

(In praise of the Beloved,
secretly, in private.)

ODE OF THE NIGHTINGALE

He is the Exalted, the All-Glorious.

- ¹A gleaming, coruscating Countenance enthralled
Me, for Her splendor dimmed a galaxy of suns,
- ²As though the aureolas of Her beauty's glow
had radiated forth to dazzle all the worlds.
- ³The perfume of the Supreme Essence hath diffused
from Her delights,
and Exaltation's spirit was uplifted by Her
loftiness.
- ⁴Then it was Her breath that did sound the
Resurrection's Trump,
at which the overshadowing, silv'ry clouds did
quake.
- ⁵The Sinai of Eternity, Her radiance revealed,
the clear light of Bahā, Her blaze did manifest;
- ⁶And to Her west, the sun of splendor dawned,
and to Her east the moon of moons revolved.
- ⁷The mistral's fragrance from Her hair did waft,
and Beauty's eyes were solaced by Her glance;
- ⁸It was Her shining visage which did Guidance lead,
the very soul of Moses was by Her fire purified.

4. overshadowing: A reference to that which He hath said, Blessed and Exalted may He be, "That God should come down to them overshadowed with clouds".^a

quake: A reference to the quaking of the mountains, insofar as they will move even as clouds, as He hath said, "and thou shalt see the mountains, that thou supposest fixed, passing by like clouds".^b All these are signs of the Resurrection Day, and the events associated therewith.

7. solaced: which is to say, illumined. From the fragrance of Her locks the mistrals of delight and splendor, and the musk of compassion and glory, have been wafted from north of the Eden of the divine Essence, which stretcheth to the right of the eternal garden. In this wise, perchance the dusty bones* of the essences of all created things shall be glorified by life without end and everlasting existence, and bestow honor upon the pride of Being through the agency of those heart-entrancing gales and pleasing, perfumed scents from the wondrous and imperishable chalice and the new, incomparable wine. Even so, the eye of essential Beauty, of which the sun of the heaven of Being is the least significant sign, did by gazing upon Her become brilliant, radiant and illumined. Exalted be God, Her creator, above that of which ye make mention.

8. When Moses cleansed and sanctified the feet of the Compassionate Self, who had been consigned to human form, from the sandals of contingent fancies and drew forth the hand of divine Power from the

^aQur'an 2:210

^bQ. 27:88

Moses

fold of grandeur in the cloak of splendor, He arrived in the Holy, good and blessed valley of the heart. This is the base of the throne of everlasting effulgence and the seat of divine and glorious converse. And when He reached that land of Sinai, which lieth outstretched to the right of the illumined Spot, He smelled the perfumed odor of the Spirit from east of eternity, and perceived the undying lights from all directions, without direction. After the darkened glass of self had been removed, the wick of the divine Essence blazed forth in the lamp of his heart, ignited by the passionate scent of divine love and the flaming brand of the fire of divine unity. And after the stations of opposition had been eliminated, He arrived in the valley of eternal sobriety through the wine of the attainment to an incomparable Countenance and the pure nectar of the imperishable.

Through the attractive power of His longing for the divine Meeting, He became aware of the city of everlasting life. "He entered the city at a time when its people were heedless."^a And behold, he discerned the fire of the timeless godhead, and shone with the light of the Almighty God. He said to His family, "Do ye tarry here. Verily, I observe a fire."^b When He discovered and perceived the pre-existent, bountiful visage of Guidance in the tree that is neither of the east nor the west,^c the changeable and ephemeral face was honored and glorified by attaining to the ancient, imperishable Countenance. In the blazing fire He discovered the wondrous, inaccessible visage of Guidance which had been concealed in the bosoms of the Unseen. This is that to which He then gave utterance: "or I shall find guidance in this fire."^d

Even so, perceive ye the intent of the blessed verse, "He who made for ye fire from the green tree."^e O would that there were a listener to comprehend it, and that one drop from the vast ocean of fire, one spark from the storehouse of flames, could be mentioned. But it is better, after all, that this pearl remain hidden within the shell of pure longing and stored in the vessels of secrecy, that every stranger might be excluded and every intimate friend may be purified before the sanctuary of beauty, that he may enter therein. How happy is the soul which consumes the cage of the body in the flames of the fire of love, and becomes the familiar of the Spirit, that he may attain unto the exalted mercy of repose, and that the lofty bounty of glory may be bestowed upon him.

