Muhammad and his family".<sup>37</sup>

The true test of the soul (*nafs*) is in how it responds to this challenge to the unity of the *umma*. The *nafs* as an organ of perception and spiritual or psychological principle is related to others such as

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<sup>35</sup> See, for example, Corbin, *Trilogie Ismaélienne*, Paris & Tehran, 1961.

<sup>36</sup> Q. 2:67-73 (*Baq.* 201-5).

<sup>37</sup> *Tafsīr al-Burhān*. v.1, pp.108-12. *Baq.* 200-1.

the *fu'ād*, *qalb*, *rūḥ* and *'aql* of which it may be thought to be the lowest.<sup>38</sup> The earliest mention of *qalb* is in the following verse:

IN THEIR HEARTS IS A SICKNESS, AND THERE AWAITS THEM A PAINFUL  
CHASTISEMENT FOR THEY HAVE CRIED LIES. [Qur'ān 2:10]

The HEART (*qalb*) is the foremost place of appearance (*mazhar*) of the *fu'ād* and is in reality two hearts. One is the place of the First Intellect, which is the HEART of Muḥammad, and the other is its opposite which is the place of Universal Ignorance.<sup>39</sup>

. . . The first is the source of all good, and one of its branches is *tawḥīd* and all righteousness. The second is the source of all evil, and one of its results is the rejection of God .... It represents the totality of all the hearts of all disbelievers ....

The way to [the first] is utterly blocked; but a "First Intellect" which tells the story in the contingent world about what is in the heart of Muhammad is 'Alī. 'Alī said about this primal universal divine soul (*al-nafs al-ulūhiyya al-kulliyya al-awwaliyya*): "It is a divine power and a simple essence which lives with the Essence. Its source is the Intellect. It begins from it and summons on its behalf .... Its return is to it whenever it is perfected and becomes like it. From it begin all existing things (*mawjūdāt*), and to it they ultimately return. Thus it is the exalted<sup>40</sup> essence of God and the Tree of Repentance and the Lote-tree beyond which there is no passing, and the Garden of Refuge. He who recognizes it will never err and he who is ignorant of it errs and trespasses.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> This is in line with the classical Sufi scale. In another work, the Bāb seems to use *nafs* for the totality of spiritual or human faculties. See his earlier *Risāla fī al-sulūk* p.1, where the four principles of the soul are *qalb*, *fu'ād*, *rūḥ* and *jism*. In this context, these four correspond respectively to the four supports of religion: *tawḥīd*, *nubūwa*, *walāya*, and *shī'a* which may be thought in turn to correspond to *ḥubb*, *ḥabīb*, *muhibb* and *mahbūb*, the four signs from the manifestation of the Family of God which are "in you".

<sup>39</sup> The opposition of *'aql* and *jahl* has occupied the minds of Shī'ī authors from earliest times. See, e.g., Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, v.1, pp. 10-29: *Kitāb al-'aql wa'l-jahl*.

<sup>40</sup> A characteristic pun meant to evoke the name of 'Alī.

<sup>41</sup> *Baq.* 58-60.



In a very long *hadīth* which preserves a conversation between the sixth Imām, Sādiq, and his disciple Mufaddal, which the Bāb quotes <sup>42</sup> during the course of his commentary on Qur'ān 2:27, a number of features of the intellect are further identified. Mufaddal asks the Sixth Imām:

How is it that meaning abstracted from any form can occur in my mind? And can the Essence be imagined, or divided, or partitioned or changed . . . or fancied in the intellects as moving or at rest? And how can the Unseen appear "mixing" with weak creation? And how is the created thing able to regard the Creator, considering the weakness of created things? Sādiq said: O Mufaddal! IN THE CREATION OF THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH AND THE SEPARATION OF NIGHT AND DAY ARE SIGNS FOR THOSE POSSESSED OF MINDS. [2:164] O Mufaddal! Our knowledge is terribly abstruse (*ṣa'b mustaṣ'ab*) and our secret much too difficult for the tongue to speak of in any but the most allusive language. Whatever our Shī'a knows, the same is according to their cognizance of us and their knowledge of us. Away with him who transmits what he does not understand and believes that which does not agree with reason or has not matured in the mind. <sup>43</sup>

