

THE SEVEN VALLEYS OF BAHĀ'U'LLĀH: A PROVISIONAL TRANSLATION WITH OCCASIONAL NOTES -- PART 01 Stephen Lambden

Study of and meditation upon *The Seven Valleys* (*Haft vādī* ; henceforth SV) of Bahā'u'llāh has formed an important part of my spiritual life for over twenty years. The classic translation of 'Alī Kuli-Khān and Marzieh Gail (= AKK) has always been very dear to me and remains so. My purpose in sharing this provisional translation, with some doctrinal and philological notes, is to register the tentative results of my own study of, and musings upon, the SV. I have attempted to translate from a stance that takes some account of modern academic trends in the English translation of Islāmic mystical (Sufi) texts as well as Bahā'ī translation style established by Shoghi Effendi. ¹ I obviously remain indebted to the translations of the SV by AKK and Marzieh Gail as well as to that of the "Disciple of 'Abdu'l-Bahā'", Hippolyte Dreyfus (1873 -1928 C.E.). A selection of my gradually accumulated notes are set forth below with a view to their being corrected, challenged and / or supplemented by others more qualified to translate and comment upon Bahā'u'llāh's mystical masterpiece.

The SV is basically a Sufi-Bābī revelation of Bahā'u'llāh which follows an important mystical literary genre; the "seven valleys" of the spiritual journey towards God (see commentary 01:7 [forthcoming in BSB.]). No detailed introduction to Sufism ('Islamic mysticism') can be set down here. There exist numerous introductory overviews and general books devoted to this subject.² It must suffice to note that Annemarie Schimmel, prefacing a brief article *Islāmic mysticism, Sūfism*, gives an excellent, succinct, though necessarily limited, definition of Islamic mysticism: "Mysticism is that aspect of Islāmic belief and practise in which Muslims seek to find the truth of divine love and knowledge through direct personal experience of God. It consists of a variety of mystical paths that are designed to ascertain the nature of man and God and to facilitate the experience of the presence of divine love and wisdom in the world."³

¹ I am grateful to Todd Lawson, Khazeh Fananapazir and Moojan Momen for looking over the whole of my provisional translation of SV:01 -- see further future BSBs -- and making some valuable comments. Such errors as remain in the translation remain entirely my own.

² See for example, Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions..*, (1975 and bibliography); Julian Baldick, *Mystical Islam..*(1989 and bibliography). It is sometimes thought that the western words Sufi (*Ar. Sūfī*) and Sufism (lit. "to dress in wool" *Ar. tasawwuf*) are rooted in the Arabic word for "wool" = *sūf*, the term having been coined around the middle of the 9th cent C.E. (in Baghdad? the then Abbasid capital [Baldick:1989, 30f]). As a noun the word Sufi can indicate an adherent of one of a plethora of orders representative of diverse streams within the Islamic mystical tradition. There are hundreds of Sufi orders. Likewise, there are a multitude of many-faceted Sufi teachings that have evolved over centuries. It is hardly possible to sum up either Sufi practise or Sufi teaching.

³ Annemarie Schimmel, *Islāmic mysticism, Sūfism* Encyclopedia Britannica (15th Edition Chicago etc., 1974 / 1986) Vol. 22 pp.18-23. See further Schimmel, 1975, 3ff.

In the SV Bahā'u'llāh informs its recipient, Shaykh Muhyī al-Dīn of Khāniqīn (Iraq), of new dimensions of the meaning of the path to God. The Sufi path is set forth in the light of Bābī [proto-Bahā'ī] theological and ethical teachings. Sufi teachings which might detract from faith in the supreme *qutb* ("Axis"), the Manifestation of God (*mazhar-i illāhī*), are subtly modified.

Many examples of Bābī and Bahā'ī scripture exhibit marked Sufi influence. Typically Sufistic terminology and hermeneutics permeate certain of the writings of the Bāb. So too, many *ahwāh* of Bahā'u'llāh : especially early [pre-1863 C.E.] Tablets e.g. the "From the Divine Garden" (*Az Bagh-i illāhī*) and "Tablet of Reality" (*Lawh-i Haqq*). Qur'ānic exegesis in Bābī-Bahā'ī scripture is quite frequently, in one way or another, Sufistic. Bahā'ī ethics is likewise markedly Sufistic.

In the 19th century Middle East a number of Sufis became Bahā'īs and contributed to the spread of the Bahā'ī Faith. During the Edirne (Adrianople) and West Galilean ('Akkā') periods of his ministry (after 1866 or so) Bahā'u'llāh to some extent came to view mystical esotericism (*bātinī* tendencies) -- over indulgence in such arcane interests as *kimiya* (alchemy, ultimately forbidden), and *jafr* ([loosely] gematria or 'numerological-prognostication') -- with disfavour.⁴ Sufism yet remains one of the most important Islamic doctrinal streams that have informed the Bābī-Bahā'ī revelations. The modern Bahā'ī Faith however, is not merely neo-Sufi. It is only peripherally and in certain doctrinal areas Sufistic.

To some extent following early Shaykhī and other Islāmic perspectives the Bāb and Bahā'u'llāh sometimes explicitly rejected Sufi doctrines. Like Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsā'ī (d.1826 C.E.) for example, the Bāb so championed the transcendent unknowability of God that pantheistic / monistic understandings of *wahdat al-wujūd* ("oneness of Being"), were explicitly rejected in his Persian *Equitable Tract* (*Sahīfa-yi 'adliyya*) (late 1847-early 1847 ; n.p.n.d. p.16). Traversing the seventh of the SV (*faqr-i haqīqī va fanā'*) Bahā'u'llāh similarly stated that "the mystic wayfarer leaveth behind him the stages of the oneness of Being and of witnessing (*wahdat-i wujūd va shuhūd*) and reacheth a oneness (*wahdat*) that is sanctified above these two stations (*dū maqām*). " (AQA. 3:133).

During his two year withdrawal in Iraqi Kurdistan (1854-1856) Bahā'u'llāh came into contact with leading figures of various important and widespread Sufi orders (see GPB:122): more specifically, the Naqshbandīyya (founded by Bahā' al-Dīn Muhammad Naqshband [1317-1389 C.E.]); the Qādirīyya (founded by 'Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī [c. 1077-1165 C.E.]) and the Khālidī (founded by Diyā' al-Dīn Khālid al-Shahrazūrī [1776-1827 C.E.], a sub-brotherhood of the Naqshbandī order) Orders. He commented

⁴ During the later years of His ministry Bahā'u'llāh spoke positively of the more pragmatic dimensions of human activity; at one time stating, for example, that the reality of "geometry" (*handasah*) is to be preferred to "all the books of the gnostics" (or mystics, *jamī 'kutub-i 'urufā'*) AK 3:353 see also *ibid* p.350ff.

orally on "abstruse passages" of the massive magnum opus of the Great Shaykh, Shaykh Muhyī al-Dīn ibn al-'Arabī (1165-1240 C.E.), the "Meccan Revelations ['Openings']" (*al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyya*) and composed several important Arabic and Persian poetical Sufi-style writings, i.e. *al-Qasīda al-warqā'iyya* ("The Ode of the Dove") and *Saqī az ghayb-i baqā'* ("The Cupbearer of the Subsistence Unseen").

Whilst living in Baghdad between 1856 and 1863 Bahā'u'llāh also came into contact with and was visited by Sufis belonging to the abovementioned (and possibly other) Sufi orders. In one of his Tablets concerning esotericists (*ahl-i bātin*) he refers to Qādirī Sufis and to an ascetic episode which he witnessed in Baghdad (MA 4:31) -- Jīlānī's tomb is situated in Baghdad.

The SV of Bahā'u'llāh is a largely Persian epistle written in response to a letter received from a certain Shaykh Muhyī al-Dīn, a *qadī* ("judge") of Khāniqīn which is situated near the Iraqi-Persian border to the northeast of Baghdad. This Shaykh was evidently a leading member of a Sufi order who, in his letter to Bahā'u'llāh, alluded to his having attained an elevated spiritual condition; *fanā'* = "passing away" from worldly reality; the "death [of the lower self]" and *baqā'* = "subsistence" or permanent mystical eternity (see note on 03:4). Exactly which Sufi order he belonged to is not directly stated in the SV or in other Bahā'ī sources known to the present writer. Internal evidence could be taken to suggest that he was, like the recipient of the *Four Valleys*, a prominent member of the Qādirī Sufi order -- the abovementioned order founded by 'Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī.⁵

Written in the classical form of the 'Seven Valleys'⁶ this significant item of Bahā'ī Scripture is markedly influenced by such Sufi texts as *The Conference [Logic] of the Birds (mantiq al-tayr)* -- also, according to some manuscripts, entitled the "Seven Valleys" -- of Farīd al-Dīn 'Attar (1140-1221 C.E.). Within it Bahā'u'llāh sets forth, from the Sufi-Bābī perspective, the various stages which mystic wayfarers might go through in their quest for and ultimate passing away, the mystical nullification of the lower self (= 'annihilation' (*fanā'*)).

As will be demonstrated, the SV is significantly influenced by both Shī'ī and Sufi theology / theosophy as well as by Bābī doctrine. Many lines within it could be understood in varying ways depending upon whether it is primarily viewed from a Shī'ī, Sufi, Bābī or modern Bahā'ī perspective -- not that it is always possible to distinguish these vantage points. The provisional retranslation (see below) is

⁵ On the Qādirīyya Sufi order see, for example, Khalīq Ahmad Nizami, "The Qādirīyyah Order" in IS.1:6-25 [=Ch.1] and the works listed in the notes (pp. 24-25)

⁶ A sevenfold scheme or series of stages in the ethico-spiritual journey towards God is well attested in the history of Judaeo-Christian and Islamic literatures. The literary form of the "Seven Valleys" has been frequently utilized in the history of Sufi mystical literatures. For further details see on I:7 (forthcoming in BSB).

influenced by developed Bahā'ī doctrine; though not, I hope, so as to obscure its original Sufi-Bābī meaning. The notes / commentary reproduced below only touch the surface of the myriad possible senses within the SV. Established Sufistic terminology is identified and commented upon as is recognizably central Bābī language.

On one occasion 'Abdu'l-Bahā' summed up the ethical significance of the SV when he stated :

*"It is my hope..that you may search out your own imperfections and not think of the imperfections of anybody else. Strive with all your power to be free from imperfections. Heedless souls are always seeking faults in others. What can the hypocrite know of others' faults when he is blind to his own? This is the meaning of the Seven Valleys. It is a guide for human conduct..."*⁷

In his *God Passes By* (1944) Shoghi Effendi refers to the *Seven Valleys* as Bahā'u'llāh's "*greatest mystical composition..*", a composition "*in which He describes the seven stages which the soul of the seeker must needs traverse ere it can attain the object of its existence*" (GPB:140). Without at this point going into details, the *Seven valleys* (*haft vādī*), which are all religious / spiritual or ethico-mystical states of being, commence with the "Valley of Search" (*talab*) and culminate in the seventh "Valley of [mystical] Poverty (*faqr-i haqīqī*) and the Spiritual Death of the limited self (*va fanā*)" (see on 01:7 [forthcoming]).

The exact date of the writing of the SV is not precisely known. It was apparently some time after Bahā'u'llāh's return from Iraqi Kurdistan (Sulaymaniyya) to Baghdad i.e. after 19 March 1856; most probably c.1857-1858 (1274-1275. A.H.?).⁸

MANUSCRIPT TEXTS OF THE SV

Unpublished manuscript copies of the Persian text of the SV can be found in a variety of locations.

Manuscript texts include:

⁷ From a talk delivered at Hotel Victoria, Boston Mass. USA. on 25th July 1912, Notes by Edna McKinney: in PUP.p.244, also SW. Vol. VII/12.p.116.