All that of which mention hath been made concerning the ranks of guidance and the grades of self-purification in the station of Moses—may peace be upon Him and our Prophet—hath reference to the manifestation of these effulgences in the world of outward appearances. Otherwise, that Exalted One was always and shall forever be led by the guidance of God. Nay, more, it was from Him that the sun of guidance dawned and the moon of God's grace appeared. It was from His essential being that the flames of the divine Essence were ignited, and from the brilliance of His forehead that the light of eternity became radiant. He Himself resolved such doubts by the words He spoke when questioned by Pharaoh about the man He had killed. He responded, "I did it indeed, and I was one of those who erred. And I fled from you when I feared you; but My Lord hath given Me judgment and hath made Me One of the Apostles."^f The discourse hath come to an end, though in truth this matter is inexhaustible and unending.

Moses Station

Moses Murder

^aQ. 28:15.

^bQ. 20:10.

^cQ. 24:35.

^dQ. 20:10.

^eQ. 36:80.

^fQ. 26:20-21.

- 9 Her eyelid's dart the heart of hearts did eagerly
accept,
and for the lasso of Her locks the head of Being
yearned.
- 10 Her footsteps' imprints are My highest aim,
the earth on which She trod, the Throne on High;
- 11 For I have wept in every eye, Her to attain,
and for My separation I have burned in every fire.
- 12 Then everywhere I spread the carpet of My heart
that She might tread upon it, granting thus My
dearest wish.
- 13 In all directions to accomplish our reunion I did seek,
in every soil have I inscribed the cyphers of
proximity.
- 14 And if in haste I sought to be united with Her light,
cast back was I into the distance after having
drawn so near;
- 15 And if I raised My hands and toward Her presence
stretched them forth,
She with a sword replied: "O, thus do I My lovers
all requite!"

9. dart: The most exalted of illumined and purified bosoms accepted and sought to receive the shaft of the Beloved's eyelid, that it might pierce Him. lasso: For the lasso of Her tresses the head of invisible, divine and universal Being yearned and sought, that it might be ensnared thereby. Deprived is the breast which doth not attain unto this shaft, and perished hath the head which doth not enter this noose. Lauded be God above that whereby We have described Him, and exalted may He be above that which ye have ascribed to Him.

10. eye: The sanctified and exalted eyes which are secretly veiled in the worlds of the Unseen, and the visible eyes which abide in the kingdom of contingent existence in every station and time, are weeping and have become tear-filled for the separation of this Servant from the sight of the luminaries of that Beloved's beauty. The outward meaning of this line will be plainly understood, but as to its esoteric import, none knoweth it save God, nor do We know a letter thereof, nay, even less.

Even so, do thou comprehend the meaning of the second hemistich, that ecstasy, yearning, attraction, distraction, adoration and love might be born into the world of thine existence, and that thou mightest perchance be honored by attainment unto the Lote-Tree of the final limit,^a and the farthest Mosque^b of the self, for this teaching is the command and decree of God. Verily, your Most High Lord hath been a witness in truth against ye, and in justice a Guardian for Us.

12. everywhere: Upon all lands, from the farthest realms of the heart and beyond those to that which hath no end and is concealed in the veils of the Unseen, to the nearest earth of contingent existence, I have spread Myself out that mayhap that foot might come upon the heart which is the seat of the hidden mysteries. For this is the final destiny of all sanctified and divine hearts.

^a53:14

^bQ. 17:1

16 For My concern was never other than the firmness
of Our bond,
Her aim was never other than to sever this
relationship.

17 Said I to Her, "My soul, My all's Thy sacrifice that
We may meet;

18 be merciful and do not Thou uncover My disgrace.
18 Then union to Me grant for My excessive love of Thee,
for it doth e'er abide in pre-sternity."

19 (And by the secret of Theophany! all creatures did
from Her
epiphany appear, and in the first beginning was I
raised.

20 And by the sorrows of Husayn! in emulating My example
hath
this cycle of existence been by its great dolor
burdened down.)