Here we see a kind of syzygy of reason and revelation in which the *'aql* is indispensable for right religion, although it appears that on its own it is unable to properly register the Unseen. As is the case with other faculties, or principles, the intellect is two-edged. Not only is it quite clear that the *'aql* is only profitable insofar as it is used to contemplate the Imāms, but that it is also capable of

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<sup>42</sup> *Baq.* 96-104. The *isnād*, one of two given in the entire commentary, is: al-Shaykh al-Thiqa Abī al-Husayn Muhammad bin 'Alī al-Halabī 'an Shakhī-hi al-Sayyid Abī 'Abd Allāh al-Husayn Ibn Ahmadān al-Khusaybī, qāla, haddathnī Ja'far Ibn al-Mālik al-Farārī al-Kūfī 'an 'Abd Allāh 'an 'Abd Allāh bin Yūnis al-Mawsulī 'an Muhammad bin Sadaqatī'l-'Abdī 'an Muhammad bin Sanān al-Zāhirī 'an Safwān bin Yahyā al-Kūfī 'an al-Mufaddal bin 'Umar al-Ju'fī qāla qultu li-mawlānā al-Sādiq al-wa'd min-hi al-rahmatu wa qad khalwatu bi-hi:...

<sup>43</sup> *Baq.* 97: The expression *ṣa'bun mustaṣ'abun* is also associated with the variant: *inna hadīth āl Muḥammad sa'bun mustaṣ'abun lā yu'minu bi-hi illā malakun muqarrabun aw nabiyyun mursaiun aw 'abdun imtahana 'lāhu qalba-hu li'l-īmān*, and others to which Kulaynī has devoted a separate chapter: *Kāfī*. v.1, pp.401-2. The long *hadīth* quoted by the Bāb, for which the quotation is something of an introduction, is not mentioned here and I have so far been unable to trace it elsewhere. Traditions transmitted through Mufaddal are sometimes thought to be tainted because of his supposed *khattābīya* allegiances; see the references in Kohlberg, "An unusual Shī'ī isnād," *Israel Oriental Studies* 5 (1975) p.147.

leading to error. It would appear that the *nafs*, *fu'ād*, *qalb*, *lubb* and *'aql* are equally incapable on their own and must be assisted through the Imām in some way to receive "existence".

The *fu'ād* is described by the Bāb as the "highest perceptive organ of man." At Qur'an 2:8, the Bāb says that the "name of the hidden one" (*ism al-maknūn*) is the "place where the Shī'a testify to the covenant of love" [for the Imāms which is binding upon them] (*mashhad 'ahd al-mahabba li'l-shī'a*). Its station (*maqām*) is the *fu'ād* where the Hujja (the hidden Imām) causes this love to appear."<sup>44</sup> Later at Qur'an 2:97, the Bāb says that the HEART (*qalb*) is the first thing which was produced through the process of Origination (*ibdā'*), and GABRIEL was appointed by God to carry to the HEART that which is SENT DOWN from the *fu'ād*.<sup>45</sup> Here the *fu'ād* appears to be beyond the contingent world, which poses the problem of how it can function as a place of testimony (*mashhad*) for the Shī'a. But it should be remembered that this HEART is Muhammad's ("*qalbika*" and so perhaps in this case it is the heart of 'Alī) and presumably qualitatively different from others. Unfortunately, none of the several qur'ānic verses which employ the word *fu'ād* are in the *sūra* of *Baqara*. In view of the general style of his *Tafsīr*, it is likely that the Bāb would have described several hierarchical levels of the *fu'ād*, had the occasion arose, in which further details of its function would have become clear.

In sum, it is the soul (*nafs*) of the Prophet and the Imāms that is the channel for the self-manifestation of God. This soul is on a different ontological level than its counterpart in the common believer.

