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## THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

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The writings of Bahá'u'lláh comprise a vast and diverse body of documents written in Arabic and Persian during a forty-year period both before and after the declaration of Bahá'u'lláh's prophetic mission in 1863. Almost 20,000 distinct works, from brief items of correspondence to lengthy treatises, totalling almost seven million words have so far been catalogued at the Bahá'í World Centre in Haifa, Israel, which preserves authenticated copies of the majority. They are regarded by Bahá'ís as divinely inspired, and together with the writings of His herald the Báb (q.v.), which are likewise regarded, they constitute the Bahá'í sacred writings. The understanding and application of these writings is guided, for Bahá'ís, by the commentary and interpretation of 'Abdu'l-Bahá (q.v.) and Shoghi Effendi (q.v.) and by the elucidation of the Universal House of Justice (q.v.).

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### **1. Aspects of content and style**

Though Bahá'u'lláh's writings (often referred to as 'tablets') embrace a wide range of topics and were addressed to many different individuals in diverse settings over a period of decades, their

underlying theme can be said to be the principle of *unity in diversity*: the unity of God behind diverse conceptions of the deity; the unity of the prophets underneath the variations in their message; the unity of religion despite its seemingly contradictory expressions in the world; and the unity of the human race, whose perennial conflicts between tribes, congregations, and nations are constants of its past and which it is the particular mission of Bahá'u'lláh to reconcile. In one of His tablets, Bahá'u'lláh identifies the unifying principle as 'the law of love which, like a fountain, always flows and is never overtaken by change' (Bahá'u'lláh, in Esslemont 1923).

Approximately two-thirds of Bahá'u'lláh's writings are in Arabic, and the remainder are in Persian or contain passages in both languages. Bahá'u'lláh's Arabic differs from the standard Arabic of His day in ways that reflect its use as the liturgical language of Islamic Iran during the nineteenth century. His Persian, also reflecting the usage of the time, often employs words of Arabic origin, but He would also occasionally compose works in pure Persian without any Arabic influences. His writings contain, and comment upon, hundreds of quoted passages from the Qur'an and the Bible, as well as the Hadith literature of Islam, the works of Sufi poets such as Rumi, and in a few cases, philosophers, historians, and others in the literary tradition.

Most of Bahá'u'lláh's works were dictated to His amanuensis Mírzá Áqá Ján; writings in His own hand are comparatively less common, with fewer than a thousand examples extant. Eyewitnesses described the overwhelming experience of being present during the revelation of verses, with words descending with such rapidity that the amanuensis would at times be unable to keep up. A clean copy of the work would be produced, this in turn serving as the basis for a copy in formal script intended for the recipient. Many writings addressed to individuals in Iran were dispatched to a copyist in the form of lengthy concatenated works, to be re-copied as separate tablets for their recipients. This multiplicity of handwritten copies, as well as the care taken by early Bahá'ís to preserve the texts they received, helps account for the fact that despite the poverty and instability of much of Bahá'u'lláh's life, most of His writings have survived in the original or in reliable transcriptions (see Figure 5.1).

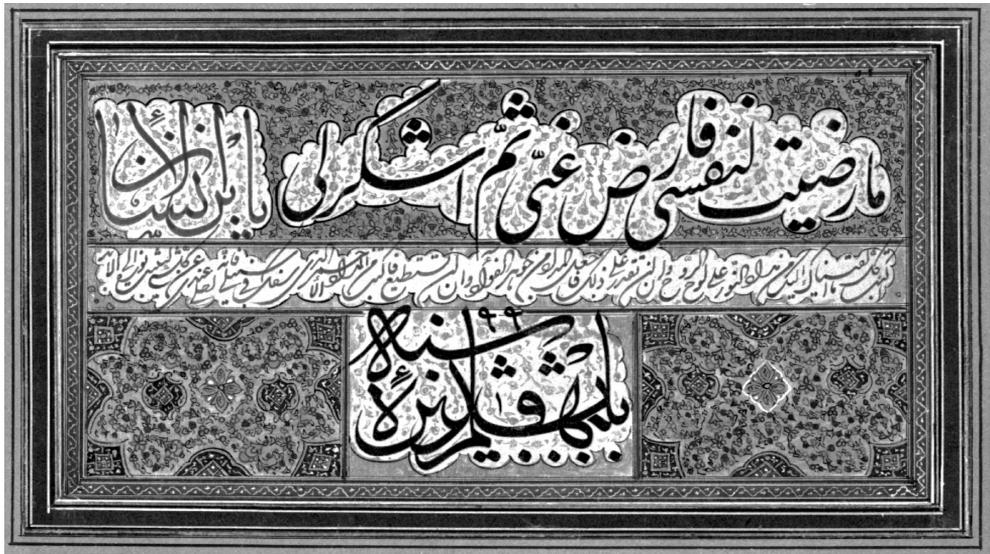


Figure 5.1 An illuminated specimen of Bahá'u'lláh's writings.

Source: Bahá'í World News Service.

The great majority of Bahá'u'lláh's writings comprise relatively brief responses to correspondence from His followers. During the early years of His ministry, these followers resided almost entirely within the Shi'ite Islamic ambit, but as time passed and word of the Bahá'í movement spread, and as Bahá'u'lláh Himself endured successive exiles that carried Him to the capital of the Ottoman Empire, to the fringes of Europe and Africa, and then to the Levant, the range of recipients widened to include members of the Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian faiths; correspondents in India and Central Asia; members of minority Islamic groups and mystical orders; several crowned heads of European nations; the head of the Catholic Church; the temporal and religious rulers of the Ottoman and Iranian empires; and the collective rulers of America. Each recipient would be addressed in a language and manner sensitive to their own unique circumstances. In one of His later works, He stated that 'at one time We spoke in the language of the lawgiver; at another in that of the truth-seeker and the mystic' (Bahá'u'lláh, Epistle 15). Elsewhere He stated that His works were revealed in 'nine different modes' (Bahá'u'lláh, *Summons* 27), but these were never enumerated, and in any case, He never allowed the flow of His work to be confined by conventional categories or literary forms. Throughout His works voices, styles, and topics often intermingle.

## **2. Periodization and principal works**

Bahá'u'lláh's writings can be divided into three main periods, corresponding to the years associated with His successive exiles to Baghdad, Rumelia, and 'Akká (see the chapter 'Bahá'u'lláh') and described by Shoghi Effendi as the vernal years, the summertime, and the harvest season of His ministry (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 205). In one of His tablets, Bahá'u'lláh stated that His call was first raised among 'mystics, then divines, and then kings and rulers' (Saiedi 2000: 241), and there is a corresponding shift in emphasis during these same three periods from mystical contemplation to arguments regarding His prophetic claim and station to the exposition of social principles. Within these periods, there are thousands of surviving works; a high-level review of their contents is facilitated by a list of 160 titles of 'best-known writings' of Bahá'u'lláh published under the auspices of Shoghi Effendi (in *The Bahá'í World*, vol. 7: 576). This list is a natural starting point, although not all titles have been identified with certainty. Works so included are not distinguished by their length: over two-thirds are less than two thousand words long, and all but two dozen are less than five thousand words long. These works, along with several others of significance, are briefly summarized here, arranged by period and sub-period, although future research may lead to changes in the periodization of some of them. Most have not yet been translated into English or are known only in extracts; works for which a full translation has been formally published and authorized at the Bahá'í World Centre are marked by asterisks (\*). Catalogue numbers prefaced by BH are taken from the partial inventory of Bahá'u'lláh's writings listed in the bibliography.

### **A. The vernal years: 'Iraq (1853–1863)**

Bahá'ís understand Bahá'u'lláh's declaration of His mission to a small circle of followers in April 1863 to be the inaugural moment of His active ministry, but it is also acknowledged that the emergence of His Faith as distinct from the Báb's was gradual, and many works of the highest significance date from the preceding decade that began with His exile from Tehran to Baghdad. A small number of works survive from the years prior to this exile, but with the notable exception of the *Rashḥ-i-'Amá* ('The Clouds of the Realms Above', BH03230), a short Persian poem of mystical exaltation composed in Tehran, they are not widely known.

*i. Early Baghdad and Kurdistan (April 1853–March 1856)*

In the year following Bahá'u'lláh's banishment to Baghdad in January 1853 (the significant 'year nine' of the Bábí calendar), He composed works promoting the Cause of the Báb and containing ambiguous references to His own incipient prophetic claim while still acknowledging Mírzá Yahyá, His half-brother and later opponent, as the nominal head of the Bábí community. These earliest known works include:

*Khuṭbiy-i-Şalavát* ('Sermon of Salutations', Arabic, BH00181). Extols the Cause of the Báb and encourages His followers to seek out and turn to the 'countenance of light'.