21 "Thou art My bosom's one beloved and My heart's sole
hope,
the master of My spirit and My light, My very soul;
22 O, after My hard exile Thy attainment to Me grant
and waft the spirit of sweet intimacy to assuage
My agony.

23 My burning torment every fuel set ablaze
and at My sighing did the seen world's light shine
forth;

24 My torrid thirst dried up the sea of God's ineffability,
the river of sublimity to slake it cannot e'er aspire.



17. My all: That is, 'All that which hath descended upon Me of the
stations of eloquent exposition and hidden meanings, and that which it
hath been given to Me to know of the glories of the divine Names and
Attributes, and that which God hath bestowed upon Me in the worlds of
the unseen and the seen--all this I offer up that I might meet Thee once,
and gaze upon Thee a single time.'

I beseech Thy forgiveness, O My God, for that which I have presumed to
utter in Thy presence. But, by Thy Might, if I were not so, I would wish to
be so in Thy precincts, for without this nothing can ever benefit Me,
and naught else can grant repose to My heart, even wert Thou to bestow
upon Me all who are in heaven and on earth. I ask Thee, O My God, by
Him Who witnessed in Thy path what none else hath witnessed, to send down upon
Thy Servant the most great signs of Thy love and the evidences of Thy
glorious loving-kindness, that My soul may be content in that for which it
hopeth. Verily, Thou art powerful over all things.

23. Fuel: Even so, He saith, "the fire, whose fuel is men and stones."²
Flames and intense anxiety are also intended.

²Q. 2:24

- 25 And all the blood which I have witnessed in all earth
 of My eyes' crimson weeping did speak forth;
 26 A sea of seas were but a drop before a single of My
 tears,
 and Abraham's dire conflagration but a torch before
 My flame.
 27 My wintry sorrow crystallized the ocean of delight,
 My grief the spring of anguish set to flow.
 28 Then blinded was My splendor, hidden was My glow,
 their gloating vanity snuffed out My light;
 29 My bones were whittled down, My body was worn out,
 till My heart was enfeebled by the fever of My
 blaze.
 30 Desire for Thee hath quite destroyed Me, and Thy love
 hath ground Me down;
 Our separation hath consumed Me, union is My only
 wish.
 31 The heavens all were by the secret of My sorrow nearly
cleft,
 the bosom's earth was split asunder by the cares of
 My poor heart;
 32 The tears of My eyes of the furnace of My heart did
 speak,
 the pallor of My face is from the roaring of My
 inner soul.
 33 For My traducar's gloating through the night do I
 lament,
 I importune throughout the day for that all My
 support is lost;
 34 For I have reached to degradation's lowest grade,
 of which the very mention doth fatigue the tongue.
 35 The Maids of Heaven in their mansions, at the sadness
 of My soul,
 in every chamber clad themselves in garb of mourning
 black.

28. gloating: Malicious gloaters greater in number than the atoms of all created things, such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor soul numbered, nor imagination conceived, like unto a downpour. Lo, it is as rainfall descending from the sky of heedlessness! Say: O people of the earth, oppose not Him in Whose heart there is naught save the effulgence of the lights of the celestial morn. Fear ye God and turn not away, for if ye never love, ye will never hate. Once the love of God comes to exist, the loss of all else is of no importance. We praise God that He hath rendered Us unneedful of their love and mention. And He is God, Powerful over all things.

31 32. cleft: A reference to the verse, "The heavens are wellnigh cleft asunder from above."^{2a}

33. roaring: The roaring of flames.

34. fatigue: The tongue is made to grow heavy and stammer.

- 36 All misery hath in every heart befallen Me,
by grief was I in every happiness yet gripped."
- 37 Then from behind Me She called, "Do Thou silent be!
and keep Thy tongue from all that hath been told.
- 38 How many a Husayn the like of Thee hath wanted Me,
how many of My suitors is an ^cAll similar to Thee;
- 39 How many lovers in adoring Me have far transcended Thee,
how many friends have I that are Thy peers among
My intimates,
- 40 Who clasped constantly and never will attain
to union's light, nor gaze at Me through My own eyes.
- 41 Theophany's bright sun is but a star when I dawn forth,
the world's illumination is a gleam when I appear,
- 42 The existential mystery's an ant before My secret's
light,
before the blazing of My love all kindled flames are
but a brand.
- 43 At My creation all of God's creation worship gave,
before My palm the hand of splendor was withdrawn.
- 44 For the command of the decree hath from a manifest
Cause come,
the justice of the judgment from My wisdom's equity
derived.
- 45 My inner being's wave did still the ocean's cresting
surf,
the Holy Spirit hath been wakened by the glow of My
delight,
- 46 And at My gaze the Moses of Eternity swooned thunderstruck;
the Sinai of all mountains hath been levelled by My
brilliancy.

