



FAYŻ-E KĀŠĀNĪ, MOLLĀ MOḤSEN-MOḤAMMAD

FAYŻ-E KĀŠĀNĪ, MOLLĀ MOḤSEN-MOḤAMMAD, b. Šāh Mortažā b. Šāh Maḥmūd (b. 1006/1598 or 1007/1599; d. 1090/1679), prolific and versatile scholar of the Safavid period, celebrated chiefly for his Sufi inclinations. Born in Kāšān to a family renowned for its learning, Fayż began his education with his father, Šāh Mortažā, from whose rich library he was also able to benefit. At the age of twenty he went to Isfahan to pursue his studies, but after about a year he moved to Shiraz to study Hadith and jurisprudence with Mājed Baḥrānī, one of the leading representatives of the Aḳbārī school (q.v.). When Baḥrānī died a few months after his arrival, he returned to Isfahan where he joined the circle of the great scholar Bahā'-al-Dīn 'Āmelī (q.v.) as well as, perhaps, attending the lectures of Mīr Dāmād on philosophy. This second sojourn in Isfahan also did not last long, for in 1029/1620 he departed for Mecca and, after performing the hajj, remained there in order to study Hadith with Moḥammad b. Ḥasan b. Zayn-al-Dīn 'Āmelī (*al-Maḥajja al-bayżā* IV, p. 7).

On his return to Persia Fayż set about seeking a new master with whom to study and before long encountered in Qom Mollā Ṣadrā (d. 1050/1641), who was destined to be his principal teacher in a wide variety of disciplines. Fayż recounts that as a result of the eight years he spent studying and engaged in ascetic exercises under the supervision of Mollā Ṣadrā, he attained the innermost meaning of all the sciences (*al-Maḥajja al-bayżā* IV, p. 9). The influence of Ṣadrā's philosophy, together with its three principal



components—illuminationist (*ešrāqī*) thought, the Sufism of Ebn al-‘Arabī (q.v.), and the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (see AHL-E BAYT)—is indeed to be seen in most of Fayẓ’s works, although the Sufi dimension is more noticeable in his writings than in those of his master. It was also Ṣadrā who gave him the *maḳlaṣ*, Fayẓ, by which he came to be known, as well as one of his daughters in marriage.

Fayẓ accompanied Ṣadrā to Shiraz in 1042/1632-33 and returned three years later to his native city of Kāšān. He declined an invitation by the ruler of the day, Shah Ṣafī (r. 1038-52/1629-42), to settle in Isfahan but responded positively to a similar summons by his successor, Shah ‘Abbās II (r. 1052-77/1642-66). Apart from teaching at the Mollā ‘Abd-Allāh *madrasa*, Fayẓ functioned also as Friday prayer leader of Isfahan, a post bestowed on him by the ruler as a token of his esteem; ‘Abbās II was also wont to pray publicly behind him on a number of occasions, and in 1068/1658 he had a *takya* built for him in Isfahan. Fayẓ reciprocated by describing the Safavid monarch as “a ruler adorned with inner and outer perfections” (*al-Maḥajja al-bayẓā* IV, pp. 8-9), aiding him in what he perceived to be his efforts to provide the Safavid state with a firm religious basis, and dedicating five works to him. The most important of these is *Ā’īna-ye šāhī*, a brief treatise expounding the essence of rulership in terms of both philosophy and the *šarī’a*. He took up the same subject in more detailed form in *Žīā’ al-qolūb*, an Arabic work in which relevant Koranic verses and Hadith are cited. After the death of Shah ‘Abbās II in 1077/1666, Fayẓ remained in Isfahan for a period of unknown duration before returning to Kāšān. It was there that he spent the rest of his life, dying in 1090/1679.