*Lawḥ-i-Kullu't-Ṭa'ám* ('Tablet of All Food', Arabic, BH00267). A commentary offering several allegorical interpretations of the Qur'anic verse 'All food was allowed to the children of Israel' (Qur'an 3:93).

Beginning in April of 1854, Bahá'u'lláh departed Baghdad and withdrew to the village of Sulaymaniyah in the mountains of Kurdistan, where He lived anonymously for two years as a dervish and composed mainly mystical and poetic works, including:

*Qaşıdiy-i-Varqá'ıyyih* ('Ode of the Dove', Arabic, BH00115). A lengthy poem composed in the style of a poem by Ibn-i-Fāriḍ, glorifying the spirit that had visited Him in the form of the Maid of Heaven, expatiating on His sufferings and His loneliness and affirming His determination to face any future calamities that might befall Him in the path of God.

*Sáqí az Ghayb-i-Baqá* ('The Cup-bearer from the Eternal Unseen', Persian, BH03843). A brief ode alluding to His messianic secret and calling for purification of heart and commitment to love and sacrifice as conditions of the spiritual journey.

*Báz Áv-u-Bidih Jámih* ('At Dawn the Friend Came to My Bed', Persian, BH05338). Another brief ode celebrating the divine love, beseeching immortal life, and expressing His desire for evanescence in God and His wish to offer up His life in the path of God.

*ii. Middle and late Baghdad (March 1856–April 1863)*

A large number of works date from Bahá'u'lláh's return to Baghdad in 1856 until His second exile in 1863, in which His prophetic claim is likewise not yet explicitly stated. These include, most prominently, three central works that helped lay the foundations for Bahá'u'lláh's later teachings:

\* *Kalimát-i-Maknúnih* ('The Hidden Words', Arabic and Persian, BH00386 and BH00113). His foremost ethical work, consisting of 153 aphorisms spoken in the voice of the Divine and declaring themselves to be the 'inner essence' of what was revealed to 'the Prophets of old', affirming the essential nobility and divinity of the human soul, prescribing its intimate communion with its Creator, proclaiming the oneness of the human race, and declaring our consequent responsibility to fellowship, love, fair-mindedness, and mutual aid for one another, especially the poor and downtrodden.

\* *Haft Vádí* ('The Seven Valleys', Persian, BH00047). His most important mystical composition, patterned in part after Faríd'u'd-Dín 'Aṭṭár's *Mantiq'u'l-Ṭayr* ('The Conference of the Birds'), describing seven stages in the path of the spiritual wayfarers—'search', 'love', 'knowledge', 'unity', 'contentment', 'wonderment', and 'true poverty and absolute nothingness'—and revealing that the source of conflict upon

earth can be traced to the wayfarers' lack of awareness of the relative truths to be found within each of these stages.

★ *Kitáb-i-Íqán* ('The Book of Certitude', Persian and Arabic, BH00002). His preeminent doctrinal work as well as His second longest, answering four questions from an uncle of the Báb regarding prophetic expectation and fulfilment, affirming the essential unity of the prophets of God while simultaneously acknowledging the distinctiveness of their persons and missions, expounding the concept of progressive revelations from God that are renewed about every thousand years, summarizing the spiritual prerequisites of the seekers on the spiritual path, clarifying the central role in that path of the independent investigation of reality, condemning the clergy for their role in the rejection of the prophets from age to age, and emphasizing, through a commentary on certain verses of the gospels, the need for a symbolic as opposed to a literal understanding of sacred scriptures.

Apart from these, numerous other works developing certain mystical themes and doctrinal foundations were written during this period, including:

★ *Aṣḥ-i-Kullu'l-Khayr* ('Words of Wisdom', Arabic, BH02183). A brief collection of moral maxims, summarizing the essence of faith, love, wisdom, religion, wealth, and others and centring around belief in God and submission to His will.

★ *Chihár Vádí* ('The Four Valleys', Persian, BH00306). A mystical work elaborating four different but complementary paths of approach to the Divine: the way of 'the self', 'the intellect', 'love', and 'the throne of the inmost heart'.

*Hurúfát-i-'Álín* ('The Exalted Letters', Arabic, with translation into Persian, BH00064). A meditation on mortality, death, suffering, and theodicy, in remembrance of a cousin who had recently died.

★ *Javáhiru'l-Asrár* ('Gems of Divine Mysteries', Arabic, BH00012). A lengthy commentary in answer to a question on the fulfilment of prophetic expectations in unexpected ways, describing the difficulties encountered in understanding sacred scriptures, offering keys to their symbolic interpretation with reference to a passage in the Gospels, and describing in a manner similar to 'the Seven Valleys' the stages traversed by the spiritual wayfarers.

★ *Lawḥ-i-Maryam* ('Tablet to Maryam', Persian and Arabic, BH00579). Recounts to one of His cousins Bahá'u'lláh's banishment to Baghdad, His departure for Sulaymaniyah, the dispirited character of the Bábí community upon His return, and His efforts to instil new life into it; alludes to His still-hidden messianic secret and counsels purity of heart as a precondition to its recognition; and announces His withdrawal from the community.

*Madínatu'r-Riḍá* ('The City of Contentment', Arabic, BH00295). Expounds various stages and degrees of contentment: contentment with God and His decree; with one's own self, which requires detachment from the world; with one's fellow believers, which implies humility in their presence; and with the vicissitudes of the world.

*Madínatu't-Tawḥíd* ('The City of Unity', Arabic, BH00134). A theological discussion of the concept of divine unity from various perspectives: the unity of the divine Essence, of the divine attributes, of the divine Manifestations, of action, and of worship.

*Şaḥífíy-i-Şaḥáṭṭíyyih* ('Book of the River', Arabic and Persian, BH00394). Challenges the validity of miracles as proof and takes the coursing of the Tigris River

as a central metaphor in a discussion of the irresistible power of the Cause of God, fate and predestination, and the root cause of dissension in the world.

Súriy-i-Nuṣḥ ('Surah of Counsel', Arabic, BH00031). A lengthy work recounting the stories of the prophets of God and their rejection by the people and clergy of their day, and exhorting the people of this day not to reject 'Him Whom God shall make manifest' upon His appearance.

Tafsír-i-Hú ('Commentary on "He"', Arabic, BH00073). An intricate commentary on the names and attributes of God, taking as point of departure a statement by the Báb which relates 'His sacred mirror and eternal light' to the name of God *huwa* ('He'), which has an inner and outer aspect signifying both the unity of opposites and the alchemical fire and water attained of old by the prophet Moses.

Tafsír-i-Ḥurúfát-i-Muqaṭṭa'ih ('Commentary on the Isolated Letters', Arabic, BH00020). An extensive commentary on the famous 'verse of light' in the Qur'an (24:35) and on the origin and meaning of the enigmatic letters heading many of its surahs, which Bahá'u'lláh relates to different aspects of the person and revelation of the Báb, to the mystical science of letters and numbers, and to stages in the alchemical craft.

During the final years of Bahá'u'lláh's residence in Baghdad, His writings frequently describe ecstatic visions and anticipate the declaration of His prophetic mission, which took place in the Garden of Riḍván towards the end of April 1863, while also expressing the awareness of the further suffering that such a disclosure would bring upon Himself and those who would choose to follow Him into further exile. Such sentiments are clearly reflected in:

Az Bágh-i-Iláhí ('From the Divine Garden', Arabic and Persian, BH01007). Poem hailing the revelation of the Báb and the advent of the approaching Day of God, coming with the trumpet blast of the words 'I am God!', and shattering the idols of the past.

Hálih Hálih yá Biṣḥárát ('Hallelujah O glad tidings', Persian, BH02000). Ecstatic poem celebrating the descent of the Maid of Heaven, who brings both life and death to her lovers.

\* Ḥúr-i-'Ujáb ('Tablet of the Wondrous Maiden', Arabic, BH01966). Ecstatic poem announcing the appearance and unveiling of the Maid of Heaven, her announcement to the people of the world, their rejection of her summons, and her return in sorrow to her abode.