40. clasped: With the sense of importuning and lamenting out of love and grief.

42. brand: A reference to the verse, "Do ye tarry here: I observe a fire. Perhaps I shall bring you a brand from it."^a

43. creation: A reference to the verse, "God's original creation, upon which He patterned mankind's creation."^b worship gave: The verse, "Set thy face toward the religion, with pure faith."^c hand: "Now clasp thy hand to thy side; and it shall come forth white, but unhurt."^d withdrawn: A reference to the verse, "Now draw thy hand close to thy side."^e

46. gaze: "gaze toward the Mount"^f thunderstruck: "Moses fell in a swoon"^g levelled: "and when God manifested Himself to the mountain, He turned it to dust."^h

^a Q. 20:10

^b Q. 30:30

^c Q. 30:30

^d Q. 20:22

^e Q. 20:22, 27:12, 28:32

^f Q. 7:143

^g Q. 7:143

^h Q. 7:143

- 47 At the announcement of My Cause were resurrected all the souls,
and at the breathing of My Spirit dusty bones have stirred alive.
- 48 That very Cause hath circumsabulated round its House,
the spirit of that House was raised up by My aspect's radiance.
- 49 The kingdom of the heights of knowledge is concealed within the ba';
the ba' of "To divulge the secret" prostrate fell before My point!
- 50 All guidance from My Cause's majesty appeared,
all exaltation is but an ambassador of My descent.
- 51 'Tis by My grace the chirping of the birds is as a harmony,
the singing of the bees is as an echo of My melody.
- 52 I have ordained a law that Thou under suspicion shalt be placed,
for Thou another's love didst taste without My having so decreed;
- 53 Thou broughtest forth relationships and attributes,
and names didst covet, thus departing from My Way.
- 54 Thou didst a self describe and then attribute it to Me;
but lo, therein a limitation lies, which is the gravest sin.
- 55 Thou didst in idle fancy My attainment plead—but nay,
it never was!
the terms thereof in Thy firm constancy alone can be fulfilled;
- 56 The cup of destiny's calamities must to the lees be drained,
the gore of tyranny from Thine own heartsblood must be poured;

49. ba': By the letter ba', existence was manifested and by the Point, the worshipper was distinguished from the object of worship. Refer to the Tradition, "Everything in the Qur'ān is contained in its first chapter. . ." and so on.^a Point: The meanings of the Point are innumerable, unlimited, and inexhaustible. the messianic Countenance, the universal Word, the divine Form, hath described the Most Great Throne, which is the place of descent and the seat of the Invisible Essence, with this exalted name and lofty appellation. It is reserved for this very Being.^b And thy Lord is in Himself sufficient for a Witness.

56. heartsblood: The inmost heart, the blood of the heart, and the spirit are all three intended.

^aThe full tradition, from the Prophet Muhammad, is: "All that is in the revealed books is in the Qur'ān, and all that is in the Qur'ān is in the Fātihah [the opening chapter], and all that is in the Fātihah is in the bi'smillāhi'r-Rahmāni'r-Rahīm [In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate]" and "All that is in the bi'smi'llāhi'r-Rahmāni'r-Rahīm is in the [beginning] letter bā', which is itself contained in the point beneath it." See 'Abdu'l-Karīm al-Jīlī, al-Kahf wa'r-Raqīm, (Hyderabad, Da'irat al-Ma'ārif, 1336 AH, 2nd ed.) and Martin Lings, A Moslem Saint of the Twentieth Century, (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1961), pp. 148-157.

^bThe Bāb.

