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THE WORD *BAHÁ'*: THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE
GREATEST NAME OF GOD

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The Word *Bahá'* Quintessence of the Greatest Name of God*

Stephen Lambden

O peoples of the world! He Who is the Most Great Name
(*al-ism al-a'zam*) is come, on the part of the Ancient King. . . .

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*

Let your joy be the joy born of My Most Great Name
(*al-ismí al-a'zam*), a Name that bringeth rapture
to the heart, and filleth with ecstasy the minds of all
who have drawn nigh unto God.
—Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*

Abstract

This article is an attempt to explore some linguistic, historical, and theological aspects of the Arabic word bahá',¹ which is viewed by Bahá'ís as the quintessence of the greatest name of God, one form of which is the title Bahá'u'lláh. Considered alone, the word bahá' is a verbal noun meaning, among other things, "beauty," "excellence," "goodliness," "divine majesty," radiant "glory," "splendor," "light," and "brilliancy." There exist a wide range of other nominal and verbal senses also.² It was at the 1848 Bábí conference of Badasht that Mírzá Husayn-'Alí Núrí (1817–1892), the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith and a one-time leading Bábí, bestowed a new name upon each of the 81 (= 9 x 9) participants. He himself, to quote The Dawn-Breakers (Tárikh-i-Zarandí), "was henceforth designated by the name of Bahá" (Nabíl,

* This article is a revised version of one previously published in the *Bahá'í Studies Review* 3.1 (1993).

1. Arabic words are made up of various root consonants—occasionally two, often three, less frequently four or five letters. The word *bahá'* is probably derived from three (*B + H + A / W*) and made up of four letters, (*B + H + A +* the glottal stop hamza (~) is usually omitted in Persian). *Bahá'*, in other words, is spelling, the final glottal stop hamza (~) is usually omitted in Persian). *Bahá'*, in other words, is made up of the following four letters which have a numerical (*abjad*) value of nine: [1] *B* = 2 + [2] *H* = 5 + [3] *A* = 1 + [4] ~ (glottal stop) = 1 (total = 9).

2. The word *bahá'* has quite a wide range of nontheological verbal senses and significances and as an Arabic verbal-noun or Persian word. It can, for example, signify "perplexity," "incomprehensibility," "poverty," "goodness," "greatness," "perfection," "majesty," "magnificence," "grandeur," "beauty," "brilliancy," "luminosity"—even "the sheen of the spittle of a lion" or "the calmness of a she-camel used to her milker"! For details and examples, see Ibn Manzúr, *Lisán al-'Arab* 1:35–36; Dozy, *Supplément* 1:123–24; Lane, *Lexicon* 1:263–64; Wehr, *Dictionary* 97; Dehkhodá, *Lughat Námih* (2d ed.) vol. 4, entry "*Bahá'*".

The Dawn-Breakers 293). Bahá'u'lláh thus, from very early on—while outwardly a leading Bábí or Sufi dervish—sometimes used the word/title (Jináb-i) Bahá' as a personal designation or proper name. It shall be illustrated below that the word bahá' was a term of considerable importance in Islamic and Bábí literatures. On occasion, it occurred in contexts that had, or came to be interpreted as having, prophetic and messianic import.

Résumé

Cet article tente d'explorer certains aspects linguistiques, historiques et théologiques du terme arabe Bahá, que les bahá'ís considèrent comme étant la quintessence du plus grand nom de Dieu et dont le titre Bahá'u'llah n'est qu'une des variantes. Le terme Bahá, considéré en soi, est un nom verbal qui signifie, entres autres, « beauté », « excellence », « bonté », « majesté divine », « gloire », « radieuse », « splendeur », « lumière » et « brillance ». Le terme possède également bon nombre d'autres significations nominales et verbales. Ce fut en 1848, à la conférence de Badasht que Mírzá Husayn 'Alí Núrí (1817-1892), qui allait devenir le fondateur de la foi bahá'íe et qui était alors un chef bábí, a conféré à chacun des 81 (= 9 x 9) participants un nouveau nom. Comme le relate La Chronique de Nábíl (Tárikh-i-Zarandí), « Il fut lui-même désormais désigné sous le nom de Bahá » (Nabíl, La Chronique de Nabíl 277). Très tôt donc, Bahá'u'lláh, en qui l'on voyait alors un chef bábí ou un derviche sufi, employait parfois le titre de (Jináb-i) Bahá' comme désignation propre pour lui-même. L'article démontrera que Bahá était un terme d'une importance considérable dans la littérature islamique et bahá'íe. À l'occasion, l'emploi de ce terme se faisait dans des contextes qui avaient ou qui allaient avoir une portée prophétique et messianique.

Resumen

Este artículo ensaya la exploración de algunos aspectos lingüísticos, históricos, y teológicos de la palabra árabe bahá', considerada por los bahá'ís como quintaesencia del Más Grande Nombre de Dios, una forma del cual es el título Bahá'u'lláh. Si se considera aparte, la palabra bahá' es un sustantivo-verbal, que significa, entre otras cosas, "belleza," "excelencia," de "corazón bueno y bondadoso," "majestad divina," "gloria" radiante, "esplendor," "luz," "brillantez." Existe además una amplia esfera de otros significados por nombre y verbo. Fue durante la Conferencia Bábí de 1848 en Badasht, que Mírzá Husayn 'Alí Núrí (1817-92) el Fundador de la Fe Bahá'í y en un tiempo figura sobresaliente bábí, otorgó un nombre nuevo a cada uno de los 81 (= 9 x 9) participantes. Él mismo, valiéndonos de cita en Los Rompedores del Alba, (Tárikh-i-Zarandí), en lo sucesivo fue designado por el nombre de Bahá'. Bahá'u'lláh, desde los comienzos, a primera vista persona sobresaliente bábí o derviche sufi, a veces usaba la palabra/título (Jináb-i) Bahá como designación

personal o nombre propio. Se demostrará adelante que la palabra Bahá' era un vocablo de bastante importancia en la literatura islámica y bábí. A veces ocurría en contextos que habían sido, o llegaron a ser, interpretados en calidad de tener significado profético y mesiánico.

Using Sufi language in the eighth couplet of his earliest extant revelation, the nineteen-couplet *Rashh-i-'Amá'* ("The Sprinkling of the Divine Cloud," Tehran, late 1852 C.E.), Bahá'u'lláh probably alludes to his power of revelation when he states that a "cup of honey" pours forth out of the "vermilion lips of Bahá'" (cf. couplets 10, 18, *Má'idih* 4:184-86). Again, in the early *Lawh-i-Kullu't-Ta'am* ("Tablet of All Food" c. 1853-54) he refers to the "fire of love" surging in his heart, "in the heart of al-Bahá'"; and also to the "dove of sorrow" in the "breast of al-Bahá'" (see *Má'idih* 4:265 f.). In hundreds of subsequent tablets, whether communicated in Ottoman Iraq, Turkey, or Palestine, there occurs the use of *Bahá'* as a proper name. In the "Fire Tablet" (*Qad [Lawh-i] Ihtirāq al-Mukhlisūn*, c. 1870), for example, we read: "Bahá' is drowning in a sea of tribulation: Where is the Ark of Thy salvation, O Saviour of the worlds?"³

Bahá'u'lláh came in the station of divinity and represents the Godhead in the worlds of creation. The word used to designate Bahá'u'lláh's divine Logos, Reality, Identity (*huwíyya*), or "Self" (*nafs*) was the Arabic word *Bahá'*. In the following letter, Shoghi Effendi summed up the theological significance of the word *Bahá'*: "By Greatest Name [= *Bahá' / Bahá'u'lláh*] is meant that Bahá'u'lláh has appeared in God's Greatest Name, in other words, that He is the Supreme Manifestation of God" (cited in *Lights of Guidance* 472).

Various derivatives of *bahá'* are significant in Bábí-Bahá'í scripture. The superlative form of *bahá'* ("[radiant] splendor/glory") is *abhá*, signifying "most" or "all-glorious" and a title of Bahá'u'lláh (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 97). In Bahá'í texts this word is often linked with the term "Kingdom" and can be indicative of the spiritual world or the realms of the afterlife. *Bahíyya* ("Beautiful," "Luminous," "Radiant," "Splendid") is a feminine noun derived from the same root letters as *bahá'* (see below). It, among other things, was the title given to Bahá'u'lláh's daughter Fátimih, Bahíyyih Khánum (1846-1932 C.E.).

3. A Selection of Bahá'í Prayers 99. For a few further references, see Heggie, *Index* 48. In certain of his letters, Shoghi Effendi indicates that the "Arabic term *Bahá'*" is "the name of Bahá'u'lláh" (*Directives*, no. 86:33).

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The honorific title (*laqab*) of Mírzá Husayn-'Alí Núrí is Bahá'u'lláh.⁴ It is a title that follows an early Islamic pattern. Grammatically, it is a genitive construction made up of the two closely linked words [1] *Bahá'* and [2] *Alláh*.⁵ It signifies "The Glory/Splendor of God."⁶ In a certain sense, moreover, Bahá'u'lláh is a double greatest name. Many Islamic writers follow traditions in which the designation of God, Alláh, is reckoned the greatest name. Bahá'u'lláh himself, at one point in his *Tafsír ḥurúfát al-muqaṭṭa'ih* ("Commentary on the Disconnected Letters [of the Qur'án]" c. 1857?), explains the letter *A* (*alif*, the first of the quranic disconnected letters) relative to its being the herald of the greatest name, Alláh (*Má'idih* 4:67).

For Bahá'ís, *Bahá'* is an extremely powerful and theologically significant word. As a proper name, it designates God's Universal Manifestation (*mazhar-i-kullíya*). In this day, it refers to the "Self" of God. In esoteric writings, it is said to have been communicated in secret to Moses on the mystic Sinai. According to tradition, partial knowledge of it bestowed supernatural, miraculous powers upon the prophets and Messengers of Israel and upon other ancient sages. For Bahá'ís, it is the name of the "Father" who is the spiritual "Return of Christ." By virtue of its power, Christ, the "Son," was raised from the "dead"; the "body" of his religion revived and revitalized.