\* Lawḥ-i-'Áshiq va Ma'shúq ('Tablet of the Lover and the Beloved', Persian, BH02198). Addresses the 'nightingales of God', announcing the blooming of a 'new flower' in the 'rose-garden of changeless splendour', calling them to detach themselves from the world and to taste 'the abandonment of enraptured love', and warning them of the fleeting nature of their opportunity.

\* Lawḥ-i-Ghulámu'l-Khuld ('Tablet of the Immortal Youth', Arabic and Persian, BH00729). Narrates in mystical language the appearance of the Immortal Youth (Bahá'u'lláh), whose beauty is compared to that of Joseph, who is unveiled by the Maid of Heaven and who summons His lovers unto Him.

Lawḥ-i-Ḥuríyyih ('Tablet of the Divine Maiden', Arabic, BH00454). Describes a visionary encounter with the Maid of Heaven, who looks deeply within His soul and expires in sorrow upon perceiving the extent of His suffering.

Shikkar-Shikan-Shavand ('With Greater Sweetness', Persian, BH00746). Poetically anticipates future opposition and lauds the constancy of the loved ones of God in the face of threats and persecutions.

Subḥána Rabbíya'l-A'lá ('Praised be Our Lord Most High', Arabic, BH01447). Celebrates, through a vision of the appearance and unveiling of the Maid of Heaven, the renewal of the mystic realm and portends future tests and difficulties.

Lawḥ-i-Malláhu'l-Quds ('Tablet of the Holy Mariner', Arabic and Persian, BH01026 and BH01355). Relates two different versions of a mystical narrative of the launching of the 'Crimson Ark' of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant upon the ocean of glory and foreshadows that some within that Ark will stray and be cast out for desiring 'to ascend unto that state which the Lord hath ordained to be above their stations'.

Lawḥ-i-Bulbulu'l-Firáq ('Tablet of the Nightingale of Separation', Arabic and Persian, BH01644). Announces in sorrowful language His departure from Baghdad and reproaches those who had thus far failed to recognize Him.

Súriy-i-Şabr ('Surah of Patience', Arabic, BH00034). Major work, written on the first day of Riḍván as He was departing Baghdad, praising the Bábís of the Nayriz upheaval of 1850 and in particular their leader, Siyyid Yaḥyáy-i-Darábí (Vaḥíd), recounting their sufferings and condemning their persecutors; describes the sufferings of the biblical Job, comparing them to those of the recipient of the tablet, who played a key role in supporting the defenders at Nayríz; commends fortitude and patience in the face of suffering; foretells the coming of 'the birds of darkness'; and proclaims the continuity of divine revelation.

## ***B. Summer: Rumelia (1863–1868)***

The writings of Bahá'u'lláh during His five years' exile in Rumelia, first in Istanbul and then in Edirne, were dominated by two interrelated themes: gradually unveiling His prophetic claim to His expanding circle of followers and to the wider world, and countering the increasingly overt opposition of His half-brother. This period also saw a substantial increase in the volume and scope of His writings on various other topics.

### *i. Istanbul and early Edirne (April 1863–March 1866)*

Bahá'u'lláh's travel to and brief four-month residence in the Ottoman capital in the wake of His declaration in the Garden of Riḍván were marked by several works of a celebratory tone which yet foreshadowed darker days ahead:

Mathnaví-yi-Mubárák ('The Blessed Couplets', Persian, BH00108). Ecstatic poem in rhyming couplets, written during the journey to Istanbul and announcing the Day of God and the divine springtime but warning that it can only be perceived by those possessing a spiritual eye.

Lawḥ-i-Hawdaj ('Tablet of the Howdah', Arabic, BH01069). Written upon Bahá'u'lláh's arrival on the shores of the Black Sea en route to Istanbul, announcing the fulfilment of what was foretold in the 'Tablet of the Holy Mariner' a short time before, and warning of an impending 'grievous and tormenting mischief' that would serve as the 'divine touchstone' separating truth from error.

\* Lawḥ-i-Náqús ('Tablet of the Bell', Arabic, BH00759). Proclamatory tablet, with repeated refrain celebrating the name 'He', commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the declaration of the Báb.

During the early Edirne period, from the end of the difficult midwinter journey from Istanbul in December of 1863 until March of 1866, the conflict with Mírzá Yaḥyá was coming to a head

but had, for the most part, not yet broken into the open. Bahá'u'lláh's writings of this time emphasize the continuity of His revelation with that of the Báb and the prophets of old, with frequent intimations of a splendour as yet only partially revealed:

★ Lawḥ-i-Aḥmad-i-'Arabí ('Arabic Tablet of Aḥmad', BH02022). Brief words of consolation and encouragement to its recipient, affirming the prophetic station of the Báb, exhorting steadfastness, and assuring the resolution of difficulties and the removal of afflictions to the one who chants it.

Lawḥ-i-Aḥmad-i-Fársí ('Persian Tablet of Aḥmad', BH00249). Sets forth the conditions of spiritual search, with purity of heart being foremost; compares His revelation to that of an ocean which yields up its pearls in proportion to the eagerness of the search; and proclaims that 'this fathomless and surging ocean is near, astonishingly near, unto you'.

★ Lawḥ-i-Anta'l-Káfi ('The Long Healing Prayer', Arabic, BH00870). Prayer for healing, rhyming and with repeated refrain, invoking various names of God for the curing of disease and the alleviation of distress.

Lawḥ-i-Fitnih ('Tablet of the Test', Arabic and Persian, BH00637). Foretells a coming period of tests and trials, which will encompass all created things and every atom of existence and lay violent hold on the peoples of the world.

Lawḥ-i-Ḥaqq ('Tablet of the True One', Arabic, BH01547). Announces to 'the followers of the True One' the appearance of the Spirit of Truth, round which circle all the Prophets of God, while sharply remonstrating the Bábís for their rejection of Bahá'u'lláh.

Lawḥ-i-Nuqtih ('Tablet of the Point', Arabic, BH02170). Proclaims itself as occupying the station of the point, differentiating all that has been revealed from all eternity to all eternity, in the same way that the point differentiates letters and words.

Lawḥ-i-Qiná' ('Tablet of the Veil', Arabic and Persian, BH00151). Sharply rebuts accusations, made by the leader of the *Shaykhí* school, of grammatical discrepancies in the writings of the Báb, asserting that divine revelation is not constrained by man-made rules, citing in support several examples from the Qur'an and challenging him with Bahá'u'lláh's own prophetic claim.

Lawḥ-i-Sayyáh ('Tablet of the Traveller', Arabic, BH00395). Declares Bahá'u'lláh's messianic claim; urges the Bábís to embrace it; relates a mystical journey to different groups of people who, though outwardly pious, were veiled in various ways from recognizing the truth; and foretells His further exile to the 'vale of Nabíl', later interpreted as a reference to the city of 'Akká.

Lawḥ-i-Tawḥíd ('Tablet of the Divine Unity', Persian, BH00512). Discourses on the transcendence of God, Whose signs have pervaded the entire creation and Who is known only through His Manifestations, who appear from age to age and call the people to recognize His cause as one would recognize a friend: that is, by his own self and not by the garments he may be wearing on any given day.

Súriy-i-Aṣḥāb ('Surah of the Companions', Arabic, BH00076). Proclamatory work playing a major role in the conversion of the followers of the Báb to the cause of Bahá'u'lláh, declaring His prophetic station to a number of receptive individuals while attesting that if it were revealed to humanity to an extent smaller than a needle's eye, it would cause every mountain to crumble into dust.

Súriy-i-'Ibád ('Surah of the Servants', Arabic, BH00248). Declares the continuity of Bahá'u'lláh's prophetic claim with the 'chain of successive Revelations that hath linked the Manifestation of Adam with that of the Báb', relates the events of His

journey from Baghdad to Edirne, and delivers specific guidance to a number of followers named in the tablet.

Súriy-i-Dam ('Surah of Blood', Arabic, BH00358). Proclamatory work declaring the oneness of the Prophets through a vision of the words of the dying Imám Ḥusayn, who identifies his sufferings with those of Abraham, Moses, Joseph, John the Baptist, Jesus, the Báb, and Bahá'u'lláh.