⁸ See for example, Ishrāq Khavarī, *Ganj-i Shāygan* (Tehran: BPT., 124 Badī') pp.17-18; [cf. *The Bahā'ī World* Vol.XIV. p.625]; A. Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahā'u'llāh* Vol.1 (George Ronald, Oxford 1974) pp.96-103; H. Balyuzi, *Bahā'u'llāh, King of Glory* (George Ronald: Oxford 1980) pp.161-3.

- Iran National Bahā'ī Archives [= INBA.] Xerox Collection Vol. 33 [= *Majmū'a-yi āthār-i qalam-i a'lā* Qudrat 133 Badī']: 101-133 .
- INBA. Xerox Collection Vol. 35 [= *Majmū'a-yi āthār-i qalam-i a'lā* Jamāl 133 Badī']: 293ff.
- British [Museum] Library MS. Or. 3116 [Kremer, no. 126] foll. 67-77 (see Rieu 1895:7).

PRINTED TEXTS OF THE SV.

The Persian text of the SV has several times been printed. It is to be found, for example, in *Haft Vādī*, *Chahār Vādī* , (Cairo 1332. A.H. [1913-14 C.E.] and in *Athār Qalam-i A'lā* Vol.3. (Bahā'ī Publishing Trust: Iran 121 Badī' [1965-6 C.E.] Reprinted, New Delhi : nd.) pp.92-137 (It is this text which has been translated below).⁹ The Persian Text of the SV and the *Four Valleys* , along with a German and an English translation, is published in, [Bahā'u'llāh] *Haft-Vādī. Chihār-Vādī [sic] The Seven Valleys. The Four Valleys Die sieben Täler. Die vier Täler.* (Hofheim-Langenhain: Bahā'ī Verlag 1988 = 145 [Badī' ISBN 3-87037-941-3]. The Persian text occupies Pt.3 pp.1-66 [end of vol. Persian pagination], the German Pt.1 pp. 1-54, and the English Pt.2 pp. 1-55. The translation is that of AKK + Gail and the German a translation of the English.

Although the SV is often found in the original Persian or in English translation along with the *Four Valleys* (*Chahār vādī*) of Bahā'u'llāh they are two entirely distinct works. In a communication of Shoghi Effendi printed at the beginning of the later editions of the AKK + Marzieh Gail translation of the SV we read: " *Seven Valleys and Four Valleys should be regarded as independent Tablets, as they were revealed to different persons.*" While the SV was addressed to a Shaykh Muhyī al-Dīn the *Four Valleys* was written sometime later for the Qādirī Sufī leader Shaykh 'Abd al-Rahmān (GPB:122; also of Karkūk in Iraqī Kurdistan ?).

⁹ Sulaymān Khān-i Tunukābunī better known as Jamāl-i Effendi (d.'Akkā' 1898) was an important Bahā'ī teacher who made a missionary trip to India at the direction of Bahā'u'llāh in 1878. Intermittently he remained many years in the Indian subcontinent where, dressed and living as a Dervish, he assiduously promoted the Bahā'ī Faith. In order to bring the Bahā'ī Faith to the attention of his associates and the people at large he apparently (?) had the SV of Bahā'u'llāh printed under his own name.

EUROPEAN TRANSLATIONS OF THE SV ¹⁰

As far as I am aware the earliest western language translation of the SV was that of the first French Bahā'ī Hippolyte Dreyfus (1873-1928 C.E.), ¹¹ *Les Sept Vallées*, Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1905. It is his translation which is included in H. Dreyfus and M. Habib-Ullah Chirazi [= Mīrzā Habīb Allāh Shīrāzī] trans. ... *Haft Vadi (Les Sept Vallées)*..[etc.], Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1905 (116 pp.). The same translation is likewise published in the first volume of Dreyfus' three volume compilation of his French translations of Tablets of Bahā'u'llāh, *L'Oeuvre de Bahā'u'llāh*, (Vol.I. pp. 25-60) Paris: Ernest Leroux 1923. The Dreyfus translation has been many times republished; including one edition brought out by the American Bahá'í Publishing Committee : Wilmette, Illinois, 1944 [3+1;5-44 pp.]. In 1933 the covenant breaker Julie Chanler translated -- with the advice of Mīrzā Ahmad Sohrab -- Dreyfus' French translation of the SV into English: Julie Chanler (trans.), *Seven Valleys* (New York: New History Foundation) 1933 [37 pp.].

The second European translation of the SV was the 1906 English translation of Ali Kuli-Khan (c. 1879 - 1966), ¹² *The seven valleys revealed by Baha'U'llah at Bagdad, in answer to questions asked by Sheik Abdur Rahman, [sic] a great Mohammedan mystic Sufi leader*, Bahai Publishing Society, Chicago 1906, [55+1 pp.]. Another edition of this translation was published by the Chicago 'Bahai Publishing Society' some time between 1906 and 1914 [n.d.] and yet again in 1914 [1, 55, 1 pp.]. It was also published by the New York Bahá'í Publishing Committee in 1936 & 1937 [60 pp.]. There were doubtless other printings as well. It is, furthermore, partially or fully published in, among Bahā'ī publications:

- Eric Hammond (Ed), *The Splendour of God, Being Extracts from the Sacred Writings of the Bahais* (Wisdom of the East Series, London, John Murray, 1909 (1st. Ed.), pp. 53-84 -- including extracts from 'Ali Kuli Khan's 1906 translation, a brief introduction, and some notes.
- Horace Holley (Ed), *Bahá'í Scriptures*.. Brentano's New York 1923, pp.? -- ?; 2nd Ed., Bahai Publishing Committee New York 1928 pp. 159-171.

¹⁰ The bibliographical information given below is largely based upon information contained in the *National Union Catalogue of Pre-1956 Imprints* (London & Wisbech: Balding and Mansell Information / Publishing Ltd. 1969) entry Bahā Ullāh Vol.30 pp.355-360; William Collins, *Bibliography of English-Language Works on the Bábí and Bahá'í Faiths 1844-1985*(George Ronald, Oxford 1990) I, The Writings of Bahá'u'llāh I.II2 -> I.II7. There also exist, it should be noted, a number of translations of the SV into non-European languages -- i.e. an Urdu translation published in Bombay prior to 192? (cf. BW. III:242) + 1929 (BW IV:304) -- as well as several made directly from the AKK [+Gail] translation into European and non-European languages (as well as a Braille rendering).

¹¹ On February 27th 1929 Shoghi Effendi wrote an 'Appreciation' of Hippolyte Dreyfus-Barney. This is printed in *The Bahá'í World* Vol. III (April 1928-April 1930) Reprint. Wilmette, Illinois : Bahá'í Publishing Trust 1980.

¹² On 'Ali-Kuli Khan see Marzieh Gail's 'In Memoriam' article in *The Bahá'í World Vol. XIV 1963-1968* (Haifa: The Universal House of Justice, 1974) pp. 351-353 and his daughter's biography, *Summon up Remembrance* (Oxford: George Ronald) 1987 and *The Arches of the Years* (Oxford: George Ronald) 1991.

An early 'unpublished' attempt at commenting on this English translation, it may be noted here, is mentioned in the American *National Union Catalogue: Pre-1956 Imprints*, Vol I. p. 503; namely, 'H.B. Hasting, *Seven Valleys. An attempt at an interpretatio[n] for western readers of some of the oriental imagery of seven valleys, by Abdel Baha Based on a translation by Ali Kuli Khan, 1905* Washington, printed as MSS [not published] by H.B.H. [Autograph note on cover title = " H.B.H. Hasting '91 (Harv.)] 1934. [Has autograph annotations and corrections]. Pamphlet 16 pp. Colophon: Printed by Sidney H. Hastings, Saugus, Mass. (Label pasted over: Abdel Baha, in cover title, reads: Baha'U'llah.)' (sic).

Yet another, even earlier work, very loosely oriented around Bahā'u'llāh's SV in English translation, and expressive of the American cultic milieu from which certain American Bahā'īs of the early period entered the Bahā'ī movement, is W.W. Harmon's, *The Seven Principles of the Microcosm and the Macrocosm applied to the disclosures of Baha'o'llah in the Book of the Seven Valleys*, arranged for students by W.W. Published by the author 1915 (59 pp.). 'Abdu'l-Bahā' had apparently encouraged Harmon to write a book on 'Divine Illumination' (in America in August 1912) and subsequently approved of his book which bore this title in a letter to him dated April 20th 1914 (refer, Harmon, 1915a p.8). His *Seven Principles*.. was written shortly after his *Divine Illumination* and contains a fair amount of occult and metaphysical speculation the like of which led certain prominent American Bahā'īs to accuse him of heterodoxy or of violating the Bahā'ī covenant.

A revised edition of Ali Kuli-Khan's 1906 translation of the SV, accomplished with the aid of his daughter Marzieh Gail, was published in 1945 along with Bahā'u'llāh's *Four Valleys (Chahār vādī)*. It has gone through numerous printings:

□ Ali-Kuli-Khan & Marzieh Gail (tr.), *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, Wilmette, Illinois, Bahā'ī Publishing Committee 1945, 1948, 1952, 1954... [62 pp.]

Certain printings of this revised edition contain a 28 page introduction by Robert L. Gulick, Jr. This introduction to the revised translation was itself revised and printed in editions published subsequent to 1975. Once again this revised translation has again been printed in a large number of compilations of Bahā'ī sacred writings.¹³

¹³ Of the easily obtainable compilations of Bahā'ī sacred writings which include the SV in its revised 2nd-3rd editions the following may be noted:

[National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the British Isles], *The Bahá'í Revelation*, London 1955/ Rev.Ed.1970 [SV =] pp.117-137.

[National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of India] *Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, A Compilation* (New Delhi: BPT 1986) [SV=] pp.1-20.

A 3rd revised edition of the AKK-Gail translation appeared in 1978 and 1984..1986> published by the Bahá'í Publishing Trust (Wilmette, Illinois, xiii [again with a shorter revised introduction by R. Gulick Jr] 65 pp. A largely identical 4th revised edition was published in 1987/91 by the same publishers.

The Oxford (England) based OneWorld Publications Ltd. has recently published *The Seven Valleys of Bahá'u'lláh* (Oxford: OneWorld Publications Ltd. 1992). This is basically another edition of the AKK+Gail translation (4th Ed. pp.13-35) with slight 'revisions', a new six page introduction (pp.5-11) and appended notes (92 Notes [pp.59-81] largely as in the AKK+Gail American editions with a 'Preface to Notes' [pp.59-60]). The U.K. Bahá'í Publishing Trust has likewise included the AKK + Gail 4th edition of the SV of Bahá'u'lláh in its commemorative centenary publication series "Nightingale Books" (= *The Seven Valleys* [London:] Nightingale Books, 1992) with a new very brief introduction and seventy five, occasionally revised, footnotes (cf. on these recent printings the review section below).

PROVISIONAL TRANSLATION : PROLEGOMENON 01¹⁴

[¹] Praise be to God Who hath caused Being to be made manifest from non-being; [²] inscribed upon the tablet of Man [kind] something of the ancient mysteries [³] and taught him that which he knew not of the Exposition. [⁴] He made Him a Perspicuous Book unto such as believed and surrendered themselves; [⁵] caused Him to witness the creation of all things in this black and ruinous age [⁶] and to speak forth from the Apex of Eternal Subsistence with a Wondrous Voice in the Illustrious Temple. [⁷] This to the end that all may testify within themselves, through soulful experience at the level of the theophany of their Lord, that there is none other God save Him. [⁸] All souls may assuredly accomplish this and thus win their way to the Summit of Spiritual Realities such that none shall witness a single thing but that they shall see God therein.