Bahá' in the Scriptures of the Adamic Cycle

The Arabic word *bahá'* is not directly or fully contained in pre-Bábí sacred scripture, not in the Hebrew Bible (*tawrat*), Greek [Aramaic] Gospel[s] (*injíl*), or Arabic Qur'án. As noted, the noun *bahá'* is composed of three or four letters: [1] *B*, [2] *H*, [3] *A* and, counting the final letter, hamza, [4] = '. The numerical (*abjad*) value of *bahá'* is nine: $2 + 5 + 1 + 1 = 9$, a "sacred number" symbolic of perfection as the highest numerical integer⁷ and corresponding to the "First Man," Adam ($A = 1 + D = 4 + M = 40$; total = $45 = 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 6 + 7 + 8 + 9$). Similarly, the Báb corresponds to the "First Woman,"

4. On the honorific title (*laqab tashríf*) in Islam, see Schimmel, *Islamic Names* 12–13, 50 ff.

5. The Arabic divine designation *Alláh* is the main Islamic word for God. It is used hundreds of times in the Islamic Holy Book, the Qur'án, and is not linguistically or conceptually alien to the Bible of Jews and Christians. More than ten different words for God occur in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament); among them, the following three interchangeable words for God, 'El, 'Eloah, and 'Elohim—the latter a feminine plural with singular significance and the first word in the Torah for God (Genesis 1:1). Very likely a contraction of "the God" (masculine [feminine] = *al + iláh*), Alláh is related to, and essentially synonymous with, these biblical names of God.

6. Cf. *Ḍiyá'u'lláh* (= "the Radiance of God") and *Ḍhikru'lláh* (= "The Remembrance of God").

7. In the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Bahá'u'lláh alludes to his elevated station and to the power of the "Greatest Name" *Bahá'* when he states, "Say: This is that hidden knowledge which shall never change, since its beginning is with nine [= the numerical value of *Bahá'*], the symbol that betokeneth the concealed and manifest, the inviolable and unapproachably exalted Name" (28. Cf. note p. 188).

"Eve."⁸ The twin Manifestations of God in this eschatological age are viewed as the "parents" of a new spiritual humanity.

In certain tablets, Bahá'u'lláh indicated his "Self" by means of the first two letters of the greatest name, *Bahá'*; that is, *B* and *H*. In the colophon at the close of the *Kitáb-i-Íqán*, for example, we read, "Thus hath it been revealed aforetime. . . . Revealed by the "Bá" and the "Há" (257). While the earlier "Tablet of the Disconnected Letters" also contains such a self-designation, when it refers to this writing as a "Book" from *B* before *H* (*Má'idih* 4:52), the fourth line of the *Lawḥ-i-Náqús* ("Tablet of the Bell," 1863 C.E.) alludes to it when there is a command to the "Angel of Light" (*malak al-núr*) to blow in the eschatological "Trumpet" (*al-ṣúr*) in view of the new theophany in which the letter *H* rides upon a mighty preexistent letter *B*.

Bahá'u'lláh has stated that various portions or "letters" of the word *Bahá'* as the greatest name are contained in pre-Bábí holy books. In past religious dispensations, there was a progressive disclosure of "letters" of various forms or conceptions of the greatest name. Certain traditions attributed to the Shí'í Imáms (rooted in Jewish notions) allocate "letters" of a 73-letter greatest name to past sages, prophets, or Manifestations of God—reckoning that one of the "letters" remained hidden ($73 - 1 = 72$). In some lists, Adam received 25 letters, Noah 25, Abraham 8, Moses 4, and Jesus 2 (Majlisí, *Bihár* 11:68). Certain writings of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh reflect such traditions.

Drawing on Qur'án 21:78 f. and (probably also) those Shí'í traditions (*aḥadith*), which reckon that certain of the Israelite prophets received a few letters of knowledge or of the greatest name of God, the Báb (*Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* 59) explains how David and Solomon were inspired with two letters of the "greatest word" (*kalimát al-akbar*), adding that *Ḍhu'l-Nun* (= Jonah), Idris (= Enoch), Ishmael, and *Ḍhu'l-Kifl* (Job or Ezekiel?) were in darkness until they testified to the truth of the "point of the Gate" (*nuqtatu'l-báb* = the Báb).

In his *Tafsír Laylat al-Qadr* ("Commentary on the Súrih of the 'Night of Power,'" Qur'án 97) the Báb refers to 3, 4, and 5 portions of one of the forms of the greatest name existing in the Pentateuch (*tawrat*), Gospel[s] (*injíl*) and Qur'án respectively (see Iran National Bahá'í Manuscript Collection [INBMC] 69:17). Similarly, in a tablet commenting on the *basmala*⁹ and first verse of the quranic "Súrih of the Pen" (*Súrih* 68), Bahá'u'lláh mentions that God divulged something (a "letter"/"word" *harf*^{an}) of the "Greatest Name" *Bahá'* in every

8. According to certain tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá—notably the tablet in explanation of the Greatest Name symbol (apparently designed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá) addressed to a Bahá'í resident in Paris (see *Má'idih* 2:100–103)—Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb may be considered the new "Adam" and "Eve," respectively. The word *Báb* has a numerical value of 5. The sum of its integers is 15—($1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 = 15$). Fifteen is also the numerical value of "Eve" (Arabic, *Hawá*).

9. *Basmala* is an Arabic word indicating the oft-repeated quranic phrase, "In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate" (*Bismi'lláh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*).

dispensation. In the Islamic dispensation, he states, it is alluded to through the letter *B* (*bá'*: the first letter of the *basmala*, see below) and in the Gospels (*injíl*) through the word *Ab* (= "Father")—which, in the Arabic Bible, contains two of the letters of *Bahá'* (*A* and *B*). *Bahá'* is clearly intimated in Bábí scripture, the *Bayán*. It is representative of the Self (*nafs*) of God in this, the Bahá'í dispensation (see INBMC 56:25).

In a Persian tablet, Bahá'u'lláh states that in past ages the greatest name (*Bahá'*) was hidden in the "knowledge of God" but recorded or intimated in the scrolls of past Messengers of God (*ṣuḥuf al-mursalín*, see *Iqtidárát* 275). In one of the Hidden Words (*Kalimát-i-Maknúnih*, Persian No. 77, revealed some five years prior to his declaration in 1863) Bahá'u'lláh mystically intimated the manifestation and power of the greatest name, *Bahá'*, (see below) through the disclosure of its first two letters (i.e., *Bá* and *Há*).¹⁰ Hundreds of subsequent tablets spell out the power and importance of the word *Bahá'*.

Bahá' in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament)

The word *bahá'* seems to have no precise equivalent or cognate in biblical Hebrew. Theologically, it is represented by the Hebrew word *kabôd* = "radiant glory." Translated into biblical Hebrew, Bahá'u'lláh (the glory-splendor of God) would be *Kabôd YHWH*. Various verses and prophecies in the Hebrew Bible have been thought to intimate the name and beauteous glory of the person of the founder of the Bahá'í Faith. A number of verses of the Book of Isaiah, for example, are significant in this respect; they are seen as intimations or predictions of the manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh and the radiance, the "glory" of the believing Bahá'í:

And the glory of the Lord [*kabôd YHWH*] shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. (Isa. 40:5)

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord [*kabôd YHWH*] has risen upon you . . . the Lord [*YHWH*] will arise upon you, and his glory [*kabôd*] will be seen upon you. . . . Then shall you see and be radiant. (Isa. 60:1, 2b; 5a)

10. See Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words* 48. Cf. Shoghi Effendi, *Dispensation* 26–27. Both 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi have interpreted this Hidden Word (see the letter of Shoghi Effendi, dated 27 August 1933 [unpublished compilation]). The word *bahá'* in a general sense does, however, occur elsewhere in the *Hidden Words*, i.e.: "O SON OF MAN! . . . Thou art My glory [*bahá'*] and My glory [*bahá'*] fadeth not . . ." (*Hidden Words* #14, cf. *Hidden Words* #23). This line of the *Hidden Words* is reflected in Arabic *Bayán* 5:4 where the Báb, apparently addressing human beings, states that they have been made "My *bahá* [*bahá'*], "my glory"; (cf. Muḥammad Afán, *Bahá'u'lláh* 310 for another explanation). It is also worth noting that the *Hidden Words* are headed with the phrase "He is the Glory of Glories" (lit. "He [God] is the Splendid, the All-Glorious" [*Huwa al-bahíyy al-abhá*]).

Isaiah predicted that in eschatological times God would be made manifest bedecked with *bahá'* ("glory"/"beauty") and *jamál* (also "beauty"). "In that day shall the Lord of hosts (*YHWH Sabaot* = Arab. *rabb al-junúd*) be for a crown of glory (Heb. '*ateret tzevi* = Arab. *iklíl jamál*), and for a diadem of beauty (Heb. *tzevirat tifarah* = Arab. *táj bahá'*), unto the residue of his people." (Isa. 28:5). It is interesting that an Arabic version of this text refers to a theophany of Bahá'u'lláh (who at one time wore a *táj* or dervish headdress) as one adorned with a *táj bahá'* ("a crown of beauty"). It will not be irrelevant to note in this respect that this text is understood messianically in the Aramaic Isaiah Targum: "At that time the Anointed One (or Messiah) of the Lord of hosts shall be for a diadem of joy and for a crown of glory unto the residue of his people . . ." (Stenning, *Isaiah Targum* 86–87).

Isaiah 33:17 contains the line "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty (*bahá'*)" (Heb. *melek be-yafyo* = Arab. *al-malik bi-bahá'ih*; 33:17a). These words have been understood to refer to an expected messianic King. Hence, the expository rendering of the *Isaiah Targum*, "The glory of the Shekinah of the everlasting king in his beauty shall thine eyes see . . ." (Stenning, *Isaiah Targum* 108–9). The promised Jewish messiah is to appear as a radiant and beautiful King—note the use of *bahá'* (= "beauty") in the (Eli Smith) Cornelius Van Dyck Arabic translation (1860s)—a version cited by Bahá'u'lláh and beloved of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

In his last major work, the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* (c. 1891 C.E.), Bahá'u'lláh himself cites a few verses from the book of the prophet Isaiah (146). They, in certain Arabic translations cited by him, contain the word *bahá'*—understood with reference to his manifestation. Isaiah 2:10 refers to "the glory of His majesty (*bahá'* '*aẓimatihi*)" and 35:2b has it that people "shall see the glory of the Lord (*majd al-rabb*) and the splendor of our God (*bahá' iláhiná*)."