Despite his fame and the patronage ‘Abbās II lavished on him, Fayẓ was exposed to the hostility of the exoterist scholars on account of his Sufi inclinations. It is unlikely that he had any formal Sufi affiliations; the assertion by Ma’šūm ‘Alī-Šah Šīrāzī (d. 1344/1926) that Fayẓ, together with Bahā’-al-Dīn ‘Āmelī, was a disciple of the Nūrbakšī shaykh Moḥammad Mo’men Sabzavārī (*Ṭarā’eq al-ḥaqā’eq*, II, p. 322, III, p. 215) should be discounted, given its lack of confirmation in any source of the Safavid period. Indeed, Sayyed Ne’mat-Allāh Jazā’erī, Fayẓ’s principal student, explicitly denied that his master was affiliated to any Sufi order (Modarres, *Rayḥānat al-adab* IV, p. 379). It is not as an adherent of organized Sufism that Fayẓ should be regarded, but as an independent figure concerned with transmitting to Shi’ite Persia, in appropriately modified form, the Sufi legacy of the Sunnite past. In order to



justify this venture, Fayẓ had recourse to the common device of presenting all the well-known figures of Sufi tradition as Shi'ites who had observed the principle of *taqīya* (prudential dissimulation; Zarrīnkūb, p. 256).

Conscious of the hostility with which Ebn al-'Arabī was viewed by many Shi'ite jurists, Fayẓ would refer to him simply as "one of the gnostics" (*yakī az 'orafā*) when quoting from his works, a formula also used by Ṣadrā. Nonetheless, Fayẓ's acceptance of *waḥdat al-wojūd* and of Ebn al-'Arabī's belief that unbelievers are not destined to remain eternally in Hellfire earned him severe denunciation by his critics. The Sufi in whose works Fayẓ displayed the greatest interest was Abū Ḥāmed Ġazālī (q.v.). He produced what might be called a Shi'ite recension of Ġazālī's *magnum opus*, the *Ehyā' 'olūm al-dīn*, by replacing the Hadith cited by Ġazālī from Sunni sources with traditions of approximately similar content taken from Shi'ite collections. Furthermore, he added to the second book of his version, which he entitled *al-Maḥajjat al-bayzā*, a chapter entitled "Aklāq al-emāma wa ādāb al-šī'a" (The Ethics of the imamate and the customs of the Shi'a) and entirely removed the chapter dealing with *samā'* (the forms of music to which some Sufis had recourse). According to the testimony of Ne'mat-Allāh Jazā'erī (cited by Chittick, p. 475), Fayẓ had his students listen to music; it may therefore be surmised that Fayẓ excised this part of the *Ehyā'* in order to forestall criticism by the Shi'ite jurists, who were unanimous in their rejection of *samā'*. Ġazālī's influence on Fayẓ may also be seen in his *al-Enṣāf fī bayān al-ḥaqq wa'l-e'tesāf*, a semi-autobiographical work clearly modeled on Ġazālī's *al-Monqeḍ men al-żalāl*. Examining in turn the views of the philosophers, the Sufis, the theologians, and the jurists, Fayẓ stresses the necessity of rejecting in the opinions of each group whatever fails to accord with the Qur'ān and the traditions of the Ahl al-Bayt. *Zād al-sālek* represents an effort by Fayẓ to illustrate the stages of Sufi wayfaring (*solūk*) with citations from the Twelve Imams. It seems, in short, justified that Fayẓ has been characterized as "the Shi'ah Ghazālī" (Nasr, p. 926).

Fayẓ's embrace of Sufism, particularly the forms it assumed in Safavid Persia, was by no means indiscriminating. His *Kalemāt-e ṭarīfa*, a work reminiscent of Ṣadrā's *Kasr aṣnām al-jāhelīya*, is a critique of contemporary Sufis, particularly harsh in its condemnations of those among them laying claim to miraculous powers. Despite this, the Sufis attempted to portray him as one of their number. A certain Sufi of Isfahan proclaimed, during a visit to Mašhad, that Fayẓ approved of practices such as loud invocation of the divine name



(*zēkr-e jalī*), forty day retreats (*čella*; q.v.), dancing, reciting love poetry while in a state of ecstasy, and forswearing the consumption of meat under the pretext of asceticism. A certain Moḥammad Moqīm then wrote from Mašhad to Fayẓ, asking him if this was indeed the case; he replied with a condemnation of all the practices mentioned as contrary to the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (Jaʿfariān, pp. 106-7). Fayẓ also sought to trace out his own position in a treatise on the conflicting claims of Sufis and jurists in which he suggested that both groups had existed in the time of the Prophet, then designated respectively as *ahl-e zohd* (ascetics) and *ahl-e ʿelm* (scholars); both therefore had a legitimate claim to exist, and it behooved both to respect each other (Dānešpažūh, pp. 113-34).