¹⁴ In this provisional [re-] translation the English text is divided up into paragraphs which are numbered from 01 (= the prolegomenon or 'introduction') and loosely sectioned or 'versified' for the sake of the commentary. The paragraphing largely follows that of AKK + Gail (also taking into account that of certain of the various published and unpublished versions of the *Haft vādī*).

THE ARABIC TEXT OF THE FIRST PARAGRAPH OF THE PROLEGOMENON (01) TO THE SEVEN VALLEYS (*HAFT VĀDĪ*) AS PRINTED IN *ATHĀR-I QALAM-I A'ĀLĀ* (New Delhi: BPT, n.d. [= Rep. of Ed. Tehran 121 BE.]) Vol. 3:92-3.

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هفت وادی

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الحمد لله الذي نظم الوجود من العدم ورقم على لوح الأنا
من أسرار القدم وحلمه من البيان ما لا يعلم جملة كتاباً مبيناً
لمن آمن واستسلم وأشهد خلق كل شئ في هذا الزمان المظلم الصلح
وانطقه في قطب البقاء على لحن البديع في الهيكل المكرم لشهد كل
في نفسه بنفسه في مقام تجسدي ربه بانه لا اله الا هو صلح الكل بذلك

٩٣

الى ذروة اتحاط حتى لا يشا به احد شيئاً الا قد يرى الله فيه

COMMENTARY

PROLEGOMENON 01 WITH SELECTED TRANSLITERATION

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

[1] Praise be to God Who hath caused Being (*wujūd*) to be made manifest from non-being (*‘adam*);^[2] inscribed upon the tablet of man [kind] (*lawh al-insān*) something of the timeless mysteries (*asrār al-qidam*)^[3] and taught him that which he knew not of the Exposition (*al-bayān*).^[4] He made Him a Perspicuous Book (*kitāb^{an} mubīn^{an}*) unto such as believed and surrendered themselves;^[5] caused Him to witness the creation of all things (*kull^u shay[‘]*) in this black and ruinous age^[6] and to speak forth from the Apex of Eternal Subsistence (*qutb al-baqā’*) with a Wondrous Voice (*al-lahn al-badī‘*) in the Illustrious Temple (*haykal al-mukarram*).^[7] This to the end that all may testify within themselves, through soulful experience (*fī nafsihi bi-nafsihi*) at the level (*fī maqām*) of the theophany of their Lord (*tajallī rabbihi*), that there is none other God save Him.^[8] All souls may assuredly accomplish this and thus win their way to the Summit of Spiritual Realities (*dharwat al-haqā’iq*) such that none shall witness a single thing but that they shall see God therein.

EXPOSITORY SUMMARY

Opening with the *basmalah*, (see below) this first paragraph of the prolegomenon to the SV (= 01)¹, highlights the marvellous divine providence. God created all things including humanity, archetypal "man" (*insān*), the quintessence of existence, whom He, from eternity, endowed with innate spiritual powers and taught articulate speech or expository mysteries. He likewise, from time immemorial, actualized the pre-existent Logos, the supernal, the "Perfect Man" or Manifestation of God through whom ordinary human beings inwardly experience God and realize spiritual progress. God made the Manifestation of God a lucid "Book", the communicator of His revelation to faithful human souls as one who reveals verses from the very apex of guidance. He enabled Him, as One born on earth like an ordinary man, to witness a "new creation", to inaugurate a new religious dispensation in the corrupt latter days, through the power of divine revelation. This that all souls might draw nigh unto God and so thoroughly experience Him that they vision Him in all things.

¹ In the remainder of this article 'verses' within paragraph 01 will largely be indicated within square brackets. i.e. [3] or SV [3] = 01:3 = 'verse' or phrase 3 of paragraph 1 of the prolegomenon of the SV.

The opening paragraph of the SV could be read in several ways: it is sometimes viewed as referring wholly to the Manifestation of God Who is the "Perfect Man". Alternatively, for example, it can be seen to refer to both the prototypical-archetypal ordinary human ("man") as well as to the "Perfect Man" (= Manifestation of God). I am inclined to this latter perspective but do not see other perspectives as irrelevant or meaningless. It seems to me, in other words, to be primarily archetypal "man" (= humankind) who is initially indicated. Subsequently, the "Man" intended is the "Perfect Man" who is for Bahā'ī the Manifestation of God. This since [2] and [3 cf. Qur'ānic ref.] seem to relate most appropriately to fallible human beings (see below). Then, it is at [4], [5] and [6] that the person and role of the Manifestation of God as supernal "Man" (*insān*), is primary. The "Perfect Man" in Sufism may be both a prototype of the human self as well as this "self" at a stage of perfection or completion -- the macrocosm or the Manifestation of God (cf. Chittick 1979). It could also be, since the SV was written during the Bābī dispensation, that the "Man", the "Perfect Man" intended here is the Bāb. The opening paragraph ultimately revolves around the centrality of the most elevated Guide, *qutb* (see below), the "Perfect Man" and Manifestation of God (= the Bāb?) who enables such as posses deep faith to see the Divine in all things.

THE BASMALAH

Being addressed to a Sufi Muslim it is fitting that the SV is headed with the *basmalāh* (= *bism Allāh al-rahman al-rahīm* trans. = "In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate"). This formula heads all but the ninth of the 114 sūras of the Qur'ān and is uttered before significant literary, legal and other Muslim endeavours (e.g. as a "grace" before eating). Diverse transformations of the *basmalah* head many of the writings and Tablets of the Bāb and Bahā'u'llāh. Both the Bāb and 'Abdu'l-Bahā' wrote detailed commentaries on this important 19 lettered Islamic formula (details cannot be gone into here). The invocation of various of the names of God remains a significant act in the Bābī and Bahā'ī religions.

BEING (*WUJŪD*) & NON-BEING (*'ADAM*)

This opening sentence has to do with the origin of existence or primordial creation. I have followed AKK^{2f} in translating *wujūd* as "Being". Shoghi Effendi often translated *wujūd* as "Being" when it occurred (some 14 times) in the opening address ("O SON OF BEING!") of many of the Arabic *Hidden Words* (*Kalimat-i maknūnih* ; see 5, 6, 11, 12, etc). *Wujūd* could also have been translated

"Existence" (i.e. all that exists or is found; as AKK 1906). It is a non-Qur'ānic term of central importance in Islāmic mysticism and metaphysics; in Islāmic philosophy-ontology. Grappling with the metaphysics of existence (*wujūd*) was an intellectual endeavour of great moment within Islāmic philosophy : such, for example, is reflected in the opening sections of Sadrā al-Dīn Shīrāzī's magisterial *Four Journeys.. (al-Asfār al-Arba'a.* c. 1628 C.E.). In SV [1] the term probably has ontological implications or indicates all that is -- both physical and spiritual. The supreme greatness and power of God is underlined in the light of His originating "Being" [=] "Existence" from non-existence, nothingness, nihility or non-being (*adam*).²

Numerous Sufi writings contain cosmogonic speculations; reflections on the origin of existence and the various meanings of creation. In 'Abd al-Karīm ibn Ibrāhīm al-Jīlī's (d. c. 1410 C.E.?) significant work, *"The Perfect Man endowed with the Gnosis of the Last and of the First Things" (al-Insān al-kāmil fī ma'nifat al-awākhir wa'l-awā'il)*, for example, there exists a section on *Quadrat* (= 'God's essential Power' / 'Providence' / 'Creation'). Therein a statement of Ibn al-'Arabī (d.1240) is registered which denies God's creation of "things" (*al-ashyā'*) from "non-existence" (*al-'adam*), having it that the realization of existence involved a transition from "theoretical existence" (*wujūd 'ilmī*) unto "real existence" (*wujūd 'ainī*). Jīlī comments that the "Great Shaykh" intended by his statement that "existence" was initially (before creation was concretized) presupposed in God's primordial knowledge (*wujūd al-ashyā' fī 'ilmihī awwal^{an}*). There was thus never a time when "existence [things]" was not.³

As developed Bahā'ī cosmology does not reckon that all existence was realized from absolute nothingness, I have preferred (in the above translation) the greater ambiguity of the term "non-being" (rather than "nothingness" [as in AKK]). Having said this, it should be remembered that this opening section of the SV is not primarily cosmological; rather, the bounties of the Divine Providence are outlined.

² On *wujūd* see further for example, the Persian poet and Sufi 'Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī's, *Treatise on Existence [Risālah fī al-Wujūd*, written in the 15th century CE.]. The Arabic text is printed, translated and introduced by N. Heer in P. Morewedge (Ed.) 1979: 223ff. For further details see also MuS: No 664: 1130-1137; Chittick, 1989 index esp. 80ff.

³ See al-Jīlī, *al-Insān al-kāmil.* , 82. Izutsu, 1984 Ch.XIII:201 on Creation throws light on the cosmogonic teaching of Ibn 'Arabī; consider the following words, "It will be evident, then, that in Ibn 'Arabī's thought, the principle of *creatio ex nihilo* holds true. But what makes his thesis fundamentally different from the ordinary Islamic *creatio ex nihilo* is that the *nihil*, for Ibn 'Arabī, is not a total unconditional 'non-existence', but 'non-existence' in the particular sense of something being as yet non-existent as an empirical or phenomenal thing. What he regards as *nihil* is 'existence' on the level of the intelligibles, or - which comes to the same thing - in the Consciousness of God. Ontologically, his *nihil* is the 'possible' (*mumkin*), i.e., something that has the power (or possibility) to exist. The ordinary view which makes 'creation' a sort of Divine monodrama has its origin in the ignorance of the positive power to be attributed to the 'possibles'. All things, in Ibn 'Arabī's view, have enough power to come out from the concealment into the field of existence in response to the ontological Command of God."

Scriptural texts which imply creation *ex nihilo* (see Genesis 1: lff. and Qur'ānic parallels) are "true" but non-literally interpreted in developed Bahā'ī doctrine: see, for example, the Tablet of Bahā'u'llāh to ʿAbd al-Razzāq partially translated by Shoghi Effendi in *Gleanings*. LXXVIII and ʿAbdu'l-Bahā' SAQ Ch. 47 (= 'The Universe is without beginning'). Responding to a question about the words of Bahā'u'llāh, "Who out of utter nothingness" (outwardly implying that God created everything *ex nihilo*, from nothing), Shoghi Effendi wrote that,

"This statement in 'Gleanings', pp.64-5, *Who out of utter nothingness...*; [= XXVII, an untitled Tablet; Per. *haqīqat nīstī vā 'adam*] etc., should be taken in a symbolic and not a literal sense. It is only to demonstrate the power and greatness of God." (LG No.1603).

If understood in the light of contemporary Bahā'ī doctrine the opening words of the SV should be taken in a similar non-literal or symbolic manner consonant with Sufi spiritual hermeneutics (*ta'wīl*).

01:[2]

The implication in this phrase is that within the spiritual essence or reality of human beings -- the "tablet of man[kind]" -- are enshrined deep spiritual truths or mysteries : which can be realized by persons of true faith by virtue of the human potentiality determined by God from eternity. In view of his spiritual nature man is heir to timeless, [pre-] eternal truths. The human soul or reality was, from timeless ages past, intended to be a locus of spiritual mysteries.

