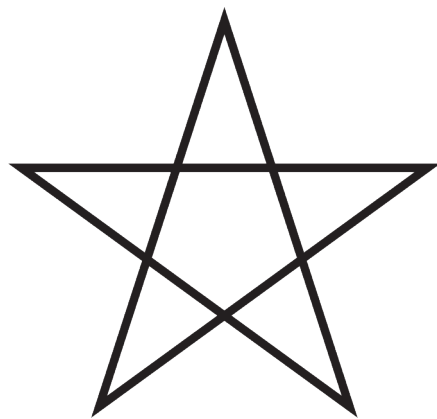


SACRED UNITY

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The five-pointed star or haykal (Arabic: temple) shown on the left is the official Bahá'í Faith symbol as indicated by Shoghi Effendi, "strictly speaking, the five-pointed star on the right is the symbol of our Faith, as used by the Báb and explained by Him." It represents the human body as a head, two hands, and two feet, particularly the body of the Manifestation of God and the person of Bahá'u'lláh himself.



He Who is your Lord, the All-Merciful, cherisheth in His heart the desire of beholding the entire human race as one soul and one body.— BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

In a letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul explains "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:12-13) Christians hold this view as sacred and strive to live in a way that recognizes that goal of full unity with God for all. The sacredness of unity with other humans and with God is not unique to the Christian faith. The more we explore our own faith and spirituality and that of other faith traditions, the more we recognize the sacredness of unity in all of creation.

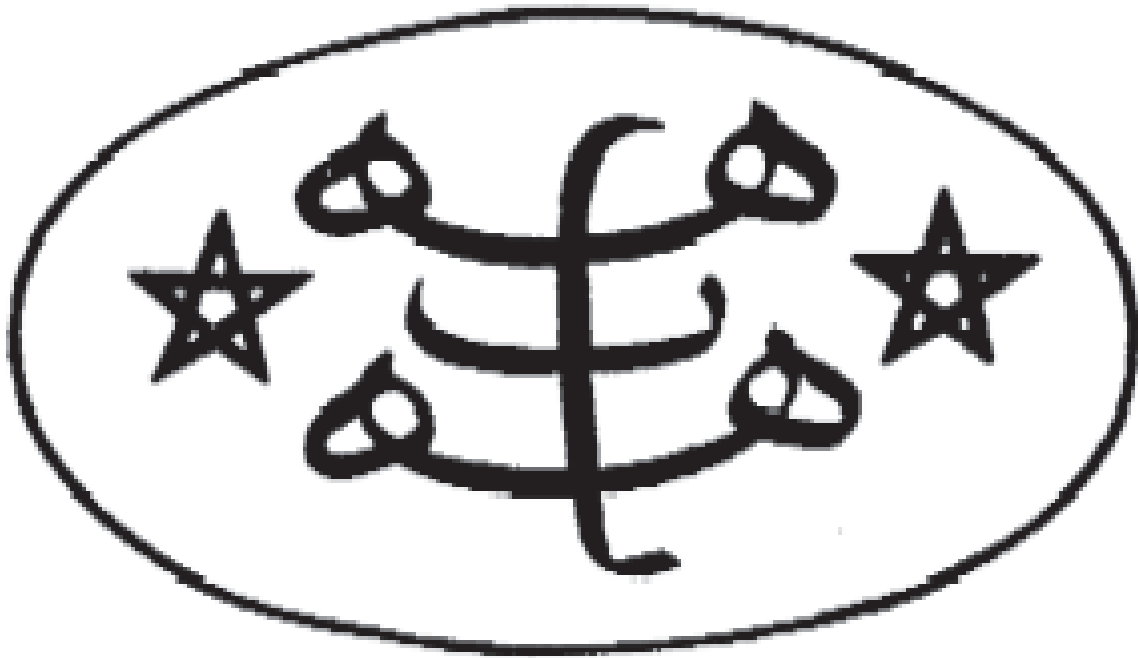
We find this sense of connection in a number of faith traditions. One of the religious traditions present in Wyoming is the Bahá'í faith, which is premised on bringing together all religions to achieve a greater and more complete understanding of God and God's message. A strong sense of sacred unity is echoed in the quote above and other writings of Bahá'u'lláh, whom followers of the Bahá'í faith see as a messenger of God who lived from 1817 – 1892. They believe he was sent to share a new revelation from God to humanity, a message of peace and justice, joining their list of previous manifestations of God, including Abraham, Krishna, Zoroaster, Moses, Buddha, Jesus and Muhammad.

Bahá'ís believe that all religions, and all people come from a single source – God. Unity is a vital facet of the Bahá'í faith, a tradition that holds sacred this unity, the oneness of people and seeks to educate and guide humanity in its journey toward universal peace. The foundation of universal peace for the Bahá'ís is found in the following principles, which they work to bring to reality every day:

- independent search after truth
- oneness of the entire human race
- abolition of all forms of prejudice
- harmony that exists between religion and science
- equality of men and women
- universal education
- a universal language
- abolition of extreme wealth and poverty
- a world tribunal to adjudicate disputes between nations
- justice as the ruling principle in human affairs

Bahá'ís, living alongside others in every land and nation, “share a common goal of serving humanity and refining their inner lives in accordance with the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. The community to which they belong is one of learning and action, free from any sense of superiority or claim to exclusive understanding of truth. It is a community that strives to cultivate hope for the future of humanity, to foster purposeful effort, and to celebrate the endeavors of all those in the world who work to promote unity and alleviate human suffering.” (see: www.bahai.org)

Many of these principles are not unique to the Bahá'í faith and as I study, I think about how I, like many, can learn and grow from these teachings. I reflect upon the oneness of humanity and creation; how I believe in the equality of all genders; and how I can help alleviate human suffering. For me, I believe that is how I spread God's love in the world.



“Bahá'u'lláh has drawn the circle of unity, He has made a design for the uniting of all the peoples, and for the gathering of them all under the shelter of the tent of universal unity. This is the work of the Divine Bounty, and we must all strive with heart and soul until we have the reality of unity in our midst, and as we work, so will strength be given unto us.” – ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

Designed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá (Son of Bahá'u'lláh), the ringstone symbol is a calligraphic representation of the Greatest Name. This Baha'i symbol serves as a visual representation of God's purpose for humanity. It has:

- two haykals (star symbols) that represent the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, their twin Manifestations of God for this age
- upper line showing the word of God
- middle line representing the Manifestations of God (Abraham, Krishna, Zoroaster, Moses, Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh)
- lower line represents humanity and the world of creation
- vertical line that joins the three horizontal lines together representing the link of the Holy Spirit proceeding from God, through the Manifestations, and down to humanity.

The Greatest Name is used with utmost dignity, and it is not generally used in a casual manner. “There would, however, be no objection to its use on plaques or ornaments, jewelry or similar items which are not normally put to common use” –From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice (the ruling body of the Bahá'í faith) to their National Spiritual Assembly of Belgium, March 12, 1980.