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## Foreword

*Bahá'u'lláh has commanded that a place be built for all the religionists of the world ... all may meet under the dome of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and adore the one God ... for the ages of darkness have passed away, and the century of light has arrived.*

(From a speech by 'Abdu'l-Bahá reported in *The Star of the West*, Vol. III, No. 4, p. 7)

This compilation is meant as a hand-book, a collection of useful materials to be kept in the hand or pocket for ready reference as Bahá'í communities take up the task of building the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, the 'place where God is remembered' or House of Worship. It is not meant as a scholarly analysis or a historical record, and it is not exhaustive. Because the focus is on present needs, many texts relating to the construction of the national and continental Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs have been omitted.

The need for a handbook has become clear from discussion between various local communities which are already engaged in 'building' Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs, and became particularly pressing following the call of the Universal House of Justice, in its Ridván message of April 1996 (BE 153):

... the flourishing of the community, especially at the local level, ... involves the practice of collective worship of God. Hence, it is essential to the spiritual life of the community that the friends hold regular devotional meetings ...

Such devotional meetings, according to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, are one form of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár:

It befiteth the friends to hold a gathering, a meeting, where they shall glorify God and fix their hearts upon Him, and read and recite the Holy Writings of the Blessed Beauty ... The lights of the All-Glorious Realm, the rays of the Supreme Horizon, will be cast upon such bright assemblages, for these are none other than the Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs, the Dawning-Points of God's Remembrance, which must, at the direction of the Most Exalted Pen, be established in every hamlet and city ... (*Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, pages 93-94)

If we speak of a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in the sense of a devotional meeting, then the call of the Universal House of Justice to develop the "practice of collective worship of God" and to hold "regular devotional meetings" can be understood as the start signal to build the institution of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and as a watershed in Bahá'í community development. Therefore it seems useful and timely to bring together those texts which will help Bahá'í communities to understand the relationship between these devotional

meetings and the unfolding process of building the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár at various levels. This evolutionary process, which begins in the individual heart and is gradually perfected and extended in institutional and physical forms, is the first theme which runs through this collection.

The timeliness of the development of devotional meetings may be directly related to the theme of entry by troops which dominates the Ridvan message for B.E. 153, and sets the tone for the present four-year plan, since 'Abdu'l-Bahá says:

... a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár will soon be established in America. The cries of supplication and invocation will be raised to the Highest Kingdom therefrom and, verily, the people will enter into the religion of God by troops with great enthusiasm and attraction. (*Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Abbas*, p. 681)

This passage appears to be the first use of the phrase 'entry by troops' in the Bahá'í Writings. While it cannot be said that building the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is sufficient in itself to achieve entry by troops in Western societies, it is a necessary part of the process. In addition to providing a means of numerical growth, it will be seen from the quotations selected here that the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár has a role to play in creating and consolidating every Bahá'í community. Such effects on the Bahá'í community provide the second theme for this collection.

What does it mean to live in a Bahá'í community for which the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is the 'spiritual center' of its activities, of its other institutions and of its sense of fellowship? What are "its functions in the organic life of the Bahá'í community?" Taking up the task of building the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár "in every hamlet and city" will clearly entail substantial changes in our thinking and in community structures. The texts in this compilation have been selected to provide a clearer conception of what the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is as a spiritual reality and as an institution, and what its relationship is to the Local Spiritual Assembly and other organs of the community, so that both local and national communities can formulate concrete goals for the realisation of this aspect of the Bahá'í community. This provides the third theme of this compilation -- the place of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in the Bahá'í community and its station as an institution.

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is also a physical space from which the remembrance of God rises. As can be seen from the quotations gathered in the fourth section of this compilation, this physical space may be a room in a home which is temporarily devoted to the purpose, a hired space, a temporary or existing building or part of a Bahá'í centre, or a building specially designed and erected for the purpose, and made as perfect as possible in the world of being. Any one of these is a worthy manifestation of 'the inward' as it seeks to unfold itself in the visible world. Lora McCall, who is a member of one local Bahá'í community in Nebraska which has purchased Mashriqu'l-Adhkár land, describes the effect of the physical Mashriqu'l-Adhkár like this:

Whenever I walk on our near-acre of land where we will build our House of Worship, I find that whatever problems I thought I had in my life fade into the background. I go to the land at least a couple of times a week, and find the pattern of my life changing. It used to be that when I was angry or upset about something I'd fuss and fume and try to distract myself. It is getting so that now I think, "I'll go walk on the land, maybe hum a few lines of the Halih,<sup>1</sup> pick up a little trash or pull a thistle. I know I'll feel better." And sometimes it isn't even conscious, I just find myself there. .... I've wondered about this phenomenon. Is it magical thinking to believe that our problems will be solved just by going to some little piece of land? I guess the answer is partly in this: not every problem has a direct solution. The *resolution* lies in reframing the situation by remembering God first, and the Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár is the Dawning Place of the Remembrance of God. I go there to remember. This doesn't mean that I don't remember my God in other places and under other circumstances, I do. The goal is to live a life of constant remembrance. But there is something about the outward expression of the inner reality -- it's that hidden treasure desiring to be known. It can't help it, it's just in the nature of things. We need these physical structures to be built in the world. It isn't enough to carry the remembrance of God in our hearts -- the hidden treasure desires to be known! ...

My heart aches to stand within the sacred space of the Mashriq [u'l-Adhkár] and lift up my voice in praise of the one true God. When I walk on that land, I can see it and hear it, and I stand in awe before my Lord. In this way, everything gets reframed, and the very pattern of my life begins to change.

In humility and love, this collection is dedicated to Lora McCall and to every soul like her, in the earnest hope that it may speed the day on which "thousands of Mashriq'u'l-Adhkárs will be born"<sup>2</sup> and every heart finds rest in the remembrance of God.

It should be noted that some of the passages quoted are from reported speeches delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, rather than tablets for which there is a written original in Persian. Such reports are not considered to be Baha'i scriptures. Others are from written tablets, but in early translations. Those from written sources in recent translations are to be considered most reliable. The spelling used in earlier sources has been brought in line with contemporary usage.

## The nature of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár

*And while we bend our efforts and strain our nerves in a feverish pursuit to provide the necessary means for the speedy construction of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, may we not pause for a moment to examine those statements which set forth the purpose as well as the functions of this symbolical yet so spiritually potent Edifice?*

Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 184

### *Essay*

The most visible form which the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár can take is as a building dedicated to worship, and particularly a building which is designed for the purpose, such as the well-known Bahá'í House of Worship in Wilmette, Illinois. But, as the selected passages show, the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár takes on many other forms which have often not been recognized as such. In some cases it refers to a building in a variety of shapes, in others to a gathering to glorify God and to recite the Sacred Writings, to an institution, a worshipping community, and to the mystic mainspring in our individual lives. 'Abdu'l-Bahá even says that "The world of existence may be likened to this temple": so far as we make the world a place where people are united in remembering God, we make the whole world a 'place of remembrance', a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár.

Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is a term with many meanings, yet the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár can be considered as one thing in its essence. The whole universe, as it is described in the Bahá'í Writings, is ordered by the emanation of attributes or names of God, which are also called the 'realities' or 'essences' of things, each of which is manifest in various appropriate forms in different levels of existence. Moreover, there are 'necessary relations' between these realities, and therefore necessary relationships between the social and institutional forms which they take. This model of inter-related but distinct spiritual realities underlying the universe lends itself to a rich metaphorical language, and we have to use poetic and theological language to answer a simple question like "What is meant by the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár?"

In this language, the attributes or names of God are said to emanate from the Godhead through successive levels of realization in much the same way as 'ideas', in platonic philosophy, exist first in the world of forms and are realized, to a greater or lesser degree, in the material world.<sup>3</sup> A single attribute, shining as it were from the Godhead through the worlds of God, is refracted from the diverse realities in forms and colours which differ, but in which we can recognize a certain family resemblance. The universe might be likened to a wonderful structure of prisms, lenses and mirrors, in which white light enters from one source and is refracted and differentiated as it passes through the mechanism, to produce new wonders as it lights on those jewels and noble metals - the individualities of things - which lie waiting, needing only the touch of light to manifest their potential. To think in this way, we do not need to arrange the various levels through which the lights emanate in a precise system, like a geography of angelic

worlds. Rather it is necessary to become poets and visionaries, to consider these prisms and jewels as if mounted on an intricate music-box, observe the fingers of power set it in motion, and see the rays flashing from prism to prism as all begin to revolve. To imagine the music of the spheres. This is intended to be a working model, a tool for thinking with, not an archaic collection from the archives of scholastic platonism.

The model of emanating realities applies equally to the reality of the Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár, which 'Abdu'l-Bahá describes as being present in, and coming into existence through, various levels of being:

In reality, the radiant, pure hearts are the Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár and from them the voice of supplication and invocation continually reacheth the Supreme Concourse.

I ask God to make the heart of every one of you a temple of the Divine Temples and to let the lamp of the great guidance be lighted therein; and when the hearts find such an attainment, they will certainly exert the utmost endeavor and energy in the building of the Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár; thus may the outward express the inward, and the form (or letter) indicate the meaning (or reality).

*Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Abbás, p. 678*

'Abdu'l-Bahá speaks here of one reality, realized first in the form of the radiant, pure hearts which turn to God, and then *and because of that*, in the building of the Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár. Inner realities are driven to find outward expression. As 'Abdu'l-Bahá says, "not an atom of all the atoms in existence ... but speaketh His praise and telleth of His attributes and names"<sup>4</sup>

Since this process is evolutionary, Bahá'í communities, as they begin to establish the Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár "in every hamlet and city"<sup>5</sup> are beginning on a process of discovery, and the path cannot be laid out for local communities in advance: the places where God is remembered may take on the most surprising forms. A great deal must be found out in practical experience, by following the messages of the Universal House of Justice and seeing what may develop. In a letter to a National Spiritual Assembly dated 9 June 1974, the Universal House of Justice has said that "The law of the Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár is gradually being put into effect," and it is not difficult to discover a gradual evolution in the letters from the Universal House of Justice regarding devotions and the Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár.

The passage from 'Abdu'l-Bahá cited above suggests beginning at the individual level, which the Universal House of Justice had already called for in the 3-year plan under the theme of enriching our individual spiritual lives. We might begin by considering our hearts as the Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár, and systematically performing there, at the morning hour, at noon and evening and in the night, the act of remembrance of God. To support this, there are a number of spiritual exercises which are prescribed or offered in the Bahá'í Writings: meditation, the repetition of the Greatest Name, daily reading of the writings, the obligatory prayers, and many others. Ideally these spiritual

exercises become a continual cycle of adoration which permeates our daily life, so that God is always in our minds, and we see the world always in the light of God. This is the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár as our inward reality. And when the hearts have indeed become the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in this sense, the reality of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár will develop outwards through the various levels of holding devotional meetings, establishing the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár as an institution, making it an active agency as Shoghi Effendi envisions, integrating worship with service to humanity and also in a building which is the outward expression of the inward reality.



## **What is the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár?**

### **The radiant hearts**

In reality, the radiant, pure hearts are the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and from them the voice of supplication and invocation continually reacheth the Supreme Concourse. I ask God to make the heart of every one of you a temple of the Divine Temples and to let the lamp of the great guidance be lighted therein; and when the hearts find such an attainment, they will certainly exert the utmost endeavor and energy in the building of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár; thus may the outward express the inward, and the form (or letter) indicate the meaning (or reality).

*Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Abbás, p. 678*

### **A meeting for glorifying God**

It befitteth the friends to hold a gathering, a meeting, where they shall glorify God and fix their hearts upon Him, and read and recite the Holy Writings of the Blessed Beauty - may my soul be the ransom of His lovers! The lights of the All-Glorious Realm, the rays of the Supreme Horizon, will be cast upon such bright assemblages, for these are none other than the Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs, the Dawning-Points of God's Remembrance, which must, at the direction of the Most Exalted Pen, be established in every hamlet and city...

*Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, pp. 93-94*

### **A building for celebrating God's praise**

Say: The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is each and every building which hath been erected in cities and villages for the celebration of My praise. Such is the name by which it hath been designated before the throne of glory, were ye of those who understand.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 114, p. 61

O friends of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and his co-sharers and partners in the servitude of the Lord of Hosts! Verily, the greatest affair and the most important matter today is to establish a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and to found a Temple, from which the voices of praise may rise to the Kingdom of the Majestic Lord. Blessings be upon you for having thought to do so and intended to erect such an edifice, advancing all in devoting your wealth to this great purpose and to this splendid work. You will soon see the angels of confirmation succeeding you, and the hosts of reinforcement crowding before you.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, from a tablet translated July 2, 1903 and published in *Star of the West*, Vol. 6, No 17, pages 133-4

### **The center of unity**

Among the institutes of the Holy Books is that of the foundation of Holy edifices. That is to say, an edifice is to be built in order that humanity might find therein a place of meeting, and this is to be conducive to unity and fellowship amongst them. The real Temple is the very Law of God, for to that all humanity must resort, and that is the Center of Unity for all mankind. That is the collective center. That is the cause of accord and unity of the hearts. That is the cause of solidarity of the human race. That is the source of the life eternal. Temples are the symbols of that uniting force, in order that when the people gather there in a given edifice of God, in the house and Temple of God, they may recall the fact that the law has been revealed for them and that that law is to unite them. That just as this edifice was founded for the unification of mankind, the law preceding and creating this Temple was issued therefor. His Holiness Jesus Christ, addressing Peter, said: "Thou art the Rock, and upon this Rock will I build my church." This utterance of His Holiness was indicative of the faith of Peter. Namely that -- This faith of thine, O Peter! is the very cause of uniting the various nations and summoning them to unite, and shall be the bond uniting the hearts. It shall be a cause of uniting the world of humanity. In brief, the purpose of places of worship and edifices for adoration is simply that of unity, in order that various nations, divergent races, varying souls, may gather there and among them amity, love and accord may be realized. The original purpose is this. That is why His Holiness BAHA'O'LLAH has commanded that a place be built for all the religionists of the world; that all religions and races and sects may gather together; that the Oneness of the human world may be proclaimed; that all the human race is the servant of God, and that all are submerged in the Ocean of God's Mercy. The world of existence may be likened to this place. It is the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*. Just as the external world is a place where various peoples of different hues and colors, of various faiths and denominations, meet; just as they are submerged in the same Sea of Favors; likewise all may meet under the dome of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* and adore the One God in the same spirit of truth, for the ages of darkness have passed away and the century of light has arrived.

From a speech by 'Abdu'l-Bahá reported in *The Star of the West*, Vol. III, No. 4, p. 7

The purpose is that the church is a collective center. Temples are symbols of the Reality and Divinity of God, the collective center. Consider how within a temple every race and people is seen and represented -- <m-dash] all in the presence of the Lord, covenanting together in a covenant of love and fellowship -- <m-dash] all offering the same melody, prayer and supplication to God. Therefore it is evident that the church is a collective center for mankind. For this reason there have been churches and temples in all the Divine religions. But the real Collective Centers are the Manifestations of God, of whom the church or temple is a symbol and expression. That is to say, the Manifestation of God is the real Divine Temple and Collective Center of which the outer church is but a symbol.

From a speech by 'Abdu'l-Bahá reported in *The Star of the West*, Vol. III, No. 10, p. 25

*The purpose of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*

QUESTION: Concerning mosques, chapels and temples.

ANSWER: Whatever hath been constructed for the worship of the one true God, such as mosques, chapels and temples, must not be used for any purpose other than the commemoration of His Name. This is an ordinance of God, and he who violateth it is verily of those who have transgressed.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas* Questions and Answers, p. 134

Thou hast asked about places of worship and the underlying reason therefor. The wisdom in raising up such buildings is that at a given hour, the people should know it is time to meet, and all should gather together, and, harmoniously attuned one to another, engage in prayer; with the result that out of this coming together, unity and affection shall grow and flourish in the human heart.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, pp. 94-95

... having recognized in Bahá'u'lláh the source whence this celestial light proceeds, they will irresistibly feel attracted to seek the shelter of His House, and congregate therein, unhampered by ceremonials and unfettered by creed, to render homage to the one true God, the Essence and Orb of eternal Truth, and to exalt and magnify the name of His Messengers and Prophets Who, from time immemorial even unto our day, have, under divers circumstances and in varying measure, mirrored forth to a dark and wayward world the light of heavenly Guidance.

Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 185

## *The spiritual effect of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*

### **Promotes the expansion of the Faith**

... a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár will soon be established in America. The cries of supplication and invocation will be raised to the Highest Kingdom therefrom and, verily, the people will enter into the religion of God by troops with great enthusiasm and attraction.

*Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Abbás* p. 681

All is to be yielded up, save only the remembrance of God; all is to be dispraised, except His praise. Today, to this melody of the Company on high, the world will leap and dance: 'Glory be to my Lord, the All-Glorious!' But know ye this: save for this song of God, no song will stir the world, and save for this nightingale-cry of truth from the Garden of God, no melody will lure away the heart. 'Whence cometh this Singer Who speaketh the Beloved's name?'

*Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 93

"A most wonderful and thrilling motion will appear in the world of existence," are 'Abdu'l-Bahá's own words, predicting the release of spiritual forces that must accompany the completion of this most hallowed House of Worship. "From that point of light," He, further glorifying that edifice, has written, "the spirit of teaching ... will permeate to all parts of the world." And again: "Out of this Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, without doubt, thousands of Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs will be born." "It marks the inception of the Kingdom of God on earth."

Message from Shoghi Effendi to America, 1949.

*Citadel of Faith*, p. 69

The rise of this symbol and harbinger of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, as yet in the embryonic stage of its development, amidst the confusion, the anxieties, the rivalries and the recurrent crises that mark the decline of a moribund civilization, will, no doubt, lend a tremendous impetus to the onward march of the Faith in all the continents of the Globe, and will, more than any other single act, direct the attention of the spiritually impoverished, the economically afflicted, the socially disturbed, and the morally disoriented masses of a sorely tried continent to its nascent institutions.

Shoghi Effendi, *Light of Divine Guidance* Vol. 1, p. 219

The completion of the exterior ornamentation of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in Wilmette, the most hallowed Temple ever to be erected by the followers of Bahá'u'lláh, and the crowning glory of the first Bahá'í century, is an event of unique and transcendental significance....

The debt of gratitude owed by the entire Bahá'í world to its champion-builders is

indeed immeasurable. The admiration which this brilliant exploit has evoked in the breasts of countless followers of the Faith in East and West knows no bounds. The creative energies its completion must unleash are incalculable. The role it is destined to play in hastening the emergence of the world order of Bahá'u'lláh, now stirring in the womb of this travailing age, cannot as yet be fathomed. We stand too close to so majestic, so lofty, so radiant, so symbolic a monument raised so heroically to the glory of the Most Great Name, at so critical a stage in human history, and at so significant a spot in a continent so richly endowed, to be able to visualize the future glories which the consummation of this institution, this harbinger of an as yet unborn civilization, must in the fullness of time disclose to the eyes of all mankind.

Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to America*, p. 61

### **Strengthens communities**

When the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is accomplished, when the lights are emanating therefrom, the righteous ones are presenting themselves therein, the prayers are performed with supplication towards the mysterious Kingdom (of Heaven), the voice of glorification is raised to the Lord, the Supreme, then the believers shall rejoice, the hearts shall be dilated and overflowed with the love of the All-Living and Self-Existent (God). The people shall hasten to worship in that heavenly temple, the fragrances of God will be elevated, the divine teachings will be established in the hearts like the establishment of the spirit in mankind; the people will then stand firm in the Cause of your Lord, the Merciful.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, from a tablet translated July 2, 1903 and published in *Star of the West*, Vol. 6, No 17, pages 133-4

'Abdu'l-Bahá hath long cherished the desire that a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár be upraised in that region. Praised be God, thanks to the strenuous efforts of the friends, in recent days the joyful news of this hath been announced. This service is highly acceptable at the Threshold of God, for the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár inspiriteth the lovers of God and delighteth their hearts, and causeth them to become steadfast and firm.

*Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 95

Although to outward seeming the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is a material structure, yet it hath a spiritual effect. It forgeth bonds of unity from heart to heart; it is a collective centre for men's souls. Every city in which, during the days of the Manifestation, a temple was raised up, hath created security and constancy and peace, for such buildings were given over to the perpetual glorification of God, and only in the remembrance of God can the heart find rest. Gracious God! The edifice of the House of Worship hath a powerful influence on every phase of life. Experience hath, in the east, clearly shown this to be a fact. Even if, in some small village, a house was designated as the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, it

produced a marked effect; how much greater would be the impact of one especially raised up.

*Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, pp. 95-96.*

From the Universal House of Justice:

*As we have said in an earlier message, the flourishing of the community, especially at the local level, demands a significant enhancement in patterns of behaviour: those patterns by which the collective expression of the virtues of the individual members and the functioning of the Spiritual Assembly are manifest in the unity and fellowship of the community and the dynamism of its activity and growth. This calls for the integration of the component elements -- adults, youth and children -- in spiritual, social, educational and administrative activities; and their engagement in local plans of teaching and development. It implies a collective will and sense of purpose to perpetuate the Spiritual Assembly through annual elections. It involves the practice of collective worship of God. Hence, it is essential to the spiritual life of the community that the friends hold regular devotional meetings in local Bahá'í centres, where available, or elsewhere, including the homes of believers. (Ridván Message, 1996) <point under the 'd']*

#### **Depends on the effort of the believers**

But I would with all the strength of my conviction emphasize the immeasurable spiritual significance of an Edifice, so beautiful, so holy, erected solely by the concerted efforts, strained to the utmost degree of self-sacrifice, of the entire body of the believers who are fully conscious of the significance of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh.

Message from Shoghi Effendi to the West, 1928.

*Bahá'í Administration, p. 153*

As I have already intimated in the course of my conversations with visiting pilgrims, so vast and significant an enterprise as the construction of the first *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* of the West should be supported, not by the munificence of a few but by the joint contributions of the entire mass of the convinced followers of the Faith. It cannot be denied that the emanations of spiritual power and inspiration destined to radiate from the central Edifice of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* will to a very large extent depend upon the range and variety of the contributing believers, as well as upon the nature and degree of self-abnegation which their unsolicited offerings will entail.

Message from Shoghi Effendi to the West, 1929.