TABLET (*LAWH*) OF MAN[KIND] (*INSĀN*)

The archetypal essence of human beings (and / or the pre-existent Being of the Manifestation of God) is referred to as a "tablet" ; that is, a panel or sheet on which writing may be inscribed. The word "Tablet", Arabic *lawh* (pl. *alwāh*) signifies (among other things) 'something written upon', a slate, slab, board, or tablet. It occurs five times in the Qur'ān : once in the singular and four times in the plural, cf. the Hebrew לוח, לחות (pl) = '(usually) a tablet of stone or wood' on which things may be written (i.e. the ten commandments, see Exodus 24:12; 31:18; 32:16ff; 34:1f, etc.). *Lawh* also refers to the planks (*dhāt alwāh*) from which Noah's ark was built (54:13 cf. Ezekiel 27:5 [Hebrew]) and indicates the heavenly *Tablet* on which the Qur'ān is inscribed, the *lawh mahfūz* ("preserved tablet" 85:22 cf. *Jubilees* chapters 3 & 5). In Qur'ān 7:145, 150, 154, *lawh* indicates written material in connection with the 'tablets of the

law' of Moses (for some details see A.J. Wensinck art. *LAWH* in SEI: 287-8 and A.J.Wensinck-[C.E. Bosworth] *LAWH* EI² 5:698). A. Jeffery, 1938, 253-4).⁴

Many of the writings of the Bāb and Bahā'u'llāh are referred to as "Tablets" (*alwāh*), primarily after the Biblical-Qur'ānic usage.⁵ They are written sacred revelations and more besides. At one point in his *Tablet of Wisdom (Lawh-i hikmat)* Bahā'u'llāh refers to the visionary appearance of divine inspiration in the form of an all-encompassing "tablet" (*lawh*). He also indicates the transcendental nature of the *Tablet of Wisdom* as a "document" (*lawh*) upon which all knowledge is inscribed, "This is a Tablet (*lawh*) wherein the Pen of the Unseen hath inscribed the knowledge of all that hath been and shall be." (trans. TB:149).⁶ Examples of the multifarious and extensive Bahā'ī uses of *lawh* cannot be fully discussed here.

Commenting on the significance of *lawh* in Sufi mysticism C.E. Bosworth writes: "In Sūfī mysticism and in esoteric philosophy and cosmology, the *lawh* has an important place... 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī... explains in his *al-insān al-kāmil* how God's creation is first given shape occultly in the divine knowledge, and only later given objective individualization by the pen of divine intelligence, which distinguishes the created from the Creator and imprints its form of existence on the Tablet as the mind imprints ideas on the soul... Esoteric works identified various forms of the Tablet with the primal intelligence (as above), the *aqḥ al-awwal*; with the expressive, universal soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqa al-kullīya*) = the preserved tablet: with the particularizing soul; with the *lawh al-hayūlā* or material tablet, which receives the forms of the

⁴ Summing up one dimension of Muslim opinion as to the significance of *lawh* it has been written, "In the commentaries on sūra XC VII, I, the tablet is again mentioned: "We sent it down (sc. the Qur'ān) in the night of the decree"; this refers either to the first revelation sent to Muḥammad or to the descent of the Qur'ān from the tablet which is above the seventh heaven, to the lowest. The tablet as the original copy of the Qur'ān is thus identical with *umm al-kitāb* [= "the Mother Book"]

"The decisions of the divine will are also written on the *lawh* with the pen, *qalam*. and the particulars contained as a whole in God's consciousness are transmitted by this last, so that on the *lawh* are inscribed the archetypes of all things, past, present and future. The popular mind represented by al-Bayhaqī, as created from a white pearl, with its upper and lower surfaces of jacynth.." (Wensinck-Bosworth EI² 5:698 [translit. altered]). In this latter connection we read at the beginning of the *Qisas al-'anbiyā'* of al-Kisā'ī, "Ibn Abbas said: The first thing God created was the Preserved Tablet, on which was preserved all that has been and ever shall be until the Day of Resurrection. What is contained thereon no one knows but God. It is made of white Pearl." (al-Kisā'ī trans. Thackston 1978:5).

⁵ The word *lawh* was used of post-Qur'ānic written works prior to the nineteenth century Bābī-Bahā'ī usage. Certain, for example, of the short Arabic / Persian treatises of Shihāb al-Dīn Yahyā Suhrawardī (executed 1191 C.E.) – the founder of the Ishrāqī "Illuminationist" school – dedicated to 'Imād al-Dīn, are referred to in this way (the four "Tablets" of the *Kitāb al-alwāh al-'Imādīya* / *alwāh-i 'Imādī*). Such post-Qur'ānic usage doubtless also lies behind the extensive Bābī and Bahā'ī adoption of such terminology.

⁶ For further details see Mazandārānī, AA 5:74-81.

supersensory world..." (EI² 5:698 [transliteration altered]).

In mystical language the archetypal reality of "man" (members of the human race) is pictured as a "tablet"; an area upon which eternal mysteries were inscribed by God. The great 'Ibn 'Arabī in his (?) *Sufistic Lexicon* (henceforth = S.Lex.) (*Istilāh al-sūfiyyah*) defines *al-lawh* as "The place of writing down (*tadwīn*) and recording (*taftīr*) what is fixed in time until a known limit." (Jurjānī p.295 trans. p.46). In the light of this definition it could be suggested that something of the mysteries of human capacity, fate, destiny or spirituality were set down by God in primordial times.

In SV [2] God is said to have written on the "Tablet of Man" in a similar manner to which He is reckoned to have written all mysteries on the "Mother Book" (*umm al-kitāb*) or "Preserved Tablet" (*lawh mahfūz*) in various Islamic traditions and literatures. The human reality is the writing material on which the essential, the eternal characteristics of the human being, are set forth. Something of the divine mysteries were written upon the locus, the reality of man .

MAN[KIND] (*INSĀN*)

The Arabic word *insān*, translated here as "man [kind]", usually indicates human beings collectively. It could equally correctly --- depending on one's interpretation -- have been translated "Man", "humanity" or the like. *Insān* occurs more than sixty times in the Qur'ān (see Kassis, *Concordance*: 170-171) and, according to some authorities, is the title of its 76th sūra (*al-insān* = "Man / Mankind").⁷

In Sufi texts *al-insān* is used in many different contexts and with a multitude of significances. It can refer to the ordinary human being or to a large number of categories of "man" spilling over into cosmological Being / Reality; the microcosmic or macrocosmic universe and more besides. i.e. archetypal man, "Primordial Man", "Universal Man", the "Perfect Man" (*al-insān al-kāmil*). The figure of the "Perfect Man" was perhaps first spoken about by Ibn 'Arabī (d.1250) though his reflections mirror such earlier speculations as are found in Zoroastrian (Gayomart), Hermetic-Gnostic (Urmensch/ Primal Man), Jewish Kabbalistic (Adam Qadmon) and other writings. Much has been written about this figure.⁸ Succinctly summing up something of Ibn 'Arabī's view of the "Perfect Man" Chittick writes, "The Perfect Man, a key

⁷ An excellent survey of Qur'ānic and other Islāmic understandings of "man" *insān* is contained in the article under this heading in EI² by R. Arnaldez (Vol.3:1237-1239).

⁸ On the Sufi notion of the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*), see R.A. Nicholson, *AL-INSĀN AL-KĀMIL* in SEI:170-1; Takeshita 1987; Chittick 1979 ; MuS : No. 63 (p.150) -- No. 68 (p.170); See also Lawson [article in this BSB] for aspects of the influence of this motif in the Bāb's tafsīr.

term in Ibn 'Arabī's vocabulary, is the all-comprehensive engendered existent (*al-kawn al-jāmi'*) discussed at the beginning of the *Fusūs [al-Hikām "Bezels of Wisdom"]*. Ontologically the origin and goal of the cosmos, he is also the model of spiritual perfection and the guide to men... the "Perfect Man is both all-comprehensive," in the sense that he embraces all realities, and "engendered," that is, he belongs to the world of created things, at least in his outward dimension. If the Perfect Man is the ontological prototype of both the cosmos and the individual man, he is also man perfected, the human state realized in its full breadth and depth..." (Chittick 1991 pp. 65-66). At one point in his *Meccan Openings (Futuhāt al-Makkiyyah)* the "Great Shaykh" enumerates three categories of "human beings" in existent reality: "There is naught in existence (*al-wujūd*) except three "human beings" (*unāsī*); that is, (1) the Universal, Most-Eternal, Primordial Man (*al-insān al-awwāl al-kull al-aqdam*); (2) the Cosmic Man (*al-insān al-'ālam*) and the (3) Adamite Man (*al-insān al-ādāmī*)." (3:331 cited MuS:153). *Insān* then, can signify ordinary man but can sometimes -- at the same time -- signify gradations up to the "Perfect Man", the cosmos and beyond. If SV [3] is meditated upon in the light of the multifarious Sufi senses of *insān* useful insights may result. Line [3] could, as suggested then, be read as referring to the archetypal ('ordinary') "man" and then (from [4]f.) refer to the truly "Perfect Man" (= the Bāb?), the Manifestation of God through whom ordinary mortals experience God.⁹

As in the Qur'ān, there are some Bahā'ī texts in which *insān* refers to archetypal or ordinary human beings and others in which this word designates the Manifestation[s] of God; occasionally, it seems, to both archetypal "man" and the "Man", the Manifestation of God. The Manifestations of God are only transiently members of the human race; human beings as Divine Messengers.¹⁰ Among those texts in which *insān* refers to ordinary human beings is the following well-known passage from Bahā'u'llāh's *Lawh-i Maqṣud*, "Man (*insān*) is the supreme talisman. Lack of a proper education hath, however

⁹ From the Bābī-Bahā'ī point of view, as noted, the truly "Perfect Man" is the Manifestation of God. He is different from ordinary members of the human race. A human being cannot become the ontologically different, perfect Manifestation of God (*mazhar-i illāhī*). Bahā'īs reckon that humanity is imperfect and will eternally remain so; ever striving towards perfection and God.

¹⁰ *Insān* is used in the opening addresses of many of the Arabic "Hidden Words" (no less than 29 of them; see 3, 4, 14, 17, 24, etc.). It is translated "Man" by Shoghi Effendi. He was several times asked about the address "O SON OF MAN!" in certain "Hidden Words". On one occasion in 1935 he wrote to the prominent Bahā'ī, Lady Sara Blomfield (d. 1939) :

"As to your second question concerning those passages in the 'Hidden Words' in which Bahā'u'llāh refers to man as 'Son of Spirit', 'Son of Existence', 'Son of Humanity' etc., the word son used in this connection is a kind of collective noun, meaning mankind and has, therefore, no connotation of any sex differentiation between man and woman whatever." (LG:1634)

Linguistically, neither the reference to "Man[kind]" (*insān*) in the SV nor the addresses of the "Hidden Words" (the use of "SON" therein [= Ar. *ibn* ; Per. *pesar*]) have sexist implications.

deprived him of that which he doth inherently possess...Regard man (*insān*) as a mine rich in gems..." (Gl. CXXII:258-9). Reminiscent of the Sufi applications of the epithet "Perfect Man" to the advanced gnostic, Bahā'u'llāh in his *Kitāb-i Īqān* alludes to Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kāzim as "Perfect Man" (*insān-i kāmīl* KI:51 tr. p.42 [66]). 'Abdu'l-Bahā uses the term "Perfect Man" of the ideal human being and of the Manifestation of God in his "Some Answered Questions" and elsewhere.¹¹

There are, as mentioned then, Bahā'ī scriptural texts in which *insān* refers to the supremely "Perfect Man", the superhuman Manifestation of God, the infallible mediator between God and man. The following passage is from a prayer of Bahā'u'llāh translated by Shoghi Effendi and printed in *Prayers and Meditations* (No. 38:36-8). This meditation (as in the first few lines of the SV) comes to refer to the Manifestation of God, the Man (*insān*) supreme, several of whom are subsequently named:-

"Lauded be Thy name, O Lord my God ! I testify that Thou wast a hidden Treasure wrapped within Thine immemorial Being and an impenetrable Mystery enshrined in Thine own Essence. Wishing to reveal Thyself, Thou didst call into being the Greater and the Lesser Worlds,¹² and didst choose Man [insān] above all Thy creatures, and didst make Him a sign of both of these worlds, O Thou Who art our Lord, the Most Compassionate ! ...