Despite these various essays in self-explanation and conciliation, Fayẓ could not fully escape the hostility of the jurists. His principal opponents were Moḥammad Šarīf Qomī, who condemned him in a work entitled *Toḥfat al-ʿoššāq* (see Jaʿfariān, p. 111); ʿAlī b. Moḥammad Šahīdī, who denounced him, together with all other Sufis, as a heretic in his *al-Sehām al-māreqa men agrāz al-zanādeqa* (see Šībī, II, p. 232); and Moḥammad Ṭāher Qomī, author of the *Toḥfat al-akyār*. The last-named is said to have ultimately made his peace with Fayẓ (Tabrizī, IV, p. 373)μ, but this is uncertain.

Despite his predominantly Sufi interests, Fayẓ would on occasion intermingle philosophical with Sufi terminology, in the manner of Šadrā, thus describing the Twelve Imams in his *Kalemāt-e mahnūna* as equivalent to “the universal intellect” (*ʿaql-e koll*). In one of his works, *Oṣūl al-maʿāref*, philosophical terminology is pervasive. More significantly, towards the end of his life, Fayẓ began to concern himself with Hadith rather than Sufism. The chief fruit of this interest was *al-Wāfi*, a compendium of traditions contained in the four canonical Shiʿite collections, explained and arranged by Fayẓ in accordance with a new system of his own devising. The commentary on the Qurʾān that Fayẓ composed, *al-Šāfi*, may also be classified as a work on Hadith, for it consists largely of citations from the Twelve Imams.

The confluence of these two interests of Fayẓ, Sufism and Hadith, can be connected in turn with his adherence to the Akbārī school of jurisprudence with its general hostility to the recourse to reason in religious concerns; reliance on *naql* (revealed and therefore authoritative texts) as opposed to *ʿaql* (reason) underlay—although in differing ways—his understanding both of Sufism and of jurisprudence. While still in his twenties, he penned *Naqd al-oṣūl al-feqhīya*, a polemic against the Oṣūlīs, the rivals of the Akbārīs, while in



a later work, *Safīnat al-najāt*, he went so far as to declare the Oṣūlīs as ineligible for Paradise, a view some fellow Aḳbārīs found extreme (Baḥrānī, p. 128). There are certain novel features to be noted in Fayẓ's principal works on jurisprudence, *Mo'taşam al-šī'a* and *Mafātīḥ al-šī'a*. He not only arranged all the topics of *feqh* in two main categories, *al-'ebādāt wa'l-sīāsāt* (acts of worship and penal provisions) and *al-'ādāt wa'l-mo'āmalāt* (customs and transactions), but also merged certain topics together or changed their order to correspond to their occurrence in human life; thus rulings concerning the washing and burial of the dead, usually treated as a subdivision of *ṭahārāt* (purity) and therefore placed close to the beginning of most systematic treatises on *feqh*, are dealt with by Fayẓ at the very end of his books. In this respect, too, Fayẓ can be seen to have been influenced by Gòazālī (Modarressī Ṭabāṭabā'ī, p. 16). Also of interest are his views on the permissibility of music and the transmission of impurity from one object to another, views which departed from the Aḳbārī consensus and were accordingly criticized.

Finally, Fayẓ is also noteworthy as a poet. Rezāqolī Khan Hedāyat remarked of his *Dīvān*, which contains some 6000 lines, that it is "full of exalted truths and precious subtleties" (*Majma' al-foṣaḥā'* IV, pp. 48-49).

Fayẓ's principal students were Ne'mat-Allāh Jazā'erī, Moḥamma- Sa'īd Qomī, and his own son, Moḥammad 'Alam-al-Hodā, who copied out the entire text of *al-Maḥajjat al-bayẓā* and wrote a commentary on *al-Wāfī*. It is worth remarking that despite all the differences in outlook separating them, Moḥammad-Bāqer Majlesī narrated Hadith from Fayẓ. It was however, as a result of the hostility to Sufism propagated by Majlesī that the *takya* founded for Fayẓ in Isfahan was razed to the ground some time during the reign of Shah Solṭān Ḥosayn (Eṣfahānī, p. 183).

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