*Bahá'í Administration, pp. 181-182*

## The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in the community

*Whensoever a company of people shall gather in a meeting place, shall engage in glorifying God, and shall speak with one another of the mysteries of God, beyond any doubt the breathings of the Holy Spirit will blow gently over them, and each shall receive a share thereof.*

*Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 94*

### Essay

The Bahá'í community embraces diverse activities and institutions, each with its own distinct nature and way of functioning. But while they are distinct, they are not separable. Like the organs in a body, they need one another in order to fulfil their own functions properly. While each must be understood as a thing in itself, according to the purposes and principles which relate to that particular organ, we cannot understand one organ without also understanding how it relates to others. This is doubly true of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, the 'crowning institution' and the one which, as a collective centre, binds the other organs together. It will be noticed, especially in the second, fourth and fifth of the extracts in this section, that there are close parallels between the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár as the centre of an organic community and house of the covenant and the Christian concept of the church as the mystic body of Christ who is the new covenant (although it must be understood that the church in the Gospel, to which 'Abdu'l-Bahá refers in the second extract, is neither a building nor a denominational organization, but rather a human community united by its common remembrance of God). The implications of this organic model of human unity deserve our thoughtful, and prayerful, consideration.

For most of us, the first step in imagining the role of Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in community life will be to consciously set aside mental images of what Shoghi Effendi calls 'National Houses of Worship',<sup>6</sup> in part because these images are of physical buildings whereas the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is much more than that, but especially because the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is primarily a local rather than a national or continental institution. The Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs are to be established 'in every hamlet and city' as 'the spiritual center every Bahá'í community': they are in the first instance meetings and places for every-day and local worship. Important as the national Houses of Worship are, the effect of local Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs which are sufficiently close to the believers to make daily worship together practicable can be expected to be much greater. 'Abdu'l-Bahá even envisages that there will be multiple Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs in a single locality,<sup>7</sup> and that the Bahá'ís will say their obligatory prayers in the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár,<sup>8</sup> which would only be practicable if the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár was quite close to one's home.

The remembrance of God is not a withdrawal from the world: rather, it is a classroom in which one learns to see and remember God in the world and in daily life.

Work, in paragraph 33 of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, is elevated to the same rank as worship. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, pages 144-145, uses very similar words to equate learning with worship. The activities associated with the dependencies of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár are not a substitute for worship, but there is an equivalence of rank and a dynamic and harmonious interrelationship between the two, as the Universal House of Justice noted in the third of the passages selected for this section.

We have seen that the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is not just a building, but also the radiant heart of the individual, a meeting for glorifying God, and a community "harmoniously attuned one to another" in the collective worship of God, and "covenanting together in a covenant of love and fellowship". In the same way, the dependencies which 'surround' the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár are not simply buildings and institutions devoted to education, social support and Bahá'í administration. The dependencies too can have a personal and collective expression even before they evolve an institutional form. For example, when the friends who unite in regular worship in one local community consulted together and decided to offer systematic support to the many single mothers living in that neighbourhood, that Mashriqu'l-Adhkár acquired the germ of its first dependency, the institution for the care of orphans. This was an act of social service, not just to the worshippers or the Bahá'í community but to the whole community, and it is a service expressing the love which flowed out of -- it was dependent on -- <m-dashes] the fellowship and unity of those worshipping together in the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár meetings.

In many Bahá'í communities one at least of these institutions of service, the Local Spiritual Assembly, has already assumed an institutional form. From the passages selected below, it is clear that Shoghi Effendi considered the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár as an indispensable feature of the development of the Bahá'í Administrative Order.<sup>9</sup> A close and supportive relationship between the two offers the possibility of a qualitative leap forward in the functioning of the administrative institutions and in community life, because re-orienting the Bahá'í communities around their Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs so that the two 'primary agencies' of the community function together will bring Bahá'í communities an important step closer to the pattern which Bahá'u'lláh intended for them. However immature one or other partner may be, when both of the primary agencies are present a community is in a sense 'completed', if not yet perfected. This may be why 'Abdu'l-Bahá says that building the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár "marks the inception of the Kingdom of God on earth."<sup>10</sup>



## *The central place of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*

### **Crowning institution**

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is the most important matter and the greatest divine Institute. Consider how the first institute of His holiness Moses, after his exodus from Egypt, was the "Tent of Martyrdom," which lie raised and which was the traveling Temple. It was a tent which they pitched in the desert wherever they abode and worshiped in it. Likewise, after His holiness Christ - - May the spirit of the world be a sacrifice to Him! - - the first institute by the disciples was a Temple. They planned a Church in every country. Consider the Gospel (read it) and the importance of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár will become evident.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, from a tablet translated February 4, 1908 and published in *Star of the West*, Vol. 6, No. 17, p. 134

Let the friends recall and ever bear in mind the repeated exhortations and glowing promises of our beloved Master with reference to the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, the crowning institution in every Bahá'í community.

Shoghi Effendi to the NSA of the United States and Canada, 1926.

*Bahá'í Administration*, p. 108

### **The spiritual centre**

In the terminology of the Holy Books, the church has been called the "House of the Covenant" for the reason that the church is a place where people of differing thoughts and diverging tendencies, -- where all races and nations may come together in a covenant of permanent fellowship. In the temple of the Lord, in the house of God, man must be submissive to God. He must enter into a covenant with his Lord in order that he shall obey His commands and become unified with his fellowman. He must not consider divergence of races nor differences of nationalities; he must not view variation in denomination and creed, nor should he take into account the differing degrees of thoughts; nay, rather, he should look upon all mankind and realize that all must become united and agreed. He must recognize all as one family, one race, one nativity; all the servants of one God, dwelling beneath the shelter of the Mercy of one God.

The purpose is that the church is a collective center. Temples are symbols of the Reality and Divinity of God, the collective center. Consider how within a temple every race and people are seen and represented; -- all in the presence of the Lord, covenanting together in a covenant of love and fellowship; -- all offering the same melody, prayer and supplication to God. Therefore it is evident that the church is a collective center for mankind. For this reason there have been churches and temples in all the Divine religions. But the real Collective Centers are the Manifestations of God, of whom the

church or temple is a symbol and expression. That is to say, the Manifestation of God is the real Divine Temple and Collective Center of which the outer church is but a symbol.

Recall the statement of His Holiness Jesus Christ recorded in the Gospel: addressing Peter, He said, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church." It is evident, therefore, that the Church of God is the Law of God and the actual edifice is but one symbol thereof. For the Law of God is a collective center which unites various peoples, nationalities, tongues and opinions. All find shelter in its protection and become attracted by it.

From a speech by 'Abdu'l-Bahá reported in *The Star of the West*, Vol. 3 No. 10.

*The oneness of mankind . . . implies the achievement of a dynamic coherence between the spiritual and practical requirements of life on earth. The indispensability of this coherence is unmistakably illustrated in His ordination of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, the spiritual center of every Bahá'í community ...*

The Universal House of Justice, to the Bahá'ís of the world, 1983.

*A Wider Horizon* p. 139

### **A feature of every locality**

O people of the world! Build ye houses of worship throughout the lands in the name of Him Who is the Lord of all religions.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 31, p. 29

This is a matter of the utmost significance. If the erection of the House of Worship in a public place would arouse the hostility of evil-doers, then the meeting must, in every locality, be held in some hidden place. Even in every hamlet, a place must be set aside as the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, and even though it be underground.

*Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, no. 59, p. 95

Thousands of Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs, which means the Dawning Points of Praise for all religionists, will be built in the world. In the Orient and the Occident of the world will they be built. But this Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, being the first one in the Occident, has great importance. In after years there will be many Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs, even in this City of Chicago there shall be numerous ones established. In Asia there shall be many. In Europe there shall be many. Even in Africa there will be many. Even in Australia and New Zealand; but this is of great importance.

From a speech by 'Abdu'l-Bahá reported in *The Star of the West*, Vol. 3 No. 4

### ***Relationship to dependencies and other institutions***

#### **Dependencies**

The auxiliary buildings of the House of Worship should likewise be erected there: the hospital, the schools and university, the elementary school, the refuge for the poor and indigent; also the haven for orphans and the helpless, and the travellers' hospice.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Memorials of the Faithful*, p. 20

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is one of the most vital institutions in the world, and it hath many subsidiary branches. Although it is a House of Worship, it is also connected with a hospital, a drug dispensary, a traveller's hospice, a school for orphans, and a university for advanced studies. Every Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is connected with these five things. My hope is that the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár will now be established in America, and that gradually the hospital, the school, the university, the dispensary and the hospice, all functioning according to the most efficient and orderly procedures, will follow. Make these matters known to the beloved of the Lord, so that they will understand how very great is the importance of this 'Dawning-Point of the Remembrance of God.' The Temple is not only a place for worship; rather, in every respect is it complete and whole." *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, pp. 99-100

The contribution that thou hast made to the Temple is beloved. The Temple is the most great foundation of the world of humanity and it hath many branches. Although the Temple is the place of worship, with it is connected a hospital, pharmacy, pilgrims' house, school for the orphans, and a university for the study of high sciences. Every Temple is connected with these five things. I hope that now in America they will build a Temple and gradually add to it the hospital, school, university, pharmacy and pilgrims' house with the utmost efficiency and thoroughness. Thou shouldst make known to the believers these details, so that they may realize how important the Temple is. The Temple is not only a place for worship; nay, it is perfect in every way.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. 3*, pages 626-7

But however inspiring the conception of Bahá'í worship, as witnessed in the central Edifice of this exalted Temple, it cannot be regarded as the sole, nor even the essential, factor in the part which the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, as designed by Bahá'u'lláh, is destined to play in the organic life of the Bahá'í community. Divorced from the social, humanitarian, educational and scientific pursuits centering around the Dependencies of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, Bahá'í worship, however exalted in its conception, however passionate in fervor, can never hope to achieve beyond the meagre and often transitory results produced by the contemplations of the ascetic or the communion of the passive worshipper. It cannot afford lasting satisfaction and benefit to the worshipper himself, much less to humanity in general, unless and until translated and transfused into that dynamic and disinterested service to the cause of humanity which it is the supreme privilege of the Dependencies of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár to facilitate and promote. Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 185-186

*The upraising of the Temple, the central edifice and spiritual heart of the community, is to be followed by the erection and functioning of the various dependencies dedicated to the social and economic upliftment of the community. However, long before a Bahá'í community reaches the stage of building its own Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, this process begins in an embryonic way. Even the first local centre that a Bahá'í community acquires can begin to serve not only as the spiritual and administrative centre and gathering place of the community, but also as the site for other aspects of community life. Clearly, then, social and economic development projects need not await the building of a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and are, themselves, worthy pursuits, provided that the community has the capacity to initiate and sustain such activity. Some of the entities created in this process may even later become dependencies of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár once it is built. What is important to remember is that, as is the case with the institution of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, central to the development process are the spiritual illumination of hearts and the enlightenment of minds.*

Letter from the Department of the Secretariat to an individual  
15 February 1994

### **Bahá'í administration**

...the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár - the Administration's mighty bulwark, the symbol of its strength and the sign of its future glory.

Shoghi Effendi, *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 80

The seat round which its spiritual, its humanitarian and administrative activities will cluster are the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and its Dependencies.

Shoghi Effendi, *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 156-157

(see also *Messages to America*, page 24)

Nor will the exertions, no matter how disinterested and strenuous, of those who within the precincts of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár will be engaged in administering the affairs of the future Bahá'í Commonwealth, fructify and prosper unless they are brought into close and daily communion with those spiritual agencies centering in and radiating from the central Shrine of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. Nothing short of direct and constant interaction between the spiritual forces emanating from this House of Worship centering in the heart of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, and the energies consciously displayed by those who administer its affairs in their service to humanity can possibly provide the necessary agency capable of removing the ills that have so long and so grievously afflicted humanity. For it is assuredly upon the consciousness of the efficacy of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, reinforced on one hand by spiritual communion with His Spirit, and on the other by the intelligent application and the faithful execution of the principles and laws He revealed, that the salvation of a world in travail must ultimately depend. And of all the institutions that stand associated with His Holy Name, surely none save the institution of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár can most adequately provide the essentials of

Bahá'í worship and service, both so vital to the regeneration of the world. Therein lies the secret of the loftiness, of the potency, of the unique position of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár as one of the outstanding institutions conceived by Bahá'u'lláh.