*ii. Middle Edirne (March 1866–September 1867)*

The middle Edirne period commences with the Súriy-i-Amr, which marks the beginning of the 'most great separation' of Bahá'u'lláh from Mírzá Yaḥyá, and ends with the Lawḥ-i-Mubáhilih, which sealed it. During this time Bahá'u'lláh resided in several different houses in the city and spent much time secluded from both friend and foe. Many of His writings from this period mention this period of withdrawal and frequently include lengthy and emphatic refutations of His half-brother's claims while exposing the latter's attempted murder of Bahá'u'lláh. At the same time, Bahá'u'lláh continued to expand His message beyond the Bábí community. Well-known works of this period include:

Súriy-i-Amr ('Surah of Command', Arabic, BH00084). Major proclamatory work formalizing Bahá'u'lláh's claim to divine messengership, read aloud at His instruction to Mírzá Yaḥyá and written partly in the voice of God and partly in the voice of Bahá'u'lláh, describing the rivers of paradise and apostrophizing earth and heaven, the trees and clouds, the lands of 'Iraq and Rumelia, and the followers of the Báb.

Súratu'lláh ('Surah of God', Arabic, BH00845). Declares the divinity of His station, rebukes the followers of the Báb for plotting against Him, and announces His temporary retirement from the community.

\* Lawḥ-i-Rasúl ('Tablet to Rasúl', Persian, BH01865). Identifies Himself, through His sufferings, with the prophets of the past and announces His intention to take leave of both friend and foe.

Súriy-i-Hijr ('Surah of Separation', Arabic, BH01774). Announces His withdrawal from the community and His sorrow at the state of affairs that made this action necessary.

\* Súriy-i-Mulúk ('Surah of the Kings', Arabic, BH00021). His most momentous proclamatory work, though not yet divulging the totality of His messianic claim, in which He counsels and chastises, in turn, the entire company of the kings of the earth, the kings of Christendom, the French Ambassador in Constantinople, the ministers of the Ottoman Sultan, the inhabitants of Istanbul, the Sultan himself, the Persian Ambassador to the Sultan, the people of Persia, the divines and wise men of Constantinople, and the philosophers of the world.

Lawḥ-i-Bahá ('Tablet of Bahá', Arabic, with translation into Persian, BH00287). Identifies Himself and His sufferings with those of prophets past; compares Mírzá Yaḥyá to the biblical Balaam, who rejected Moses after having occupied an exalted station; and bids His own followers, the newly named 'people of Bahá', to enter the 'ark of eternity' upon the 'crimson sea'.

Lawḥ-i-Laylatu'l-Quds ('Tablet of the Sacred Night', Arabic and Persian, BH00970). Calls on His followers to be closely united and to associate with their neighbours 'with faces joyous and beaming with light'.

Lawḥ-i-Rúḥ ('Tablet of the Spirit', Arabic, BH00032). Refutes certain claims of Mírzá Yaḥyá; asserts the magnitude of Bahá'u'lláh's own station, whose full transformative

power remains, out of wisdom, as yet undivulged; and foretells the ultimate triumph of His cause.

Lawḥ-i-Sarráj ('Tablet to Sarráj', Persian and Arabic, BH00006). One of the longest works of Bahá'u'lláh, written in answer to questions regarding the enigma of the outwardly exalted station of Mírzá Yaḥyá and arguing, citing various statements of the Báb, that virtues become transmuted into vices when one turns away from the light of truth.

Súriy-i-Bayán ('Surah of Utterance', Arabic, BH00144). Charges the recipient to teach the Cause of God in a state of detachment from the world and enkindlement with the love of God, summons the Maid of Heaven to come to the aid of whoever does so, and instructs him to carry the message to specific people and regions in Iran.

Súriy-i-Ḥajj I and II ('Surahs of Pilgrimage', Arabic, BH00058 and BH00071). Prescribes the rites of pilgrimage to the House of the Báb in Shiraz and the House of Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdad, codified later in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas as a sacred duty.

Súriy-i-Qadír ('Surah of the Omnipotent', Arabic, BH01132). A meditation on the name of God 'the Omnipotent' and its pervasive influence in the world according to the capacities of things and, referring to the opposition of Mírzá Yaḥyá, calling the Bábís and the manifestations of worldly power to recognize Bahá'u'lláh.

Súriy-i-Zubúr ('Surah of the Writings', Arabic, BH00604). Explains the circumstances of His withdrawal from the community, states that He has as a result hidden His reality behind the veils, and calls the recipient to proclaim and defend Bahá'u'lláh's cause both in person and in his writings, assuring him that divine confirmations will attend his efforts.

Lawḥ-i-Mubáhilih ('Tablet of the Confrontation', Arabic, BH00457). Praises the station of Quddús, one of the Báb's first disciples and an early martyr, and relates the circumstances of the public challenge issued by Bahá'u'lláh to Mírzá Yaḥyá to take place in the mosque of Sultan Salim, at which the latter failed to present himself, which sealed the irreparable breach that had arisen between them.

### *iii. Late Edirne (September 1867–August 1868)*

Bahá'u'lláh's final break with Mírzá Yaḥyá launched the most prolific single year of His forty-year ministry. In several dozen significant works, Bahá'u'lláh still addressed foremost the rift with His half-brother but also increasingly treated a broader range of subjects, such as the afterlife, justice, cosmology, history, alchemy, and medicine. At the same time, His specific proclamations and summons expanded to address the Emperor of France, the Shah of Iran, and the Prime Minister of the Ottoman Empire. Well-known works of this period include:

Kitáb-i-Badí' ('The Wondrous Book', Persian, BH00004). Bahá'u'lláh's trenchant apology of His claims, by far His longest single work, written in the voice of one of His supporters, emphasizing the importance of recognizing the truth through the eye of the heart and refuting seven specific accusations levelled by a certain follower of Mírzá Yaḥyá. The answers emphasize the importance of 'He Whom God shall make manifest' in the writings of the Báb, declare Bahá'u'lláh's claim to be the fulfilment of that promise, assert that the relationship between the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh is the same as that between John the Baptist and Jesus Christ, and warn the questioner of the wrath of God.

Lawḥ-i-'Abdu'r-Razzáq ('Tablet to 'Abdu'r-Razzáq', Arabic and Persian, BH00060). Addresses some misconceptions of the Bábís and answers questions concerning the origin of creation, the soul after death, and the absence of historical records prior to Adam.

Lawḥ-i-Ashraf ('Tablet to Ashraf', Arabic, BH00597). A summons to the recognition of Bahá'u'lláh, naming the proofs of His cause as His own self, His revelation, and His words and admonishing the Bábís who had not yet embraced it.

★ Lawḥ-i-Mawlúd ('Tablet of the Birth', Arabic, BH01010). Tablet in honour of the birthday of Bahá'u'lláh, celebrating 'the harvesting of the ages and the gathering up of past cycles' and announcing the dawning of the morn of divine revelation.

Lawḥ-i-Naṣír ('Tablet to Naṣír', Persian and Arabic, BH00049). Affirms the ceaselessness of divine grace and guidance, which brings forth fruit provided the seed is cast upon fertile soil; asserts the continuity of His mission with those of Jesus, Muhammad, and the Báb; clarifies the position of Mírzá Yaḥyá as nominal figurehead; exposes the latter's attempt to take Bahá'u'lláh's life; and affirms that 'every man hath been, and will continue to be, able of himself to appreciate the Beauty of God'.

Lawḥ-i-Quds ('Tablet of Holiness', Arabic and Persian, BH00203). A call to the recognition of Bahá'u'lláh, affirming the continuity of His mission with the Báb's, investigating the cause of the rejection of prophets past, and refuting the counter-claim of Mírzá Yaḥyá.

Lawḥ-i-Salmán I ('First Tablet to Salmán', Persian and Arabic, BH00066). Laments the opposition of Mírzá Yaḥyá; contrasts the stations of belief and disbelief; considers and rejects various theories of the mystics concerning the relationship between God and creation; asserts that, the Godhead itself being unknowable, the means of access to the knowledge of God is through the channel of His prophets; and interprets a line of Rumi's *Mathnawí* to the effect that the light of truth is one but that, cast through the glass of different souls, it takes on different tints and colours, which is both the cause of the denial of the religion of God and the source of conflict upon earth.

Lawḥ-i-Máriyyih ('Tablet of Mary', Persian and Arabic, BH00088). A detailed explanation in symbolic language of an enigmatic statement on alchemy attributed to the legendary figure of Mary the Prophetess, describing the various stages in the creation of the elixir, and warning that the rediscovery of its knowledge by the scientists of the day will herald both the maturity of the world and the threat of a desolating affliction.

Lawḥ-i-Ṭibb ('Tablet of Medicine', Arabic and Persian, BH01313). Relates various items of medical and dietary advice—paraphrasing in part a chapter from Naṣíf al-Yáziǵí's *Majma'u'l-Baḥrayn*, a popular literary work of the time—and concludes with a prayer for healing.