Many other biblical texts contain significant references to the *kabôd* ("glory") or *kabôd YHWH* ("Glory of the Lord")—the latter occurring thirty-six times in the Hebrew Bible. Perhaps alluding to Bahá'u'lláh, Ezekiel described the "Glory of God" in the form of a man (Ezek. 1:26; see also Ezekiel chapters 1, 10, 43:1 ff. Cf. Daniel 7). Israel Abrahams (1858–1924), one-time Reader in Rabbinic and Talmudic Literature at Cambridge University, in the second of his three lectures on the Glory of God (entitled "Messianic" and delivered in the U.S.A. in the Spring of 1924), among other interesting observations, wrote, "The expectation that the divine Glory will be made splendidly manifest with the coming of the Kingship of God is not only a natural hope, it is also a solid foundation for optimism" (42). That *kabôd* ("glory") is of paramount eschatological ("latter day") importance in the Hebrew Bible prompted Arthur M. Ramsey (1906–1988), Archbishop of Canterbury (1961–1974), and one-time (regius) professor of divinity at Cambridge and Durham) to write:

... one day Israel will have the vision of the *kabôd* of her God, whether by His dwelling with man upon the stage of history or by the coming of a new heaven and a new earth bathed in the light of the divine radiance. . . . No reader of the Old Testament would believe that there was a coming of the Kingdom and of the Messianic age which did not include a manifestation of the glory. . . . (Ramsey, *The Glory* 18, 37)

The theophanic secrets of the divine Glory (*kabôd*) have been, and are, a matter of central importance in Jewish mysticism. So too are the mysteries of the tetragrammaton ("four-lettered word"), which occurs some 6,823 times in the Hebrew Bible, (= *YHWH*, trans. "Lord"; also loosely transliterated "Yahweh," "Jehovah"). It is the personal name of the biblical God of Moses. Bahá'u'lláh claimed to be a manifestation of the God, the Lord who is *YHWH* (see Lambden, *Sinaitic Mysteries* 154 f.), the very radiance of God's Presence, and divine "Glory." Kabbalistically speaking or in the light of Jewish mysticism, the first two letters of the divine name *YHWH* (the *Y* and the *H*) correspond to the first two letters of the word *Bahá'* (the *B* and the *H*). Quite frequent in the Hebrew Bible is a short form of *YHWH* composed of its first two consonants *Y* and *H*, read *Yáh*. The well-known exclamation *Hallelujah* (Heb. *Hallelûyah*) meaning "Praised be *Yáh* [God]" uses this abbreviated form of the divine designation. The two-letter abbreviated form of *Bahá'* and this two-letter form of the Hebrew name of God coincide. According to various mystics, the first of their two letters (*Y* and *B*) were considered the "Primal Point" (*al-nuqta al-awwaliyya*) from which certain dimensions of existence sprang forth.¹¹

Bahá' in the New Testament

The Arabic word *bahá'* obviously does not occur directly in the Greek New Testament. Its theological equivalent is the Greek word *doxa* = radiant "glory" which often translates the Hebrew *kabôd* (in one sense also, radiant "glory").¹² The Arabic word *bahá'* is, however, found at certain points in Arabic versions

11. A centrally important Jewish mystical work is the *Sepher Ha-Zohar* ("Book of Radiance") attributed to the second-century Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai (but which many modern scholars attribute to the Spanish mystic Moses de Leon [1240–1305 C.E.]). It was not unknown in nineteenth-century Iran. Within this Aramaic work, there exist a number of references to the hidden, supernal "Point" (*Zohar* 1.15a) which is related to God's *Hokhmah* ("Wisdom") (see Lambden, article "Wisdom," in the *Bahá'í Encyclopedia* [ed. Momen et al.] forthcoming).

12. The Arabic word *majd*, which can also be rendered (radiant) "glory," is a word which not infrequently translates *doxa* ("glory") in certain Arabic versions of the New Testament. In the *Kitáb-i-Iqán* and in other tablets, Bahá'u'lláh quotes those New Testament verses which predict the Return of Christ in "glory" (*doxa*) (see Mark 13:26, Matthew 24:30, Luke 21:27; cf. Mark 8:38, Matthew 16:27, Luke 9:26). Here (Greek) *doxa* ("glory") is often translated (in Arabic Bibles) *majd*. It is thus the case that many references in Bahá'u'lláh's tablets to his coming with great "glory" (*majd*) allude to his being the Return of Christ "in the glory (*majd/doxa*) of the Father." (For some details, see Lambden, "In the Glory of the Father," forthcoming in *Bahá'í Studies Bulletin*.)

of the New Testament and in other Arabic writings. A good example occurs in Revelation 21:23 where John of Patmos predicts:

And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God [= *Bahá'u'lláh*] is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb.

In one of his tablets to a Jewish Bahá'í, Bahá'u'lláh cites this verse in Arabic exactly as it was printed in the London 1671 (1858) edition of the William Watts *Arabic Bible for the Eastern Churches*. A decade or so ago, I noticed some millennial, or even older (early medieval, probably pre-9th century C.E.), Christian uses of the word *bahá'* in Arabic recensions of an originally Syriac work, *The Book of the Cave of Treasures* (*Me'ârath Gazzê*, original Syriac circa 4th century C.E.?; see Bezold, *Die Schatzöhle*), namely, in the "Book of the Rolls" (*Kitáb al-majáll*).¹³ This work includes an account of the story of Adam and Eve. Reference is made to the First Man's pre-fall "mighty glory" (*bahá'* *al-'azím* [Bezold, *Die Schatzöhle* 2:14]), his "wondrous glory" (*al-bahá'* *al-'ajíb*, Gibson, *Apocrypha* 6). According to the "Book of the Rolls," the first couple were both clothed in glory or "beauty/splendor" (*bahá'*) (Gibson, *Apocrypha* 7).¹⁴

It has been noted that Bahá'u'lláh associated the word *Father* with the greatest name. Several verses of the Gospels speak of the Return of Christ "in the glory of his Father" (Matt. 16:27, Mark 8:38. Cf. Luke 9:26). Both the words *glory* (Greek *doxa*) and *Father* (Greek *pater*, Hebrew Bible 'Ab, Arabic Bible Áb) could be regarded as alluding to the greatest name *Bahá'*. In the New Testament, the word *Father* occurs over 200 times—as opposed to around 15 times (as 'Ab) for "God" in the Hebrew Bible. It is found in the two versions of the so-called Lord's Prayer (see Luke 11:3–4, Matt. 6:9–13). This prayer begins: "Our Father which art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. . . ." The "Father" referred to here is primarily the Godhead but could also be understood to refer to Bahá'u'lláh who has ever existed (in his pre-existent Reality) in the "heaven" of the Will of God. The "hallowed be thy

13. A number of the post-sixth century C.E. Arabic recensions of the *Book of the Cave of Treasures* exist (see Bezold, *Die Schatzöhle*, vol. 2); most notably, the "Book of the Rolls" (*Kitáb al-majáll*, later referred to as the "Apocalypse of Peter" and related to the "Testament of Adam" tradition). The first fifty or more pages of an Arabic recension of it were published by Margaret D. Gibson (from an undated ninth century C.E.) manuscript preserved in a monastery library on Mount Sinai) in the series *Studia Sinaitica* (8), as *Apocrypha Arabica*.

14. Jewish traditions have it that in the "last days" the radiant "glory" of the (symbolic) "First Man" or "First Couple" would be regained (cf. Gen. 3:21). The new humanity will, it is predicted in numerous texts, be "clothed" in the primordial "glory" (perhaps "Bahá'í status"). This, symbolically speaking, the "First Couple" lost at the time of the "Fall." A variety of religious traditions reckon that primordial conditions will again be experienced in the new, messianic age of paradise—for Bahá'ís, the emergent "new heaven and earth" of the Bahá'í Faith. Cf. Lambden, "From Fig Leaves."

name" verse might be understood to be an allusion to the "glory" of the greatest name *Bahá'*, to One whose kingdom has been long awaited by Christians expecting the Return of Christ in the glory of the "Father."

Numerous Christians have written volumes upon the subject of the multifaceted biblical concept of the "Glory" / the "Glory of God." Christ's Return "in the glory of the Father" has been meditated upon, prayed for, and variously interpreted for many centuries. Some have focused upon the mystery of the biblical "glory" (*kabôd/doxa*) or related expressions of the divine splendor. A somewhat eccentric Protestant Christian example of this is the Rev. H. A. Edwards's pamphlet, *The Glory of the Lord, An Investigation into the Significance of the Shekinah* [= "Glorious Dwelling"] *Presence, the Reasons for its Withdrawal and the Prophecies Concerning its Future Return*. More recent and much more important volumes have been written which contain valuable information about the glorious divine Presence in history and eschatology, about the *Kabôd* and the *Doxa*. Details cannot be gone into here. It must suffice to quote a few sentences from the entry *DOXA* ("Glory") in Rahner and Vorgrimler's (Catholic) *Concise Theological Dictionary*:

In principle, man has already acquired a share in God's eschatological [end time] *doxa* through the self-communication of God to man which has occurred in Christ (the bestowal of the Spirit) but, under this soteriological aspect, that *doxa* is still essentially a hidden thing, to be revealed only when the sufferings of this age are over (Rom. 18:18). (*Concise* 136)

Worth noting at this point is an interesting Islamic tradition related by the sixth *Shí'í* Imám, Ja'far al-Šádiq (d. 765 C.E.). He stated that the child Jesus, explaining the first letter, the letter *B* of the *basmala* to his bewildered schoolteacher, had it that "The letter *B* signifieth Bahá'u'lláh." This tradition is quoted in many Islamic sources, as it is by 'Abdu'l-Bahá' in his own commentary on the *basmala* (see *Makátib 'Abdu'l-Bahá'* 1:46).¹⁵

The Word *Bahá'* in Islam¹⁶

The linguistic history, semantic field, and multifarious occurrences of the word *bahá'* in Arabic and Persian Islamic literatures have yet to be systematically

15. Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsá'í (see below), for example, in his *Tafsír súrat al-tawhíd* ("Commentary on the Súra of the Divine Unity") quotes from Imám Ja'far al-Šádiq the following explanation of the letters of the *basmala*, "The [letter] "B" (*bá'*) is Bahá'u'lláh ("the Glory of God"), the [letter] "s" (*sín*) is Saná'u'lláh ("the Brightness of God") and the [letter] "m" (*mím*) is the Majdu'lláh ("the radiance of God")." (3). Cf. Lambden, "An Episode" 14, 25 fn. 26.