- 57 For severed must be every hope of comfort's soft
caress,
and ruthlessly suppressed be the desire for every
need.
- 58 To shed Thy blood's an obligation in the sacred faith
of Love;
O, first consume Thy heart in flames and then pledge
fidelity to Me!
- 59 Each night made wakeful by the slurs of every slanderer,
an endless stream of sharp abuse day after day;
- 60 In My religion poison as a healing potion is,
the cruelties of fate are in My faith a tender
sympathy.
- 61 Forsake love's call!--or with all it entails be Thou
content,
for it was ordained thusly in the canon of My law."
- 62 Then secretly I called to Her, "My lover and
the goal of all My hopes, My inmost heart's sole aim,
- 63 Lo, ready here stand I between the two hands of Thy
right,
aspiring to all that hath been enumerated, here as I.
- 64 Then here as I, soliciting whatever Thou dost love,
and partial to all that which Thou decreest, here
as I.
- 65 This breast of Mine is yearning for the shafts of Thine
assault
and for the blades of harsh oppression doth My body
long,
- 66 Thy fire to Me is light, Thy tyranny is My desire,
for Thy compulsion is My comfort and Thy judgment is
My wish.
- 67 Upon the tears of My eyes ~~gaze~~, see how they have flowed
forth,
look on My inner heart, how it hath dwindled quite
away.
- 68 Each day the javelins of all have struck Me down,
and every night rejection's rapier murdered Me,
- 69 I read the book of unbelief in every line,
to everyone's vituperation every second I attained.
- 70 Each moment with the calumny of idol worship was I
slurred,
and at all times was I transfixed by banishment's
sharp spear,
- 71 As though fate's tribulations had descended on My soul,
as though the swords of fury had been sharpened for
My neck;

63. enumerated: That which hath been mentioned of tyranny and wrath.

- 72 For Mine was Jacob's mourning, Joseph's prison cell,
and Job's afflictions, then the fire of Abraham,
- 73 And Adam's brooding, Jonah's flight,
the sad lament of David, Noah's plaint,
- 74 Then Eve's long separation, Mary's agony,
Isaiah's trials, Zachariah's deep distress.
- 75 Far from the raining of My grief the fate of all hath
been decreed,
- 76 My overflowing woes have given rise to all adversity.
76 Gaze at My wanderings throughout the lands without an
intimate,
see Thou how solitude was My familiar in the
wilderness.
- 77 When My eye opened Heaven's eye began to flow,
at My heart's breaking that with which the earth
was cleft did meet.
- 78 The soul of My despair cut short the Spirit of Eternity,
and at the flare of My distress subverted was the
Most High Throne.
- 79 The red in all the universe was crimsoned by My blood,
the world is but a twig which sprouted from the
weeping of My eye.
- 80 'Tis sweet to undergo such trials in the path of love
for Thee,
and without Thee the honey of eternal life would
bitter be.
- 81 Still visible are iron's traces on My neck,
upon My legs the marks of fetters yet remain,
- 82 And not a single day passed save that I was therein
scorched
by poetry's allusions and the clarity of prose.

72. Jacob's: A reference to the verse, "and his eyes became white with grief."^a Joseph's: The verse, "I prefer the prison to compliance with their bidding."^b Job's: "Truly evil hath touched me."^c

73. Jonah's: "And Jonah when he went forth enraged and thought that We would have no power over him."^d David and Noah's: Noah and David much lamented. Noah's story is well-known, but that of David and his lamentations can be learned from the Psalms, how he was greatly afflicted and tested.

74. Eve's: In her separation from Adam for forty days or more, as it is mentioned in the former traditions.^e

77. opened: A reference to the verse, "so We opened the gates of heaven"^f flowing: "with water which fell in torrents"^f was cleft: "and We caused the earth to break forth with springs"^f did meet: "and their waters met by a settled decree".^f

^aQ. 12:82

^bQ. 12:33

^cQ. 21:83

^dQ. 21:87

^eAccording to Islamic tradition, Adam and Eve became separated when they were driven from Eden, and had to search for one another for some time.

^fQ. 54:11; the references are to Noah's deluge.