Lawḥ-i-Tuqá ('Tablet of Divine Virtue', Arabic, BH00934). Bids the people enter the 'crimson Ark', adorned with divine virtue; addresses the objections of those who reject the divine verses; and warns those who, like Mírzá Yaḥyá, denied the 'Most Great Announcement'.

Lawḥ-i-Yúsuf ('Tablet to Yúsuf', Persian, BH00258). Emphasizes the importance of detachment as prerequisite to the recognition of spiritual truth and explains the meaning of 'paradise', 'hellfire', 'resurrection', and similar terms.

Riḍvānu'l-'Adl ('The Paradise of Justice', Arabic, BH00195). Extols the virtue of justice, assigning it a sacred origin and purpose in the world; calls upon the kings and rulers, the people of the world, and the Bábís to be its exponents; asserts that its essence is embodied in the laws of God; and prophesies the day when the 'standard of oppression' will be rolled up and the 'banner of justice' will be unfurled throughout the earth.

Riḍvānu'l-Iqrár ('The Paradise of Recognition', Arabic, BH00227). Dwells on the state of those who have rejected the truth and contrasts it with the state of those who have recognized and believed.

Súriy-i-A'ráb ('Surah of the Arabs', Arabic, BH00610). Addresses words of praise and encouragement to the Arabs among His followers, inviting them to remember with gladness the years He spent amongst them in 'Iraq.

Súriy-i-Asmá' ('Surah of Names', Arabic and Persian, BH00112). Responds to objections to His claims raised by some Bábís, implores them not to be shut out from the truth by the veil of names, acknowledges the outward differences between sacred scriptures while asserting that this derives from the varying capacity of humanity, extols at length the revelation and the crucifixion of Jesus as having infused 'a fresh capacity into all created things', compares the Báb to John the Baptist and announces Himself to be the return of Christ, and declares that the purpose of His revelation, like Christ's, is to bestow eternal life.

Súriy-i-Aḥzán ('Surah of Sorrows', Arabic, BH00155). Expatiates on the sorrows experienced by Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb, taking in part the form of a mystical conversation between the two.

Súriy-i-Dhibh ('Surah of the Sacrifice', Arabic, BH00434). Exhorts the recipient to look into the truth of the Cause of God with his own eyes and declares that Bahá'u'lláh has been offered up as a sacrifice at the hands of the wicked at every moment for the past twenty years.

Súriy-i-Dhikr ('Surah of Remembrance', Arabic, BH00297). Speaking in the voice of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh declares His mystical identity with the Báb (one of whose titles was 'the Remembrance of God') and the fulfilment of the Báb's revelation in Him and laments the state of the Bábís in the extremity of their rejection of Bahá'u'lláh.

Súriy-i-Faḍl ('Surah of Grace', Arabic, BH00343). Exhorts the recipient to be bold in conveying Bahá'u'lláh's claim to the followers of the Báb and to sharply challenge those who have repudiated the former's claim, asking them to consider the infinite grace of God in revealing again the divine verses.

Súriy-i-Faṭḥ ('Tablet to Faṭḥ-i-A'zam', Arabic, BH00376). Addresses an intimate early follower, expressing His weariness at the inane questions and vain objections of the uninformed, the defection of former believers, and the opposition of Mírzá Yaḥyá and declaring that He would rather die a thousand deaths than endure the calumny that the latter was spreading.

\* Súriy-i-Ghuṣn ('Tablet of the Branch', Arabic, BH00939). Announces the high station of Bahá'u'lláh's son 'Abdu'l-Bahá, titled *Ghuṣn-i-A'zam* ('the Greatest Branch'), foreshadowing His later appointment in the Kitáb-i-'Ahd as successor to Bahá'u'lláh.

Súriy-i-Ism ('Surah of the Name', Arabic, BH00994). Calls the recipient to cast all names and designations behind him and announce the joyful tidings; states that between God and the creatures, there is a ladder with three steps: this world, the hereafter, and 'the Kingdom of Names'; calls the people to deliver their souls from 'the bondage of self'; invites the recipient to 'intone the verses of God', promising that the sweetness of their melody will cause 'the heart of every righteous man to throb'; and counsels the people to truthfulness, generosity, and purity of heart.

Súriy-i-Ismuná'l-Mursil ('Surah of Our Name, the Sender', Arabic, BH00532). A meditation on the name of God, 'the Sender', and its various present and future manifestations in the world, from the Messengers of God, to individuals such as couriers who may be unaware of their role in propagating the divine message, to the Bábí and Bahá'í kings of the future, to the newly designated 'people of Bahá'—His own followers, upon whom lies the responsibility of delivering the message to others.

Súriy-i-Javád ('Tablet to Javád', Arabic, BH01725). Recalls the idol worshippers of ages past and condemns their blind imitation, equates their words and deeds with those of the Bábís, and affirms that most of the people today are similarly worshipping false

idols and that when they are gone it will be as if they had never existed, but that none of this will hinder the divine Sun from shining.

Súriy-i-Khiṭáb ('Surah of Utterance', Arabic, BH00503). Praises the recipient for recognizing Bahá'u'lláh after failing to do so in an earlier meeting prior to His declaration, calls the Bábís to recognize Bahá'u'lláh as the return of the Báb and their verses as the same in essence, and summons the recipient to teach the Cause of God through his utterance and through his pen, promising that through the power of this tablet, his words will have a penetrating influence.

Súriy-i-Ma'ání ('Surah of Divine Mysteries', Arabic, BH00922). Praises God and His Messengers, who receive divine inspiration in various ways; declares as a matter of principle that the transcendent Godhead is not the immediate cause of this inspiration; and extols the transformative power of the word of God at the time of its revelation.

Súriy-i-Qahír ('Tablet to Qahír', Arabic, BH00127). Affirms Bahá'u'lláh's mystical identity with the Báb; answers a number of specific objections to His claims advanced by followers of the Báb; and laments His persecution at their hands, while reserving His real fears for 'Him who will come after Me', a statement that was reiterated in the Súriy-i-Haykal.

\* Súriy-i-Qalam ('Surah of the Pen', Arabic, BH00334). A celebration of the festival of Riḍván, taking the form of a series of apostrophes to His Pen, the denizens of earth and heaven, the concourse of monks, and the Maid of Heaven.

Súriy-i-Qamîṣ ('Surah of the Shirt', Arabic, BH00052). Proclamatory tablet taking in part the form of a conversation between the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh; announcing the return of the Báb in the person of Bahá'u'lláh; reproaching the Bábís for their denial; and directing one of the many named recipients to place the tablet, like the shirt of the biblical Joseph, upon his face.

Súriy-i-Sulṭán ('Tablet to Sulṭán-Ábád', Arabic, BH00061). Addresses individually words of praise and encouragement to a number of followers in the town of Sulṭán-Ábád and addresses parenthetically Mírzá Yaḥyá, upbraiding him for his opposition and urging him to repent, while assuring him that Bahá'u'lláh holds no hatred in His heart for him.

\* Súriy-i-Vafá ('Surah of Faithfulness', Arabic, BH00354). Exhorts the recipient to be the essence of faithfulness; asserts Bahá'u'lláh's mystical identity with the Báb; answers questions about 'the return', the worlds of God, the ordinances of God, and paradise; and confirms that, as predicted during the time of His departure from 'Iraq, the 'birds of darkness' have begun to stir.

Súriy-i-Zíyáriḥ ('Surah of Visitation', Arabic, BH00280). Visitation tablet for Mullá Ḥusayn, who was the first to embrace the cause of the Báb and was one of its early martyrs and who is implicitly related in the tablet to Bahá'u'lláh (whose given name was also Ḥusayn) and through Him to the persecution and suffering of Abel, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, Imam Ḥusayn, and the Báb.

Súriy-i-Zuhúr ('Surah of Revelation', Arabic, BH01761). Declares, at a time when He is beset on all sides, that His revelation is the testimony of God that separates truth from error; asserts that what the people recognize of His cause is but the robe and cloak wherewith He attires Himself; and admonishes the people for failing to recognize Him upon His return, after changing His garb and departing for but a little while from their midst.

Lawḥ-i-Nápulyún I ('First Tablet to Napoleon III', Arabic and Persian, BH01120). Recounts the sufferings endured by Bahá'u'lláh and His followers; avows their innocence; reminds the Emperor of two pronouncements he had made on behalf of

the oppressed and the helpless; and calls upon him to inquire into the condition of those who have been wronged, including Bahá'u'lláh and His fellow exiles.