16. I shall concentrate here on a very small number of the Islamic religious uses of *bahá'*. Neither the full range of religious usages nor other occurrences will be registered. As an example of a non-religious, geographical usage, it may be noted that the noun *Bahá'* indicates "one of the hamlets of the [minor] district of Shahriyár which is an administrative division of Tehran with a population of 194" (Dehkhodá, *Lughat Námih*, entry "*Bahá'*" 395, drawing upon a *Persian Geographical Dictionary*).

researched. It is a word that does not occur in the Qur'án and is not among the traditional ninety-nine "most beautiful names" of God (*al-asmá' al-ḥusná*; see Qur'án 7:179). It is thus considered "hidden." The Arabic word *bahá'* was not unknown prior to the advent of Bahá'u'lláh. Its explicit identification with the greatest name of God (*al-ism al-a'zam*), however, despite a few Islamic traditions to this effect, was *not* widely recognized. As the secret of the hundredth name of God, *Bahá'* is often alluded to in Bahá'u'lláh's tablets as that secreted "Hidden Name," which is, in this new age, now the manifest greatest name of God.

The word *bahá'* is found in a number of prophetic ḥadīth—traditions attributed to the prophet Muḥammad. One such tradition, influential in certain Persian Sufi circles, reads, "The red rose [*al-ward al-aḥmar*] is of the glory of God [*min bahá'u'lláh*]" (trans. Ernst, *Rūzbihān Baqlī* 67, transliteration added).¹⁷ This tradition is cited and commented upon in the *Mashrab al-arwāḥ* (The Tavern of Souls), *Sharḥ-i shāḥīyyāt* (Commentary on the Ecstatic Utterances), and other writings of the outstanding love-mystic and gnostic, Shaykh Rūzbihān Baqlī Shīrāzī (d. 1209 C.E.). In the *Mashrab*, for example, he reckons the "red rose" a manifestation of God's beauty-glory (*bahá'*):

Whenever God wishes to adopt someone as his loving intimate, he shows that person the glory of His Beauty, so that the person falls in love with everything beautiful. The Prophet said, "The red rose is part of God's glory [*bahá'u'lláh*]. Whoever wishes to contemplate God's glory, let him behold the rose." The gnostic said: "The vision of God's glory occurs at the site of intimacy and expansion."¹⁸

The Lifeblood of the Supplications (*Muhaj al-da'wát*) is a compilation of prayers attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad and the Twelver Imáms compiled by Raḍī al-Dín ibn Táwús (1193–1266 C.E.). Within it is contained an Arabic prayer attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad which came to be entitled *Du'á al-*

17. Fascinating and relevant details can be found in the recent work of C.W. Ernst, *Rūzbihān Baqlī: Mysticism and the Rhetoric of Sainthood in Persian Sufism*. Ernst notes that in his *Qur'án Commentary*, Rūzbihān relates the tradition from an early Sufi named al-Wásitī (d. 932 C.E.).

18. See Rūzbihān Baqlī, *Mashrab al-arwāḥ* 262, English trans. Nurbaksh, *Sufi Symbolism* 4:19. See also Rūzbihān Baqlī, *Commentaire (Sharḥ-i Shāḥīyyāt)*, paragraph 265. In her *Mystical Dimensions*, Annemarie Schimmel, commenting on this tradition writes, "It was Rūzbihān Baqlī who highlighted the prophetic tradition according to which Muḥammad declared the red rose to be the manifestation of God's glory ([*Bahá'*] B 265). He thus gave the rose—loved by poets throughout the world—the sanction of religious experience; his vision of God is a vision of clouds of roses, the divine presence fulgent as a marvellous red rose. Since this flower reveals divine beauty and glory most perfectly, the nightingale, symbol of the longing soul, is once and forever bound to love it—and the numberless roses and nightingales in Persian and Turkish poetry take on, wittingly or unwittingly, this metaphysical connotation of soul-bird and divine rose" (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions* 299). For further details and key quotations from Rūzbihān see Ernst, *Rūzbihān Baqlī* 66 f.

eminent exaltation is far above the reach of every other symbol of exaltation. The splendour of His appearance far surpasseth that of any other appearance. His divine concealment is far more profound than any other concealment. His loftiness is immeasurably above every other loftiness. His gracious favour is unequalled by any other evidence of favour. His power transcendeth every power. His sovereignty is invincible in the face of every other sovereignty. His celestial dominion is exalted far above every other dominion. His knowledge pervadeth all created things, and His consummate power extendeth over all beings. (*Selections from the Writings of the Báb* 156–57)

There exists an Arabic prayer of Bahá'u'lláh—headed “In the name of God, the All-Glorious (*al-Abhá*)”—which opens with reference to the *Shí'í* Dawn Prayer, the first line of which it subsequently quotes. By means of this Dawn Prayer, God had been supplicated, Bahá'u'lláh meditates, by the tongues of Messengers (*rusúl*), beseeched through the “tongues of those who are nigh unto God.” All, in fact, were commanded to recite it at dawntimes for it contains the “Greatest Name” and is a protection against being veiled from that Name (*Bahá'*) which is the “ornament” of God's “Self.” It is in this tablet that Bahá'u'lláh seems to refer to the *Shí'í* dawn prayer as the “Tablet of Eternity” (*lawḥ al-baqá'*) (see Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, *Majmú'ih-yi Munáját* 45–46).²³

In a Persian tablet to Mírzá 'Abbás of Astarábad, sometimes referred to as the *Lawḥ ism-i-a'zam* (“Tablet of the Greatest Name”), Bahá'u'lláh quotes from the beginning of the above-quoted Dawn Prayer and observes that the “people of *al-Furqán*” (Muslims) have not heeded the fact that the “greatest name” was said to be contained within it, indeed, at its very beginning (refer Má'idih, 4:22–23, cf. 7:97). In his last major work, the *Lawḥ-i-Ibn-i-Dhī'b* (*The Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* c. 1891 C.E.), Bahá'u'lláh refers to the Dawn Prayer. He exhorts *Shaykh* Muḥammad Taqí Najafí (d. 1914), should he enter the “Crimson Ark” (become a Bahá'í), to face the “Kaaba of God” (Bahá'u'lláh) and recite the opening line of the *Shí'í* Dawn Prayer (cited above). Were this to be carried out, Bahá'u'lláh promises, even the “doors of the Kingdom” would be “flung wide” open before the face of the “son of the Wolf.” This anti-Bahá'í cleric did not read this prayer as directed; he never became a Bahá'í.

Among those Muslims (*Shaykhís*) who wrote a commentary on this Dawn Prayer but remained both anti-Bábí and anti-Bahá'í was the third head of the Kirmání *Shaykhís*, Hájí Mírzá Muḥammad Karím Khán Kirmání (d. 1288 A.H./1871 C.E.). In his Arabic *Treatise in Commentary upon the Dawn Prayer* (written 1274 A.H./1857 C.E.), he records the tradition that it contained the greatest name.²⁴ Karím Khán equates *bahá'* in its opening line with the

synonym *ḥusn* (“beauty, excellence”) and goes on to explain that “the *bahá'* of God (*bahá'* Alláh) signifies the first of the effulgences of God (*tajalliyát Alláh*), higher than which there is nothing else.” It is the cause of the emergence of everything other than itself and is “the Essence of Essences—by virtue of it all existence originated it is the station of the [first letter] B (*Bá'*) of *Bismi'lláh*” (see *Commentary* 19). Though antagonistic to the person of Bahá'u'lláh, Karím Khán regarded the *Bahá'* of God as the primordial cosmological Reality. He was aware of the exegetical traditions and of their linguistic and theological import but remained heedless and antagonistic towards the Bábí and Bahá'í religions.

Possibly based on and echoing the Dawn Prayer of Ramaḍán is the following spontaneous supererogatory supplication for the month of Ramaḍán transmitted by Abí 'Abd Alláh (Imám Ja'far al-Šádiq, d. circa 148 A.H./669–70 C.E.) cited in Majlisí's *Biḥār al-anwár* from al-Iqbál of Sayyid Raḍíy al-Dín ibn Tawús (589 A.H./1193 C.E.–664 A.H./1266 C.E.):

O my God! I verily, ask Thee by Thy Name which is inscribed in the pavilion of glory [*surádiq al-majd*] and I beseech Thee by Thy Name which is inscribed in the pavilion of Splendour [*surádiq al-bahá'*]. I, verily, ask Thee by Thy Name which is inscribed in the pavilion of Grandeur [*surádiq al-'azamat*] and I beseech Thee by Thy Name which is inscribed in the pavilion of Radiance [*surádiq al-jalál*]. I verily, ask Thee by Thy Name which is inscribed in the pavilion of Might [*surádiq al-'izzat*] and I beseech Thee by Thy Name which is inscribed in the pavilion of Secrets [*surádiq al-sará'ir*] which is Foremost [*al-sábíq*], Paramount [*al-fá'iq*], Beauteous [*al-ḥusn*], and Splendid [*al-naḍír*]. And by the Lord of the Eight [Arch-]Angels [*al-malá'ikat al-thamániyat*] and the Lord of the Mighty Celestial Throne [*rabb al-'arsh al-'aẓám*]. (Cited in Majlisí, *Biḥār* 58:43)

Six celestial pavilions surrounding the Divine are spoken about in this supplication relative to specific divine attributes. They are occasionally mentioned in Bábí–Bahá'í scripture.

