

The Word *Bahá'*: Quintessence of the Greatest Name of God¹

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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 filieth 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'*,² 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.³ It was at the 1848 Bábí conference of Badash̄t that Mírzá Ḥusayn-‘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, *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'lláh n'est qu'une des variantes. Le terme *Bahá'*, considéré en soi, est un

¹ This article is a revised version of one previously published in the *Bahá'í Studies Review* 3.1 (1993).

² 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—though it is fundamental to the Arabic 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).

³ 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'*”).

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 a 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' » (Nábíl, *La Chronique de Nábíl* 277). Très tôt donc, Bahá'u'lláh, en qui l'on voyait alors un chef bábí au 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. A 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 Mas 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 (1817-1892) 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. El 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* 4:265f.). 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-Ihtiráq al-Mukhlisún*, 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?"⁴

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" (qtd. in *Lights of Guidance* 472).

⁴ *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).

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.).

The honorific title (*laqab*) of Mírzá Husayn-‘Alí Núrí is Bahá'u'lláh.⁵ 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*.⁶ It signifies “The Glory/Splendor of God.”⁷ 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 hurúfát al-maqáṭṭa'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-kullíyya*). 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] (*infil*), 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 integer⁸ 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,” “Eve.”⁹ The twin Manifestations of God in this eschatological age are viewed as the “parents” of a new spiritual humanity.

⁵ On the honorific title (*laqab tashrifí*) in Islam, see Schimmel, *Islamic Names* 12–13, 50ff.

⁶ 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.

⁷ Cf. *Diya'u'lláh* (“the Radiance of God”) and *Dhikru'lláh* (“The Remembrance of God”).

⁸ 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).

⁹ 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

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 “Ba” and the “Ha” (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-súr*) 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, Biḥár* 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 (*aḥadīth*), 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 Dhu'l-Nun (Jonah), Idris (Enoch), Ishmael, and Dhu'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 (*tavvrat*), Gospel[s] (*injil*) and Qur'án respectively (see Iran National Bahá'í Manuscript Collection [INBMC] 69: 17). Similarly, in a tablet commenting on the basmala¹⁰ and first verse of the quranic “Surih of the Pen” (*Súrih* 68), Bahá'u'lláh mentions that God divulged something (a “letter”/“word” *harf*) of the “Greatest Name” *Bahá'* in every dispensation. In the Islamic dispensation, he states, it is alluded to through the letter *B* (*bá'*: the first letter of the *basmala*) and in the Gospels (*injil*) 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., *Ba* and *Ha*).¹¹ Hundreds of subsequent tablets spell out the power and importance of the word *Bahá'*.

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*).

¹⁰ *Basmala* is an Arabic word indicating the oft-repeated quranic phrase, “In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate” (*Bismi'lláh al-Raḥman al-Raḥim*).

¹¹ 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

***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 beautiful 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)

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 *taj* or dervish headdress) as one adorned with a *taj 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' 'azimatih*)” 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

OF MAN! . . . Thou art My glory [*bahá'í*] and My glory [*bahá'í*] 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'í*] “my glory” (cf. Muḥammad Afnan, *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*]).

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, 43:1ff. 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:

[O]ne 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 *Yah*. The well-known exclamation *Hallelujah* (Heb. *Halleluyah*) meaning “Praised be *Yah* [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.¹²

***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”).¹³ The Arabic word *Bahá'* is, however, found at certain

¹² A centrally important Jewish mystical work is the *Sepher Ha-Zahar* (“Book of Radiance”) attributed to the second-century Rabbi Simeon bar Yoḥai (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” (*Zahar* I.15a) which is related to God’s *Hokmah* (“Wisdom”) (see Lambden, article “Wisdom,” in the *Bahá'í Encyclopedia* [ed. Momen et al.] forthcoming).

¹³ 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-Íqán* 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”

points in Arabic versions 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*).¹⁴ 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 2:14]), his “wondrous glory” (*al-bahá'al-‘ajíb*, Gibson 6). According to the “Book of the Rolls,” the first couple were both clothed in glory or “beauty/splendor” (*bahá'*) (Gibson 7).¹⁵

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 *Ab*) 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 fifteen 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 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

(*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*.)