\* Lawḥ-i-Sulṭán ('Tablet to Násiru'd-Dín Sháh', Persian and Arabic, BH00038). Bahá'u'lláh's lengthiest tablet to any monarch, delivered in person to the Shah at the cost of the messenger's life, urging the Shah to judge His cause fairly; disavowing any designs on worldly power; detailing the injustices He and His followers had suffered over the course of successive banishments; calling the clergy to account for their role in His rejection; and, citing the rejection of Jesus and Muhammad by the people of their day, urging the Shah to consider the possibility of the appearance of a new Manifestation of God in this day.

\* Súriy-i-Ra'ís ('Surah to the Chief', Arabic, BH00260). Addresses 'Áli Páshá, the Ottoman Prime Minister, as Bahá'u'lláh and His companions were being transferred from Adrianople to Gallipoli en route to 'Akká; takes the minister to task for his abuse of power; predicts the downfall of Sulṭán 'Abdu'l-'Azíz; announces that He has come to 'quicken the world and unite all its peoples'; relates the circumstances of His expulsion from Edirne; and parenthetically answers a question from a follower about the origin and nature of the soul.

### ***C. The harvest season: 'Akká (1868–1892)***

The 'Akká period, the longest of Bahá'u'lláh's ministry, saw the ripening of a slowly maturing process and a further expansion in the range of His writings. Having rallied the majority of the Bábí community around His cause, Bahá'u'lláh was now able to increasingly turn His attention to the more universal and cosmopolitan implications of His teachings, first by concluding His proclamation to the kings and rulers of the earth, then by delineating the laws and ordinances of His new Faith, and finally by further elucidating its universal and world-shaping social principles.

#### *i. Early 'Akká (1868–1873)*

The early years of the 'Akká period, including the first two which were endured under harsh conditions in the citadel of 'Akká, were dominated by Bahá'u'lláh's further summons to kings and rulers, continuing the work that had begun with the Súriy-i-Mulúk in Edirne:

\* Lawḥ-i-Páp ('Tablet to Pope Pius IX', Arabic, BH00347). Announces the return of Christ, 'come down from Heaven even as He came down from it the first time'; warns of the 'veils of human learning' that threaten to obscure this truth; calls on the monks to come forth from their seclusion; summons the people of all religions to hasten unto the most great Ocean; asserts the power of His revelation to overcome all opposition; bids the Pope to abandon his worldly riches and adornments; and proclaims to the Christians that John the Baptist has reappeared in the person of the Báb while the promised Father foretold by Isaiah and the Comforter promised by Christ has appeared in the person of Bahá'u'lláh.

\* Lawḥ-i-Nápulyún II ('Second Tablet to Napoleon III', Arabic, BH00259). Summons the Emperor to 'tell the priests to ring the bells no longer', announcing that He is the one promised by Christ; bids the monks to come forth from their seclusion; prophesies that his 'kingdom shall be thrown into confusion' and his empire 'shall pass from [his] hands' for 'casting behind [his] back' the first epistle from Bahá'u'lláh; recounts the sufferings of Bahá'u'lláh in His successive exiles; counsels the Emperor to watch over his subjects with justice; and instructs him, and the people of the world in

general, to teach the Cause of God through the power of utterance, to be trustworthy, and to conceal the sins of others.

★ *Lawḥ-i-Malik-i-Rús* ('Tablet to Czar Alexander II', Arabic, BH01042). States cryptically that Bahá'u'lláh has answered a secret wish of the Czar; praises him for offering, through one of his ministers, aid to Bahá'u'lláh while in the dungeon of Tehran; calls on him to arise to become a champion of the Cause of God; declares that Bahá'u'lláh is the one 'Whom the tongue of Isaiah hath extolled, the One with Whose name both the Torah and the Evangel were adorned'; and warns of the ephemerality of earthly possessions.

★ *Lawḥ-i-Malikh* ('Tablet to Queen Victoria', Arabic, BH00662). Announces the fulfilment of 'all that hath been mentioned in the Gospel'; praises the Queen for forbidding the trading in slaves and for entrusting 'the reins of counsel into the hands of the representatives of the people'; calls the elected representatives of the people in every land to take counsel together for the sake of mankind; ordains that 'the mightiest instrument for the healing of all the world is the union of all its peoples in one universal Cause, one common Faith'; and instructs the kings of the earth to cease burdening their subjects with their own wanton expenditures, to be reconciled among themselves, and to enforce a common peace by joining forces against any who would take up arms against another.

★ *Súriy-i-Haykal* ('Surah of the Temple', Arabic, BH00007). The centrepiece of His proclamatory works, originally written in Edirne and recast in 'Akká, in which Bahá'u'lláh as the embodiment of the promised new Temple is called forth by the Holy Spirit and symbolically raised up limb by limb, with the mission of each part being assigned and sent forth into the world in fulfilment of the prophecy of the Old Testament (Zechariah 6:12). In its final form, it includes His epistles to Pope Pius IX, Emperor Napoleon III, Czar Alexander II, Queen Victoria, and Naṣíru'd-Dín Sháh.

The culmination of Bahá'u'lláh's summons to kings and rulers, as well as the primary exposition of the laws and ordinances of His Faith, are contained in a text whose central significance is belied by its relative brevity:

★ *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* ('The Most Holy Book', Arabic, BH00001). The 'mother book' of the Bahá'í Dispensation, announcing to the kings of the earth the promulgation of the 'Most Great Law'; formally ordaining the institution of the House of Justice; prescribing the obligatory prayers; designating the time and period of fasting; formulating laws surrounding marriage and inheritance; ordaining the institution of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* (houses of worship); establishing the Nineteen Day Feasts; abolishing the institution of priesthood; and specifying punishments for murder, arson, adultery, and theft. Apart from these laws, He reminds his followers of the twin duties of recognition and obedience; exhorts them to fellowship with the adherents of all religions; warns them to guard against fanaticism, sedition, pride, dispute, and contention; enjoins on them cleanliness, truthfulness, chastity, hospitality, fidelity, courtesy, forbearance, justice, and fairness; and counsels them to be 'even as the fingers of one hand and the limbs of one body'.

Other works of the early 'Akká period include:

★ *Lawḥ-i-Ra'ís* ('Tablet to the Chief', Persian, BH00269). Bahá'u'lláh's second tablet to the Ottoman Prime Minister 'Álí Páshá, denouncing him for his further act of cruelty in imprisoning Bahá'u'lláh and His followers in the citadel of 'Akká, warning

him of the ephemerality of his worldly power, relating the episode of a puppet show from Bahá'u'lláh's own childhood which convinced Him of the fleeting nature of the trappings of the world, asking 'ÁlÍ Páshá to comport himself with reason and justice, and reiterating a request for a brief audience with the Sultan.

Lawḥ-i-Aḥbáb ('Tablet of the Friends', Arabic, BH00130). Addresses various followers with words of advice and encouragement, calling them to be united, to be detached from the things of the world, and to promote the cause of God and lamenting the Bábis and others who have rejected His message.

\* Lawḥ-i-Aqdas ('Tablet to the Christians', Arabic, BH00505). Announces to an unnamed Christian Bahá'u'lláh's revelation as the fulfilment of Christian prophetic expectations, reproaches the Christians in general and the clergy in particular for failing to recognize it, asks them to consider how Christ was similarly rejected by the people of His day, and concludes with a series of beatitudes reminiscent of the Sermon on the Mount.

Lawḥ-i-Baqá ('Tablet of Immortality', Arabic, BH02169). Brief tablet assuring the recipient of a lofty station in the world to come and counselling him to detachment and service to the Cause of God.

Lawḥ-i-Basīṭatu'l-Ḥaqīqah ('Tablet on the Uncompounded Reality', Arabic and Persian, BH00409). Elucidates a statement by the philosopher Mullá Ṣadrá that 'the uncompounded reality is all things', offers a middle position between the doctrines of 'the oneness of being' and 'the oneness of appearances', observes that both positions can be upheld with reference to different sacred scriptures, and suggests that nothing is to be gained from disputation in such matters.

\* Lawḥ-i-Fu'ád ('Tablet to Fu'ád Páshá', Arabic, BH01494). Details the divine justice that was meted out to the recently deceased Ottoman Prime Minister in consequence of his abuses of power and foretells the imminent downfall of his colleague, 'ÁlÍ Páshá, as well as the overthrow of the Sultan himself.