Shoghi Effendi to the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, 1929.

*Bahá'í Administration*, p. 186

To each one of your brethren in the Faith, throughout the United States and Canada, who are witnessing, from day to day and at an ever-hastening speed, the approaching completion of their National House of Worship, the great Mother Temple of the West, your resolution to establish within its hallowed precincts and in the heart of the North American continent the Administrative Seat of their beloved Faith cannot but denote henceforward a closer association, a more constant communion, and a higher degree of coordination between the two primary agencies providentially ordained for the enrichment of their spiritual life and for the conduct and regulation of their administrative affairs. To the far-flung Bahá'í communities of East and West, most of which are being increasingly proscribed and ill-treated, and none of which can claim to have had a share of the dual blessings which a specially designed and constructed House of Worship and a fully and efficiently functioning Administrative Order invariably confer, the concentration in a single locality of what will come to be regarded as the fountain-head of the community's spiritual life and what is already recognized as the mainspring of the administrative activities, signalizes the launching of yet another phase in the slow and imperceptible emergence, in these declining times, of the model Bahá'í community -- a community divinely ordained, organically united, clear-visioned, vibrant with life, and whose very purpose is regulated by the twin directing principles of the worship of God and of service to one's fellow-men.

Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to America*, p. 24

Complementary in its functions to those of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár - an edifice exclusively reserved for Bahá'í worship - this institution [the Hazíratu'l-Quds <points under H and z>], whether local or national, will, as its component parts, such as the Secretariat, the Treasury, the Archives, the Library, the Publishing Office, the Assembly Hall, the Council Chamber, the Pilgrims' Hostel, are brought together and made jointly to operate in one spot, be increasingly regarded as the focus of all Bahá'í administrative activity, and symbolize, in a befitting manner, the ideal of service animating the Bahá'í community in its relation alike to the Faith and to mankind in general.

From the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, ordained as a house of worship by Bahá'u'lláh in the *Kitab-i-Aqdas*, the representatives of Bahá'í communities, both local and national, together with the members of their respective committees, will, as they gather daily within its walls at the hour of dawn, derive the necessary inspiration that will enable them to discharge, in the course of their day-to-day exertions in the Hazíratu'l-Quds <points under H and z> -- the scene of their administrative activities -- their duties and responsibilities as befits the chosen stewards of His Faith.

Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 339-340

**Huqúqu'lláh <Point under first H]**

QUESTION: In the deduction of our necessary expenses, are contributions to the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, teaching and other activities of the Cause considered a part of Huqúq or should they be taken separately?

ANSWER: 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied that Huqúq was separate and independent of these and came first. After that had been determined then the other affairs could be looked after. He smiled and said when Huqúq is given 'Abdu'l-Bahá will ascertain how much of it is for the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, how much for teaching and how much for the needy, etc. 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Published in *The Compilation of Compilations*, Volume I, "Huqúqu'llah" no. 1176, p. 515 <point under H]

## Worship in the Mashriq'l-Adhkárs

*We hear that thou hast in mind to embellish thy house from time to time with a meeting of Bahá'ís where some among them will engage in glorifying the All-Glorious Lord... Know that shouldst thou bring this about, that house of earth will become a house of heaven, and that fabric of stone a congress of the spirit.*

*Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 94*

### Essay

In Volume 1 of *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh* (pp. 219-220), Adib Taherzadeh paraphrases Nabíl's account of a devotional gathering in Baghhdad:

That night a wonderful feast had been arranged and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, then eighteen years of age, was acting as host. His youthful and radiant personality added distinction to the assembly. ... After partaking of food they began to chant the Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, and soon the atmosphere became deeply spiritual. Hears were filled with divine love and souls were illumined by the light of the New Day; so when the poem of *Aḡ Bāgh-i-Iláhí* was chanted, its mysteries became apparent to them, revealing thereby the approaching hour of the unveiling of Bahá'u'lláh's divine station. Every sincere soul in that company experienced ecstasy and joy, and the atmosphere became alive with excitement and rapture ... Then, without warning the door opened and Bahá'u'lláh entered majestically, holding in His hand a small glass vessel of rose-water. He greeted them with the salutation 'Alláh'u'Akbar', and bade them not to arise or disrupt their meeting. He had felt the spirituality of that gathering, He said, and so had come to anoint them with rose-water...

What could be more perfect! A worship so deeply spiritual that the inner meanings of the verses are revealed, and Bahá'u'lláh Himself is attracted and anoints the gathering!

It is striking how many of the verses which refer to the Mashriq'l-Adhkár also refer to song, to voices being raised, to cries of invocation which reach to the heavens. "Make it ring out with the joyous music of the hallowed spheres", says 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and many of the letters from Shoghi Effendi regarding the construction of specific Mashriq'l-Adhkár buildings refer to their acoustics. The atmosphere of the Mashriq'l-Adhkár is intended to be chaste and serene, but clearly it is also joyous, celebratory, stirring and spontaneous rather than sober, repetitive, hushed or constrained by rules:

All is to be yielded up, save only the remembrance of God; all is to be dispraised, except His praise. Today, to this melody of the Company on high, the world will

leap and dance: 'Glory be to my Lord, the All-Glorious!' But know ye this: save for this song of God, no song will stir the world, and save for this nightingale-cry of truth from the Garden of God, no melody will lure away the heart. 'Whence cometh this Singer Who speaketh the Beloved's name?'

*Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 93*

The importance of music, and the effect which its vibrations have on the spirit of the hearers, have been addressed in the *Compilation of Bahá'í Writings on Music* and do not need to be considered again here. Additional insights, including tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá encouraging hymn singing, can be found in Armstrong-Ingram's *Music, Devotions and Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*. A more technical discussion of factors to be considered in setting English translations of the sacred writings to music is provided by the same author in a series of articles in *Arts Dialogue*, issues 35 to 38, March to December 1996.

In addition to its effect on the hearers, singing has a powerful effect on the singers themselves and on the community, because it is an aspect of community life in which everyone, with a little encouragement, can participate. For Mashriqu'l-Adhkár gatherings which do not have a shared musical tradition, this requires some thought and practice, to build a little expertise and especially the confidence to sing out. One local Mashriqu'l-Adhkár community responded by deciding to close their devotional meetings with twenty minutes of singing practice, with words written on a large sheet of paper and one person leading. Within a few months the community had a repertoire of half a dozen items which could be sung out with confidence and pleasure, with sufficient volume for the neighbours to hear. "The cries of supplication and invocation will be raised to the Highest Kingdom," says 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and "the people will enter into the religion of God by troops..."<sup>11</sup> It would clearly be helpful if the doors are set open and the people can hear what is being sung.

While the use of instruments is not permitted in the perfected Mashriqu'l-Adhkár building,<sup>12</sup> in the fifth of the passages below 'Abdu'l-Bahá expresses the hope that "the melodies of the violin and the mandolin" will be heard in a devotional meeting.

Other forms of worship which are mentioned in the Writings include recitation, silence and dhikr. Recitation, or reading the Writings in a manner which is both musically attractive and enables the hearers to clearly understand the words, clearly has a central place in Bahá'í worship, which is hardly surprising since this worship is devoted to "commemorating the Lord of the verses." Paragraph 116 of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* promises:

They who recite the verses of the All-Merciful in the most melodious of tones will perceive in them that with which the sovereignty of earth and heaven can never be compared. From them they will inhale the divine fragrance of My worlds--worlds which today none can discern save those who have been endowed with vision through this sublime, this beautiful Revelation. Say: These verses draw hearts that are pure unto those spiritual worlds that can neither be



expressed in words nor intimated by allusion. Blessed be those who hearken.

Silence is mentioned much less often in relation to worship, but paragraph 115 of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* says:

Blessed is he who, at the hour of dawn, centring his thoughts on God, occupied with His remembrance, and supplicating His forgiveness, directeth his steps to the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* and, entering therein, seateth himself in silence to listen to the verses of God, the Sovereign, the Mighty, the All-Praised.

This leads us on to the whole topic of meditation, which is certainly one way in which God is remembered but is too wide a field to enter into here. There are some helpful texts in the compilation *Prayer, Meditation and the Devotional Attitude*, and in Wendi Momen's book *Meditation*.

Dhikr is the repetitive recitation of a name of God or a sacred verse, analogous to the daily recitation of the Greatest Name, enjoined in paragraph 18 of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, and to the use of a mantra in Hindu devotions. Dhikr is a common feature of the spiritual discipline of the Sufi orders, each of which has developed its own distinctive dhikr practice. The same Arabic root dh-k-r, remembrance, underlies both the name of the Sufi practice and the second part of the name *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, and where the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* commands us to build the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* and then enter it to "celebrate the praise of your Lord", the verb is udhkuru, from the same root. Thus a meeting to recite dhikr would certainly fall within the definition of a *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*.

From these brief notes it can be seen that there is ample room for imagination, experiment and variety in developing forms of worship for the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* gatherings. It is no easy thing to learn to pray and to worship together, especially for those in the West whose parents or grandparents left the churches, so that they have grown up without any experience to draw on. While each of the 'regular devotional meetings' must find its own patterns of expression (liturgies) we can call on three sources in addition to the Writings: the experience of other *Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs* through the exchange of letters and in email discussion groups, the development of the arts and of the role of artists in the Bahá'í community, including the growing body of recorded music, and the liturgies used in the more senior branches of 'the ancient faith of God', in churches, Sufi gatherings and the worship of indigenous peoples.

Such forms of worship already incorporate what Shoghi Effendi calls the 'natural gifts of expression' in the cultures concerned, and can be used by Bahá'ís in those cultures as an open treasure-house, from which we may take whatever is suitable to Bahá'í worship. This is analogous to the incorporation of elements of previous architectural styles in specially-designed *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* buildings. In a tablet in *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, (p. 144), the Master clearly envisages the Bahá'í children also attending the Christian Sunday Schools, which would be a very natural way for the Bahá'í devotional meeting to learn from its elder sister, the church.

Armstrong-Ingram, in *Music, Devotions and Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, presents a fascinating history of how one community, with 'Abdu'l-Bahá's encouragement, first adopted and then adapted the tradition of worship in the surrounding culture. Another discussion of the use of existing liturgical traditions can be found in Linda Walbridge's article 'Rituals: an American Bahá'í dilemma' in *The Bahá'í Studies Review* (UK), Vol. 5., 1995. As 'Abdu'l-Bahá says, if we are to see development and growth in the 'temple' we will have to give both ourselves and others freedom to express our faith, in our own ways:

Just as in the world of politics there is need for free thought likewise in the world of religion there should be the right of unrestricted opinion ... in democracy, because thought and speech are not restricted, the greatest progress is made possible. It is likewise in the world of religion. When freedom of conscience, liberty of thought and right of speech prevail, -- that is to say, when every man according to his idealization may give utterance to his own beliefs -- development and growth are inevitable.

From a speech by 'Abdu'l-Bahá reported in *The Star of the West*, Vol. 3 No. 10.