Thou didst raise Him [= the Manifestation of God] up to occupy Thy throne before all the people of Thy creation. Thou didst enable Him to unravel Thy mysteries, and to shine with the lights of Thine inspiration and Thy Revelation, and to manifest Thy names and Thine attributes. Through Him Thou didst adorn the preamble of the book of Thy creation, O Thou Who art the Ruler of the universe Thou hast fashioned ! ...

¹¹ "This Man (*insān*) of whom we speak [the Manifestation of God] is not every man (*insān*); we mean the Perfect Man (*insān-i kāmīl*)" (SAQP. L:150 tr.196); "The splendours of the perfections, bounties and attributes of God shine forth and radiate from the reality of the Perfect Man (*insān-i kāmīl*) that is to say the Unique One, the Supreme Manifestation of God (*mazhar-i kullī-yi illāhī*)" (SAQP. LIX:168 tr. 222); "Man is the sum of creation and the Perfect Man is expression of the complete thought of the Creator, the Word of God." (PT:51). Materials revolving around or rooted in the Islāmic mystical doctrine of the *Insān kāmīl* occupy, directly or indirectly, an important position in the shaping of Bābī-Bahā'ī theophanology, the doctrine of the Manifestation of God (*mazhar-i illāhī*). Many statements of 'Abdu'l-Bahā about the Manifestation of God reflect Islāmic "Perfect Man" speculations.

¹² Cf. Shoghi Effendi's translation of a part of Bahā'u'llāh's *Commentary on a verse of Sa'dī (Tafsīr Bayt Sa'dī)* where it is indicated that "man" should be regarded as both the "lesser world" and the "greater world" (see Gl. CLXI:339).

At one time, Thou didst raise Him up, O my God, and didst attire Him with the ornament of the name of Him Who conversed with Thee (Moses) ...At another time, Thou didst adorn Him with the name of Him Who was Thy Spirit (Jesus) ...Again, Thou didst reveal Him, decked forth by the name of Him Who was Thy Friend (Muhammad)..."¹³

TIMELESS MYSTERIES (*ASRĀR AL-QIDAM*)

The word translated "mysteries" is the plural of *sirr* namely, *asrār*. Both the singular and the plural are very common in Islāmic esoterica, in Sufi texts and in Bābī-Bāhā'ī scripture. It often has the sense of 'secret' or 'mystery' as well as, on occasion, the inner dimension of human beings; their 'heart' or 'thought'.¹⁴ 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī (d.1330 CE.), the Shī'īte Sufī and important commentator on the theosophy of Ibn 'Arabī, in a version of the *Sufistic Lexicon (Istilahāt al-sūfiyya)* attributed to him, includes definitions of *sirr*, (Arabic p. 83 trans. No. 267 p.60) and gives a series of seven genitive expressions commencing with *sirr*; including *sirr al-qadr* = "what God discovers about every individual in Eternity..." (Arabic p. 85 trans. No. 272 p. 61; see Nos. 268-275 pp. 260-262).¹⁵

Qidam is a non-Qur'ānic Arabic word with a wide range of senses. Steingass has, "Preceding in point of time, being ancient, eternal; a going before; age; antiquity; olden time" (p.958). Wehr defines the word as follows, "time long since past, old times; remote antiquity, time immemorial; oldness, ancientness; infinite pre-existence, sempiternity, timelessness (of God); seniority.." (p.877). Reference to other dictionaries and to Sufi lexicons considerably extends the possible range of meanings. Ibn 'Arabī for example, seems to understand *qidam* as signifying something like 'immemorial determinism': "That which is fixed (*thabata*) for the servant in the knowledge of the Real (*'ilm al-Haqq* [God])." (Text, Jurjānī 1978, p. 297 trans.p. 50). The basic sense of *asrār al-qidam* would be something like ancient /

¹³ I am grateful to Khazeh Fananapazir for drawing this passage to my attention. *Prayers and Meditations* No. 38 can be profitably compared with the opening paragraph of the SV. The use of *insān* in both texts seems initially to refer to archetypal man and subsequently to the Manifestation[s] of God.

¹⁴ Defining *sirr* in his *Istilahāt al-Sūfiyyah* Ibn 'Arabī writes, " This term is applied [in several ways]. For instance one may say *sirr al-'ilm*, "the secret of the knowledge," meaning the reality that exists for one who possesses that knowledge; *sirr al-hāl*, "the secret of the state," meaning the realization (*ma'rifa*) intended by Allah for the one who experiences it; *sirr al-haqqāh*, "the secret of the reality," meaning that which symbolic expression (*ishārah*) touches upon". (p.36).

¹⁵ Various versions of a "*Sufistic Lexicon*" (*Istilahāt al-Sūfiyya*) are attributed to Ibn 'Arabī and to al-Qāshānī. The attribution of certain of them to these mystagogues is doubtful. I refer here to Qāshānī 1991 (text and trans. [in 28 chapters after the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet arranged in *abjad* order]).

timeless immemorial mysteries / secrets'. It could also be taken to imply that the secrets of the human reality / destiny were set down by God in ancient eternity.

The translation by AKK, "mysteries [secrets] of pre-existence", for *asrār al-qidam* was viewed by Shoghi Effendi (according to a letter dated January 5th, 1948) as "ambiguous" or misleading -- presumably as far as developed Bahā'ī doctrine goes --: "*Regarding your question concerning the passage in 'Seven Valleys' referring to pre-existence. This in no way presupposes the existence of the individual soul before conception. The term has not been absolutely accurately translated, and what is meant is that man's soul is the repository of the ancient divine mysteries of God.*" (*Bahā'ī Institutions, A Compilation*, Bahā'ī Publishing Trust, New Delhi 1973) p.116.

The above phrase then, has sometimes been read by modern Bahā'īs as implying that the doctrine of the (ontological) pre-existence of the human soul was taught by Bahā'u'llāh. 'Abdu'l-Bahā' held that the human essence or soul is phenomenal -- it has a beginning (but no end) in time. When created it is eternal or has an endless spiritual existence. Bahā'īs do not believe in the actual or ontological pre-existence of the human soul. Some modern Bahā'īs have even read a doctrine of reincarnation into [2]! -- a doctrine clearly rejected in Bahā'ī Scripture as well as in many orthodox Islāmic writings.¹⁶

Instead of "mysteries of pre-existence" I have translated "timeless mysteries"; indicating mysteries that have existed since ancient eternity and with which human souls were infused.

As already noted, SV [2] implies that it is ordinary human beings, the "tablet" of whose existence is endowed with something (*min*, not everything[?]) of the infinite divine mysteries and who are "taught" that which they "knew not" of the *bayān* ; see below on [3]). It seems probable then, to sum up, that in these opening lines it is personified, prototypical, or archetypal humankind (= "man") that is initially intended [1-3]. Later (from [4]f.) the significance seems to be focused upon, or primarily revolve around, the most elevated human being, the "Perfect Man" (*al-insān al-kāmil*) who for Bahā'īs is the Manifestation of God (see below on [4]).

¹⁶ It is the Bahā'ī belief that the human soul is individualized. Every human being has their own "soul" which is non-physical, beyond time and space, though (during earthly life) connected with the human body. Every human soul has its beginning at the moment of conception: the fertilization of the ovum of the mother by the sperm of the father. Thereafter it is eternal. Bahā'u'llāh and 'Abdu'l-Bahā' have explained that the soul of every individual is uniquely endowed with innate capacities.

BAYĀN

The verbal noun *bayān* occurs three times in the Qur'ān (3:138 [132]; 55:4 [3] and 75:19) where it means something like exposition, explanation or utterance / 'clear, articulate, distinctive speech'. In certain of these Qur'ānic texts, including those cited below (and the SV [3] ?), *bayān* has sometimes been understood to refer to man's being given the ability to coherently or clearly communicate in primordial times.

At [3] Bahā'u'llāh is very probably alluding to Qur'ān 96:5 and 55:3-4. The sūra of the "Blood-Clot" (*al-'alaq* 96), commonly reckoned the first sūra which God revealed to Muhammad in 610 CE., begins, "Recite: In the Name of Thy Lord who created (1), created Man (*al-insān*) of a blood-clot (2). Recite: And Thy Lord is the Most Generous (3), Who taught by the Pen (4), taught Man that which he knew not (*'allama'l-insān mā lam ya'lam*) (5)." (Tr. Arberry p. 651). These first five verses of sūra 96 refer to God's creation of humanity, *al-insān*. Any Muslim or Sufi reader of the opening lines (esp. 2-3) of the SV would immediately call these Qur'ānic verses to mind. SV [3a] could be seen as a slightly expanded or paraphrastic / expository quotation of Qur'ān 96:5 in the light of Qur'ān 55: [3-] 4. What God taught primordial man (*insān*) is spelled out; namely, the *bayān*.

Closely parallel then, to Qur'ān 96:1f is Qur'ān 55 (*sūra al-Rahmān*): 1f [esp. 3-4] : "The All-Merciful (1) has taught the Qur'ān (2). He created man (*khalaq al-insān*) (3) and taught Him *al-bayān* (*'allamahu al-bayān*)." Again, this verse would be called to mind by the Sufi reader of the SV. It is a verse apparently linked to 96:5. These two verses more or less comprise SV [3].

The Sunnī and Shī'ī Qur'ān commentaries give many interesting expository comments on [*al-*] *bayān* as it occurs in the various Qur'ān passages. Especially interesting in the light of SV [3]f. is Fayd-i Kāshānī's *Tafsīr al-Sāfī* in which a tradition about *al-bayān* (in Qur'ān 55:4, see below) from the sixth Imām, Ja'far al-Sādiq, is recorded which reads, "The *Bayān* is the Greatest Name (*al-ism al-a'zam*) through which he [primordial man] was taught all things (*kull shay'*)." (Vol. 5:106).

Within Bābī and Bahā'ī Scripture *bayān* can signify the whole corpus of the Bāb's revelations or a specific work (the *Bayān*) which exists in both a Persian and an Arabic version: cf. the word Qur'ān [= Recitation] which signifies God's revelations to the Prophet Muhammad. The word *Bayān*, in [3] might, in the light of the Qur'ānic verses referred to above, be indicative of humanity's being endowed with articulate speech / utterance in primordial times. Alternatively and in the light of the Bābī revelation, allusion may be made to the (or a major) revelation of Bahā'u'llāh's forerunner the Bāb. Shaykh Muhyī al-Dīn might have been inspired by [3] to think about the primordial truth and reality of the Bābī

revelation.

01:[4]

It has been stated earlier that from the Bābī-Bahā'ī point of view the truly "Perfect Man" is the unique Manifestation of God. As noted, it is at translation [4]f. that the significance seems to revolve around this most elevated "Man." A transition is made at [4] from reference to archetypal "man" (*insān*)¹⁷ to a focus upon the Manifestation of God. It is thus here that I have capitalized the object pronoun "Him" to make this transition clear. SV [4] touches upon the mediatory, educative and salvific role of the Divine Manifestation as a lucid, God-written Book. Souls receptive to the revelation or manifest "Book" of the "Perfect Man," are characterised by that full submission and humility that accompanies true faith. The Manifestation of God is the repository of spiritual Truth for such ordinary human beings as have "believed" (*āmama*) in God's Messenger and fully surrendered themselves (*istaslama*) to His [= God's] Will. True Sufism is not the abode of a spiritual elite but the paradise of the humble.