Lawḥ-i-Hirtík ('Tablet to Georg David Hardegg', Arabic, BH01217). Briefly addresses the head of the German Templers of Haifa, calling him to consider with insight the ascendancy and sweetness of the word of God, the mysterious processes by which the abased become exalted and the exalted abased, and the lessons of the past; employs the science of letters and their numerical equivalents in explaining the significance of certain names; and affirms that He and the recipient are moved by the same divine spirit.

Lawḥ-i-Ḥusayn ('Tablet to Ḥusayn', Persian, BH01068). Calls the recipient to commune intimately with God; warns that whatever is concealed in people's inmost hearts will be revealed in this day; compares all creation to mirrors which reflect the light of the Sun of Truth, to the extent that they turn to it; proclaims the purifying and healing agency of the love of God; and observes that the prophets of God would never have subjected themselves to such persecutions if human life ended with this physical one.

Lawḥ-i-Pisar-'Amm ('Tablet to the Cousin', Persian and Arabic, BH00647). Praises the recipient, a paternal cousin, for his faithfulness; remonstrates with another relative for remaining distant, asking him whether it is better to die in his bed or in the path of God; and calls the people of a certain village not to grieve over their suffering and not to engage in rebellion and revolt but to eschew dissension and strife and to be characterized with divine attributes.

Lawḥ-i-Ru'yá ('Tablet of the Vision', Arabic, BH01325). Recounts, in celebration of the anniversary of the birth of the Báb, a joyful vision of the Maid of Heaven as

personification of the Holy Spirit, who embraces Him and addresses Him ecstatically and who bids Him leave 'Akká and hasten to His 'other dominions'.

Lawḥ-i-Saḥáb ('Tablet of the Cloud', Arabic, BH00739). Proclamatory tablet mentioning Bahá'u'lláh's recent summons to Násiru'd-Dín Sháh and Napoleon III, extolling the prophetic significance of the Holy Land and His banishment there, and exhorting His followers to proclaim His message with wisdom, deeds, and upright conduct, describing them as those who would pass through a valley of pure gold 'aloof as a cloud'.

Lawḥ-i-Salmán II ('Second Tablet to Salmán', Persian and Arabic, BH01403). Emphasizes the fleeting nature of this world, that those who remain occupied with it are heedless of this truth, and that one of the signs of the maturity of the world is that none will be found to bear the burden of kingship and its earthly cares.

Lawḥ-i-Shaykh Fání ('Tablet to Shaykh Fání', Persian, BH01850). Stresses the importance of distinguishing the transcendent reality of God from the signs of God in the world, taking as an example the subject of mystical self-surrender (*faná'*) and eternal union (*baqá'*) with God, which should be understood as the act of complete renunciation of worldly desire and not the elevation of the individual will to that of God's.

\* Qad Iḥtaraqá'l-Mukhlisún ('The Fire Tablet', Arabic, BH00687). Written in rhythmic prose and taking the form of a conversation between Bahá'u'lláh and God in verses reminiscent of the biblical Book of Job, Bahá'u'lláh calls to God in His suffering and in God's apparent absence and receives God's answer as to the wisdom of this suffering.

\* Šalát-i-Mayyit ('Prayer for the Dead', Arabic, BH09085). Prayer with six verses to be repeated nineteen times each, recited at graveside, and stated in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas to constitute the only exception to the general prohibition on congregational prayer.

\* Su'ál va Javáb ('Questions and Answers', Persian, BH00069). Compilation of answers and clarifications by Bahá'u'lláh to over one hundred questions regarding the laws of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas.

Súriy-i-Amín ('Tablet to Amín', Arabic, BH01343). Praises the recipient for his steadfastness; calls the followers of the Qur'an to hear 'the voice of the Crier, Who cried out between heaven and earth'; relates the fallen state of Fu'ád Páshá upon his death; and extols the ultimate sacrifice of the youthful Badí', who delivered Bahá'u'lláh's epistle to Násiru'd-Dín Sháh.

Súriy-i-Ḥifẓ ('Surah of Protection', Arabic, BH00682). Discusses Bahá'u'lláh's opposition from Mírzá Yaḥyá and the latter's intention to have Bahá'u'lláh killed, which was averted through divine protection, and Bahá'u'lláh's open offer of forgiveness should His half-brother turn to Him in repentance.

## *ii. Middle and late 'Akká (1873–1892)*

As the conditions of His third and final banishment were gradually relaxed, the last years of Bahá'u'lláh's life were lived in relative comfort and freedom, particularly from 1878, when He was permitted to reside in different houses beyond the walls of 'Akká. The significant works of this period are chiefly concerned with enumerating universal principles. One body of tablets in particular expresses what may be called the heart of the social teachings of the Bahá'í Faith:

\* Iṣhráqát ('Splendours', Arabic and Persian, BH00053). Explains the meaning of the 'most great infallibility' and the nature of the authority of the Manifestations of God, proclaims the fulfilment of prophetic expectations derived from various passages in the Qur'an, recalls a vision of the personified virtue of trustworthiness, and proclaims nine

'splendours': religion as source of order in the world; the promotion of the 'Lesser Peace' by the rulers of the world; the commandments of God as source of life to the world; the importance of praiseworthy deeds and upright character; the conferral of government positions based on merit; union and concord among all people, which can be achieved by establishing a universal language; the importance of parenthood and the education of children; entrusting administrative affairs to the trustees of the House of Justice; and religion as the most potent instrument for establishing unity in the world.

\* *Kalimát-i-Firdawsíyyih* ('Words of Paradise', Persian and Arabic, BH00111). Proclaims eleven 'leaves of paradise': the fear of God, the importance of religion, the golden rule, that rulers should possess good character and act in justice (in contrast to Muḥammad *Sháh*, whose deeds in particular are denounced), reward and punishment as the basis of order in the world, justice, the unity of mankind, the education of children, moderation, renouncing asceticism and monasticism, and forbidding religious strife and dissension.

\* *Lawḥ-i-Maqṣúd* ('Tablet to Maqṣúd', Persian and Arabic, BH00140). Relates various teachings as prerequisites to world peace: universal education; regarding one another as 'the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch'; reward and punishment as pillars of world stability; rulers acting with justice and wisdom; the gathering of the nations to lay the foundations of the 'Lesser Peace'; the adoption of a universal language and script; affirming that 'the earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens'; not allowing religion to become the source of disunity; taking counsel together in all matters; promoting useful branches of knowledge; exercising moderation in all things; inculcating tolerance and righteousness; and having due regard for the power of human utterance, in particular the Word of God, which is the 'master key for the whole world'.

\* *Lawḥ-i-Dunyá* ('Tablet of the World', Persian and Arabic, BH00238). Reiterates many of Bahá'u'lláh's central social teachings, such as renunciation of self and promoting the good of the entire human race; achieving the betterment of the world 'through pure and goodly deeds, through commendable and seemly conduct'; consorting with all religions in friendliness and fellowship; avoiding contention and conflict; observing courtesy; promoting the 'Lesser Peace'; adopting a universal language; championing the universal education of children; and recognizing the importance of agriculture.

\* *Tajallíyát* ('Effulgences', Arabic and Persian, BH00668). Emphasizes the importance of belief in the Divine Manifestation and proclaims four 'effulgences': the knowledge of God and recognition of His Prophet, steadfastness in the Cause of God, acquiring useful knowledge, and refuting accusations that Bahá'u'lláh had claimed the station of the Godhead.

\* *Ṭarázát* ('Ornaments', Persian and Arabic, BH00308). Proclaims six 'ornaments': knowledge of self and acquiring a useful profession, fellowship with all religions, possessing a good character, truthfulness and trustworthiness, preserving the station of craftsmanship, and the importance of acquiring knowledge and of fairness in newspaper reporting.

\* *Bishárát* ('Glad-Tidings', Persian and Arabic, BH00568). Proclaims fifteen 'glad-tidings': the abolition of holy war, consorting in fellowship with the followers of all religions, the adoption of a universal auxiliary language, the obligation to faithfully serve just monarchs, obedience to government, the establishment of the 'Lesser Peace', freedom in choice of clothing and cut of beard, abandonment of monasticism, forbidding the confession of sins, abrogating a law of the Báb regarding the destruction

of books, exalting useful work to the status of worship and forbidding mendicancy, entrusting the affairs of the people to the House of Justice, abrogating the requirement of making special journeys to visit the graves of the dead, and commending a combination of republicanism and monarchy in the governance of human affairs.