## *Appropriate devotions*

### **Sacred writings, and the prayers of 'Abdu'l-Bahá**

Teach your children the verses revealed from the heaven of majesty and power, so that, in most melodious tones, they may recite the Tablets of the All-Merciful in the alcoves within the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs*. Whoever hath been transported by the rapture born of adoration for My Name, the Most Compassionate, will recite the verses of God in such wise as to captivate the hearts of those yet wrapped in slumber. Well is it with him who hath quaffed the Mystic Wine of everlasting life from the utterance of his merciful Lord in My Name -- a Name through which every lofty and majestic mountain hath been reduced to dust.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, para. 150, p. 74

Prayers revealed by Bahá'u'lláh and the Master as well as the sacred writings of the Prophets should be read or chanted as well as hymns based upon Bahá'í or non-Bahá'í sacred writings.

Letter on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the NSA of the United States, 2 April 1931. See Armstrong-Ingram, *Music, Devotions and Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, p. 256

It is permissible and satisfactory to use the prayers of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the devotional services in the Temple. His public talks and Tablets should not be used, but His prayers may be used.

Letter on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the NSA of the United States, 3 October 1953. Published in *Arts Dialogue* no. 36, June 1996, p. 15

### **Music and chanting**

O servant of Bahá! Music is regarded as a praiseworthy science at the Threshold of the Almighty, so that thou mayest chant verses at large gatherings and congregations in a most wondrous melody and raise such hymns of praise at the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* to enrapture the Concourse on High. By virtue of this, consider how much the art of music is admired and praised. Try, if thou canst, to use spiritual melodies, songs and tunes, and to bring the earthly music into harmony with the celestial melody. Then thou wilt notice what a great influence music hath and what heavenly joy and life it conferreth. Strike up such a melody and tune as to cause the nightingales of divine mysteries to be filled with joy and ecstasy.

From a Tablet by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to an individual believer.

See *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. II, "Music" no. 1419, p. 76

The utmost joy was attained, for - praise be to God! - <m-dashes] the friends of the Merciful passed some time on that day joyous and singing in the land of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* and enjoyed commemorating the Lord of the verses with the greatest joy.

That melody was heard by the Supreme Concourse and that rose-song of the nightingale of faithfulness gladdened the people of the rose-garden of ABHA.

I am hopeful that, during the coming Ridván <dot under d], a great feast shall be held in the land of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, a spiritual celebration prepared and the melodies of the violin and the mandolin and hymns in praise and glorification of the Lord of Hosts make all the audience joyous and ecstatic.

*Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Abbás*, p. 101

In regard to the main question you have raised in connection with the singing of hymns at Bahá'í meetings. He wishes me to answer you that he sees no objection to it whatsoever. The element of music is, no doubt, an important feature of all Bahá'í gatherings. The Master himself has emphasized its importance.

Letter on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to Louise Waite, 17 March 1935. See Armstrong-Ingram, *Music, Devotions and Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, p. 112

Shoghi Effendi would urge that choir singing by men, women and children be encouraged in the Auditorium and that rigidity in the Bahá'í service be scrupulously avoided.

Letter on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to NSA of the United States, 2 April 1931. See Armstrong-Ingram, *Music, Devotions and Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, p. 256

Shoghi Effendi was asked if he thought it advisable for the Western composers to pattern their music after the beautiful Eastern way of chanting. He did not approve of this, he said that the West should use its own natural gifts of expression, that imitations were never spontaneous and therefore not acceptable.

*Bahá'í News* May 1932, p. 16. Report cited in Armstrong-Ingram, *Music, Devotions and Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, p. 257

## Poetry

O thou who art attracted by the Fragrances of God!

Verily, I chanted thy poem. Its significance was beautiful, its composition eloquent and its words excellent. It was like the melody of the birds of holiness in the paradise of El-ABHA. The breasts of the maid-servants of the Merciful were exhilarated by its chanting. Blessed art thou for uttering forth such an excellent poem and brilliant pearl.

Verily, these verses shall be sung in the divine meetings and in the assemblages of the spiritual in the course of ages and centuries to come, for thou hast uttered the praise of thy Lord and expressed significant meanings in eulogy of thy Lord, the Merciful, the Clement. All poems shall be forgotten in the course of time save those that are extraordinary; thy poem shall be chanted with melody and best voices in the Center of Worship (or Mashriqu'l-Adhkár) forevermore.

*Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Abbás*, pp. 57-58

### ***Sermons and pulpits prohibited***

Ye have been prohibited from making use of pulpits. Whoso wisheth to recite unto you the verses of his Lord, let him sit on a chair placed upon a dais, that he may make mention of God, his Lord, and the Lord of all mankind. It is pleasing to God that ye should seat yourselves on chairs and benches as a mark of honour for the love ye bear for Him and for the Manifestation of His glorious and resplendent Cause.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas* para. 154, p. 75

*These provisions have their antecedent in the Persian Bayan. The Bab forbade the use of pulpits for the delivery of sermons and the reading of the Text. He specified, instead, that to enable all to hear the Word of God clearly, a chair for the speaker should be placed upon a platform.*

*In comments on this law, 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi have made it clear that in the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár (where sermons are prohibited and only the words of Holy Scripture may be read) the reader may stand or sit, and if necessary to be better heard, may use a low moveable platform, but that no pulpit is permitted. In the case of meetings in places other than the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, it is also permissible for the reader or speaker to sit or stand, and to use a platform. In one of His Tablets, when reiterating the prohibition of the use of pulpits in any location, 'Abdu'l-Bahá has stressed that when Bahá'ís deliver their speeches in gatherings, they are to do so in an attitude of utmost humility and self-abnegation.*

Notes to the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, no. 168, p. 237

### ***Rituals prohibited***

It should be borne in mind that the central Edifice of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, round which in the fullness of time shall cluster such institutions of social service as shall afford relief to the suffering, sustenance to the poor, shelter to the wayfarer, solace to the bereaved, and education to the ignorant, should be regarded apart from these Dependencies, as a House solely designed and entirely dedicated to the worship of God in accordance with the few yet definitely prescribed principles established by Bahá'u'lláh in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*. It should not be inferred, however, from this general statement that the interior of the central Edifice itself will be converted into a conglomeration of religious services conducted along lines associated with the traditional procedure obtaining in churches, mosques, synagogues, and other temples of worship. Its various avenues of approach, all converging towards the central Hall beneath its dome, will not serve as admittance to those sectarian adherents of rigid formulae and man-made creeds, each bent, according to his way, to observe his rites, recite his prayers, perform his ablutions, and display the particular symbols of his faith, within separately defined sections of Bahá'u'lláh's Universal House of Worship. Far from the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár offering such a spectacle of incoherent and confused sectarian observances and rites, a condition wholly incompatible with the provisions of the *Aqdas* and irreconcilable with

the spirit it inculcates, the central House of Bahá'í worship, enshrined within the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, will gather within its chastened walls, in a serenely spiritual atmosphere, only those who, discarding forever the trappings of elaborate and ostentatious ceremony, are willing worshippers of the one true God, as manifested in this age in the Person of Bahá'u'lláh. To them will the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár symbolize the fundamental verity underlying the Bahá'í Faith, that religious truth is not absolute but relative, that Divine Revelation is not final but progressive.

Shoghi Effendi to the Bahá'ís in the United States and Canada, 1929.

*Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 184-185

As regard the chanting of Tablets in the Temple, Shoghi Effendi wishes in this connection to urge the friends to avoid all forms of rigidity and uniformity in matters of worship. There is no objection to the recital or chanting of prayers in the Oriental language, but there is also no obligation whatsoever of adopting such a form of prayer at any devotional service in the auditorium of the Temple. It should neither be required nor prohibited. The important thing that should always be borne in mind is that with the exception of certain specific obligatory prayers, Bahá'u'lláh has given us no strict or special rulings in matters of worship, whether in the Temple or elsewhere. Prayer is essentially a communion between man and God, and as such transcends all ritualistic forms and formulae.

Shoghi Effendi, *Directives from the Guardian* (Hawaii edition), no. 206

### ***Dawn***

Blessed is he who, at the hour of dawn, centring his thoughts on God, occupied with His remembrance, and supplicating His forgiveness, directeth his steps to the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and, entering therein, seateth himself in silence to listen to the verses of God, the Sovereign, the Mighty, the All-Praised.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, para. 115, p. 61

QUESTION: Concerning the remembrance of God in the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár "at the hour of dawn".

ANSWER: Although the words "at the hour of dawn" are used in the Book of God, it is acceptable to God at the earliest dawn of day, between dawn and sunrise, or even up to two hours after sunrise.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Questions and Answers, no. 15, p. 111

Occupy thyself in remembrance of the Beauty of Him Who is the Unconstrained at early morn, and seek communion with Him at the hour of dawn. O Ali! Remembrance of Me is a healing medicine to the souls and a light to the hearts of men.

Bahá'u'lláh. *The Compilation of Compilations*, "The Importance of Prayer, Meditation, and the Devotional Attitude" para. 1732, p. 228

## The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár building

*These are the Institutes of God and the Foundations of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, or His Temple. The outer edifice is a symbol of the inner. May the people be admonished thereby!*  
From a speech by 'Abdu'l-Bahá reported in *The Star of the West*, Vol. 3 No. 4 p. 8

### Essay

In contrast to the New Testament, which speaks of 'the church' and 'churches' as communities of worship without referring to the building in which the church meets, the Bahá'í Writings do refer to the building for worship, giving it a high station and in some cases setting quite specific requirements for it. The importance of the physical building can be related to the Bahá'í teachings concerning the station of physical reality itself. Although the physical and metaphysical worlds are referred to as levels, the physical creation in the Bahá'í teachings is not a lesser order of creation. While there is an order of priority, in which the names of God emanate through the worlds of God until they reach the physical world, physical reality is the capstone of the ordered universe, rather than God's afterthought, because the expression of God's desire to be known remains imperfect until the names of God have worldly as well as spiritual analogues. Neither the physical form, nor the individual, collective or institutional forms of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár can be called the 'true' Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, but just as the last station on a railway line gives its name to the whole route, the physical Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, which is the perfection of the process of emanation, serves to identify the whole process.

The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, in the key text which ordains the building of Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs "throughout the lands" speaks of buildings which are "as perfect as is possible in the world of being."<sup>13</sup> Other texts require that both the building and, if possible, the grounds should be circular or nine-sided,<sup>14</sup> and this pattern is in fact applied in the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár buildings which have been erected in or near to the cities of Chicago, Frankfurt, Sydney, Apia, Panama City, New Delhi and Kampala, and in the design for the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in Chile. There are also verses which restrict the possible uses of a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, such as in Question 94 of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas where Bahá'u'lláh says:

Whatever hath been constructed for the worship of the one true God, such as mosques, chapels and temples, must not be used for any purpose other than the commemoration of His Name. This is an ordinance of God, and he who violateth it is verily of those who have transgressed.

This means that other activities should not take place in the main hall of the

Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, which is dedicated to worship,<sup>15</sup> and it may well be an endorsement of the Shí'ih teaching that a property once dedicated as a mosque can never be used for another purpose.<sup>16</sup>

The goal of achieving physical perfection, the requirement that the building have a particular shape and the restriction on multiple uses form a considerable practical barrier to local and even national communities wanting to establish a physical Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. However in the evolution of Bahá'í institutions we see a process by which institutions are progressively differentiated from their partner institutions, a process analogous to the gradual differentiation of the initial cluster of cells which is the newly-conceived child, as the cells prepare themselves for their specific functions and gradually form distinct organs. Similarly, the collective remembrance of God has long had a place in Bahá'í communities without having an institutional form such as regular devotional meetings. For instance, there is the devotional part of the Nineteen-day Feast, and the prayers which are offered at the beginning of Local Spiritual Assembly meetings could be considered, in a sense, as bringing the Assembly in "close and daily communion with those spiritual agencies centering in and radiating from the central Shrine of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár."