- 83 My spirit hath departed and My heart hath melted
quite away,
the vehemence of My travail hath set My inner self
to boil,
- 84 And with no spirit, heart, nor inmost self did I
abide,
till My continuing existence mightily bewildered
Me.
- 85 'Twas for My secret's loftiness to this I was
condemned,
O would that at the first beginning My creation
ne'er arose!
- 86 And thus have woes encompassed Me from every side,
therewith hath disputation extirpated Me.
- 87 Then I ascended to the utmost loneliness in solitude,
and in My heart I to the essence of the Meeting
did attain;
- 88 There Thy description in My eye's depiction I did see,
through Thine eye which is piercing in its every
glance.
- 89 If I fell into limitation, it in Thee was manifest,
if I was bound by a description, it from Thee
appeared.
- 90 The Stygian black of night in My turbidity was
realized,
and day's limpidity was by My joy clarified.
- 91 No matter if I have been exiled, for I did attain
to exaltation's light upon the day I was sent forth.
- 92 Jerusalem was My familiar through His intimacy's glow,
I emigrated in Tih-rān in those days of My banishment;
- 93 Then in the Light did I believe by My own inner light,
and in the mystery of My soul I by the Spirit did
ascend."
- 94 I call on thee, O breath of life, to journey forth,
forth from a self in which no remnant still remains;
- 95 Celestial breath, do thou descend from this thy throne,
that in the measure of My shame thou mayest have no
part.
- 96 I waken thee, My heart, post-haste depart thou must--
thou hast no glory in the countries of disgrace.
- 97 Be steadfast, O my patience, bear all that which thou
hast seen
in thy Beloved's path, of hardship and of ease.

88. piercing: "and so thy sight today is piercing"^a

^aQ. 50:22

- 98 In spirit then did She address Me, "Do Thou patient Be!
The proofs which Thou hast furnished had been known
to Me.
- 99 Forget all that which Thou hast known, and worshipped
hast,
for many gods or one are all the same to Me;
- 100 And Sinai's brightest splendor is for Me without the
slightest worth,
to Me the light's sublimest glow is as the thickest
gloom.
- 101 Thy verses of description are, while true, a children's
truth,
and for My subjects are Thy fine delineations
sound,
- 102 But My "I was in sanctity" hath never ceased to be,
'I was in purity' shall never go astray.
- 103 How many just ones in My eyes oppressors were,
how many wise ones in My eyes were ignorant;
- 104 How many living in My eyes were moribund,
how many learned shall a single letter never know;
- 105 How many servants in My eyes rebellious were,
how many bent in prayer shall My prostration
ne'er attain!
- 106 By My self's being were the heavens' Psalms confirmed,
and Sinai's tablets from My Tablet did descend,
- 107 The world-sun by My atom did revolve,
the sea of being at My droplet praise did give.
- 108 The hymns of all the universe were less to Me
than an ant's humming or the buzzing of the bee;
- 109 Distracted were all minds by the attraction of My
mystery,
the melody of My own spirit hath revived all souls.
- 110 All numens by My downpouring command were divinized,
all lords were by My overflowing judgment reared,
- 111 The realms of Spirit hath by the decree within Me stirred,
the Throne of Sinai hath My footstool been;
- 112 Theophany's bright star for My light did blaze out,
the sun of joy for My spirit did shine forth.
- 113 Collections of the verses, gleams of a Descent,
impressions of His footprints, Dawning-Points of
holiness;
- 114 And gems of contemplation, essences of thought,
adornments of illumination, wisdom's ornaments.

- 115 For from the Alpha of My Cause the fate of all hath
 been decreed,
 and all things wondrous have appeared by My soul's
 generosity.
- 116 Thou didst from My face turn away and think Thou
 hadst drawn nigh;
 in fancy's revelation Thou didst supposition's
 waters loose,
- 117 Thou hast departed from the light of the Unseen in what
 thou didst
 in Thyself wreak, and so didst lose My handiwork.

115. Cause: The world of Cause is intended.

117. This effulgence is meant. It is an effulgence from the luminaries of the morn of Reality, and from the dawning rays of the sun of sanctity and splendor. It rose from the sun of Being, the moon of the Beloved and the Point of the Adored One, and shone forth upon the realities of all contingent beings and the inmost essences of all creatures. Then, through droplets from the elixir of divine Being and pure spray from the inexhaustible Fountain, this effulgence honored and adorned the very atoms of all existing things, and all those of which mention hath been made, with everlasting, perpetual life. It thus invested them with the mantle of imperishability and clothed them in the vestments of exaltation and the robes of eternity.