¹⁴ 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*.

¹⁵ 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 lime 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.”

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 Rabner 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). (136)

Worth noting at this point is an interesting Islamic tradition related by the sixth Shí’í Imám, Ja‘far al-Şádiq (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).¹⁶

The Word *Bahá’* in Islam¹⁷

The linguistic history, semantic field, and multifarious occurrences of the word *bahá’* in Arabic and Persian Islamic literatures have yet to be systematically 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 ḥadíth—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, *Rúzbihán Baqlí* 67, transliteration added).¹⁸ This tradition is cited and commented upon in the *Mashrab al-arwáh* (The Tavern of Souls), *Sharḥ-i shaḥíyyátt* (Commentary on the Ecstatic Utterances), and other writings of the outstanding love-mystic and gnostic, Shaykh Rúzbihán Baqlí Shirází (d. 1209

¹⁶ Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsá’í (see below), for example, in his *Tafsír súrat al-tawḥíd* (“Commentary on the Sura of the Divine Unity”) quotes from Imám Ja‘far al-Şádiq 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.

¹⁷ 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 nonreligious, geographical usage, it may be noted that the noun *Bahá’* indicates “one of the hamlets of the [minor] district of Shahríyár which is an administrative division of Tehran with a population of 194” (Dehkhoda, *Lughat Námih*, entry “Bahá” 395, drawing upon a *Persian Geographical Dictionary*).

¹⁸ Fascinating and relevant details can be found in the recent work of C.W. Ernst, *Rúzbihán Baqlí: Mysticism and the Rhetoric of Sainthood in Persian Sufism*. Ernst notes that in his *Qurán Commentary*, Rúzbihán relates the tradition from an early Sufi named al-Wásití (d. 932 C.E.).

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, lei him behold the rose.” The gnostic said: “The vision of God’s glory occurs at the site of intimacy and expansion.”¹⁹

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 Rađí 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-ḥujub* (“The Supplication of the Veils”).²⁰ It contains the following line that associates the word *bahá’* with the Sinaitic theophany:²¹

I beseech Thee [God] by the Names [*al-asmá’*] through which Thou didst manifest the glory of self [*tajallayta*] before the Speaker [*al-kalím*, Moses] upon the mighty mountain [Sinai]. When sunbeams of the light of the Veils [of Light hiding the Divinity] were manifested from the *bahá’* [splendor] of the Divine Grandeur [*al’azimat*], it was such that the mountain was levelled. (Cf. Qur’án 7:143)²²

Bahá’u’lláh, it will be recalled, mystically identified himself with the divine Being who conversed with Moses on the Sinai of inner realization. Relative to Bábi-Bahá’í scripture the use of the word *bahá’* (“splendor-glory”) for the divine Sinaitic theophany is prophetically ignificant (see above)—this in light of a line in the *Khuṭba al-Ṭuṭunjiyya* (“Sermon of the Gulf”; see below) and various verses in the biblical book of Exodus (see chapters 3, 19, and 24). In his writings, the Báb occasionally identified the greatest name of God with the divine Reality, which appeared to

¹⁹ See Rúzbihán Baqlí, *Mashrab al-arwah* 262, English trans. Nurbaksh. *Sufi Symbolism* 4:11). See also Rúzbihán Baqlí, *Commentaire (Sharḥ-i Shathiyát)*, paragraph 265. In her *Mystical Dimensions*, Annemarie Schimmel, commenting on this tradition writes, “It was Rúzbihán Baqlí 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” (299). For further details and key quotations from Rúzbihán see Ernst, *Rúzbihán Baqlí* 66 f.