It would not be surprising if the physical form of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár underwent a similar progressive differentiation. In its Ridvan letter of 1966, the Universal House of Justice wrote: "it is essential to the spiritual life of the community that the friends hold regular devotional meetings in local Bahá'í centres, where available, or elsewhere, including the homes of believers." In a subsequent letter to an individual believer (April 20 1997), the Universal House of Justice has enlarged on the relationship between the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and Bahá'í centres. Because of its length, it has been decided to reproduce the letter here rather than in the section regarding temporary Mashriqu'l-Adhkár premises.

Dear Bahá'í Friend,

The Universal House of Justice has received your email of 20 November 1996 and warmly agrees with the view that Bahá'í communities need to raise their awareness of the importance of the devotional aspect of Bahá'í life, not only as an individual and private practice of believers, but also as expressed in gatherings of Bahá'ís to worship. Such gatherings enrich the life of Bahá'í communities and can also attract to the Faith many seeking souls.

The only question at issue would seem to be the method of developing this important element of Bahá'í community life and whether it is now timely for the believers in all localities to establish specific locations or buildings, which would be designated Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs. The central point in the letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to ... is that such a step in the evolution of local Bahá'í communities would be premature at this time.



There are many ways in which the institutions and activities of the Bahá'í community can develop, but it must be remembered that the Bahá'í Cause is an organic body, and it is for the World Centre of the Cause to determine the methods and steps by which its potentialities and functions will unfold. The term "Mashriqu'l-Adhkár" has been used in the Writings to describe various things: the gathering of the friends for prayers at dawn; a building where this activity takes place; the complete institution of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, with its dependencies; the central edifice of that institution, often described as a "House of Worship" or "Temple". These variants can all be seen as denoting stages or aspects of the gradual introduction of Bahá'u'lláh's concept as promulgated in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. For the development of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, several lines of action have been set in motion, and it is to these that the believers should devote their efforts and attention.

At the local level, emphasis has long been placed upon the believers' gathering regularly for worship, in whatever location they can effectively use. After the Kitáb-i-Aqdas had been revealed there was a spontaneous reaction among the friends in Iran to implement the ordinance of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá encouraged this, stressing the importance of the friends' meeting for devotions, even if, owing to the conditions of the time, this be in an inconspicuous place. During the lifetime of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the various community functions and institutions, such as the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and the Local Spiritual Assembly, were developed in a variety of evolving and temporary manners.

In obedience to the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi began to raise up the entire structure of Bahá'u'lláh's Administrative Order on a systematic basis.

As the community has evolved, the importance of the friends' meeting, not only for worship, but also for the teaching of the Faith and the administration of the community and its activities became evident. Hence under the guidance of the Guardian, the concept of a local Bahá'í centre and then a local Hazíratu'l-Quds was progressively developed.

The Guardian made it clear that the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and the Hazíratu'l-Quds were different, complementary institutions, both under the aegis of the Local House of Justice, and preferably functioning in close proximity to each other. For the immediate future, he placed the stress on building up the Hazíratu'l-Quds, which should be used for all the functions of the community.

In a letter written in July 1925 to the Bahá'ís of Iran, Shoghi Effendi stated:

That which is highly imperative in these days, which is bound to attract an abundant flow of heavenly blessings and would be conducive to the care and protection of the servants of the one true God, is that in every locality a suitable place be acquired and dedicated exclusively to use as the focal centre of the Cause of God ...

Moreover, if practicable, and provided local conditions do not prove unfavourable, it is recommended that all Bahá'í gatherings such as the communal meetings for reciting prayers and the Holy Writings, the sessions of the Spiritual Assembly, firesides, conferences, memorial meetings, festivities and banquets be held in this place, even if the accommodation is extremely modest. Furthermore, if the prospects prove favorable and the lofty edifice of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* could also be reared in the same consecrated spot in the future, then there would be light upon light.

This focal centre should be called "Hazíratu'l-Quds" (Sacred Fold) so that the musk-laden breezes of the fervent supplications which are wholeheartedly offered by the people of Bahá, and the sweet savours of their spiritual deliberations and brilliant exploits, may be carried to neighbouring regions, thus bringing healing to the infected nostrils of the people of the world, and enabling them to inhale this divine fragrance.

Thus at the local level, the Hazíratu'l-Quds is currently conceived as the focal point of local Bahá'í activity, the centre of the local community in which all its activities, devotional, social and administrative, can take place. In the future, a local Hazíratu'l-Quds will be used for the kinds of administrative purposes described by Shoghi Effendi on pages 339-349 of *God Passes By*, and local *Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs* will be established, but, at this stage in the development of the Cause, the Hazíratu'l-Quds is not just the seat of the centre of Bahá'í administration, it is also a centre of worship and a centre of spiritual unity; it must perform these three functions, all under the unifying aegis of the Local Spiritual Assembly.

As yet, too few local communities have been able to establish an adequate Hazíratu'l-Quds, and it would be both unnecessary and undesirable for Local Spiritual Assemblies, let alone individual believers, to attempt to establish *Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs* now at the local level. What is required is for Local Spiritual Assemblies, as their communities grow, to strive to obtain a modest local centre and ultimately to acquire a Hazíratu'l-Quds, and to encourage the greater use of

the local Bahá'í Centre for devotional, as well as other gatherings.

As to the activity of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, the Universal House of Justice has, for some years, been advocating the desirability of the holding of gatherings for dawn prayers wherever such an activity is feasible. Clearly, such meetings would be both natural and easy of accomplishment in the case of agricultural villages, while in a large industrialized city, under present circumstances, it would be far more difficult for the friends to gather regularly at dawn for devotional purposes.

The establishment of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár as a distinct institution has been started at the continental level, with the erection in each continent of the building which constitutes the prayer hall and central shrine of a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and then, as material means permit, by the construction and operation of the dependencies which are designed to surround that edifice. So far only the Home for the Aged in Wilmette has been established. Another has been called for in Langenhain, Germany, but practical issues have thus far delayed its construction.

It was in relation to the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in Wilmette and the function of the National Hazíratu'l-Quds of the United States, that the Guardian developed, through many of his letters, the friends' understanding of the differences which must ultimate [sic] distinguish the functioning of a Hazíratu'l-Quds from that of a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár.

The House of Justice trusts that this explanation will help to clarify this important aspect of the development of the Cause.

While the combination of the Hazíratu'l-Quds and Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in one building will be the preferred solution for many communities, the references below regarded various temporary and informal Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs suggest imaginative possibilities for those communities which do not have a Bahá'í centres. Some families have dedicated a small room built onto their homes as a place of prayer, a place too small to serve as a Bahá'í centre but just right for the family and the few friends who join them in remembering God. At least two local communities in the west have created 'prayer gardens' on their Mashriqu'l-Adhkár endowments, in one case surrounding the grave of an early believer.<sup>17</sup> Such gardens remind us of the garden of Ridván, and of this fragrant observance:

While in the barracks, Bahá'u'lláh set apart a special night and He dedicated it to Darvish Sidq-'Alí. He wrote that every year on that night the dervishes should bedeck a meeting place, which should be in a flower garden, and gather there to make mention of God.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Memorials of the Faithful*, page 38

From Bahá'í centres to prayer gardens, from underground chapels to perfected Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs, the possibilities are very broad. The first step, at least, seems clear:

In reality, the radiant, pure hearts are the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and from them the voice of supplication and invocation continually reacheth the Supreme Concourse.

I ask God to make the heart of every one of you a temple of the Divine Temples and to let the lamp of the great guidance be lighted therein; *and when the hearts find such an attainment*, they will certainly exert the utmost endeavor and energy in the building of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár; thus may the outward express the inward, and the form (or letter) indicate the meaning (or reality).

*Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Abbás*, p. 678

### *Temporary premises*

If, for the present, you prepare or establish a home in New York, though by renting it, to become a center for the gathering of the believers of God, it is very acceptable. God willing, in all the states of America in the future, there will be erected Temples with infinite architectural beauty, art, with pleasing proportions, and handsome and attractive appearance, especially in New York. But, for the present, be ye satisfied with a rented place.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablet translated May 9 1908 and published in *Star of the West*, Vol. 6, No. 17, p. 134

In Persia there are many Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs. Some have been houses which have been rented for that purpose. Others have given their homes entirely for that purpose, and in some places temporary and small places have been built therefor. In all the cities of Persia there are Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs ...

From a speech by 'Abdu'l-Bahá reported in *The Star of the West*, Vol. 3 No. 4 p. 8

Inform the maid-servant of God, who prepared her home as a [temporary] Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, that this service was accepted in the Kingdom of ABHA.

*Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Abbás*, p. 149

### **A designated building**

The edifice of the House of Worship hath a powerful influence on every phase of life. Experience hath, in the east, clearly shown this to be a fact. Even if, in some small village, a house was designated as the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, it produced a marked effect; how much greater would be the impact of one especially raised up.

*Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 96

### *Permanent premises*

#### **Modest and affordable**

In respect to the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár: Brevity must now be observed; that is, as much as possible endeavor should be made so that by the assistance of all the friends and the sincerity of your intentions it may become instituted and built in Chicago even though it be not possible to build a most solid, lofty and great (edifice). Whatever is now possible should be erected.

*Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Abbás*, p. 418

In the days when 'Abdu'l-Bahá was urging the American Bahá'ís to build the first

Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of the western world, He repeatedly emphasized that it could be a modest building, and that the important thing was the spiritual element that this House of Worship in the name of Bahá'u'lláh should be raised in the heart of America. The same thing applies now to your Temple in Germany. Size and pretentiousness are not important. The important thing is that the building should be speedily erected, and be a financial possibility, not placing, as the American Temple, a terrible strain on the friends for years to come.

Shoghi Effendi, *Light of Divine Guidance* Vol. 1, pp. 235-236

The American Bahá'ís freely chose the Bourgeois model, very beautiful, but very expensive in every way, including upkeep! They must bear the burden of their choice -- <m-dash] a burden which, no doubt, will not be too excessive in the future when the community is vastly expanded!

Shoghi Effendi, letter to the NSA of the United States, 11 April 1949

### **The site**

The place is suitable, but if it were possible to have a wider piece of ground, so that the building should stand in the middle, surrounded by a flower garden, it would be better and more pleasing; otherwise, if this is not possible, the building on the present ground is also permissible.

*Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Abbás*, pp. 127-8

That one [the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in Ishqabad] is almost complete, that is to say, with all its gardens. That Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is centrally located. ... It is like a beautiful bouquet. Just imagine an edifice of that beauty in the center, very lofty, surrounded centrally by gardens, variegated flowers, with nine avenues interlacing nine gardens, nine ponds and nine fountains, and see how delightful it must be! That is the way it should be. It is matchless, most beautiful! Such is the design. And now they are at work building a Hospital and a School for Orphans and a Home for the Cripples and a large Dispensary and a Hospice. They are now planning, thinking of these things. When that, God willing, shall be completed, it will be a Paradise! There will be no greater geometry than this, and I hope that in Chicago it shall be like this. It will be even so. Therefore endeavor to have the grounds circular in shape. If possible even adjust and exchange certain parts in order to have a circular place. The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár could not be triangular in shape. It must be circular.