A variety of Bábí and Bahá'í scriptural sources have been influenced by an Arabic oration attributed to Imám 'Alí (d. 656) which is said to have been delivered between Kufa and Medina and is known as *Khuṭba al-Ṭuṭunjīyya* / *ṭaṭanjīyya* (loosely, “The Sermon of the Gulf”; cf. Lambden, “Sinaitic” 84–85, 160). It was very highly regarded and quite frequently cited or alluded to by the first two *Shaykhí* leaders and by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. Towards the end of this sermon, reference is made to the latter-day sign of the miraculous transformation of the pebbles [or gravel] of Najaf (near Kufa in Iraq, the site of the shrine of Imám 'Alí) into precious jewels (*jawhar an*). These treasures, which God will scatter under the feet of the true believers, will render other precious stones relatively valueless. This unparalleled sign is associated with the radiant, confirmatory manifestation of the divine *ḍiyá'* (“splendor”) and *bahá'* (“glory”) (see Bursí, *Masháriq* 169).

23. I am grateful to Khazeh Fananapazir for bringing this prayer to my attention.

24. This treatise has been printed twice: first in 1317 A.H./1899–1900 C.E. and second in 1351 A.H./1932–33 C.E. See Kirmání, *Fihrist* 367, no. 323.

The word *bahá* (as "brilliant radiance," etc.) occurs in the context of descriptions of the wonders that the prophet Muḥammad beheld during his heavenly *Mi'rāj* or "Night Journey" (as narrated by Ibn 'Abbas d. circa 686 C.E.): "I [Muḥammad] was overtaken with awe [*al-hayba*] at what I had seen of the Glory [*al-jalál*], the Perfection [*al-kamál*], the Beauteous Splendor [*al-bahá*'], the Grandeur [*al-'aẓimat*] and the sheer Gravitas of God [*haybatu'lláh*] . . ." (*al-Isrá wa'l-Mi'rāj* 30). It is also the case that the word *bahá* is present in certain Qur'án commentaries in the description of the beauty-splendor emanating from or "covering" the *Sidratu'l-Muntahá* (Lote-Tree beyond which there is no passing) referred to in Qur'án súrih 53 ("The Star" *al-najm*)—and visioned by Muḥammad during his Night Journey. This in the exegesis of the words "When the Lote-Tree was covered with that which covered it" (Qur'án 53:16). Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan al-Dín Túsí (d. 1067 C.E.), for example, in his bulky (twenty-volume *Shí'í*) Qur'án commentary entitled *al-Tibyán fī Tafsír al-Qur'án* ("The Clarification Regarding Qur'án Commentary") explains as follows: "The meaning [of Qur'án 53:16] is that the Lote-Tree [*al-sidra*] was covered with Light [*al-núr*] and Splendour [*al-bahá*], Beauty [*al-Ḥusn*] and [lucid] Purity [*al-ṣafá*'] which so delights the eyes that there is no end to its depiction . . ." (*al-Bayán* 9:432).

Various Sufi mystical writers utilize this imagery and associate the brilliant radiance of *bahá* with the heavenly Lote-Tree. Shaykh Muḥyí al-Dín ibn al-'Arabí (d. 1270 C.E., see below), for example, in his *Kitáb al-Isrá* (Book of the Ascent, a work which to some extent describes his own mystical *mi'rāj* through the heavens and meeting-dialogue with the prophets) writes in describing Muḥammad's arrival on the celestial Mount Buráq at the Lote-Tree of Lights (*sidrat al-anwár*), "So I enquired of him [Muḥammad], 'What is this Light [*al-núr*] and Glory [*al-bahá*]'?" And he replied, '[It is] the Lote-Tree beyond which there is no passing [*Sidrat al-muntahá*]' (*Isrá* 34 in *Rasá'il ed Affifí*).

A Persian work entitled *Mi'rāj námah* ("The Celestial Ascent") is attributed to both Avicenna (d. 1087 C.E.) and Yaḥyá Suhrawardí (d. 1192 C.E.), the founder of the Illuminationist (*Ishráqí*) school. Within it the Arabic word *bahá* is associated with the Persian *farr* (which may also signify radiant "glory"). It is stated that the Prophet Muḥammad in a previsionary state, "between waking and sleep," recounted that "Suddenly Gabriel the Archangel descended in his own form, of such beauty [*bahá*], of such sacred glory [*farr*], of such majesty that all my dwelling was illuminated." The same association of *bahá* and *farr* occurs in an angelological context in a subsequent line towards the end of this account of, and mystical commentary upon, the ascent (*mi'rāj*) of the Arabian Prophet: "Over against the valley, I saw an angel in meditation, perfect in Majesty, Glory [*farr*], and Beauty [*bahá*]." This angel is stated to have been named Michael, "the greatest of the Angels" (see Corbin, *Avicenna* 4:165 ff., esp. 171, fn. 13 and 175, fn. 25).

At this point it may be noted that the word *bahá* has occurred hundreds of times throughout the Islamic centuries as a component of Islamic honorific titles applied to eminent Muslims. Hundreds of Muslims have been designated "*Bahá' al-Dín*," the "glory [splendor] of religion."²⁵ Bahá' al-Dín Walad of Balkh (d. 1230 C.E.), meaning "the splendor/glory of religion from Balkh" is the designation, for example, of the father of Jalál al-Dín Rúmí (1207–73 C.E.), famed author of the "Persian Qur'án–Bible," the *Mathnawí*. The founder of the Naqshbandíyyih Sufi order was Bahá' al-Dín Muḥammad Naqshband (d. 1389 C.E.). Perhaps the most famous Bahá' al-Dín was the Safavid theologian, mystagogue, and man of letters, Bahá' al-Dín Muḥammad ibn Ḥusayn al-Ámilí (b. Baalbeck circa 1547, d. Isfáhán 1622 C.E.), author of around 100 works including a well-known anthology entitled *Kashkúl* ("Begging-Bowl"). A one-time Shaykh al-Islám of Isfáhán appointed by Sháh 'Abbás the Great, he adopted the pen-name (*takhalluṣ*) Shaykh [-i-] Bahá'í.²⁶ There exists a Persian *mathnawí* mystical poem attributed to him which celebrates and highlights the mystery of the "greatest name." He, for example, has it that the "greatest name" is the Name, by virtue of a sunburst of which Moses experienced the luminous Sinaitic theophany. By reciting it, Jesus resurrected the dead. Indeed, it enshrines the "treasures of the Names" (*kunúẓ-i-asmá'*).²⁷

The word *bahá*, as well as derivatives from the same Arabic root, are also found in the titles of certain Islamic books and treatises. There existed, for example, a work about language called *Kitáb al-Bahá* ("The Book of Splendor or Beauty") by the celebrated grammarian Abú Zakariyyá' Yaḥyá ibn Ziyád [al-Aqta' al-Daylamí], known as al-Farrá' (d. 207/822; concerning this grammarian, see Carter, *Cambridge History of Arabic Literature* 123 ff.).²⁸

25. The following are a few examples of the many persons whose titles or names included the word *bahá*: [1] Bahá' al-Dawlah wa'l-Diyyá' al-Malla, Abu Nasr Fíruz Khárshádh ibn 'Aḍud al-Dawla Faná-Khusraw (d. 1012 C.E.), a Búyid "king in Rayy" who invaded Fars where he subsequently died; [2] Bahá' al-Dín Zakariyyá', known as Bahá' al-Haqq, ("the glory of the Ultimately Real") a Suhrawardí saint (1182/3–1262 C.E.); [3] Bahá' al-Dín Zuhayr, Abu'l-Fadl Muḥammad al-Muhallabí al-Azdí, a celebrated Arab poet and official of the Ayyúbids (1186–1258 C.E.); [4] Bahá' al-Dín Juwainí, the father of the thirteenth-century C.E. historian; [5] Bahá' al-Dawlah, Muḥammad Husayn Núrbakshí (d. circa 1507 C.E.) an outstanding physician of the Safavid era. He received the title Bahá' al-Dawlah from the Sháh. On the origins and relationship of names including al-Dín (including Bahá' al-Dín), see J. Kramers, "Les noms musulmans composés avec Dín," *Acta Orientalia* V (1926) 63–67 (not available to me). See also Dehkhodá, *Lughat Námih*, Bahá' al-Dawlih/ Bahá' al-Dín (397 f.).

26. According to Ishráq Khávarí, Shaykh-i-Bahá'í adopted this pen-name in light of the traditions of the Imáms about the greatest name of God and the occurrence of the word *Bahá* in both the Dawn Prayer of Muḥammad Bāqir (see above) and the *Du'a-yi Umm Dawúd* ("Supplication of the Mother of David")—in which the sixth Imám Sādiq said the greatest name was contained (see Ishráq Khávarí, *Jannát-i Na'im* 1:469; cf. Noghabáí, *Bisharát-i-Kutub-i-Ásmání* 149).

27. Refer Shaykh Bahá'í, *Dār rumúẓ-i-ism-i-a'ẓam*, in Jawāhirí, ed., *Kulliyát* 95.
28. This work is listed in the massive *Shí'í* bibliography of Aghá Buzurg al-Tehrání, *al-Dharrí'a*. See *al-Dharrí'a* 3:157, no. 550. There are other works the titles of which are of interest to our theme including, for example, three works entitled *Risála al-bahíyya* ("The Luminous Treatise") (see *al-Dharrí'a*, nos. 587 f.). Several *Shí'í* writers composed books entitled *al-Anwár al-bahíyya* ("The Glorious Lights") (for some details see *al-Dharrí'a* 3:420–21, nos. 1661–62). Examples of the Islamic use of *bahíyya* ("luminous") are numerous.