\* Lawḥ-i-Mánikchí Şáhib ('Tablet to Mánikchí Şáhib', Persian, BH00698). Addresses a number of theological questions by implying that the answers lie in the realm of action, in the process elucidating several central Bahá'í teachings: that the Manifestations should be regarded as 'divine physicians' prescribing the remedy from age to age in accordance with the disease, that the unity of mankind is the remedy for the ills of today, that one should be 'anxiously concerned with the needs of the age' in which one lives and centre one's deliberations 'on its exigencies and requirements', and that words should be matched with deeds and that both should be motivated by purity of intentions.

Other middle and late 'Akká period works tend to address specific theological and philosophical questions:

Lawḥ-i-'Abdu'l-Vahháb ('Tablet to 'Abdu'l-Vahháb', Persian and Arabic, BH00433). Addresses a question on the soul and its continuance after death, alludes to the state of the souls in the next world while declaring that it cannot be adequately described, and declares that the whole truth of the matter has remained concealed for the sake of the protection of the human race.

Lawḥ-i-Amváj ('Tablet of the Waves', Persian and Arabic, BH03062). Brief tablet declaring that the ocean of utterance has surged with four 'waves': shining the light of unity over the whole earth, being clothed in the garment of trustworthiness, establishing the transcendence of God, and casting away the causes of abasement and embracing that which leads to exaltation.

Lawḥ-i-Bismillih ('Tablet of "In the Name of God"', Persian, BH00528). Emphasizes the importance of the independent investigation of spiritual reality upon attainment of maturity, which entails the understanding of why some choose the path of faith and others that of denial, why each religious sect believes it is in sole possession of the truth, and why the Prophets of the past were all rejected in their day.

\* Lawḥ-i-Burhán ('Tablet of the Proof', Arabic, BH00336). Condemns in fiery language two members of the Shiite clergy for their roles in the martyrdom of two prominent Bahá'ís, sets forth the spiritual prerequisites of the truly learned, and summons them to investigate the truth of Bahá'u'lláh's cause by perusing His writings.

\* Lawḥ-i-Haft Pursiḥ ('Tablet of the Seven Questions', Persian, BH00827). Briefly addresses a believer of Zoroastrian background, answering seven questions regarding the problem of conflicting religious claims, declaring that His religion is 'the religion of forbearance' and that it 'embraceth all faiths and all religions', and affirming 'the reality of Paradise and Hell, for reward and punishment require their existence'.

Lawḥ-i-Ḥaqqu'n-Nás ('Tablet of the Right of the People', Arabic, BH00423). Answers a question about the execution of justice in the next world as a result of actions in this world, explaining that everything in this physical world has a metaphorical counterpart in each of the divine worlds, which guarantees the settling of accounts, and giving three illustrative examples.

\* Lawḥ-i-Hikmat ('Tablet of Wisdom', Arabic, BH00223). Calls on the people to observe a number of spiritual maxims; answers a question regarding the origin of

creation; describes the Word of God as ‘the Cause which hath preceded the contingent world’; identifies nature with the operation of the Divine Will; mentions in positive terms some ancient philosophers, including Empedocles, Pythagoras, Hippocrates, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Balinus, and Hermes; states that the essence and fundamentals of philosophy have emanated from the Prophets; and asserts that a true philosopher would never deny God and His evidences.

Lawḥ-i-Ittihād (‘Tablet of Unity’, Persian and Arabic, BH00472). Elucidates the subject of unity in different aspects: unity of religion, unity in speech, unity of deeds, unity in rank and station, unity of souls, and unity in material possessions.

Lawḥ-i-Jamál (‘Tablet to Jamál Burújirdí’, Persian, BH01034). Advises the recipient to practice love, humility, and detachment when engaging people with different views since souls are created in different states of understanding; gives an example of two valid yet opposing positions regarding the relationship of the Manifestations to God; and states that ‘the whole duty of man in this Day is to attain that share of the flood of grace which God poureth forth for him’, advising that the ‘largeness or smallness of the receptacle’ should not be considered.

Lawḥ-i-Karím (‘Tablet to Karím’, Persian and Arabic, BH00501). States that, while some are able to recognize the truth the moment they encounter it, most stand in need of a teacher; explains that some can be taught with words, others by deeds and actions, and still others by the example of a saintly character; emphasizes the importance of the latter; asserts that the purpose of His revelation is not to enforce outward ordinances but to enable people to manifest divine perfections and to achieve that which their minds can readily embrace; and condemns some of the fanciful theories about the Promised One held by certain Muslims.

Lawḥ-i-Raqshá (‘Tablet of the She-Serpent’, Persian and Arabic, BH00921). Details the divine justice and wrath that was visited upon the two individuals mentioned in the Lawḥ-i-Burhán and offers remembrance and praise for several of His followers.

\* Lawḥ-i-Siyyid Mihdíy-i-Dahájí (‘Tablet to Siyyid Mihdíy-i-Dahájí’, Arabic and Persian, BH00587). Praises a prominent teacher of the Bahá’í Faith, declares that the complete victory of the Cause of God will be achieved through speech and utterance, and stipulates the prerequisites of effective speech: that it possess moderation and refinement, be delivered with tact and wisdom, and have penetrating influence, all of which require detachment and purity of heart on the part of the speaker.

Súriy-i-Dḥabíḥ (‘Tablet to Dḥabíḥ’, Persian and Arabic, BH00513). Summons the Bahá’ís to upright conduct, obedience to worldly authority, and high moral character and warns that the greatest harm that can be inflicted upon Bahá’u’lláh’s Cause is not His imprisonment and persecution but the misdeeds of those who claim to be His followers.

Tafsír-i-Va’sḥ-Shams (‘Commentary on the Súrah of the Sun’, Arabic, BH00271). Gives a detailed interpretation of a short surah of the Qur’an, relates several symbolic meanings of the word ‘sun’, and tells of the inexhaustible meanings of the Word of God, which are disclosed according to the capacity of the hearers and which must be understood according to both their outward and inward meanings.

\* Ziyárat-Námih (Tablet of Visitation, Arabic, BH02307). Name of a category of prayers usually in honour of deceased individuals and designated to be read at their gravesites, the most well-known of which was compiled by Nabil Zarandí after the passing of Bahá’u’lláh and is often recited in His Shrine.

In the final years of Bahá'u'lláh's life, three works of great significance were penned which brought His ministry to a close and put in place the necessary arrangements for the continuance of His Faith in the world:

\* *Lawḥ-i-Karmil* ('Tablet of Carmel', Arabic, BH02324). Brief proclamatory tablet, revealed during a visit to Mount Carmel, taking the form of a joyful dialogue between Bahá'u'lláh and the sacred mountain and promising 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', words that have been taken as the charter for the establishment of the Bahá'í World Centre in Haifa.

\* *Lawḥ-i-Ibn-i-Dhi'b* ('Epistle to the Son of the Wolf', Arabic and Persian, BH00005). His last major work and His third longest, calling on its recipient, a leading mujtahid, to repent of his role in the oppression and massacre of the Bahá'ís, quoting some of the most celebrated passages from His own writings, and adducing proofs establishing the validity of His cause.

\* *Kitáb-i-'Ahd* ('Book of the Covenant', Persian, BH00003). Bahá'u'lláh's last will and testament, appointing 'Abdu'l-Bahá as His successor by summoning 'the Aghṣán, the Afnán and My Kindred to turn, one and all, their faces towards the Most Mighty Branch'; categorically forbidding contention and conflict; and cautioning lest the means of order and unity that He brought into the world should become the cause of confusion and discord.

## References and further reading

The Bahá'í Reference Library, [www.bahai.org/library](http://www.bahai.org/library), contains a selection of works of Bahá'u'lláh and other Bahá'í Writings in English translations as well as in the original languages.

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Phelps, S. (2020) *A Partial Inventory of the Works of the Central Figures of the Bahá'í Faith*, Includes an index to over 11,000 works of Bahá'u'lláh accessible in the public domain, in the original languages and in translation, including all the titles mentioned in this chapter: [www.afnanlibrary.org/docs/other-materials/partial-inventory-of-the-works-of-the-central-figures-of-the-bahai-faith](http://www.afnanlibrary.org/docs/other-materials/partial-inventory-of-the-works-of-the-central-figures-of-the-bahai-faith).

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