From a speech by 'Abdu'l-Bahá reported in *The Star of the West*, Vol. 3 No. 4 p. 9

As he has already informed you by cable, he feels that the land which you proposed as a Temple and National Haziratu'l-Quds site was altogether too large, too expensive, and above all, too far from the city limits. He has given instructions to a number of other National Bodies who were pursuing their investigations in a direction much the same as your own. He realizes that it is difficult, and much more expensive, to find a plot close to

the heart of the city. On the other hand, he feels that even a small plot, near to town, is much more reasonable from every standpoint than a large plot way out in the country. The friends must remember that they have to be able to get out to their National Centre and their National Temple and use them; and, as Bahá'ís are all busy, hardworking people for the most part, the time involved must inevitably influence their attendance at Bahá'í meetings in the Hazíratu'l-Quds <points under H and z], and later, Bahá'í services in the Temple.

Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to Canada*, p. 46

## Design

*As perfect as possible*

O people of the world! Build ye houses of worship throughout the lands in the name of Him Who is the Lord of all religions. Make them as perfect as is possible in the world of being...

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 31

## Exterior

There now remains the important consideration of a design for the Mashriqu'l-Adhíkár. It does not matter whether it is executed by a Bahá'í or a non-Bahá'í architect, but the essential thing is that it must be beautiful and dignified. There must be none of this hideous, exaggerated, bizarre style, which one sees in many modern buildings. It is not befitting for our House of Worship.

Shoghi Effendi. *Light of Divine Guidance* Vol. 1, pp. 215-216

(and see *Letters to Australia and New Zealand*, p. 128)

The Guardian would be happy if your Assembly could produce a design of a building, graceful in outline, with a dome. If they can do this he will be very pleased. The main thing for the architect to consider is the mass of the building, the outline of the building and its architectural beauty. Most of the sacred buildings, including the Temple at Wilmette, include elements of the previous schools of architecture in an ensemble that seems to present something new. He thinks the architects should study the graceful mass of the Wilmette Temple, of the design of Mr. Remey for the Temple on Mt. Carmel, and the Shrine of the Bab, as well as the outline of the domes of important buildings, particularly the dome of St. Peters in Rome. In this way they will get an idea of proportions which they feel are suitable. The details and the style is somewhat secondary and is left to the architect's taste.

Letter on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 10 November 1955

*Light of Divine Guidance* Vol. 1, p. 246

In passing, there is one point to be mentioned; and that is that the Temple in Wilmette does not constitute a pattern for other Temples, nor does it represent a new type of Bahá'í architecture. Therefore it is not necessary for your architects to endeavour to follow that pattern. What should be done is to follow the Master's instructions as to the Temple, and then create something that will be desirable and appropriate for your area. Letter on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 10 February 1955.

*Light of Divine Guidance* Vol. 1, pp. 227-8

The beloved Master has not given very many details concerning the House of Worship. He has written in tablets, however, that the building must be round, and be 9-sided. The Guardian feels that at this time all Bahá'í temples should have a dome. In other words, the instructions of the Master to have a round, 9-sided building must be very carefully carried out; but in addition the Guardian feels the Temples built now should likewise have a dome.

Letter on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 10 November 1955.

*Light of Divine Guidance* Vol. 1, p. 247

(and see a similar letter at pp. 215-216.)

The Beloved Guardian explains that there is no requirement for one window to be oriented toward the East. In fact, he feels this should not be done; otherwise it will take on a practice of the Moslems with regard to their prayer niche, etc. I am sending a copy of this note to the German NSA, so they will understand.

The Guardian has also indicated that there is nothing in the teaching requiring one dome for the building, in fact, any dome. It is of course more beautiful, generally to have a dome, or even domes, but that is not a necessary requirement of the Temple.

Likewise the Guardian indicates, it is not essential that there be nine doors.

The real requisite is that the building should be circular in shape, having nine sides; that there should be nine gardens, walks, etc....

Letter on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 20 April 1955

*Light of Divine Guidance* Vol. 1, page 232



Nine is the highest digit, hence symbolizes comprehensiveness, culminations; also, the reason it is used in the Temple's form is because 9 has exact numerical value of 'Baha' (in the numerology connected with the Arabic alphabet) and 'Baha' is the name of the Revealer of our Faith, Bahá'u'lláh. The 9-pointed star is not a part of the teachings of our Faith, but only used as an emblem representing '9'. In telling people of the 9 religions of the world, that is 'existing religions, we should not give this as the reason the Temple has nine sides. This may have been an idea of the architect, and a very pleasing idea, which can be mentioned in passing, but the Temple has 9 sides because of the association of 9 with perfection, unity and 'Baha'.

Shoghi Effendi, *Directives from the Guardian* (Hawaii, 1973),  
no. 141, p. 52

### **Interior**

... the central House of Bahá'í worship, enshrined within the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, will gather within its chastened walls, in a serenely spiritual atmosphere ...

Shoghi Effendi to the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, 1929.

*Bahá'í Administration* p. 185

He need not tell you how very important the decisions are which you will now be called upon to make in connection with completing the Temple interior. He urges you, at all times, to receive the very best technical advice, and to bear in mind that the main thing is that the meetings in the Temple should be conducted in a beautiful and peaceful setting, in comfort and with dignity and simplicity, and that the audience should be able to hear perfectly and the tone values be pleasant to the ear.

Letter on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to NSA of the United States,  
20 July 1946

...He feels that one of the most important points is the acoustics of the building, and the NSA must be sure it is getting the very ablest professional advice in this matter, as well as in all others.

Letter on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to Philip Sprague 22 February 1947

(and see a similar letter on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the NSA of the United States, 20 July 1946)

*No images or effigies*

O people of the world! Build ye houses of worship throughout the lands in the name of Him Who is the Lord of all religions. Make them as perfect as is possible in the world of being, and adorn them with that which befitteth them, not with images and effigies.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, para. 31, p. 29

However, in the Temple (Mashriq'l-Adhkár) the blessed picture must never be placed (or hung) on the wall. This you should know.

*Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Abbás, p. 337*

### ***Ways and means***

For example, should we think it good to build a church, simply thinking of it as being a good thing will not help its erection. We must will to build it. Then wealth is needed for its erection; simply thinking will not be sufficient. ... we are in need of will, volition and action.

From a speech by 'Abdu'l-Bahá reported in *The Star of the West*, Vol. 3 No. 9 p. 15.

Ye have written regarding the erection of the Temple and the purchase of the ground, or the finding of a place to be as a home for the gathering of the believers. At this moment that Abdu'l-Baha is immersed in the ocean of calamities, this news caused him joy and happiness, that - praise be to God! - the friends and the maid-servants of the Merciful are thinking to serve the Kingdom of God.

*Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Abbás, p. 435*

One of the wondrous events that has of late come to pass is this, that the edifice of the Mashriq'l-Adhkár is being raised in the very heart of the American continent, and numerous souls from the surrounding regions are contributing for the erection of this holy Temple. Among these is a highly esteemed lady of the city of Manchester, who hath been moved to offer her share.

Having no portion of goods and earthly riches, she sheared off with her own hands the fine, long and precious tresses that adorned her head so gracefully, and offered them for sale, that the price thereof might promote the cause of the Mashriq'l-Adhkár.

Consider ye, that though in the eyes of women nothing is more precious than rich and flowing locks, yet notwithstanding this, that highly-honoured lady hath evinced so rare and beautiful a spirit of self-sacrifice.

And though this was uncalled for, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá would not have consented to such a deed, yet as it doth reveal so high and noble a spirit of devotion, He was deeply touched thereby. Precious though the hair be in the sight of western women, nay, more precious than life itself, yet she offered it up as a sacrifice for the cause of the Mashriq'l-Adhkár! ...

*Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, pp. 98.*

... so vast and significant an enterprise as the construction of the first Mashriq'l-Adhkár of the West should be supported, not by the munificence of a few but by the joint contributions of the entire mass of the convinced followers of the Faith. It cannot be

denied that the emanations of spiritual power and inspiration destined to radiate from the central Edifice of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* will to a very large extent depend upon the range and variety of the contributing believers, as well as upon the nature and degree of self-abnegation which their unsolicited offerings will entail. Moreover, we should, I feel, regard it as an axiom and guiding principle of Baha'i administration that in the conduct of every specific Bahá'í activity, as different from undertakings of a humanitarian, philanthropic or charitable character, which may in future be conducted under Bahá'í auspices, only those who have already identified themselves with the Faith and are regarded as its avowed and unreserved supporters should be invited to join and collaborate. For apart from the consideration of embarrassing complications which the association of non-believers in the financing of institutions of a strictly Bahá'í character may conceivably engender in the administration of the Bahá'í community of the future, it should be remembered that these specific Bahá'í institutions, which should be viewed in the light of Bahá'u'lláh's gifts bestowed upon the world, can best function and most powerfully exert their influence in the world only if reared and maintained solely by the support of those who are fully conscious of, and are unreservedly submissive to, the claims inherent in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh.

Shoghi Effendi, in *Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 179-180

O Lord, O Thou Who dost bless all those who stand firm in the Covenant by enabling them, out of their love for the Light of the World, to expend what they have as an offering to the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, the dayspring of Thy wide-spread rays and the proclaimer of Thine evidences, help Thou, both in this world and the world to come, these righteous these upright and pious ones to draw ever nearer to Thy sacred Threshold, and make bright their faces with Thy dazzling splendours.

Verily art Thou the Generous, the Ever-Bestowing.

*Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 96

## Devotions for the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár

### **Bahá'u'lláh**

By Thy glory, O my God! Though I recognize and firmly believe that no description which any except Thyself can give of Thee can beseem Thy grandeur, and that no glory ascribed to Thee by any save Thyself can ever ascend into the atmosphere of Thy presence, yet were I to hold my peace, and cease to glorify Thee and to recount Thy wondrous glory, my heart would be consumed, and my soul would melt away.

My remembrance of Thee, O my God, quencheth my thirst, and quieteth my heart. My soul delighteth in its communion with Thee, as the sucking child delighteth itself in the breasts of Thy mercy; and my heart panteth after Thee even as one sore athirst panteth after the living waters of Thy bounty, O Thou Who art the God of mercy, in Whose hand is the lordship of all things!

I give thanks to Thee, O my God, that Thou hast suffered me to remember Thee. What else but remembrance of Thee can give delight to my soul or gladness to my heart? Communion with Thee enableth me to dispense with the remembrance of all Thy creatures, and my love for Thee empowereth me to endure the harm which my oppressors inflict upon me.

Send, therefore, unto my loved ones, O my God, what will cheer their hearts, and illumine their faces, and delight their souls. Thou knowest, O my Lord, that their joy is to behold the exaltation of Thy Cause and the glorification of Thy word. Do Thou unveil, therefore, O my God, what will gladden their eyes, and ordain for them the good of this world and of the world which is to come.

Thou art, verily, the God of power, of strength and of bounty.  
*Prayers and Meditations*, pages 194-196

Praised be Thou, O Lord my God! This is Thy servant whom Thou hast in the kingdom of Thy names called by Thine own name, and whom Thou hast reared under the wings of Thy grace and favors. Thou seest him, therefore, hastening in the direction of Thy gifts, and rushing forth towards Thee seeking after Thy bounty. Attire him, O my God, with the mantle of Thy favor and the robe of Thy munificence and generosity, that all created things may perceive from him the sweet smell of the raiment of Thy love.

Adorn, then, his head with the crown of Thy remembrance, in such wise that his fame may be noised abroad among Thy servants as one who loveth Thee and cleaveth steadfastly to Thy Cause. Assist him, moreover, at all times and under all conditions to help Thee and to remember Thee, and to extol Thy virtues amidst Thy creatures.