²⁰ This “Prayer of the Veils” has been transmitted in various recensions by, among others, Muḥammad Báqir Majlisí, the compiler of the Shí’í encyclopedia, *Bihár al-Anwár* (“The Ocean of Lights”) and *Shaykh-i-Bahá’í* (see below) who includes it in his *Kashkúl* (“The Begging Bowl”). Some Muslim scholars have doubted its authenticity. The fourth leader of the *Shaykhis*, Ḥají Zayn al-‘Abidín *Khán* Kinnání (1859-1941 C.E.) wrote a commentary on it in which its authenticity is discussed (see his *Sharḥ du’á al-ḥujub* 6 ff.).

²¹ For background details, see Lambden, “Sinaitic Mysteries.” In several of his writings, the Báb uses the word Bahá’ of the splendor of the Sinaitic theophany. Bahá’is understand certain of these texts to be prophetic of the person of Bahá’u’lláh. The Arabic text translated above is that in Kirmání, *al-ḥujub* 5. See also the comments on 224 f.

²² Probably influenced by this tradition, there exists one writing of the Báb (INBMC 20:1–5), which begins by praising God, “Who shed the radiance of His splendour and divulged His glory (*tajallí*; see Qur’án 7:143) before the celestial “Divine Cloud” (*li-’l-amá’*) through the splendour, *bahá’* (*bi-’l-bahá’*)” (1).

Moses on Sinai (*INBA*. MS 6003C 173–88). Indeed, in his *Qayyúmu 'l-Asmá*, súrih 77, he reckoned the vehicle of this divine theophany the “Light of *Bahá'*” (cf. below).

Tradition, furthermore, has it that Imám Ḥusayn related that the greatest name was said to be contained in the Prophet Muḥammad's *Du'á al-Jawshān al-kabir* (“Greater Supplication of *Jawshān*”). In this prayer, God is addressed as one possessed of *Bahá'* (“Glory”; see Qúmmí, *Mafátiḥ*, 131 ff.). It is likewise reckoned that Imám Ja'far al-Ṣádiq held that the greatest name is contained in the so-called *Du'á Umm Dawúd* (“Supplication of the Mother of David”) near the beginning of which we read, “Unto Thee [God] be *Bahá'* (“Glory”)” (Qúmmí, *Mafátiḥ* 199).

The traditions of the Twelver *Shí'í* Imáms are viewed very positively and often cited by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. Among the most important occurrences of the word *Bahá'* in *Shí'í* Islamic literatures is that which appears in an Arabic invocatory prayer attributed to Imám Muḥammad al-Báqir (677-732 C.E.), the fifth of the Twelver *Shí'í* Imáms. The eighth *Shí'í* Imám, Muḥammad Riḍá' (d. 818 C.E.), who transmitted this prayer, reckoned that it contained the greatest name of God (*al-ism al-a'zam*). It is a prayer to be recited at dawn during Ramaḍán (*Du'á Saḥar*), the Muslim month of fasting. The word *bahá'* or a derivative of the same root is contained some five times within its opening words:

O my God! I beseech Thee by Thy *Bahá'* [“Splendour”] at its most splendid [*abhá'*] for all Thy Splendour [*Bahá'*] is truly resplendent [*bahíyy*]. I, verily, O my God, beseech Thee by the fullness of Thy Splendour [*Bahá'*].²³

This prayer continues in like manner, substituting the word *bahá'* and its derivatives with all the other of the nineteen divine attributes used by the Báb in the Bábí-Bahá'í calendar—first set forth in the (Báb's) *Kitábu 'l-Asmá'* (“Book of Names” c. 1849) and later ratified by Bahá'u'lláh in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (“Most Holy Book” c. 1873). The scheme of names within it, directly or indirectly, lies behind a good many Bábí-Bahá'í scriptural uses of *bahá'*—frequently, for example, in the Báb's *Kitáb-i-Panj Sha'n* (“The Book of the Five Grades”). It is quoted in the (Persian) *Dalá'il-i-Sab'a* (“The Seven Proofs” c. 1848/9?) where its first five lines are regarded as an allusion to the Prophet Muḥammad and the other “people of the cloak” (*ahl al-kisá'*, see Qur'án 33:32, namely, 'Alí, Fátimih, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn; see 58–59). The following passage from the Báb's writings (there are many similar ones) is closely related to the above-quoted Dawn Prayer (as select transliteration will indicate) and to the Bábí messiah *Man-Yuḏhiruhu'lláh* (“Him Whom God shall make manifest”= Bahá'u'lláh):