PERSPICUOUS BOOK (*KITĀB* ^{an} *MUBĪN* ^{an})

The expression *[al-] kitāb [al-] mubīn* = "Perspicuous Book" occurs some twelve times in the Qur'ān (see Kassis 1983:352-5). The active participle *mubīn* (IV, root B.Y.N. cf. *bayān*), could (alternatively) have been translated, 'clear', 'manifest', 'evident', 'demonstrative', 'lucid' or 'expository', etc. Messengers of God (*rasūl*) deliver a clear or "Manifest Message" (*al-balāgh al-mubīn*; see 5:92[3]; 16:36,82; 24:54[3]; 36:17[16]; 64:12). *Kitāb mubīn* frequently refers to the distinctive Arabic Qur'ān or to its heavenly prototype (e.g. 5:15 [18]; 11:6[8]; 12:1; 10:61 [62]; 27:75; 36:12 [11]). As a revealed Book the Qur'ān reckons itself especially *mubīn* compared to other alleged scriptures (see 15:1; 36:69). The Prophet Muhammad twice swears by the Qur'ān as *al-kitāb al-mubīn*. (43:2 [1]; 44:2 [1]). It is within the archetypal *kitāb mubīn* that heavenly and earthly secrets are registered (6:59, etc.), a celestial book identified in many Qur'ān commentaries with the "Preserved Tablet" (*lawh mahfūz*).¹⁸

In his article *al-insān al-kāmil* Arnaldez sums up material contained in the "Book of Definitions" (*Kitāb al-Ta'rīfāt*) of 'Alī b. Muḥammad (Sayyid Sharīf) al-Jurjānī (1339--1414 CE.) in which (as elsewhere) a correspondence is made between the "Perfect Man" and various designations of a celestial "Book":

¹⁷ Shoghi Effendi's letter of January 5th 1948 (cited on page 7 above) seems to presuppose that it is the individual human soul that is referred to at phrase [2].

¹⁸ For some further details see Gätje, 1976 p.49f (Zamaksharī on Sūra 43:2/1-4/3).

"According to Djurdjānī [= Jurjānī], in his *Definitions*, the perfect man unites the totality both of the divine (*ilāhiyya*) worlds and of the engendered (*kawniyya*) worlds, universal and particular; he is the Writing [*kitāb* or "Book"] which combines the divine Writings and the engendered Writings [or "Books"; *jāmi' lil-kutub al-illāhiyya wa'l-kawniyya*]; indeed in respect of his mind and intellect, he is an intelligible Book, named *Umm al-Kitāb* [= "Mother Book"]; in respect of his heart, he is the Book of the *Lawh Mahfūz* [= "Preserved Tablet"]; in respect of his soul, he is the Book of the Abolition (*mahw*) and Establishment (*ithbāt*) of being.." (E², 1240; see Jurjānī 1978, 39-40). As in SV [4] certain Sufis established a correspondence between the archetypal or "Perfect Man" and a celestial Book.

Kitāb mubīn is quite a common phrase in writings of the Bāb and Bahā'u'llāh. At one point in his *Most Holy Book (al-kitāb al-aqdas)* Bahā'u'llāh uses the Qur'ānic phrase *fī kitāb "mubīn"* (see Hasānī, 121) possibly referring -- as in certain Qur'ānic verses -- to a register of fate. It is of interest to note that in his significant *Tablet of Wisdom (Lawh-i hikmat)* this same Tablet is specifically referred to as *al-kitāb al-mubīn* ("a perspicuous Book" ; see TB:149).

Here in SV [4], *kitāb mubīn* most likely refers to the Manifestation of God, the "Perspicuous Book" of whose Logos-like Reality is educative for believing humanity.

At [4]b persons of faith are referred to by means of two Arabic verbs; firstly (*āmama*) and secondly (*istaslama*). *Āmana* signifies (IVth verbal form root A.M.N.) 'to believe, to have faith' and is very common in the Qur'ān (see Kassis: [147] 149-164) and other Islāmic literatures. *Istaslama*, on the other hand, is the less common Xth verbal form of the root S.L.M. (IV = 'to submit / surrender [to the Will of God]') from which the words Muslim (= "one who submits [to the Will of God]" occurs 38 times in the Qur'ān) and Islām (= "Surrender" ; 8 times in the Qur'ān) are derived. While the active participle *mustaslim* occurs once in the Qur'ān (37:26) the verbal form *istaslama* (= 'one who resigns himself in submission' [so Kassis:1081]) does not. *Istaslama* in [4b] basically signifies 'self-surrender' possibly implying 'full-submission' to the Will of God born out of humble faith. Some Bahā'ī scholars believe that the use of this uncommon verb is significant here.¹⁹

01:[5]

It may be that at [5] archetypal "man" is mystically represented as witnessing the creation of all things in timeless [pre-] eternity. Alternatively the "Perfect Man" or Manifestation of God could be so represented

¹⁹ So for example Khazeh Fananapazir (personal communication).

in view of His pre-existence.²⁰ On the other hand, [5] could be understood, not as referring primarily to the original "creation" of the universe, but to the "creation" of a new spiritual universe. The emergence of the spiritual universe of the Bayān, the re-creation of "all things" was witnessed by the Reality of the Manifestation of God during a period of spiritual darkness, by the Bāb or by Bahā'u'llāh himself during the Bāb's ministry. This might be confirmed by virtue of the fact that the original Arabic of "all things" *kull shay'* has a numerical value of 361 = 19 X 19, for, on occasion, 361 indicating totality, has important chronological and theological significance in the writings of the Bāb.

ALL THINGS [EVERYTHING] (*KULL SHAY'*)

Kull shay', signifying "all things" or "everything" is an Arabic expression that occurs over 100 times in the Qur'ān (see Kassis:1154ff.). From the point of view of Bābī theology certain of these Qur'ānic texts are laden with deep significance. Worth noting, for example, are the following lines;

"..He has knowledge of everything (*kull" shay'"*). (2:29[27], 231, 282, 4:32[36] etc.)

"And We wrote for him (Moses) on the Tablets of everything (*kull" shay'"*) an admonition and a distinguishing of everything (*kull' shay'*)..". (7:145 [142])

"...all things (*kull" shay'"*) perish except His Face". (28:88)

"..everything (*kull" shay'"*) We have numbered in a clear register (*imām mubīn*)."
(36:12[11]).

"He is God who created seven heavens, and of earth their like, between them the Command descending, that you may know that God is powerful over everything (*kull' shay'*) and that God encompasses everything (*kull' shay'*) in knowledge." (65:12)

"..and He has numbered everything (*kull" shay'"*) in numbers.." (72:28)

"..and everything (*kull" shay'"*) We have numbered in a Book". (78:29)²¹

As early as 1889 E.G. Browne summed up certain basic background aspects of the Bāb's teachings relating to *kull shay'*, when he wrote,

²⁰ Just as Christians believe in the pre-existence of the Logos or essence of Christ, Muslims believe in the pre-existence of the Reality or Light of Muhammad (and the Imāms) the *nūr-i Muḥammadiyya*. It is the Bahā'ī belief that the Essence, Soul or Reality of the Manifestation of God is pre-existent: unlike the souls of ordinary human beings.

²¹ All these translations are from Arberry : 1983

"..one of the principal Attributes or Names of God is 'Hayy,' the Living. If we take the sum of the letters of this word, we find it is 18. Adding to this the number of the Alif--the "One pervading the Numbers" -- we again get the sacred number 19.

The number 1, therefore, represents the Unmanifested, Undifferentiated, Unknowable Essence; 19, the manifestation thereof. Going a step further, we find 19 X 19, i.e. 361, represents the manifested Universe. This the Bábis call 'adad-i kull' shay,' "the number of All Things;" and if we add up the values of the letters in 'kull' shay' [ignoring *tashdīd*: ك = 20 ل = 30 ش = 300 ي = 10] we find they come to 360, which, with the One pervading the Numbers [or the *hamza* = 1], makes 361.

The number 19, being thus recognized by the Bāb as a sacred number, plays a prominent part in his system. God, is One (Vāhid = 19), the true Existence (Vujūd = 19), the Living (Hayy + the One pervading the Numbers," = 19), by means of the 19 "Letters of the Living" (Hurūfāt-i Hayy) created "All Things" (kull' shay + the One pervading the numbers [in fact the *hamza* = 1] = 361 = 19 X 19).

In the World, He is represented by Mīrzā 'Alī Muhammad [the Bāb], the "Point" (Nuqta), and the 18 disciples, called "Letters of the Living," who first believed in him; these together constituting the complete "Unity" (Vāhid). Each of the nineteen members of the "Unity" had nineteen immediate disciples, who represent the "Number of all things" (361). Everything is arranged to correspond to this.." (JRAS XXI: 920 [transliteration largely adjusted and notes about the *hamza* = 1 added).²²

In late writings of the Bāb *kull shay'* theology is very common. It has been noted that in the exordium of the *Persian Bayān* the Bāb relates all created things to 'the number of all things' (361 = 19 X 19). Likewise, in the first *wāhid* of his *Arabic Bayān* he states : "We, verily, made the gates of this religion according to the number of *kull shay'* (= 361)..". Persian Bayān IV:10 has it that the Bāb reckoned that the whole of the Bayān is summed up in Qur'ān 65:12; a verse in which *kull' shay'* occurs twice (see above). Similar or related statements are made in many other works of the Bāb.

²² Browne goes on to refer to the Arabic Bayān which has 19 vāhids ("unities") each with 19 bābs ("chapters") and the 19 months and 19 days of the Bābī (+ Bahā'ī) calendar. See also E.G. Browne, *Bāb, Bābīs* in ERE. 2:306 where similar notes on 19 and 361 are given and where it is noted that, for the Bāb, 19 is "made the basis of all divisions of time, money and the like". It should also be borne in mind that there are 19 letters in the *basmala*.

At one point in his late *Book of the Five Grades (Kitāb-i Panj Sha'n*, spring 1850) the Bāb refers to the all-pervading nature of his latter-Day claim to Divinity when he states, "This is the Day in which God sent down [my claim], 'I, verily am God, no God is there except Me, the Most-Elevated, the Most-Elevated,' according to the number of all things (*kull shay'* [= 361 = 'totality'])". [np. n.d. p.19]. An important theme of this fairly lengthy Arabic and Persian volume is the cyclic "resurrection" of "all things" (*kull shay'*); the recreation of the likeness of the pleroma of the faithful from era to era. Addressing the Bābī faithful the Bāb thus, at one point, writes, "O *Kull^a Shay'*! Prepare yourselves for the latter resurrection (*qiyāmat al-ukhra*) for you, assuredly, are the conclusive similitude (*mathal*) of that final resurrection (*qiyāmat*)." (n.p. n.d. p.352).

In the very late [*Book of*] *The Temple of Religion ([Kitāb-i] Haykal al-Dīn)* Bābīs and / or the 'Letters of the Living' (*hurūfāt al-hayy*) are quite frequently addressed, "O All Things!.. (*yā kull^a shay'*)" (see pp. 5, 7, 8, 10, 31 etc.). In for example, Unity 3 Gate 4 of this Arabic work, we read regarding the "Hereafter" or "Forthcoming Era" (*al-ākhirā*), "The bounty that God will send down upon the Manifestation of His Self (*mazhar nafsihī*) in the forthcoming era is as the bounty which was sent down in al-Bayān (which also is just as was sent down aforetime) if, O *Kull^a shay'*, thou art able to fathom the Book of God in the forthcoming era." (p.10). Again, for example, at III:8 we read, "O *Kull^a shay'*! In the Bayān He hath ever decreed, and will ever decree, that thou art the most radiant jewels (*jawāhir al-abhā'*) ..." (p.11). Interestingly, in the light of SV [2] it is stated at 4:4 (p.14), "Bear thou witness that the spirit of all things (*rūh kullⁱ shay'*) is in "Man" (*al-insān* = the Cosmic "Perfect Man"?) and all, at the command of God on the part of His Countenance, rise up [on the Day of Resurrection?]." (p.14).²³

One of the important late works of the Bāb (probably dating from the Chihrīq period) is usually known as *The Book of Names (kitāb al-asmā')* or more fully (?) *The Book of the Names of All Things (kitāb al-asmā'ⁱ kullⁱ shay')*.²⁴ It is not surprising in the light of the foregoing and the Bāb's Hurufī type theology of "all things", that some post-1850 non-Azalī and non-Bahā'ī Bābīs -- in defining their conservative Bābī religious orientation -- called themselves "All-things" (*kullⁱ shay'ī*).