The word *bahá'* is, furthermore, sometimes contained in numerous Islamic theological, mystical, and other literatures. Al-Miqdád ibn 'Abdu'lláh al-Ḥillí (d. 826/1422–23), for example, in the course of discussing the impossibility of an anthropopathic Essence of Divinity—God's having such emotions as joy and anguish—in his *Irshádu'l-ṭálibín ilá nahju'l-mustarshidín* ("The Guidance of Seekers unto the Path of Travellers") writes that the "Necessarily Existent" (*wájib al-wujúd* = God) by virtue of being "the origin of every perfection and the cause of all *bahá'* ["glory"] and *jamál* ["beauty"] has the perfection of perfections and the *bahá' al-ajmal* ["most beauteous glory"]." Furthermore, "all *bahá'* ["glory"], *jamál* ["beauty"], perfection [*kamál*] and rational good are God's, for He is the Beloved One and the One Adored . . . the Necessarily Existent is He Who is in the acme of *kamál* ["perfection"], *jamál* ["beauty"] and *bahá'* ["glory"] . . ." (235).

The "Great Shaykh," Muḥyí al-Dín ibn al-'Arabí (1165–1240), in his magnum opus, the lengthy *Meccan Revelations* (*Openings; al-Futúḥát al-Makkíyya*)—partially orally commented upon by Bahá'u'lláh during his two-year sojourn in Sulaymáníyyih (1854–56; see Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 122)—occasionally uses the word *bahá'* or a related derivative of the same Arabic root. In, for example, *Futúḥát* chapter 65, on the "Gnosis of Paradise," there is reference to the appearance of God to certain inmates of Paradise. In the course of a divine colloquy, mention is made of such as are angelically clothed with, or whose "faces" are radiant with *bahá'* ("glory"), *jamál* ("beauty"), and *núr* ("light").

In his *Tarjumán al-ashwáq* ("Interpreter of Yearning Loves"), Ibn al-'Arabí celebrates the radiant outer and inner spiritual beauty of a woman of Persian, Isfáhání descent named Nizám and entitled '*Ayn al-Shams wa'l-Bahá'*' ("The Essence of the Sun and the Radiant Beauty [Splendor]") whom he had met in Mecca around 598/1202 (Ibn 'Arabí, *Tarjumán al-ashwáq* 3). She was a preacher and a woman given to asceticism. It was perhaps his encounter with her which inclined the Great Shaykh (Ibn 'Arabí), like other Sufi mystics, to "perceive the divine through the medium of female beauty" (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* 431). Such mystical respect and awe, such carnality, spiritual "love" for the divine, feminine "beauty" is far from any form of base carnality.

Another stunning, and, for Bahá'ís, prophetic, occurrence of the word *bahá'* in a mystical text is its use in the work *Shams al-ma'ání* ("The Sun of Mystic Meaning") of Muḥyí al-Dín al-Búní (d. 1225 C.E.) where it is written in the course of commenting on "the name *Bahá'*" ("Glory/Splendor"):

God will cause a brilliance [*ishráq an*] to radiate from His splendid [*al-bahíyy*], all-glorious [*al-abhá'*] Countenance [*al-wajh*] with the name of Bahá' [*bi-ism al-bahá'*]

on the Universal Day [*yawm al-muṭlaq*]. And He shall enter the meadow [or vicinity, *marj*] of Akká' and unite all the peoples of the earth. (Cited Khávarí, *Rahiq-i-Makhtúm* 1:365–66)²⁹

In a lengthy prayer (*Ṣalát al-kubrā*) contained in the volume entitled *Lordly Graces* (*Fuyūdāt al-Rabbání*) ascribed to 'Abd al-Qadir Jílání (d. 1165 C.E.), the founder of the Qadírí Sufi fraternity, the Prophet Muḥammad is called *al-núr al-bahíyy* ("the glorious light") (refer to Jílání, *Fuyūdāt* 148). The Shí'í Sufi 'Abd al-Karím al-Jílí (d. circa 832/1428) in the prolegomenon to his important *al-Insán al-kámil* ("The Perfect Man") refers to God as being clothed in both "glory and splendor" (*al-majd wa'l-bahá* 1:4). Such are a few of the many occurrences of the word *bahá'* in Islamic sources.

The Word *Bahá'* in Early Shaykhism

Treatises on the significance of the greatest name of God and the use of the word *bahá'* are also found in the writings of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsá'í (d. 1826 C.E.) and Siyyid Kázim-i-Raṣhtí (d. 1843/4 C.E.), the two most important Muslim harbingers of the Bábí-Bahá'í Faiths (see Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 97). Siyyid Kázim is reckoned by Bahá'ís to have prophetically alluded to the mystery of the word *Bahá'* in the opening cosmological sentence of his recondite commentary on a poem of 'Abd al-Báqí Afandí al-Muṣílí (d. 1278/1861), the *Sharḥ al-qaṣída al-lámiyya* ("Commentary on the Ode Rhyming in the Letter L"). Loosely translated, the opening words might be rendered:

Praise be to God Who hath ornamented the brocade of existence with the mystery of differentiation [*sirr al-baynúnat*] by virtue of the ornament of the emergent Point [*ṭiráz al-nuḡṭat al-báriz*] from whence cometh the letter "H" [*al-há'*] through the letter "A" [*bi'l-alif*], without filling up [*ishbá'*] or segregation [*inshiqáq*]. (See *Sharḥ al-qaṣída*, cited 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Makátib* 1:41)

These opening words have been referred to, for example, by Bahá'u'lláh in a tablet to Mullá 'Alí Bajistání (see *Má'idih* 8:139) and by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in his commentary on the *Basmala* (see *Makátib* 1:33 ff.). The Siyyid, in somewhat cryptic fashion, mentions the "Point"—which on one level indicates the essence of the hidden letter *B* (cf. the dot of the Arabic/Persian letter *B*)—is related to the letters *H* and *A*. For Bahá'ís, these letters, in conjunction, indicate or spell the proper noun and greatest name *Bahá'*.

29. This particular work, of the forty or more works of al-Búní, is not available to me. I have translated the text cited as being from this work in *Ishráq Khávarí, Rahiq-i Makhtúm*. Better known is al-Búní's *Kitáb shams al-ma'árif wa laṭá'if al-awárif* ("The Sun of Gnosis") which exists in various recensions and has been printed several times.

Also worth noting here is the fact that Siyyid Kázim, commenting on a phrase containing the word "splendor" (*diyá'*) in *al-Khuṭba al-Ṭuṭunjīyya* ("The Sermon of the Gulf"), attributed to Imám 'Alí, identified it with *bahá'* ("radiant glory") and wrote, "it is the light of lights, the very Light which illuminates the lights." This was alluded to in Jesus' words related by Imám Ja'far al-Šádiq, "the B [*bá'*] of 'In the Name of God the Merciful the Compassionate' [*Bismi'lláh al-Raḥmán al-Raḥím*] which is Bahá'u'lláh" (see above). This is the *bahá'*, Siyyid Kázim adds, which is mentioned in the opening line of the *Shí'í* Dawn Prayer (cited above; refer to Siyyid Kázim, *Sharḥ al-khuṭba* 20). At a much later section of the *Sharḥ al-qaṣída* (unpaginated), Siyyid Kázim, commenting on the exalted status of Músá al-Kázim (d. 799, the seventh Imám) in connection with the divine "Light" mentioned in the Medinan quranic "Light Verse" (24:35), explains that this "Light" is (on one level) synonymous with the "Radiance" (*al-Diyá'*) and the "Glory" (*al-bahá'*). At one point he writes, "the Bahá' ["glory"] is *al-Diyá'* ["Radiance"]." In reality it is the "Primordial Light" and the "Greatest, Greatest Name" (*al-ism al-a'zam al-a'zam*) through which God created the "heavens and the earth" and whatsoever is therein.

The "Splendor" Motif in Select Non-Semitic (Asian) Religions

The Arabic word *bahá'* and its derivatives obviously do not occur directly in the Sanskrit, Gāthīc, Avestan, Pali, Chinese, Japanese, and other sacred texts of the non-Semitic Bahá'í-recognized (Asian+) religions (Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism). Words of identical or similar meaning are, however, found in eschatological contexts or texts that Bahá'ís have found prophetically significant; a radiant celestial aura is sometimes associated with portraits of messianic figures mentioned in Hindu, Zoroastrian, and Buddhist texts. Details cannot be gone into here, though the following few notes may be of interest.

A Sanskrit root *B-H-Ā* signifies "to shine." Related Sanskrit, Pali and other words (i.e., *ābhāti* = "shines towards"; *ābhā* = "luster, splendor"), though etymologically/linguistically unrelated, remind one of derivatives of the Arabic verbal root *B-H-A* [W], including *bahá'* and *abhá'*. Various stanzas of the eleventh chapter of the *Bhagavad Gīta*—such as the use of *bhāh* (= "Light," "Glory") in 11:12—detailing the "radiant glory" of the transfigured Krishna have, by certain Bahá'ís, been seen to be prophetic (i.e., Munje, *World* 50–51, on *Gīta* 11:30).³⁰

30. R.C. Zaehner in his *The Bhagavad Gīta* translates verses eleven and twelve, which are part of the picture of Krishna's universal form, his transfiguration (see chapter 11:9 ff.), as follows. "Garlands and robes celestial He wore, fragrance divine was his anointing. [Behold this] God whose every [mark] spells wonder, the Infinite, facing every way! If in [bright] heaven together should arise the shining brilliance of a thousand suns, then would that perhaps resemble the brilliance of that [God] so great of Self" (82–83)—transliteration of the Sanskrit of verse twelve, *divi sūrya-sahasraśa bhaved yugapad uthitā yadi bhāh, sadrsī sā syād bhāsaśa tasya mah'-ātmanah*.