The glory [*Bahá'*] of Him Whom God shall make manifest [*Man yuḏhiruhu'llá'*] is immeasurably above every other glory, and His majesty [*Jalál*] is far above every other majesty. His beauty [*Jamál*] excelleth every other embodiment of beauty, and His

²³ Arabic text in Qúmmí, *Mafátiḥ* 228–29. Cf. the parallel lines of the *Du'á 'yawm al-mubáhila* in *Mafátiḥ* 351 f. This prayer is also recorded, among other sources, in Muḥammad Táqí Majlisí's *Bihár al-Anwár* and *Zád al-Ma'ád*, where it is commented upon (cf. Afshar, *Bahr* 270). Both Imám Riḍá' and Imám Ja'far al-Ṣádiq (d. 765 C.E.) are associated with the transmission of this Dawn Prayer and of traditions to the effect that it contains the greatest name of God. It is related on the authority of Imám Ja'far in *al-Miṣbáḥ* (“The Luminary”; essentially a compilation of prayers written circa 895 A.H./1490 C.E.) of *Shaykh* Taqí al-Dín al-Kaf'amí al-'Amilí (Qum: Manshúrat al-Raḍí Záhidí, 1405 A.H./1984-85 C.E.). Cf. 692 f. where there is a marginal note on 692 ascribed to al-Ṣádiq registering a tradition to the effect that the Dawn Prayer contains the “Greatest Name.” For a full translation of the Dawn Prayer and commentary, see Lambden, “The Influence of a *Shí'í* Dawn Prayer upon Bábí-Bahá'í Religion and Scripture” in *Syzygy: A Journal of Bábí-Bahá'í Studies* (forthcoming).

grandeur [*‘Azimat*] immensely exceedeth every other manifestation of grandeur. Every light [*Núr*] paleth before the radiance of His light, and every other exponent of mercy falleth short before the tokens of His mercy. Every other perfection is as naught in face of His consummate perfection, and every other display of might is as nothing before His absolute might. His names are superior lo all other names. His good-pleasure taketh precedence over any other expression of good-pleasure. His pre-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* 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 Shi’i dawn prayer as the “Tablet of Eternity” (*lawḥ al-baqá’*) (see *Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A’lá, Majmú’ih-yi Munáját* 45–46).²⁴

In a Persian tablet to Mírzá ‘Abbas of Astarábád, 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-lbn-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 (Shaykhs) who wrote a commentary on this Dawn Prayer but remained both anti-Bábí and anti-Bahá’í was the third head of the Kirání Shaykhs, 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.²⁵ 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

²⁴ I am grateful to Khazeh Fananapazir for bringing this prayer to my attention.

²⁵ 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.

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-Şádiq, d. circa 148 A.H./669-70 C.E.) cited in Majlisí's *Bihár al-anwár* from al-Iqbál of Sayyid Raḍíy al-Dín ibn Táwús (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-husn*], 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-'azám*]. (qtd. in Majlisí, *Bihár* 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-tuṭunjíyya / taṭanjíyya* (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 Shaykhi 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 *diyá'* ("splendor") and *bahá'* ("glory") (see Bursí, *Masháriq* 169).

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'ráj* 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-'azimat*] and the sheer Gravitas of God [*haybatu'lláh*]" (*al-Isrá wa'l-Mi'ráj* 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 Tafsīr 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 Afffi*).