But in spite of all this, we have departed from this greatest of signs and this most great bestowal, and from these inextinguishable lights and imperishable gifts, nor have we been steadfast in this mighty handiwork, these perfect honors, this ancient glory, this unending grace. We have remained shut away from the sanctified breaths of the Holy Spirit and the fragrant breezes wafting from the glow of intimacy, to such an extent that were a thousand Davids of Existence to serenade the dusty bones of mankind with psalmody and songs of beatitude in fresh and wondrous melodies, these latter would never stir nor move an iota. For all readiness for the descent of compassion from the heaven of divine Power hath vanished, and all have been imprisoned in the cage of the body and dazed by evil passions. They have swooned with heedlessness in such wise that they shall never regain consciousness nor reach the station of attainment and nearness, which is the original goal. What a sign of grief and regret we must breathe, for we have not been led by the quintessence of Guidance, nor have we emulated the essence of the Ancient of Days. We have neither advanced toward the Sinai of His proximity, nor have we opposed His deniers. We have not patterned ourselves according to the attractions of His Holy Spirit, nor have we remiered the lights of His delight our exemplars. The quintessence of emulation is martyrdom, to which honor we have failed to attain; and it is to clad oneself in the robe of steadfastness, which we have failed to accomplish. Aye, we are surrounded by the Lake of His Essence, yet we seat ourselves and await a drink of water. We dwell in the shade of the Sun of His Eternity, and call for a lamp! Such is the case with this Servant, with mankind, with everyone in every land.

If even a flame from this Lote-Free were to blaze forth, we would not thereby be ignited, but would, rather, arise to extinguish it! Happy is he

who clothes himself in the garb of equity for this battle. If thou dost acquire this most great attribute, thou wilt most certainly attain to the most glorious bounty. This is that invisible golden thread by whose movement all creation is set in motion, and by whose quiescence all who are in the realms of the Worshipped One are brought to a standstill. The breast must then be purified and cleansed from corrupt, groundless and satannic fancies, that the wondrous countenance of Equity might lift up its head from behind the mountain of Qāf.^a

Thereafter shall we experience the everlasting assaults of rapture and the divine ecstasies of yearning through the ruffling of the wings of the doves of eternity and the hands of the spirits of splendor. In the fluttering of love shall we then find rest and repose. This is the ultimate goal and the least of His stations. We must in every matter shun all else, which derives from the opposers of the eternal Truth. It is impermissible for us to sit and socialize even for a moment, for by God, the corrupt souls are melting away the pure ones, even as the blaze of dry fire wood and cold, white snow. Be not thou among those whose hearts grow hard at the mention of God, the Creator.

That which hath been mentioned in commentary upon this verse was as a kindness to the gaze of the opposers and a mercy to the eyes of the hateful, that they might not understand it according to their evil passions, nor interpret it thereby. These verses were spoken at the time when we travelled into exile in the lands of the Ottoman Empire.^b No one among the divines and eminent men of that realm made any protest or objection. But from the railing of this people, I believe that even after this explanation they will raise objections and by reason of self-delusion will become wayfarers on the path of vain imagination, error, idle fancy and blindness. To God is the setting out on the path, whether thankfully or ungratefully, whether advancing or fleeing away. When the seal of a perfume bottle is removed, those with a sense of smell can perceive the scent, whereas those suffering from rheum will remain deprived. Were all to be stricken with the malady of rheum, this would not indicate a fault in the rose-water of Eternity, nor would the musk of Cathay thereby be brought into disrepute.

Praise be to Thee, O God, My God! I call upon Thee at that time, a time in which Thou didst send down upon Me the evidences of divine sorrow, which, were they to overflow into the universe, would cause the seen and the unseen worlds to pass out of existence, in such wise that the spirit well-nigh departed in its agitation. By Thy Might, and Thine invisible Eternality, were I to breathe a word of it, the hearts would burn in their inmost essences, the heavens and all that is in them would be cleft asunder and the earth and all that is upon it would be devastated. Alas, alas, thereby the fragrance of constancy would never be diffused from the garden of glory, nor would the everlasting breezes be wafted from the city of splendor. The nightingale of pre-existence would never warble upon the crimson twigs, nor would the chanticler of grandeur raise his voice in the kingdom of exaltation.

