



Les Sept Vallées [Haft-i-Vádí, 1894]
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Conceived between 1856 and 1862 as an answer to a sufi iraqi student, this essay – intentionally written in a sufi style whose typical seven valleys theme (‘Attár, al-Ghazálí etc.) is therein revived, but characterized by original concepts which distinguish it from Sufism – has been considered Bahá’u’lláh’s ‘greatest mystical composition’ (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 143) and ‘describes the seven stages which the soul of the seeker must needs traverse ere it can attain the object of its existence’ (ibid.). This object is the knowledge of God through His Manifestation (mazhar-iláhí), i.e. the Messiah who reveals to mankind the divine will, which he sets forth through his words, vehicles not only of innovatory ideas, but also of creative spiritual powers, and thus is the founder of a new religion.

After an introductory explanation of original concepts about ‘the creation of all things’, ‘the Manifestation of [the] Lord’, progressive revelation – which he will specify in further writings as *The Kitáb-i-Iqán* as a single civilizing process brought about by the Founders of the great religions which has today arrived at the great turning point of global unity – B. describes a searcher who in the v. of Search discovers a trace of the Manifestation of God, recognizes it and falls in love with him; in the v. of Love tries to approach him, by overcoming his own imperfect self; in the v. of Knowledge, confirmed by the Creator and by virtue of his own efforts, acquires the capacity of looking at reality through his inner eye; in the v. of Unity discovers ‘the Manifestations of Oneness’ under ‘the veils of plurality’; in the v. of Contentment comes to surrender to the Divine Will as set forth through the laws of His Manifestation and as expressed in his own allotted circumstances; in the v. of Wonderment is astonished in front of the miracles he now perceives throughout the world of creation; and in the v. of True Poverty and Absolute Nothingness makes the Manifestation the centre of his life, annihilating himself in his will.

Meanwhile B. – who covertly but repeatedly refers to himself as that Manifestation of God who is the goal of that journey – redresses sufi positions. He refutes

the pantheistic doctrines of ‘oneness of Being and Manifestation (wahdat-i-wujúd wa shuhúd)’ stating that the world of creation is not ‘a manifestation (zuhúr), but an emanation (sudúr, fayd)’ from Divine Reality. He challenges the idea of mystical unitive extasis as well as its anthropomorphic and incarnational (hulúl) implications and states that God is transcendent and unknowable. He denies that man can dispense with a Manifestation of God as a mediator, and explains that he can ‘win his way to the summit of realities’ only through his help. He disproves the three stages of religious life – Religious Laws (sharí’at), the Path (taríqat) and the Truth (haqíqat) – as three consecutive and surmountable stages in the mystical journey and says that obedience to the Laws revealed by the Manifestation of God is ‘the secret of the ‘Path’ (sirr-i-taríqat)’ leading towards ‘Truth’. He states that spiritual progress greatly depends on an ‘invisible confirmation’ of God rather than on unaided personal efforts and that any seeker ‘may cross these seven stages ... in a single breath, if God will and desire it’.

B. thus lays the premises of a new mysticism, whose summit is a Manifestation of God who, vested with both the prophetic (nubuwwat) and initiatory (waláyat) functions, calls mankind to pursue its spiritual maturity through a spiritual road, which will be later described by himself in full details. This road, far from being an abstract and mental path, opened only to an initiated aristocracy, appears rather as a practical way: whosoever has innerly and outwardly adhered to its clearly set forth prescriptions, aiming at accomplishing the spiritual, social and political unity of mankind in this world, will thereby be lead both to acquire an albeit partial understanding of Reality and to give an active contribution to an ever-advancing civilization.

J. Savi

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Works:

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Articles:

G. Townshend, 'The Seven Valleys by Bahá'u'lláh', *The Bahá'í World* 1936-1938, 7, 623-25, Wilmette, Ill., Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1939.

Cross-references:

(→): 'ABDU'L-BAHA, 'ATTAR, al-GHAZALI, SHOGHI EFFENDI, Sufism

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***Les Sept Vallées* (Haft vâdî) publ. 1894**

Cet essai fut conçu par Bahâ'u'llâh entre les années 1856 et 862. Il s'agit d'une réponse à un adepte irakien du soufisme, réponse intentionnellement écrite dans un langage de style soufi qui reprend le thème classique des sept tillées ('Attâr, al-Ghazâli, etc.). Cet essai se caractérise cependant par des idées et des conceptions originales qui le distinguent du soufisme, et il « peut être considéré comme l'oeuvre mystique le plus important » de Bahâ'u'llâh (Shoghi Effendi, *Dieu passe près de nous*, 133).