A Persian work entitled *Mi’rāj námah* (“The Celestial Ascent”) is attributed to both Avicenna (d. 1087 C.E.) and Yahya 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.”²⁶ 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 Rumí (1207-73 C.E.), famed author of the “Persian Qur’án-Bible,” the *Mathnawí*. The founder of the Naqshbandíyyih Sufí 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 ‘Abbas the Great, he adopted the pen-name (*takhalluṣ*) Shaykh [-i-] Bahá’í.²⁷

²⁶ The following are a few examples of the many persons whose titles or names included the word *bahá*’ [I] Bahá’ al-Dawlah wa’l-Ḍiyá’ al-Malla, Abu Naṣr Fírúz 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-Ḥaqq, (“the glory of the Ultimately Real”) a Suhrawardí saint (1182/3-1262 C.E.); [3] Bahá’ al-Dín Zuhayr, Abu’l-Faḍl 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).

²⁷ According to *Ishráq Khávarí*, Shaykh-i-Bahá’í adopted this pen-name in light of the traditions or the Imáms about the greatest name or God and the occurrence of the word *Bahá*’ in both the Dawn Prayer of Muḥammad Báqir (see above) and the *Du’á-yi Umm Dawúd* (Supplication of the Mother of David)—in which the sixth Imám Ṣádiq said

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” (*kunúz-i-asmá*).²⁸

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’ Yahyá ibn Ziyád [al-Aqta’ al-Daylamí], known as al-Farrá’ (cl. 207/822; concerning this grammarian, see Carter, *Cambridge History of Arabic Literature* 123 ff.).²⁹

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,” Muhyí 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 al-‘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 al-‘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 spiritual “love” for the divine, feminine “beauty” is far from any form of base carnality.

Another stunning, and, for Bahá’is, prophetic, occurrence of the word *bahá*’ in a mystical text is its use in the work *Shams al-ma’áni* (“The Sun of Mystic Meaning”) of Muhyí al-Dín al-

the greatest name was contained (see Ishráq Khávári, *Jannát-i Na’im* 1:469; cf. Noghabai, *Bisharát-i-Kutub-i-Asmání* 149).

²⁸ Refer Shaykh Bahá’i, *Dár rumúz-i ism-i a’zam*, in Jawáhirí ed., *Kulliyat* 95.

²⁹ This work is listed in the massive Shí’í bibliography of Ághá Buzurg al-Tehrání, *al-Dhari’a*. See *al-Dhari’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-Dhari’a* nos. 587 f.). Several Shí’í writers composed books entitled *al-Anwár al-bahíyya* (“The Glorious Lights”) (for some details see *al-Dhari’a* 3:420–21, nos. 1661–62). Examples of the Islamic use of *bahíyya* (“luminous”) are numerous.

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 [*ishraq*] 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. (qtd. in Khavari, *Rahíq-i-Makhtúm* 1:365–66)³⁰29

In a lengthy prayer (*Ṣalát al-kubrá*) contained in the volume entitled *Lordly Graces* (*Fuyūdat al-Rabbáni*) ascribed to ‘Abd al-Qadir Jílání (d. 1165 C.E.), the founder of the Qadíri Sufi fraternity, the Prophet Muḥammad is called *al-núr al-bahíyy* (“the glorious light”) (refer to Jílání, *Fuyūdat* 148). The Shí’i 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-Rashtí (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-Muṣilí (d. 1278/1861), the *Sharḥ al-qaṣida 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 [*tíráz al-nuqṭat al-báriz*] from whence cometh the letter “H” [*al-há’*] through the letter “A” [*bi’l-alíf*], without filling up [*ishbá’*] or segregation [*inshiqáq*]. (See *Sharḥ al-qaṣida*, qtd. in ‘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’*.

Also worth noting here is the fact that Siyyid Kázim, commenting on a phrase containing the word “splendor” (*ḍiyya*) in *al-Khuṭba al-Tuṭunjíyya* (“The Sermon of the Gulf”), attributed to Imam ‘Alí, identified it with *bahá’* (“radiant glory”) and wrote, “it is the light of lights, the very

³⁰ 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 *Ishraq* Khavari, *Rahíq-i-Makhtúm*. Better known is al-Búní’s *Kitáb shams al-ma’arif wa laṭá’if al-awárif* (“The Sun of Gnosis”) which exists in various recensions and has been printed several times.