### Ecstasy and Existence

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It will be of interest to notice the treatment by the Bāb of a subject of some importance, namely *wijdān* or ecstasy, which appears in three passages of the *Tafsīr*. At Qur'an 2:29 the Bāb says the following:

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<sup>44</sup> *Baq.* 51. The idea is that it is only the *fu'ād* that is touched somehow by the Imām. Another reading might suggest that it is love for the Shī'a itself, presumably incumbent upon believers, which enables the heart to recognize the Imām.

<sup>45</sup> *Baq.* 239.

As for the sign of the Exclusive Unity - it is in all things. And even if there is composition in their [?the Imāms'] knowledge, God will remove whatever was causing spiritual deficiency<sup>46</sup> at the moment of ecstasy (*'inda wijdān*). Nor [at this time] will there be in them any aspect of mixture or plurality, because they [at such time] are a proof (*dalīl*) of the Living, the Self-subsisting. And God did not make multiplicity a proof of His Exclusive Unity. . . . No one knows Him and none understands His mode except Him. Nevertheless, that which is known (*ma'rūf*) is His Will [i.e., Muhammad and the Imāms as the personifications of the Divine Will, *al-mashīya*] and the intended ultimate goal of all "creation" (*ghāyat al-imbān*) as a result His bounty in all regions according to [their respective spiritual capacities to receive] the divine manifestations of His Will.

Towards the end of his commentary on Qur'ān 2:35, the Bāb makes the following statement:

So when Adam DREW NIGH the Tree of Reality [which was] the manifestation of Fātima in the precincts of Being, he disobeyed his Lord because God had commanded him not to DRAW NIGH unto her except through an ecstatic experience, because at the time of such an experience the one who DRAWS NIGH IS [in fact] the TREE and nothing else.<sup>47</sup>

Here the Bāb seizes upon what might otherwise appear as the relatively accidental grammatical gender of TREE to introduce a reference to Fātima who is accounted one of the Family of God and therefore represents the same ontological intensity associated by him with the Prophet and the Imāms. Commenting on the qur'ānic WHOSO FOLLOWS MY GUIDANCE (*man tabi'a hudā'i*) at verse 38, the Bāb says:

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<sup>46</sup> *Baq.* 115: *iftiqār*. Izutsu translates the word as "ontological need". (Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts*. Berkely and Los Angeles, 1983 p. 168.)

<sup>47</sup> *Baq.* 155. As a matter of fact, the figure of Fātima plays a very important role in this *Tafsīr*. Unfortunately, it is not possible at this time to do more than mention this in passing.

FOLLOWING (*al-tabī'īyya*) has several degrees. "The paths to it (*ilayhā*) are as numerous as the souls of the creatures."<sup>48</sup> . . . I testify that the thing FOLLOWED is his ['Alī's] *walāya*, inasmuch as none can follow the GUIDANCE of God like him, because God, appeared (*tajallā*) to him by means of him (*la-hu bi-hi*), and verily HE IS THE TRUTH [Qur'ān 41:53], LIKE HIM THERE IS NAUGHT [Qur'ān 43:11], HE IS THE EXALTED ('Alī) THE GREAT (*kabīr*). [Qur'ān 22:62; 31:30 34:23; 40:12].<sup>49</sup> And he ('Alī) is the Followed One in reality and therefore the Most Great Example (*al-mathal al-kubrā*. cf. Qur'ān 79:20) and whatever is other than him if purified from accident and caused to forsake illusions and counterfeits, and caused to enter the House of Glory (viz., love of the Imāms), absorbed in the beauty of ecstasy<sup>50</sup> oblivious of the clouds of the contingent world, then he has FOLLOWED<sup>51</sup> the GUIDANCE of God . . . so that NO FEAR SHALL BE ON THEM, NEITHER SHALL THEY SORROW [Qur'ān 2:38].<sup>52</sup>

*Wijdān* or *wajdān* (the vowing is not specified in the ms.) are derived from the root *wj d* from which comes *wajada* "he found". *Wujūd*, of course, means existence, or "the state of being found". The intensive noun forms can also mean "finding" but it is generally reckoned that their use by Muslim mystics refers to a special state in which a person finds oneself and which state is at the same time perhaps unheralded or unanticipated. This is in line with that element of the English verb

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<sup>48</sup> This is a variation on the famous hadīth quoted by the Bāb in his *Sulūk*. p.1 : *al-turuq ilā allāh* . . .