*Prayers and Meditations*, pages 62-63

Glory be to Thee, O Lord my God! Abase not him whom Thou hast exalted through the power of Thine everlasting sovereignty, and remove not far from Thee him whom Thou hast caused to enter the tabernacle of Thine eternity. Wilt Thou cast away, O my God, him whom Thou hast overshadowed with Thy Lordship, and wilt Thou turn away from Thee, O my Desire, him to whom Thou hast been a refuge? Canst Thou degrade him whom Thou hast uplifted, or forget him whom Thou didst enable to remember Thee?

Glorified, immensely glorified art Thou! Thou art He Who from everlasting hath been the King of the entire creation and its Prime Mover, and Thou wilt to everlasting remain the Lord of all created things and their Ordainer. Glorified art Thou, O my God! If Thou ceasest to be merciful unto Thy servants, who, then, will show mercy unto them; and if Thou refusest to succor Thy loved ones, who is there that can succor them?

Glorified, immeasurably glorified art Thou! Thou art adored in Thy truth, and Thee do we all, verily, worship; and Thou art manifest in Thy justice, and to Thee do we all, verily, bear witness. Thou art, in truth, beloved in Thy grace. No God is there but Thee, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.

*Prayers and Meditations*, pages 261-262

○ Thou, at Whose dreadful majesty all things have trembled, in Whose grasp are the affairs of all men, towards Whose grace and mercy are set the faces of all Thy creatures! I entreat Thee, by Thy Name which Thou hast ordained to be the spirit of all names that are in the kingdom of names, to shield us from the whisperings of those who have turned away from Thee, and have repudiated the truth of Thy most august and most exalted Self, in this Revelation that hath caused the kingdom of Thy names to tremble.

I am one of Thy handmaidens, O my Lord! I have turned my face towards the sanctuary of Thy gracious favors and the adored tabernacle of Thy glory. Purify me of all that is not of Thee, and strengthen me to love Thee and to fulfill Thy pleasure, that I may delight myself in the contemplation of Thy beauty, and be rid of all attachment to any of Thy creatures, and may, at every moment, proclaim: "Magnified be God, the Lord of the worlds!"

Let my food, O my Lord, be Thy beauty, and my drink the light of Thy presence, and my hope Thy pleasure, and my work Thy praise, and my companion Thy remembrance, and my aid Thy sovereignty, and my dwelling-place Thy habitation, and my home the seat which Thou hast exalted above the limitations of them that are shut out as by a veil from Thee.

Thou art, in truth, the God of power, of strength and glory.  
*Prayers and Meditations, pages 126-127*

○ my Lord! Make Thy beauty to be my food, and Thy presence my drink, and Thy pleasure my hope, and praise of Thee my action, and remembrance of Thee my companion, and the power of Thy sovereignty my succorer, and Thy habitation my home, and my dwelling-place the seat Thou hast sanctified from the limitations imposed upon them who are shut out as by a veil from Thee.

Thou art, verily, the Almighty, the All-Glorious, the Most Powerful.  
*Prayers and Meditations, page 261*

### **'Abdu'l-Bahá**

○ Thou Lord of the Kingdom! Though our bodies be gathered here together, yet our spellbound hearts are carried away by Thy love, and yet are we transported by the rays of Thy resplendent face. Weak though we be, we await the revelations of Thy might and power. Poor though we be, with neither goods nor means, still take we riches from the treasures of Thy Kingdom. Drops though we be, still do we draw from out Thy ocean deeps. Motes though we be, still do we gleam in the glory of Thy splendid Sun.

○ Thou our Provider! Send down Thine aid, that each one gathered here may become a lighted candle, each one a centre of attraction, each one a summoner to Thy heavenly realms, till at last we make this nether world the mirror image of Thy Paradise.

O Lord, O Thou Who dost bless all those who stand firm in the Covenant by enabling them, out of their love for the Light of the World, to expend what they have as an offering to the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, the dayspring of Thy wide-spread rays and the proclaimer of Thine evidences, help Thou, both in this world and the world to come, these righteous these upright and pious ones to draw ever nearer to Thy sacred Threshold, and make bright their faces with Thy dazzling splendours.

Verily art Thou the Generous, the Ever-Bestowing.

*Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, page 96*

O Thou kind Lord! These are Thy servants who have gathered in this meeting and have turned to Thy Kingdom and are in need of Thy bestowal and blessing. O Thou God! manifest and make apparent the signs of Thy oneness which have been deposited in all the realities of life. Reveal and unfold the virtues which Thou hast made latent and concealed in the human realities.

O God! We are as plants, and Thy bounty is as the rain. Refresh and cause to grow these plants through Thy bestowal. We are Thy servants; free us from the fetters of the material being. We are ignorant; make us wise; we are dead, make us alive; we are material, endow us with spirit; we are deprived, make us the intimates of Thy mysteries; we are needy, enrich us and bless us from Thine endless treasury. O God! resuscitate us, give us sight, give us hearing, and familiarize us with the mysteries of life, so that the mysteries of Thy Kingdom may be witnessed by us in the world of existence, and [we may] confess Thy oneness. Every bestowal emanates from Thee; every benediction is Thine. Thou art Mighty; Thou art Poerful; Thou art the Giver and Thou art the Ever Bounteous.

Prayer by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, as reported in *The Star of the West*, Vol. 3 No. 3 p. 42

O Lord! Confirm and aid this assemblage. Confirm these souls through the breaths of Thy holy spirit. Enlighten the eyes by witnessing these radiant lights, and render the ears happy through Thy anthems and Thy summons. O God! Verily, we have gathered here in the utmost of love. We have turned to Thy Kingdom. We seek naught save Thee, and desire naught save Thy good pleasure. O God! Let this food be Thy manna from heaven, and suffer this assemblage to be a concourse of Thy supreme ones. May they be the cause of love to humanity and the source of illumination to the human race. May they be the instruments of guidance upon the earth. For verily, Thou art Powerful. Thou art the Giver, Thou art the Forgiver and Thou art the Almighty!

Prayer by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, as reported in *The Star of the West*, Vol. 6 No. 13 p. 97

O kind Lord! Thou who art generous and merciful! We are the servants of Thy threshold and we are all beneath the protection of Thy mercy. The sun of Thy Providence is shining upon all and the clouds of Thy mercy shower upon all, Thy favours encompass all, thou providest for all, thou protectest all and Thy glance of favor encompasses all. O Lord! vouchsafe to us Thy infinite bestowals and let the light of guidance shine. Illumine the eyes, make joyous the souls and confer a new spirit upon the hearts! Give them eternal life. Open the doors of Thy knowledge, let the light of faith shine. Unite and bring all into one great shelter beneath the banner of Thy protection, so that all may become the waves of one sea, the leaves and twigs of one tree and may be assembled beneath the shadow of the same tent. May they drink from the same fountain; may they be refreshed through the same breezes; may they acquire illumination from the same source of life. Thou art the Giver, the Merciful!

Prayer by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, as reported in *The Star of the West*, Vol. 3 No. 7 p. 14

Remove not, O Lord, the festal board that hath been spread in Thy Name, and extinguish not the burning flame that hath been kindled by Thine unquenchable fire. Withhold not from flowing that living water of Thine that murmureth with the melody of Thy glory and Thy remembrance, and deprive not Thy servants from the fragrance of Thy sweet savors breathing forth the perfume of Thy love.

Lord! Turn the distressing cares of Thy holy ones into ease, their hardship into comfort, their abasement into glory, their sorrow into blissful joy, O Thou that holdest in Thy grasp the reins of all mankind!

Thou art, verily, the One, the Single, the Mighty, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.  
*Bahá'í Prayers* (US edition), page 24



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## Notes

1. See Stephen Lambden, 'A Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh of the Late Baghdad Period: Lawh-i Halih Halih Halih, Yá Bishárat, *Bahá'í Studies Bulletin* 2:3 (pages 105-112), December 1983 (since revised).

2. `Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, page 78.

3. While the concept of the emanation of the names or attributes of God closely resembles the platonic or neo-platonic concept of ideas or forms which are realized in matter, there are many important differences in concepts, so that it is not possible to consider Bahá'í theology as an extension of platonic thought.

4. *Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha*, p. 41. The impulse which drives each reality to be manifest in every possible form may be considered as the fundamental force in the Bahá'í cosmology, since it seems to be a reflection of the motivation of creation itself, according to the *hadith* "I [God] was a hidden treasure, and desired to be known."

5. *Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá*, pages 93-94.

6. *Messages to America*, p. 24.

7. Tablet addressed to Mírza Ali-Asghar Faridi-yi Uskú'í, quoted by Ishráq Khávarí in *Ganjinih-i-Hudúd va Akhám*, p. 232.

8. For a discussion and translation of the tablets in which `Abdu'l-Bahá refers to the saying of obligatory prayers in the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár building, and in devotional meetings, see R. Jackson Armstrong-Ingram. *Music, Devotions, and Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* (Kalimat Press, 1987), pp. 312-325. In addition to the tablets cited there, there is a tablet of `Abdu'l-Bahá to the Bahá'ís of Bushruyeh, printed in Ishráq-Khávarí's *Ganjinih Hudúd va Ahkám* p. 230, which refers to the friends coming together in the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár to say the obligatory prayer. The question of how these tablets are to be related to the law of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas which forbids obligatory prayers in congregation (paragraph 12) is too complex to be dealt with in a handbook. Reference can however be made to `Abdu'l-Bahá's station as authorized interpreter of the Bahá'í teachings, to the definition of congregational prayer which is implied in the instructions for the prayer for the dead, which is 'to be recited by one of those present while the remainder of the party stands in silence' (Kitáb-i-Aqdas, note 19, page 172), and to the following tablet of `Abdu'l-Bahá:

"As to the obligatory prayer (to be said three times a day): Each one must say his prayer alone by himself, and this is not conditional on a private place; that is, both at home and in the worshipping-place, which is a gathering-place, it is allowable for one to say his prayer; but each person must say his prayer by himself (i. e., not in company with others who might recite the same words and continue the same postures together at the same time)." (*Tablets of `Abdu'l-Bahá Abbás*, p. 464).

It should be noted that the material in brackets in this tablet is likely to be the interpretation suggested by the translator, rather than the words of `Abdu'l-Bahá.

9. See, for example, his cable regarding the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár to be built on Mount Carmel, in *Messages to the Bahá'í World*, pp. 19-20. Other passages referring to the position of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in relation to the World Centre can be found in *Messages to America*, pp. 32-33, and *Messages to the Bahá'í World*, page 63.

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10. Cited by Shoghi Effendi in *Citadel of Faith*, p. 69, and in *God Passes By*, p. 346.

11. *Tablets of `Abdu'l-Bahá Abbás*, p. 681.

212. See Armstrong-Ingram, *Music, Devotions and Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, p. 243.

313. Paragraph 31. This may be a reflection of the Persian Bayán, VI 3, as summarized in *Selections from the Writings of the E.G. Browne*, M. Momen (ed.), page 376.

414. `Abdu'l-Bahá, talk reported in *Star of the West* Vol. III No. 4 p. 9, and Shoghi Effendi, *Light of Divine Guidance*, Vol.1, pages 247-248. Other elements such as having nine doors or a dome are not requirements (*Light of Divine Guidance*, Vol. 1, page 229).

515. Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 77.

616. In a Tablet to Aqá Ni`matu'llah Naráqí quoted by Ishráq Khávarí's in *Ganjinih-i-Hudúd va Akhám*, p. 234, `Abdu'l-Bahá has said that the Universal House of Justice will have to rule on this question.

717. For the establishment of Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs beside the graves of believers, see `Abdu'l-Bahá, *Memorials of the Faithful*, p. 20.