Light which illuminates the lights.” This was alluded to in Jesus’ words related by Imám Ja‘far al-Šádiq, “the *B* [*ba*] of ‘In the Name of God the Merciful the Compassionate’ [*Bismi ‘lláh al-Rahmán al-Rahím*] 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-qasída* (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, Gáthíc, 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’is 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-Á* signifies “to shine.” Related Sanskrit, Pali and other words (i.e., *ábháti* = “shines towards”; *ábhá* = “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 Gíta*—such as the use of *bháh* (= “Light,” “Glory”) in 11:12—detailing the “radiant glory” of the transfigured Krishna have, by certain Bahá’is, been seen to be prophetic (i.e., Munje, *World* 50–51, on *Gíta* 11:30).³¹

The messianic figures Kalki, the tenth Avatár of Vishnu expected by some Hindus, the Zoroastrian messiah figures Saöshyant (“[future] Benefactor”) and Sháh Bahrám (Vahrám = 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 = *Khwarr*; 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 *núr* (“light”), 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:

³¹ R.C. Zaehner in his *The Bhagavad Gíta* 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 súryasahasraya bhaved yugapad utthitá yadi bháh, sadrsí sá syád bhásas tasya mah’-átmanah*.

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'is, Muḥammad, the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh] who perform their tasks on earth thanks to the *khwarr* ["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. (8:297; for details, see, for example, Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth Century Books* 71)

The name of the centrally important Maháyána Buddha Amitábha, the ruler of the Western paradise of Sukháváti, 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 Scripture³²

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 Súrih 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.

In the first major revelation of the Báb, the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'*, the word *bahá'* occurs some fourteen times—*bahiyya* ("luminous") occurs at least once.³³ Here, as in other works of the Báb, it is cosmologically, theologically, and, for Bahá'is, 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 *quṭb al-bahá'* ("Pole of Splendor") situated above Mount Sinai (*al-ṭúr 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 *quṭb nuqṭat al-bahá'* ("Pole of the Point of Baha"). *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* 29 is designated the "Surih of the Maiden" (*súrat al-ḥúriyya*). 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-ḥúriyya*) begotten by *al-Bahá'*: "I am the Maid of Heaven [*al-ḥúriyya*] begotten by the Spirit of *Bahá'* [*waladtaní al-bahá'*]" (*Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* 29, trans. The Báb, *Selections* 54). In various tablets, including the *Súrat al-Bayán* ("Surih 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-ḥúriyya*], the Offspring

³² 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*.

³³ As there is yet no critical or authorized edition of the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'*, these figures are approximate.

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.³⁴ 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 Bab 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 [*hi'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 *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 Persian *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

³⁴ 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” (Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets* 71). In his last major work, *The Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, clear reference is made to *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* 57 when Bahá'u'lláh addresses *Shaykh* Muḥammad Táqí Najafí (d. 1914) advising him: “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).

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.

In his Arabic *Bayán*, the Báb links the moment of the dawning of the “Sun of *Bahá’*” (*shams al-bahá’*) with the expected divine Manifestation. He states that in the Book of God, the period from the beginning of the rise of the “Sun of Bahá’” until its setting, is better than every period of night (see texts cited in *Má’idih* 7:32; *Rahiq* 1:364).³⁵

Written a few months prior to the Báb’s martyrdom, the fairly lengthy Arabic and Persian work known as the *Kitáb-i-Panj Sha’n* (“The Book of the Five Grades”), contains quite a few paragraphs that may be viewed as creative re-revelations of the opening section of the *Shi’í Dawn Prayer* (*Du’á saḥar*; see above). In *Panj Sha’n* 88 the Bábí Messiah “Him whom God shall make manifest [*Man-Yuzhiruhu’lláh*]” is said to be God’s “servant, Word and Glory” (*Bahá’*) and much else besides. This work contains quite a number of occurrences of the words *bahá’* and *abhá* as well as the phrase or title *Bahá’u’lláh*: “Say: Yea! We have all been glorified in Bahá’u’lláh” (see 71). One section (172–212) is believed to have been specially dedicated to Mírzá Ḥusayn ‘Alí Núrí, Bahá’u’lláh.