<sup>49</sup> That is, all of these qur'ānic verses are read as referring to 'Alī.

<sup>50</sup> *Baq.* 166.

<sup>51</sup> *Ittaba'a* (as opposed to the qur'ānic *tab'ia*) connotes also "investigate," "examine," "study".

<sup>52</sup> *Baq.* 165-6. It should be noted that the last phrase of the verse is repeated at Qur'ān 10:62, where it is specifically the "friends of God" (*awliyā' allāh*) who will neither grieve nor sorrow, (*Baq.* 195-6).

"to find" which connotes "coming upon something unawares". As an intensive form of *wj d.* one might also translate the term as "superexistence".<sup>53</sup>

Whatever the intent of *wijdān* in classical Sufism might be,<sup>54</sup> it is clear that the Bāb associates it not with the unreachable divine Essence, but with 'Alī and/or the other members of the Family of God.

Here it is clear that the *wijdān* experience refers to a total absorption of the subject into the object. It is the spiritual time (*waqt*) when any potential existent acquires the greatest possible degree of existence. For the Bāb, the pinnacle of existence is represented by the Prophet and the Imāms. In this case 'Alī specifically. This is of course in line with Sufi usage; it is also reminiscent of the specifically Iranian *hikmat-i ilāhī* tradition as it developed from Suhrawardī to Mullā Ṣadrā and beyond to the Shaykhīya. The idea of "knowledge by presence" is somewhat akin to the idea expressed here by the Bāb, but with the characteristic emphasis, at least with respect to Mullā Ṣadrā, that the highest "object" with which the soul can attempt union is the Divine Will, as hypostatized by Muḥammad and the Imāms. In this respect, the Bāb is faithful to the teachings of Shaykh Aḥmad.<sup>55</sup> 'Alī being the link between the believer and Muḥammad, who is the highest "spiritual idea" the believer may aspire to, is the object of the ecstatic experience. It may be speculated that the Bāb's reference to ecstasy stems from his own experience. This experience (or experiences) is seen as the immediate background for the Bāb's eventual claim, announced within a few months of writing this commentary, to be the focus of the above-mentioned Islamic apocalypse.

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<sup>53</sup> Cf. Corbin's translation of *baqā'* as surexistence. Ell. v.1, p.224.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. e.g., Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā, where *wijdān* is the fifth level of a hierarchy of eight spiritual conditions ranging from the lowest, *manām*, to the highest, *takwīn*. In this scale, *wajd* is fourth. See Fritz Meier, Die "*Tawā'ih al-gamāl wa fawā'ih al-galāl*" des Nagmuddīn al-Kubrā. Wiesbaden, 1957, Arabic text, *faṣl* 41 & 95. Meier translates *wijdān* as "being touched inside" (p.101 German text).

<sup>55</sup> Henry Corbin, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī: Le Livre des pénétrations métaphysiques*, Paris, 1964, p. 224.

That the mystico-philosophical terminology of the *wahdat al-wujūd* metaphysicians acquired additional communalistic and even apocalyptic meaning might be thought to have been an inevitable development of a meeting between the *wahdat al-wujūd* school and Shī'ism. But in this first major work of the Bāb, a number of other features have been noticed, namely the attribution of features pertaining to a mythical cosmogony to the Prophet and the Imāms. Some of these ideas are also found quite early in Shī'ism, both "12er" and Ismā'īlī, prior to Ibn 'Arabī. Years ago, Massignon demonstrated how some of the "physiognomy" of the Primordial Man of the Manichaeans was projected on the figure of Salmān.<sup>56</sup> A comparison of some of the features of that physiognomy with the function of Muḥammad, 'Alī, and the "family of God" in this early work by the Bāb displays striking similarities.

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<sup>56</sup> Louis Massignon, "Salman Pak et les prémices spirituelles de l'Islam iranien." (= *Publications of the Société des Études Iraniennes*, No. 7) Tours, 1934.