^aThe mountain of Qāf is a fabulous mountain chain, said to surround the world, and to bind the horizon on all sides. 'Behind the mountain of Qāf' is thus a poetic way of saying 'beyond this world.'

^b Kurdistan.

- 118 Hold fast to the cord of the Cause according to its
outer form,
then with the face of Light acquaint Thyself in
inner hiddenness;
- 119 Thou must Thy veils of nearness rend and yet no
indication give,
without disclosure gaze upon the holy beauty in
Thyself.
- 120 Fall silent, for the powers of the Throne in turmoil
be,
then persevere for that the eyes of the Unseen
have wept.
- 121 A meaning beyond knowledge lies concealed in Thee,
in its perception all illumined minds are impotent;
- 122 For in the sacred mystery joy and intimacy secrets are,
which Thou must ne'er divulge if Thou trustworthy be.
- 123 Wert Thou but to unmask the face of what Thou saw'st
the universe would vanish in the twinkling of an eye,
- 124 For thus the Throne of Glory hath decreed
and so ordained the mystery of Might.
- 125 Blessed are they who attain, for they were faithful,
blessed are those mentioned in the wondrous
revelation,
- 126 Blessed are the lovers for their blood which they
have shed forth,
blessed are those clinging to the cord of My
affection;
- 127 Blessed are the sincere ones, they that have hastened
from all sides unto the shade of My Divinity."

By the glory of Him Whom Thou hast glorified and made the Manifestation of Thy Divinity and the Fountainhead of Thy supreme Power, I have forgotten every mention, and all the wonders of Thy knowledge, and the comprehensive signs of Thy wisdom which Thou didst teach Me aforetime. Nay, I was forgetful and oblivious, as though I were not in the realms of the seen. And by the Lives of ^cAli and Muhammad, and by the pure Spirit, the compassion of the Merciful, the attraction of Mahmud, ^a the distraction of Ahmad, ^a the secret of the Beloved, the delight of the Pure One, I like not to remain in this kingdom even a second. And God was behind Me as My witness.

O people of the Bayān, and whose professeth belief in God and His verses . . . give ear to that which the Dove of the divine Essence doth warble in the utmost rapture, overwhelmed with the love of God and with yearning for Him, having died to the self and now living in God, the Mighty, the Powerful.

^aReferences to the Prophet Muhammad.

Fear God, and do not differ concerning His cause. Worship naught else but Him, and wreak not corruption in the land of knowledge. Accept the counsel proffered ye by this Servant, upon Whom the darts of the divine decree have rained down from the crimson cloud, in such wise that none but God can ever estimate their number, or fully perceive them. O people, be merciful, fear God and devour not this Servant in the flames of your own selves. Torture Him not with the idle fancies of your base desires, and do not deliver Him into the prison of your heedlessness. Do not slay Him with the swords of your hypocrisy, nor banish Him with the spears of your injustice and malice. For He hath but summoned ye to God, and shall never call ye unto anyone save the Manifestations of His Self, the Mirrors of His inmost Essence, and Him Who standeth in the stead of His Cause itself.

Say: Fear God, and oppose Him not, nor transgress the bounds of His counsel. Know ye that there is among ye one who worketh corruption in this good and blessed land. The malediction of God be upon him, and whosoever raiseth his hand without the approval or permission of God, or stirreth in disobedience to Him. Such a one is deprived of God's compassion. Whosoever taketh his hands from his pockets and followeth his selfish passions, casting the Cause of God behind his back, hath removed himself from the shadow of Providence, though he dwell in the vicinity of the shrine of God. Whoso submitteth to his base desires and attributeth this to God hath forfeited the garden of His loving-kindness, and whoso faileth to detach himself from all who are in the heavens and on earth shall never be able to enter the kingdom of heaven. For he who hath in his heart aught else but the love of God shall never step foot in His city. The vengeance of the Lord be upon whoso teacheth anyone without His permission, and the awful might of God be upon whoso distributeth His words to any soul without His leave.