In *Panj Sha’n* 3.3:16, the question is posed, “Do ye know Bahá’u’lláh or not? For He is the glory of Him Whom God shall make manifest” (trans. Taherzadeh, *Covenant* 44). As in the *Qayyúmu’l-Asmá’*, the Báb, speaking with the voice of God, claims identity with Bahá’u’lláh. In this important and largely unstudied work, he writes—in light of the essential oneness of the Manifestations of God and speaking prophetically with the voice of God (?)—“Say: This is Bahá’u’lláh unto such as are in the heavens and in the earth and whatsoever is between them” (71, cf. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 28).

The complex and lengthy Arabic work entitled *Kitábu’l-Asmá’* (“The Book of Names,” 1849/50) again contains many occurrences of the word *Bahá’* and derivatives of the same root. In that section of this text commenting upon the name of God *al-Bashír* (“the Herald”) reference is made to robe or “garment of the Joseph of Bahá’,” which has been understood relative to Bahá’u’lláh as the Bábí messiah figure *Man-Yuzhiruhu’lláh* (see *Ishráq Khávarí*, *Qámús* 4:1870 ff.). The use of the word *bashír* (“bearer/herald of good tidings”) in Qur’án 12:93 is rooted in the episode of Joseph’s garment being placed on the face of the patriarch Jacob/Israel and restoring his vision: “But when the bearer of good tidings [*bashír*] came to him, and laid it [the *qamis*, “robe/garment”) on his [Jacob’s] face [*wajhihi*], forthwith he saw once again.”³⁶ This quranic verse lies behind the Báb’s exegetical rewrite in the *Kitábu’l-Asmá’*. The Báb exhorts his readers to “hearken” then “take ye firm hold of the garment of the Joseph of Bahá’ [*qamis yúsif al-bahá’*]” from the hand of the “Exalted, Transcendent Herald of Glad-Tidings [*mubash shirihí al- ‘alí al- a’lá*].” The “garment” should be placed upon the head in order that one might be endowed with insight (*li-tartadda basír*; text cited *Qámús* 4:1875).

Finally, in connection with the Báb’s writings, it may be noted that in his *Wasiyyat-Námih* (“Will and Testament”) the Báb refers to himself as “one who liveth in the Abhá Horizon” (INBMC 64:96). According to Shoghi Effendi in *God Passes By*, this was an allusion to Bahá’u’lláh as the Abhá Horizon wherein He “lived and dwelt” (*God Passes By* 97). The essential oneness of the twin manifestations of this era is implied in this mystical cosmology. In quite a number of his

³⁵ The phrase “Sun of *Baha’*” can also be found, for example, in the Báb’s “Commentary on the Súrih of the Cow and Golden Treatise” (*Risála Dhahabíya*). Cf. Afán, *Bahá’u’lláh* 214.

³⁶ Note also the use of the exclamation “Good news!” (*yá bushrá*) in Qur’án 12:19b followed by the words, “Here is a youth (*ghulam*)” (see *Qámús* 12:18, 25 ff.).

tablets, Bahá'u'lláh cites or alludes to this phrase of the Báb. He even had it inscribed on one of his seals.

At Chihriq, before his martyrdom in July 1850, the Báb entrusted Mullá Báqir, a Letter of the Living, with a box containing a piece of blue paper inscribed with some 360 derivatives of the word *bahá'* in fine calligraphic script. Written in the form of a pentagram, this, according to Bahá'í historical sources, was ultimately delivered to Bahá'u'lláh (see *Dawn-Breakers* 370+fn., 'Abdu'l-Bahá', *Traveller's Narrative* 625–26).³⁷ While this pentagram appears to be lost³⁸ something of the nature of such derivatives as it might contain (i.e., *buhyán* and *mubti[a]ha*) can be gathered from certain sections of such of his works as the *Kitáb-i-Panj Sha'n* which is reckoned a work in which “the name Bahá'u'lláh” is prophesied (*God Passes By* 28).