The messianic figures Kalki, the tenth Avatār of Vishnu expected by some Hindus, the Zoroastrian messiah figures Saōshyant ("[future] Benefactor") and Shāh Bahrām (Vahrām = Verethraghna) are all pictured as manifesting some kind of aura of glory, a supernatural splendor comparable to the *bahá'* ("radiant glory") of Bahá'u'lláh. The Zoroastrian savior, for example, incarnates the *Khvarenah* (Avestan; Pahlavi = *Khvarr*; New Persian *Khurrah/farr*) or supernatural "splendor." Indeed, the ancient Iranian motif of the radiant and luminous aureole of kings, prophets, and messiah figures had some direct and indirect influence upon themes of royal and radiant messianic "glory" in the Abrahamic religions. *Khvarenah* ("splendor") was sometimes translated into Greek as *doxa* ("[radiant] glory," see above) and Arabic-Persian as *nūr* "light" (*nūr*), which are both possible senses of the word *bahá'*. In his article "Khvarenah" in the recent *Encyclopedia of Religion* (ed. Eliade et al.), G. Gnoli writes:

The *khvarenah* is a luminous and radiant force, a fiery and solar fluid. . . . It is an attribute of Mithra, of royalty, of divine and heroic figures in the national and religious tradition, of Yima, the first king, of Zarathustra, and of the three Saoshyants [future messiahs; for Bahá'ís, Muḥammad, the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh] who perform their tasks on earth thanks to the *khvarr* ["splendor"] that they possess. It has the power to illuminate the mind and to open the eye of the soul to spiritual vision, enabling those who possess it to penetrate the mysteries of the otherworld. (*Encyclopedia of Religion* 8:297; for details, see, for example, Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth Century Books* 71)

The name of the centrally important Mahāyāna Buddha Amitābha, the ruler of the Western paradise of Sukhāvātī, in Sanskrit signifies "Boundless Light." While then, the word *bahá'* has no linguistic cognate in the languages of the non-Semitic (Asian) religions, there are a number of theological motifs that are comparable to the messianic splendor of the greatest name, *Bahá'*.

The Word Bahá' in Bábí Scripture³¹

The word *bahá'* and such forms of it as its superlative *abhá'* are quite frequent in the numerous tablets and writings of the Báb. From the early *Tafsír súrat al-Baqara* ("Commentary on the Súrah of the Cow," early 1844) and *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* (mid-1844) until his last major work *Haykalu'l-dín* ("The Temple of Religion," written shortly before his martyrdom in 1850), it is theologically significant in a variety of contexts. There can be little doubt that the Báb attached a special significance to it.

31. Among the recent treatments of this subject is Muḥammad Afnán's useful Persian article on "Bahá'u'lláh in the Writings of the First Point" (the Báb). For further details, see my paper, "The Word Bahá' in the Writings of the Báb," forthcoming in *Bahá'í Studies Bulletin*.

In the first major revelation of the Báb, the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'*, the word *bahá'* occurs some fourteen times—*bahíyya* ("luminous") occurs at least once.³² Here, as in other works of the Báb, it is cosmologically, theologically, and, for Bahá'ís, prophetically significant. It indicates, for example, an exalted and radiantly splendid celestial realm. On occasion, it characterizes the most elevated mystical heights. It may indicate the theophanic radiance of the inner Sinaitic sphere, that glorious splendor which emanates from or constitutes the "Fire" of the "Burning Bush" or "Tree," which is the being of the Manifestation of God.

It is in the twentieth *súrih* of the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* that the first occurrence of *bahá'* is found. Mystically interpreting the quranic form of the Joseph story, *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* 20 refers to the "Remembrance" (*dhikr* = the hidden, messianic Imám) as one protected and concealed at the *qutb al-bahá'* ("Pole of Splendor") situated above Mount Sinai (*al-túr al-síná'*; cf. Joseph's being cast into the pit by his brothers [Gen. 37:24; Qur'án 12:10 f.]). Two *súrihs* later, in *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* 22, mention is made of the celestial, cosmic "Water," which extends around the *qutb nuqtat al-bahá'* ("Pole of the Point of Bahá'"). *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* 29 is designated the "*Súrih of the Maiden*" (*súrat al-huríyya*). Here, in the course of addressing the "people of the earth," the Báb (speaking with the voice of God) claims to be a "Maiden" (*al-huríyya*) begotten by *al-Bahá'*: "... I am the Maid of Heaven [*al-huríyya*] begotten by the Spirit of Bahá' [*waladání al-bahá'*]..." (*Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* 29, trans. *Selections* 54). In various tablets, including the *Súrat al-Bayán* ("*Súrih of the Exposition*," circa 186?), Bahá'u'lláh refers to *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* 29 and claims to be this heavenly Maiden: "... [By God!] I am the Maid of Heaven [*al-huríyya*], the Offspring begotten by the Spirit of Bahá' (*al-Bahá'*); trans. Shoghi Effendi, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh* 284).

While in *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* 38 the Báb appears to be addressed as "The Radiant Light of God [*núr Alláh al-bahíyy*]," there exists a complex rewrite of select verses of the quranic *Súrih of the Cave* in *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* 54 in which the phrase, "the midst of the Fire in the Beauty of the Splendor [*bahá'*]" (*khilál al-nár fi jamál al-bahá'*) occurs (cf. Qur'án 18:80 and context). In *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* 57 the Báb refers to the "people of Bahá'" who sail in "arks of ruby, tender, crimson-coloured." The phrase "people of Bahá'" occurs hundreds of times in Bahá'í scripture and usually indicates the followers of Bahá'u'lláh. The "Crimson Ark" is symbolic of the Bahá'í religion, the vehicle of salvation.³³ The "Remembrance" (*dhikr*) is described in *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* 75 as a "Blessed

Tree on Mount Sinai sprung up from the Land of Splendour (*bahá'*)." In *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* 76 reference is made to a mysterious "Watercourse of Splendor (*bahá'*) (*majrá al-bahá'*) above Mount Sinai" and *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* 77 identifies the "Light of Bahá'" as the vehicle of the divine theophany on Sinai experienced by Moses (see Lambden, "Sinaitic" 101). The Báb claims in *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* 79 to be both the "Indubitable Word" (*al-kalimát al-ḥaqqah*) and the "Calamitous Word" (*al-kalimát al-qári'at*) situated about the mystic "Fire" nigh unto "the pivot of the sphere of Bahá'."

While in *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* 93 the Báb claims to be the "throne of Glory" (*al-'arsh al-bahá'*), in *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* 100 he claims to have planted with his own hands "Trees bearing the semblances of beauty [*ḥí'át al-bahá'*]." Not only does the Báb in *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* 107 claim to be the cherubic Being who appeared to Moses on the "Mount of Glory" (*túr al-bahá'*; cf. Lambden, "Sinaitic" 99) he, speaking with the voice of God in the following chapter (*Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* 108), bids the "Solace of Mine Eyes" (*Qurratu'l-'Ayn* = the Báb himself or theologically Bahá'u'lláh?) proclaim "I am al-Bahá'." The final occurrence of the word *bahá'* in *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* 109 is related to the observance of obligatory prayer before the setting of the sun in the "sphere of Splendor (*bahá'*)."

The word *bahá'* designates not only the first month of the new Bábí-Bahá'í calendar but also the ninth 19-year cycle or "Unity" (*Váhid*), the 17th of these 19-year cycles being *Bahíyy* (= "Luminous," a derivative of *bahá'*) and the 18th 19-year cycles being *Abhá*. Among the many significant uses of *bahá'* and *abhá'* in the Báb's writings—many of which are regarded by Bahá'ís as allusions to the person of Bahá'u'lláh—is the following "prophetic announcement" from the *Order of Bayán*: "Well is it with him, ... who fixeth his gaze upon the Order of Bahá'u'lláh, and rendereth thanks unto his Lord. For He will assuredly be made manifest. God hath indeed irrevocably ordained it in the Bayán" (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 25). In another passage we read, "The glory [*Bahá'*] of Him Whom God shall make manifest is immeasurably above every other glory [*Bahá'*]" (*Selections* 156). Bahá'u'lláh, as the Bábí messiah figure *Man-Yuzhiruhu'lláh* is here allocated a superlative measure of "glory," of *bahá'*. While in Persian *Bayán* 3:14 it is stated, "All the Bahá' of the Bayán is *Man-Yuzhiruhu'lláh*," at 3:15 the "Primal Will" (Reality of the Manifestation of God)—in each "Dispensation," is said to have been Bahá'u'lláh ("the Glory of God")—besides whose Bahá' all else hath ever been, and will ever remain as naught.

32. As there is yet no critical or authorized edition of the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'*, these figures are approximate.

33. See, for example, the "tenth leaf" of the *Kalimát-i-Firdawsíyyih* ("Words of Paradise") where it is written, "Blessed is he who preferreth his brother before himself. Verily, such a man is reckoned, by virtue of the Will of God, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise, with the people of Bahá' who dwell in the Crimson Ark" (*Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh* 71). In his last major work, *The Epistle to*

the Son of the Wolf (*Lawḥ-i-ibn-i-Dhi'b*), clear reference is made to *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* 57 when Bahá'u'lláh addresses Shaykh Muḥammad Táqí Najafí (d. 1914) advising him to "Seek thou the shore of the Most Great Ocean, and enter, then, the Crimson Ark which God hath ordained in the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* for the people of Bahá'" (139, cf. 130). In his Tablet of Carmel, Bahá'u'lláh predicts that "ere long will God sail His Ark upon thee, and will manifest the people of Bahá' who have been mentioned in the Book of Names" (*Kitáb al-Asmá'* [= *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'*?]) (*Gleanings* 16; see also *Gleanings* 169, cf. Heggie, *Concordance* 48).

the horizon of Bahá' in the land of 'or even nearer' [*aw ádná*, see Qur'án 53:9], shining resplendent from the "Point of Bahá'" (see *Má'idih* 7:97). A Persian couplet by Táhirih containing the word Bahá' is likewise cited (*Má'idih* 98). In her Arabic and Persian writings, this learned female Letter of the Living frequently used the words *bahá'* or *abhá'*. The Hand of the Cause of God, Abu'l-Qásim Faizi, translates the following passage from one of Táhirih's "epistles":

O my God! O my God! The veil must be removed from the face of the Remnant of the Lord. O my God! Protect Ḥusayn the mystery of Muḥammad and advance the day of reunion with him. . . . Make the point of Bahá, O my God, to circulate. . . . (Qtd. in Faizi, *Explanation of the Symbolism of the Greatest Name* 9)

Bahá' in the Bahá'í Faith

The Greatest Name [*Bahá'*] should be found upon the lips in the first awakening moment of early dawn. It should be fed upon by constant use in daily invocation, in trouble, under opposition, and should be the last word breathed when the head rests upon the pillow at night. It is the name of comfort, protection, happiness, illumination, love and unity. . . . The use of the Greatest Name and dependence upon it, cause the soul to strip itself of the husks of mortality and to step forth freed, reborn, a new creature. . . . ('Abdu'l-Bahá' cited *Lights of Guidance* 267)

For Bahá'ís, theologically speaking, the word *Bahá'* as the greatest name of God is a sacred "word," a "mantra" of great magnitude.³⁸ As the greatest name, the word *Bahá'* stands at the centre of the Names of God. Indeed, Bahá'u'lláh has stated that all the divine Names, relative to both the seen and the unseen spheres, are dependent upon it (see *Má'idih* 8:24). The use of the greatest name *Bahá'* is thus, in a sense, the alpha and the omega of Bahá'í existence.