E.G. Browne and I. Goldziher have, it should be noted, speculated about a possible post-Qur'ānic Sufi influence upon the Bāb's frequent use of *kull shay'* theology. Goldziher in his note about 'The Relationship of the Bāb to earlier Sufi teachers' (reproduced and translated below, Appendix 5) for the

²³ As in the Bayān, it is stated in this Book that all the statutes of the *Bayān* were revealed according to the decree of *kull^a shay'* (2:4 p.18).

²⁴ See MacEoin, 1992: 91-2.

most part concentrates on the Sufi roots of this expression. Following Browne (see Browne, JRAS. XXI:919-920) he speculates regarding the influence of the corpus of Ibn 'Arabī whom he thinks might have previously associated the numbers 19 and 361 with *kull shay* (= abjad 361). In this connection he draws attention to a verse from the religious poetry of Abu'l-'Atāhiya (d.c. 826 CE.), frequently cited by the "Great Shaykh" in his *Futūhāt.*, and to a piece of Qur'ānic exegesis by 'Abu'l-Hakīm ibn Barrajan (d.Marrākush [Spain] 1141 CE.)²⁵ who influenced Ibn 'Arabī significantly.²⁶ The mystical use of *kull shay'* by Ibn Sinā (Avicenna d. Hamadan 1037 CE.) was also registered by the great Hungarian Islamicist in his attempt to search out the post-Qur'ānic roots of the Bāb's theology of *kull shay'*.²⁷

To sum up. It is fitting that, after mentioning the divine "Man" as the "Perspicuous Book" whose pages are "read" by humble believers, reference is made to the former's witnessing the "creation of all things" at a time characterized by injustice and gloomy darkness; perhaps, to reiterate, the "re-creation" of everything in the light of the appearance of the Bābī religion. In Bābī terms a new religion can be viewed as a new pleroma of "all things".

01:[6]

This line again seems to speak about the One who is the centre of divine guidance; the one who reveals verses or communicates as the head of the mystical hierarchy. That He speaks forth from the "Apex of Eternal Subsistence" (*qutb al-baqā'*) alludes to the status of the person who is the focus or head of spiritual guidance; one who occupies the most elevated spiritual condition. Reference is almost certainly made to the Manifestation of God and "Perfect Man" who communicates the Will of God through the revelation of verses (presumably the Bāb).

²⁵ See Chittick, *The Sufi Path..index* (esp. p.398 notes 15 & 16).

²⁶ See also Chittick, *The Sufi Path..index* (esp. p.398 notes 15 & 16). The complexities of Ibn 'Arabī's use of *kull shay'* cannot be gone into here (see though, Appendix 5 below and MuS No. 550 p.974). Worth noting however, is the fact that the "youth" *fatā* (cf. the Bāb's references to himself as *al-fatā' al-arabī*) who appears to Ibn Arabī (see FM.I) reveals to him the secret of the *imām mubīn* "in other words the secret of the Book that contains all things" (see FM. I:180 citing and interpreting Qur'ān 36:12 [11]; Chodkiewicz 1992 p.229 fn.1).

²⁷ This source-critical theory of the Sufi background to the Bāb's theology of "all things" requires further investigation. It seems likely that it will be regarded as another significant item of Sufi influence on the Bābī revelation (see Appendix below).

THE APEX OF ETERNAL SUBSISTENCE (*QUTB AL-BAQĀ'*)

The word *qutb* (variously translated "Axis" or "Pole", etc.) is the special designation of the supreme spiritual guide of Sufis; as well as, for some Shī'ī Muslims, the Imām as the one who enshrines the Muhammedan Light / Reality (cf. Nasr 1972: 58, 66). Possibly, in fact, it could signify the occulted 12th Imām who is the Promised Messiah or Mahdī / Qā'im : for Bābīs and Bahā'īs, of course, the Bāb. Bahā'u'llāh speaks of the *qutb* in a phrase that suggests the role of the Manifestation of God. The source of guidance is primarily the Manifestation of God not the Sufi guide or *qutb*. Both the Bāb and Bahā'u'llāh, at various points in their writings in one way or another, refer to themselves as the *qutb*.

The aforementioned al-Qāshānī (? in a version of the S.Lex.) commented on *Qutb* as a term signifying the "Unique One" (*al-wāhid*) who is the locus of the "vision of God (*nazr allāh*)" throughout the world and in every age; the one whose heart is intimately attuned to [the Archangel] Isrāfīl (Qāshānī : [96] Arabic [Personal translation]: 141 ; cf. below on IV [1]). Most Sufi manuals and many books about Sufism give an elaboration of the role and significance of the One designated the *Qutb* . Whilst resident amongst the Sufis of Sulaymānīyya, Bahā'u'llāh Himself, it should be noted, came to be regarded by some as one of the "Men of the Unseen" (*njāl al-ghayb*) or the very "*axis of the universe*" (i.e. *qutb* see GPB:124).

In his essay *Shī'ism and Sufism* Nasr writes, "...just as in Sufism each master is in contact with the pole (*Qutb*) of his age, in Shi'ism all spiritual functions in every age are inwardly connected with the Imām. The idea of the Imām as the pole of the Universe and the concept of the *Qutb* in Sufism are nearly identical, as asserted so clearly by Sayyid Haydar Āmulī [d. after 1385 C.E.] when he says, 'The *Qutb* and the Imām are two expressions possessing the same meaning and referring to the same person.' The doctrine of the universal or perfect man (*al-insān al-kāmil*) as expounded by Ibn 'Arabī is very similar to the Shi'ite doctrine of the *Qutb* and the Imām , as is the doctrine of the Mahdī developed by later Sufi masters. All these doctrines refer essentially and ultimately to the same esoteric reality, the *haqīqat al-muhammadiyah*, as present in both Shi'ism and Sufism. And in this case as far as the formulation of this doctrine is concerned there may have been direct Shi'ite influences upon later Sufi formulations." (Nasr 1972:111 ; see also Pourjavady & Wilson 1978:65 fn.12 MuS No. 524: 909ff.).

That the exalted One alluded to here stands at the axis of reality is also alluded to by virtue of the term *baqā'* which in Sufi literature indicates the "station" above and beyond the mystical passing away of the

constraints of the lower material "self" (*fanā'*). *Baqā'* indicates an eternity of spiritual "subsistence" or "permanence" in God (*baqā'*) which follows this "death" of the lower self (*fanā'*; see further below on 03:4).

ILLUSTRIOUS TEMPLE (*AL-HAYKAL AL-MUKARRAM*)

The phrase "Illustrious Temple" (*al-haykal al-mukarram*) refers, in all probability, to the Person (lit. 'body' or 'temple') of the Manifestation of God. The non-Qur'ānic Arabic loan-word *haykal*, probably deriving from Aramaic *hēykāla*, is rooted in the Sumerian *e-gal*, "large house, palace, temple", Akkadian *ekallu*, "temple, palace". The Biblical Hebrew cognate *hēykhāl* (= "palace, temple, holy place") frequently denotes the Jerusalem Temple (2 Kings 18:16, 23:4, Haggai 2:15, 18 etc.). Relating to the Islāmic mystical uses of *haykal* Bāb ī-Bahā' ī scriptural occurrences of this word often have it signify the 'Form', 'Being', 'Temple', 'Person' or 'Body' of the Divine Manifestation. Symbolizing the human form *haykal* can also indicate a talismanic pentacle. The Bāb recommended the use of scriptural talismanic pentacles and sometimes wrote his compositions (books or tablets) in this star-shaped form. Bahā'u'llāh's celebrated *Sūra of the Temple* (*Sūrat al-haykal* c.1873) follows this tradition and also relates to Biblical statements regarding the second / an eschatological temple (*Heb. hēykhāl = Ar. haykal*) the appearance of which is predicted in the book of Zechariah chapter 6:12f (see GPB:213).

By His "Wondrous Voice" (*al-lahn al-badī'*) is perhaps meant the power of revelation of the divine "Man" who is the Manifestation of God.

01:[7]

This line has to do with the individual seeker's inner, transfigured experience of God, enabling the Divine to be seen in all things. The influence of the common Sufi tradition of the allegorical interpretation of Qur'ān 7:143 can be discerned : the individual seeker occupies the role of "Moses" who experienced the Divine theophany (For some background details, see Lambden 1987).

THROUGH SOULFUL EXPERIENCE (*FĪ NAFSIHI BI-NAFSIHI*)

This phrase is literally, "in his self (*nafs*), through his self (*nafs*)" and (in context) probably implies a deep inner or soulful experience; a personal transfiguration. The human *nafs* is the scene of the divine

theophany. In Arabic *nafs* has a wide range of senses. Relative to individuals it can signify, "soul, spirit, psyche, self, human reality, life, person." In various writings of the Bāb and Bahā'u'llāh such Sufistic expressions as *fī nafsihī bi-nafsihī* are quite common. All human beings have the capacity of (indirectly) experiencing God in the spiritually pure depths of their "soul" (*nafs*). According to Bahā'ī doctrine the inward experience of God is ultimately the experience of the Holy Spirit, the Manifestation of God. The Reality or Essence of God (*dhāt-i illāhī*) cannot be directly experienced.

AT THE LEVEL (*FĪ MAQĀM*) OF THE THEOPHANY (*TAJALLĪ*) OF HIS LORD (*RABBIHĪ*).

This Arabic phrase *fī maqām tajallī rabbihī* has been translated, "on the level of the theophany of their Lord". AKK (1906) had "in the seat of the manifestation of his Lord" and AKK^{2^{row}} "in the station of the Manifestation of his Lord". These latter translations, however, give the impression that the significance is the inner recognition of the Manifestation of God rather than the seeker's Moses-like inward experience of a divine theophany (Qur'ān 7:143) -- through the Manifestation of God -- and a consequent realization of the Divine Oneness. The words *tajallī rabbihī* doubtless would remind the Sufi reader of the self-revelation, the *tajalla rabbahu* = "his Lord divulged his glory" of Qur'ān 7:143: pointed differently it would be an exact Qur'ānic citation.²⁸ The Manifestation of God and "Perfect Man", the "Illustrious Temple" and supreme *qutb*, enables human beings to experience the divine theophany (*tajallī*) themselves and testify wholeheartedly to the oneness of God. Bahā'u'llāh here seems to allusively highlight the importance of the Manifestation of God as the *qutb* leading to high spiritual experience.