In one of his tablets of the Adrianople period, the *Lawḥ-i-Sarráj* (“Tablet to Alí-Muḥammad Sarraj,” c. 1867), Bahá'u'lláh has cited prophetic intimations of the “greatest name” in the writings of leading Bábís. Muḥammad-‘Alí, entitled Quddús (“the Most Holy”), is said to have written tablets at Badasht and referred to a time when the Lord will cause a secret to be made manifest “from the horizon of Bahá' in the land of ‘or even nearer’ [*aw ádná*, see Qur’án 53:9], shining resplendent from the “Point of *Baha*” (see *Má'idih* 7:97). A Persian couplet by Tahiriḥ 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 Ṭáhiriḥ'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

³⁷ In his account of this matter, 'Abdu'l-Bahá writes in *A Traveller's Narrative*, “Now the Siyyid Báb had disposed all His affairs before setting out from Chihriq towards Tabríz, had placed His writings and even His ring and pen-case in a specially prepared box, put the key of the box in an envelope, and sent it by means of Mullá Báqir, who was one of His first associates, to Mullá 'Abdu'l-Karím of Qazvín. This trust Mullá Báqir delivered over to Mullá 'Abdu'l-Karím at Qum in presence of a numerous company. At the solicitations of those present he opened the lid of the box and said, ‘I am commanded to convey this trust to Bahá'u'lláh: more than this ask not of me, for I cannot tell you.’ Importuned by the company, he produced a long epistle in blue, penned in the most graceful manner with the utmost delicacy and firmness in a beautiful minute *shikastih* hand, written in the shape of a man so closely that it would have been imagined that it was a single wash of ink on the paper. When they had read this epistle [they perceived that] He had produced three hundred and sixty derivatives from the word *Bahá'*. Then Mullá 'Abdu'l-Karím conveyed the trust to its destination” (25–26).

³⁸ In Loulie Albee Mathews's book *Not Every Sea*, reference is made to this author's viewing and having a photograph taken in the British Museum [Library] of “The Star Tablet” of the Báb. She wrote to Shoghi Effendi about this and apparently later (in 1944) viewed the Báb's “authentic” “Star Tablet” (63–64). What she thought to be “The Star Tablet” of the Báb however, may merely have been one of the numerous *haykals* (pentacles or star-shaped Tablets/talismans) of the Báb or his followers.

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’is, theologically speaking, the word *Bahá’* as the greatest name of God is a sacred “word,” a “mantra” of great magnitude.³⁹ 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*.⁴⁰ 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 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 Bábi 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’*; Bábis?) wafting from the Joseph of Bahá’ (Yúsifu’l-Bahá’ = *Man-Yuzhiruhu’lláh* = Bahá’u’lláh?).”⁴¹ 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 (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’is at Riḍván 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-báhiyyu’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*).

³⁹ 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.”

⁴⁰ As noted, the *basmala* is primarily a term designating the formula, “In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate” (*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).

⁴¹ 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 Husayn Yúsif-i-Bahá’. While the phrase *Yúsif-i-Bahá’* does not occur in the *Qayyúmu’l-Asmá’*, it does occur in the *Four Valleys*.

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 Farhádi 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‘azzí*) 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’* (the All-Glorious; “My Most Glorious Name” [*bismi’l-Abhá’*] see *Majmú‘a-yi-alwáḥ-i-mubáraka haḍrat-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, qtd. in 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* 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 *Ya Bahá’u’l-Abhá* (“O Glory of the All-Glorious,” also a title of Bahá’u’lláh), as forms of the greatest name.⁴² Nine repetitions (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).

⁴² 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 *Dawn Breakers* 552) and that Bábí women should greet or salute each other with *Alláh-u-Abhá* (Persian *Bayán* 6:5).

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 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." (qtd. in *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-Ḥamíd II, the Sultan 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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