It is often the case that the word *Bahá'* and other related or theologically weighty terms, like a string of pearls, head most of Bahá'u'lláh's and 'Abdu'l-Bahá's tablets—replacing the Islamic equivalents, i.e., the *basmala*.³⁹ One might read, for example, *bismi'lláh al-bahíyyu'l-abhá'* ("In the name of God, the Luminous, the All-Glorious") at the commencement of a tablet of Bahá'u'lláh. While in Islam (and in fact before many Bahá'í prayers), the formula *huwa'lláh* (He is God) is common, in Bahá'í sources one not infrequently finds *huwa'l-abhá'* (He is the All-Glorious). The *Hidden Words* are headed with the line *huwa'l-bahíyyu'l-abhá'* (Shoghi Effendi's translation, "He is the Glory of Glories," lit. "He is the Luminous, the All-Glorious"). Certain litany-type

38. When the Bahá'í Faith was first taught in the United States a good deal was made of the arcane, the sublime mystery of the greatest name *Bahá'*. It was initially only communicated to prospective converts after a series of "introductory lessons."

39. As noted, the *basmala* is primarily a term designating the formula, "In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate" (Arabic = *bismi'lláh al-raḥmán al-raḥím*). In certain of his works the Báb modified or altered this formula to "In the Name of God, the Most Transcendent, the Most-Holy" (*bismi'lláh al-amná' al-aqdas*) (see Persian *Bayán* 5:10).

tablets contain refrains that include *Bahá'* as the greatest name or diverse forms of it. The opening Arabic half of the *Lawḥ-i-Malláhu'l-Quds* ("Tablet of the Holy Mariner"), for example, includes the oft-repeated refrain, *fa-subhánu'lláhu'l-abhá'* ("Glorified be my Lord, the All-Glorious"; see *Bahá'í Prayers* 51 f.; *Má'idih* 4:335 f.).

There are thousands of occurrences of the word *bahá'* in Bahá'í sacred scripture. Only a few selected examples can be registered here. Bahá'u'lláh most likely alludes to himself as the expected Bábí Messiah, the new, "True Joseph" or return of Imám Ḥusayn, when he writes in the *Cháhar Vádí* ("Four Valleys," c. 1858), "Methinks I catch the fragrance of musk from the garments of [the letter] "H" (*qumuṣ al-há'*; Bábí?) wafting from the Joseph of Bahá' (Yúsifu'l-Bahá' = *Man-Yuḡhiruhu'lláh* = Bahá'u'lláh?).⁴⁰ In the *Kitáb-i-Íqán* written a few years later (circa 1862), he refers to himself as "the immortal Bird of Heaven" warbling upon the *Sidrih* ["Lote-Tree"] of Bahá' (*Kitáb-i-Íqán* 50).

Worth noting here is that Shoghi Effendi also made some interesting uses of derivatives of *B-H-A* in celebrating the glory of Bahá'u'lláh. In a lengthy Persian letter written to the oriental Bahá'ís at Ridván 105 B.E. (1949 C.E.), he lauded the exalted person of Bahá'u'lláh by an adjectival use of four different derivatives of *B-H-A*, referring to Bahá'u'lláh as *jamálu'l-bahíyyu'l-báhiyyu'l-mutabáhiyu'l-abhá'* ("the Luminous, Radiant, Brilliant, All-Glorious Beauty"; refer to *Tawqí'at* 310; cf. above on certain of the Báb's writings containing derivatives of *B-H-A*).

It was during the latter part of the Adrianople (Edirne) period of his ministry (circa 1867 C.E.) that the greeting *Alláh-u-Abhá'* ("God is All-Glorious") superseded the Islamic salutation *Alláh-u-Akbar* ("God is Great"; refer to *God Passes By* 176) and became widely adopted in the Middle East—and subsequently elsewhere. It was also during the Adrianople period of his ministry that Bahá'u'lláh named a Tablet in honor of Khátún Ján, the eldest daughter of Hájí 'Abdu'lláh Farhádí of Qazvín, The Tablet of Glory (*Lawḥ-i-Bahá'*).

Hundreds of tablets of the 'Akká (West-Galilean) period of Bahá'u'lláh's ministry contain interesting usages of *Bahá'* and its derivatives. Theological statements about the "greatest name" are numerous. In his tablet to the Templar leader George David Hardegg (1812–79; to be dated around late 1871) Bahá'u'lláh, in cryptic fashion, spelled out both the letters of the "Comforter" (Gk. *parakletos*, Arabic *mu'azzil*) promised in John's Gospel (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7) and the Greatest Name, *Bahá'*. In the opening Arabic section of Bahá'u'lláh's Tablet of Medicine (*Lawḥ-i-Tibb*) it is recommended that eating commence with the utterance of the superlative form (of the word *Bahá'*) *al-Abhá'*

40. See *The Seven Valleys* 56 (translation made more literal on the basis of the original Arabic). The figure of Joseph is important in the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* of the Báb. For some details, see Husaynī, *Yúsif-i-Bahá'*. While the phrase *Yúsif-i-Bahá'* does not occur in the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'*, it does occur in the *Four Valleys*.

(= the All-Glorious; "My Most Glorious Name" [*bismí'l-Abhá*'] see *Majmú'a-yi-alwáh-i-mubáraka haqrat-i-Bahá'u'lláh* 223; Fananapazir and Lambden, "Tablet of Medicine"). The utterance of the word *bahá'* is intimately related to both physical and spiritual health. In one of his tablets, Bahá'u'lláh says, "Well is it with the physician who cureth ailments in My hallowed and dearly cherished Name" (From a tablet of Bahá'u'lláh, cited Universal House of Justice 1970). 'Abdu'l-Bahá' taught "that the Most Great Name [= *Bahá'*/ Bahá'u'lláh] exerciseth influence over both physical and spiritual matters is sure and certain" (*Bahá'í Writings on Some Aspects of Health, Healing, Nutrition and Related Matters* 2). In another tablet, he writes:

O maid-servant of God! Continue in healing hearts and bodies and seek healing for sick persons by turning unto the Supreme Kingdom and by setting the heart upon obtaining healing through the power of the Greatest Name and by the spirit of the love of God. (*Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá* 3:629)

In his "Most Holy Book" Bahá'u'lláh recommended the recitation of the "greatest name" 95 times each day (see *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* 26, para. 18; 180 n. 33; Shoghi Effendi explained that this was not "absolutely binding" [*Lights of Guidance* 270]). It, or certain Arabic phrases containing it (or its derivatives), came to be clearly identified in Bahá'í scripture as the long secreted greatest name (*al-ism al-a'zam*) of God. Shoghi Effendi identified the Bábí formula and later Bahá'í invocation/greeting *Alláh-u-Abhá* (= God is All-Glorious) as well as the vocative exclamation *Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá* (= O Glory of the All-Glorious, 3 x 3) of the greatest name are part of the recitation of the Bahá'í daily "Long Obligatory Prayer" (*Prayers and Meditations* 319, 322, 323). In one of his tablets, 'Abdu'l-Bahá advised that in order to "seek immunity from the sway of the [negative/"evil"] forces of the contingent world," the sign of the "Most Great Name" should be hung in the dwelling and the ring of the "Greatest Name" (which spells the word *Bahá'* in four directions) worn on the [little finger] of the right hand (see *Lights* 521 and *Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá* 1:178).

The greatest name informs the life of the Bahá'í and is recited six times during Bahá'u'lláh's communal Prayer for the Dead (*Prayers and Meditations* 260). It is too sacred to be used on gravestones (*Lights of Guidance* 199). The Guardian's viewpoint regarding the centrality of the symbol of the greatest name is expressed in the words, "The Greatest Name is a distinctive mark of the

41. The invocation *Alláh-u-Abhá* is quite common in the writings of the Báb. It was stipulated for example, that city dwellers should recite it 95 (5 x 19) times on the first day of each 19-day month (see Persian *Bayán* 5:17). The Báb used it in his writings some twenty years or more prior to its Bahá'í adoption. He also directed the recitation of *Alláh-u-Abhá* 19 times each day (among other similar invocations; see *Dawnbreakers* 552) and that Bábí women should greet or salute each other with *Alláh-u-Abhá* (Persian *Bayán* 6:5).

Cause and a symbol of our Faith" (*Lights of Guidance* 267). 'Abdu'l-Bahá indicates that the nameless, "indirect" presentation of the Bahá'í teachings, abstracted from the greatest name *Bahá'*, is limited:

As to his question about the permissibility of promulgating the divine teachings without relating them to the Most Great Name, you should answer: "This blessed Name hath an effect on the reality of things. If these teachings are spread without identifying them with his holy Name, they will fail to exert an abiding influence in the world. The teachings are like the body, and this holy Name is like the spirit. It imparteth life to the body. It causeth the people of the world to be aroused from their slumber." (Cited, *The Gift of Teaching* 13)

With the centenary year (1992) recently past, it is fitting to recollect in conclusion that when Bahá'u'lláh passed away one hundred years ago, his eldest son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the "Mystery of God" (*sirru'lláh*), sent a cable to 'Abdu'l-Hamíd II, the Sulṭan of Turkey (r. 1876–1909), which read, "The Sun of *Bahá'* has set." Today, however, the "Sun" of the greatest name *Bahá'* continues to illumine all the horizons of the world with a deathless splendor. Its frequent repetition by the "people of Bahá'" (Bahá'ís), sacred scripture leads us to believe, reverberates and actualizes spiritual forces throughout universes seen and unseen.

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