AT THE LEVEL (*FĪ MAQĀM*)

The word *maqām* translated "level" is frequently used in Sufi manuals and literatures of the multifarious stages or levels in the path towards God. It could have been translated "level", "stage" or "station"; the latter possibility having been avoided in the light of SV [7] probably referring to the individual's own experience and not primarily to the "station" of the Manifestation of God -- this being

²⁸ As in many Sufi texts Moses' Sinaitic encounter with His Lord becomes a type of the inner experience of the individual seeker (see line [8]). The words *tajallī* and *rabbihī* are both key terms in Qur'ān 7:143. On the Sinai (*Ar. tūr*) of the "heart" the mystic wayfarer -- like Moses -- experiences the Divine theophany (*tajallī*) and subsequently, with the inner "eye," envisions the signs of the "Lord" (*rabb*) in all things. The "Moses" of the inner reality of the transfigured seeker experiences the theophany of "his Lord" and experiences His unique oneness. The Divine is visioned in all things after the spiritual renewal of the experience of the theophany (see further Lambden, 1988)

presupposed in [6]. Al-Hujwīrī in his *The Unveiling of Secret Things (Kashf al-Mahjūb* c.1050 C.E.) has it that *maqām* "denotes anyone's 'standing' in the way of God, and his fulfilment of the obligations pertaining to that 'station'... Everyone who desires God has a station (*maqām*)...God hath said, 'None of Us but hath a certain station [*maqām*]' (Kor. xxxvii,164).."(trans. Nicholson pp.180, 370-1). Ibn 'Arabī succinctly defines *maqām* as "Stage. An expression for complete fulfilment (*istifā'*) of the demands of the observances (*huqūq al-marāsīm*)."(Jurjānī, 285 trans. p.30 [adapted]).

The seeker referred to in SV [7] occupies a personal "level" or "station" (*maqām*) at which the self-manifestation or theophany of God is experienced. This experience of an inner theophany is not that of the Divine Essence but an indirect experience of God through His Manifestation.

THE THEOPHANY (*TAJALLĪ*) OF THEIR LORD (*RABBIHI*)

This phrase has previously been translated "Manifestation of his Lord" (AKK) but the use of *tajallī* and *rabbihī* calls attention to Qur'ān 7:143. The word *tajallī* can mean "manifestation" (not necessarily the "Manifestation [of God]"; capitalized) but is a different word from that normally used in 'Manifestation of God' (= *mazhar [-i illāhī]*). In ordinary Arabic-Persian literatures the verbal-noun *tajallī* (a verbal-noun of the Vth form of the verb *jalā* = to appear, be revealed, become manifested...) can for example, "mean lustre, brightness, brilliancy; manifestation; transfiguration, splendour, glory." (Steingass p. 283). The Sufi-type definition of *tajallī* (= self-disclosure / self-manifestation, theophany) given by 'Ibn 'Arabī is worth bearing in mind relative to its occurrence in SV [7], "That which is disclosed to hearts from the lights of the Unseen." (*Istilāh* ..Jurjānī p.290 trans. p.38). There are hundreds of Bābī-Bahā'ī scriptural works and Tablets in which *tajallī* is important.

In one of his Persian Tablets to his apostle Salmān (*Lawh-i Salmān* I, c. 1866-7?) Bahā'u'llāh comments on that verse of the *Mathnawī* of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (l. 2467) which reads, "When colourlessness fell prey to color/ a Moses came into conflict with a Moses."²⁹ In the course of his comments he underlines the limitations of the human mind and mystic endeavour by stating (in Shoghi Effendi's translation) : "O Salmān! The meditations of the profoundest thinker, the devotions of the holiest of saints, the highest expressions of praise from either human pen or tongue, are but a reflection of *that*

²⁹ Trans. Hamid Algar 1981 p.433 n.87. Algar writes that "The meaning is that Pharoah, in his primordial nature free of attachment and color (and therefore himself a "Moses") became colored by attachment and thus the antithesis of Moses."

which hath been created within themselves, through the revelation of the Lord, their God" (MAM: 144, trans. Gl. p. 316). The original Arabic behind the last translated phrase is very close to SV [7], *mā khalaqa fī nafsīhi min tajallī rabbīhi*. Clear reference to Qur'ān 7:142 precedes this passage which echoes 7:143b.³⁰ Individual realizations and meditations, limited though they are, are actualized by God Himself. They result from the *tajallī rabbīhi*, the "revelation of the Lord, their God"; the divine theophany, the self-manifestation of God within the human consciousness.

01:[8]

THE SUMMIT OF SPIRITUAL REALITIES (*DHARWAT AL-HAQĀ'IQ*).

In this line Bahā'u'llāh probably indicates that all human beings may accomplish that experience of the theophany which some Sufis reckoned the preserve of the advanced saint. All are capable of attaining high spiritual realizations (*haqā'iq*) and seeing the reflection of God in all things. Sufi elitism is subtly thwarted. *Haqā'iq* is the plural of *haqīqah* (= "reality") which is defined by Ibn 'Arabī as "The negation of the effects of your qualities by His qualities, so that He is the agent through you, in you, from you, not yourself, '.. and there is no living creature but He seizes it by the forelock' (Qur'ān 11:56)." (Jurjānī: 288 S.Lex. 34).

PARAGRAPH 1 : CONCLUDING NOTE

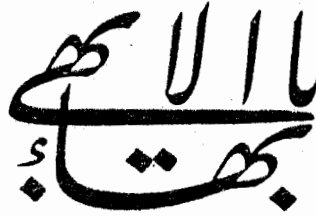
To sum up. This opening paragraph of the SV covers (a) God's providential creation of "man" whose soul was, from eternity, endowed with divine mysteries and further taught by God ([1] & [2]) through (b) the divine "Man" (= the Manifestation of God, [4] -> [6]) who can enable all souls to attain a high degree of spirituality ([7] & [8]). The basic Bābī-Bahā'ī theology relating to God, the role of the divine "Man" or Manifestation of God, and his effect upon man are encapsulated in this first paragraph of the SV. The terminology is largely distinctively Sufi and sometimes also Bābī.

³⁰ The original Persian text of the Persian Tablet to Salmān (I) is printed in MAM: 123-160. On page 143 Bahā'u'llāh clearly refers to Qur'ān 7:142a.

In the second paragraph Bahā'u'llāh, in the light of the Islāmic allegiance of Shaykh Muhyī al-Dīn, praises and exalts the Reality of the truly "Perfect Man", the Prophet Muhammad; thereby glorying the nature of the Reality and the role of the Manifestation of God. This will be discussed in part two of this commentary in a forthcoming BSB.

APPENDIX 1 : THE FRENCH TRANSLATION OF SV:01 BY HIPPOLYTE DREYFUS --
FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1905.

L'ŒUVRE
DE
BAHĀOU'LLĀH



LA TRÈS SAINTE TABLETTE
LES PAROLES CACHÉES
LES SEPT VALLÉES DU VOYAGE VERS DIEU
LA LETTRE SUR LE BAYAN



TRADUCTION FRANÇAISE

par

Hippolyte DREYFUS

PARIS
ÉDITIONS ERNEST LEROUX
28, Rue Bonaparte, 28

1923

Tous droits réservés

Au nom de Dieu, le Clément, le Miséricordieux!

Rendons grâces à Celui qui a tiré l'existence du néant, qui a gravé les antiques mystères sur la tablette de l'homme, qui lui a enseigné les explications de tout ce qu'il ignorait, qui a fait de lui un livre incontestable pour ceux qui croient et obéissent, qui, en ces jours sombres et pleins de troubles, lui a expliqué la création de toutes choses, et qui l'a élevé à la condition sublime de l'éternité dans le Temple le plus noble (fn.1 = La Manifestation de Dieu, Bahāou'llāh) par lequel. Il prononce maintenant les merveilleuses mélodies qui permettent à chacun de voir en Lui et par Lui la station de resplendissement de son Seigneur, (c'est-à-dire qu'en vérité, il n'y a pas d'autre Dieu que Lui); et d'arriver ainsi aux sommets de la Vérité où il voit Dieu dans chaque chose!

APPENDIX 2 : THE TRANSLATION OF SV:01 BY JULIE CHANLER FROM THE
FRENCH OF HIPPOLYTE DREYFUS IN CONSULTATION WITH AHMAD SOHRAB.

Seven Valleys

by

Baha-U-Llah

Written in Bagdad

in the Year 1857

to

SHEIK ABDUR RAHMAN

MYSTIC SUFI LEADER

Translated

by

JULIE CHANLER

from the French version of

HYPPOLYTE DREYFUS

THE NEW HISTORY FOUNDATION

132 EAST 65TH STREET

NEW YORK, N. Y.

Compared by MIRZA AHMAD SOHRAB

with the original Persian text

PUBLISHED

1933

In the name of God the Clement, the Merciful!

Praise be unto God who drew life out of chaos and engraved the mysteries of pre-existence on the tablet of man -- giving him the explanation of that which he knew not, and making of him an irrefutable book for the seeing and the faithful. He has raised him to the condition of eternity in a most noble Temple wherein, during these dark and troublous days, He has played such ravishing melodies, that each and every one is enabled to recognize in him and through him, the glorious station of his Lord; proclaim that there is no other god, and so attain the summit of Truth where divinity is apparent in all things.

APPENDIX 3 : THE 1906 [1914] TRANSLATION OF SV:01 BY ALI KULI KHAN
(Shop of the Grier Press 1914).

The Seven Valleys

REVEALED
by
BAHA'U'LLAH

AT BAGHDAD, IN ANSWER TO QUESTIONS
ASKED BY SHEIK ABDUR RAHMAN,
A GREAT MOHAMMEDAN
MYSTIC SUFI
LEADER.

TRANSLATED
by
ALI KULI KHAN,
(ISH' TE-AL, EBN-KALANTER.)
BOSTON, MASS., U. S. A.

PUBLISHED BY
BAHAI PUBLISHING SOCIETY
CHICAGO, ILL., U. S. A.

9

In the Name of God, the Compassionate,
the Merciful!

Praise be unto God, who caused existence to appear from non-existence, inscribed the mysteries of Pre-existence on the tablet of man, and taught him the explanation of that which he knoweth not; made him a manifest book to such as believed and obeyed, enabled him to witness the creation of all things during this gloomy, disastrous age, and caused him to give utterance on the apex of immortality to a wonderful melody in the "Most Excellent Temple" (i.e., the Manifestation of God); so that every one may testify in himself (i.e., in man), by himself, in the seat of the manifestation of his Lord, that -- "verily, there is no God save Him"; and that all may thereby reach the summit of truth, until no one shall behold anything whatsoever, but that he may see God therein.

The
Seven Valleys
and
The
Four Valleys

Bahá'u'lláh

Translated by MARZIEH GAIL
In consultation with ALI-KULI KHAN



BAHÁ'Í PUBLISHING TRUST
WILMETTE, ILLINOIS

Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois 60091

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by the National Spiritual Assembly of the
Bahá'ís of the United States
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Printed in the United States of America

95 94 93 92 91 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Bahá'Allah, 1817-1892.
[Haft vâdi. English]
The seven valleys ; and, The Four valleys /
Bahá'u'lláh ; translated by Marzieh Gail in
consultation with Ali-Kuli Khan. — 4th ed.
p. cm.
Translation of: Haft vâdi, and, Chahâr vâdi.
Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 0-87743-226-0. — ISBN 0-87743-227-9 (sc)
I. Bahai Faith—Doctrines. I. Bahá'Allah,
1817-1892. Chahâr vâdi. English. 1991. II.
Title. III. Title: Seven valleys. IV. Title: Four
valleys.
BP360.B6713 1991
297'.9382—dc20

90-14430
CIP

In the Name of God, the Clement, the Merciful.

Praise be to God Who hath made being to come forth from nothingness; graven upon the tablet of man the secrets of preexistence; taught him from the mysteries of divine utterance that which he knew not; made him a Luminous Book unto those who believed and surrendered themselves; caused him to witness the creation of all things (Kullu Shay') in this black and ruinous age, and to speak forth from the apex of eternity with a wondrous voice in the Excellent Temple [fn.1 = The Manifestation]: to the end that every man may testify, in himself, by himself, in the station of the Manifestation of his Lord, that verily there is no God save Him, and that every man may thereby win his way to the summit of realities, until none shall contemplate anything whatsoever but that he shall see God therein.