Dans cette oeuvre mystique sont décrits « les sept étapes que doit nécessairement traverser le chercheur avant de pouvoir atteindre le but de son existence » (*ibid.*). Ce but consiste dans la connaissance de Dieu accessible par l'intermédiaire de sa Manifestation (*mazhar-i-ilâhi*), c'est-à-dire le Messie, qui révèle à l'humanité la volonté divine qui l'propage par le truchement de sa parole, véhicule non seulement d'idées novatrices, mais aussi de pouvoir spirituels et créatifs ; il est ainsi le fondateur d'une religion nouvelle.

Tout d'abord, Bahâ'u'llâh présente une introduction explicative à des concepts originaux sur « la création de butes choses » (17), la « Manifestation du Seigneur », et la révélation progressive. (Plus tard, dans des écrits ultérieurs, tels que le *Kitâb-i-iqân*, il précisera qu'il s'agit là d'un processus civilisateur inauguré par les fondateurs des grandes religions, processus qui est arrivé de nos jours à passe décisive de la réalisation d'une unité globale.) L'auteur décrit ensuite la position du chercheur se trouvant dans la « Vallée de la Recherche » (20) et découvrant « une trace » de la Manifestation de Dieu (22). Il la reconnaît et il devient son disciple aimant. Dans la deuxième « Vallée de l'Amour » (23), il s'efforce de s'en approcher en surmontant les imperfections de son propre « moi » (25) ; dans la « Vallée de la Connaissance » (26), « assisté par le Créateur » (26), il acquiert, par la vertu de ses efforts personnels, les capacités de voir la réalité des choses par « son oeil intérieur » (26) ; dans la « Vallée de l'Unité » (31), il découvre, sous les voilés de la pluralité, « les Manifestations de l'Unité » (31) ; dans la « Vallée de la Félicité » (42), il s'en remet à la volonté divine ainsi qu'elle est énoncée par le biais de sa

Manifestation et telle qu'elle s'exprime dans les circonstances personnelles de sa propre vie; dans la « Vallée de l'Émerveillement » (44), il est plongé dans l'admiration devant les miracles qu'il perçoit maintenant dans la création tout entière ; enfin dans la « Vallée de la Vraie Pauvreté et de l'Anéantissement Absolu » (48), il fait de la Manifestation divine le centre de sa propre vie, annihilant sa volonté dans celle de la Manifestation de Dieu.

A plusieurs reprises, mais de façon voilée, Bahâ'u'llâh se réfère à lui-même comme étant bien cette Manifestation divine qui représente le but de ce long voyage, et il corrige en même temps quelques-unes des *conceptions* soufies. Il réfute la doctrine panthéiste de l'unicité de l'Être, affirmant que le monde de la création n'est pas comme des branches, feuilles et fleurs sortant de la semence, mais comme des rayons de lumière émanant du soleil. Il conteste la notion d'union mystique achevée dans l'extase ainsi que ses implications corrélatives d'anthropomorphisme et d'incarnation (*hulûl*), et il déclare que Dieu est transcendant et inconnaissable. Il nie que l'homme puisse se passer d'une Manifestation divine comme médiateur et il explique que l'être humain ne peut parvenir au sommet de la connaissance des réalités que par l'aide secourable de ce médiateur. Il réfute la conception des trois étapes de la vie religieuse (les « Lois religieuses », *sharî'at*, le « Sentier », *tarîqat* et la Vérité, *haqîqat*) comme étant de simples degrés successifs à surmonter au cours du voyage mystique, et il dévoile que l'obéissance aux Lois édictées par la Manifestation de Dieu constitue « le secret du "Sentier" » (*sirr-i-tarîqat*, 52) menant à la « vérité ». Il affirme que le progrès spirituel dépend bien davantage d'une « invisible confirmation » (40) de Dieu que des efforts personnels effectués sans son aide transcendante ; enfin il déclare que tout chercheur sincère peut traverser « ces sept étapes » du voyage mystique « en un seul souffle, si tel est la volonté et le désir de Dieu » (52). Ainsi Bahâ'u'llâh établit-il les bases d'un mysticisme nouveau dont l'aboutissement est une Manifestation divine investie à la fois de la fonction prophétique (*nubuwwat*) et de fonctions initiatiques (*walâyat*). Cette Manifestation de Dieu appelle le genre humain à poursuivre le chemin de sa maturité spirituelle par une voie spirituelle, voie qu'il décrira lui-même ultérieurement dans les moindres détails. Loin d'être un cheminement abstrait et intellectuel, uniquement ouvert à une aristocratie d'initiés, cette voie se présente plutôt comme parcours pratique. Quiconque, intérieurement et extérieurement, donne son adhésion à ces prescriptions clairement exposées : visant à l'accomplissement de

l'unité spirituelle, sociale et politique de l'humanité en ce monde, sera conduit, d'une part, à l'acquisition d'une compréhension, même partielle, de la Réalité et, d'autre part, à fournir une contribution active à l'avancement continu d'une civilisation progressive.

(J. Savi)