The Institution of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár

A Statement and Compilation Prepared by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice

September 2017

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The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, "the Dawning-place of the Praise of God",[1] is described by the Universal House of Justice, in its letter dated 18 December 2014 to the Bahá'ís in Iran, as "a unique concept in the annals of religion" that "symbolizes the teachings of the new Day of God".[2] The House of Justice further states that the House of Worship is a "collective centre of society to promote cordial affection" and that it

> stands as a universal place of worship open to all the inhabitants of a locality irrespective of their religious affiliation, background, ethnicity, or gender and a haven for the deepest contemplation on spiritual reality and foundational questions of life, including individual and collective responsibility for the betterment of society. Men and women, children and youth, are held in its embrace as equals.[3]

The extraordinary significance of this matchless institution for the unity and well-being of humanity is underscored throughout the writings of the Faith. Bahá'u'lláh, for instance, proclaims, "Blessed are they that occupy themselves in the House of Worship with the remembrance of Him Who is the Lord of the righteous!"[4] 'Abdu'l-Bahá affirms that while the House of Worship is "built upon earth, in reality it is an institution of the Concourse on high" and its "pinnacles shall soar to the apex of heaven".[5] In another Tablet He refers to it as "the dawning-place of lights and the gathering place of the righteous", in which "noble souls ... offer supplications, intone divine verses, and chant prayers with wondrous melodies" such that "the inmates of the Concourse on high hearken and call out, crying, 'Happy are we; let all the world rejoice!'"[6] It is, the Master declares, "the first visible and manifest establishment of the Lord",[7] being so momentous a structure that even the act of "laying but one brick for [it] or one of its dependencies is like unto building a lofty edifice".[8] As Shoghi Effendi states, the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is a "symbol and harbinger of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh".[9] It is, in the words of the House of Justice, a beacon of light "against the gloom of hatred and inequity".[10] Eight continental Temples now illumine the world, while local and national ones are beginning to emerge, each one summoning "all comers to worship the One Who is their Creator, their sovereign Lord, the Giver of Light to the world"[11] and galvanizing "an entire people to reach for a more profound sense of unified purpose".[12] Each reminds us of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's assurance that "a hundred thousand Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs shall be reared in glory, dignity, and utmost majesty".[13]

To assist in further understanding the nature of this divine institution and its profound implications for the spiritual regeneration of humanity, the attached compilation of extracts from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá as well as from the letters written by, or on behalf

of, Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice is provided. Some of the concepts that may be gleaned from various passages in the compilation are discussed below.

1. The Influence of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár

In the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, Bahá'u'lláh calls on the peoples of the world to build

> 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. Then, with radiance and joy, celebrate therein the praise of your Lord, the Most Compassionate. Verily, by His remembrance the eye is cheered and the heart is filled with light.[14]

'Abdu'l-Bahá elaborates on the importance of this institution, referring to the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár as "the lodestone of divine confirmations" and "the mighty foundation of the Lord, the firm pillar of the Faith of God". In the same Tablet, He states that the establishment of the House of Worship "is a means for the exaltation of the Word of God" and that the "praise and glorification emanating from it cheereth the heart of every righteous soul". He thus exhorts the friends to "be occupied therein with prayer and the worship of God, the recitation of the verses and words of God, and the chanting of heavenly odes in glorification of the All-Merciful".[15]

Elsewhere, 'Abdu'l-Bahá describes the House of Worship as "a centre wherein the spirits are gladdened and the hearts attracted to the Abhá Kingdom"[16] and avers that it has "a powerful influence on every phase of life",[17] awakening the friends[18] and promoting the oneness of humankind.[19] By gathering together in this edifice to make mention of the Lord, "bonds of unity"[20] are forged while affection grows and flourishes "in the human heart".[21] Indeed, through the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, which "causeth hearts to be illumined, souls to become spiritual, and the fragrances of the Kingdom of Glory to be inhaled", the world of humanity is "transformed into another world, and the susceptibilities of the heart are heightened to such a degree that they encompass the entire creation".[22] According to Shoghi Effendi, the impact of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is "incalculable and mysterious",[23] directly bolstering the faith of the individual, while also serving, in the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, as "the greatest means of diffusing the sweet savours of the Lord".[24] "As a potent symbol and an integral element of the divine civilization towards which Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation ushers all peoples," the House of Justice observes in a letter written on its behalf, "the House of Worship becomes the focal point of the community from which it emerges."[25] "The people shall hasten to worship in that heavenly Temple," the Master declares, "the fragrance of God will be diffused, the Divine Teachings will take root in the hearts like unto the establishment of the spirit in the souls of men, and the people will stand firm in the Cause of your Lord, the All-Merciful."[26]

2. A Place of Worship

'Abdu'l-Baha explains that "pure and radiant hearts are the dawning-places of the mention of God from which the melodies of supplication and prayer continually reach the Concourse on high", and He states that should the hearts of the friends become divine temples through the bounty of God, "they would assuredly exert the utmost endeavour ... to build the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, so that the outward frame may reveal the inward reality and the outer form give tidings of the inner meaning".[27] Several themes are found in the writings associated with this place of worship and the inward reality it manifests, including the power of prayer, the effects of communal worship, and the nature of devotions within the central edifice itself.

In the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, Bahá'u'lláh calls attention to the potency of reciting the verses of God in Houses of Worship:

> 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.[28]

The House of Justice elucidates the theme of the power of prayer, explaining that the Twin Luminaries have taught us that prayer is "the essential spiritual conversation of the soul with its Maker, direct and without intermediation", "the morning's dew" that "brings freshness to the heart and cleanses it", and "a fire that burns away the veils and a light that leads to the ocean of reunion with the Almighty".[29] The quality of prayer is pivotal. Upon it "depend the development of the limitless capacities of the soul and the attraction of the bounties of God". When it is "motivated by the love of God", its powers are manifested. "It is to be expressed", the House of Justice continues,

> with a sincere and pure heart conducive to contemplation and meditation so that the rational faculty can be illumined by its effects. Such prayer will transcend the limitation of words and go well beyond mere sounds. The sweetness of its melodies must gladden and uplift the heart and reinforce the penetrating power of the Word, transmuting earthly inclinations into heavenly attributes and inspiring selfless service to humankind.[30]

A second theme is that of communal worship, which Bahá'ís and their friends around the world understand to be fundamental to the pattern of collective endeavour aimed at the spiritual and material betterment of society. Essential to this pattern, the House of Justice maintains, "is the devotional meeting—a communal aspect of the godly life and a dimension of the concept of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár".[31] When "integrated into the core of community life", such gatherings become "occasions where any soul may enter, inhale the heavenly fragrances, experience the sweetness of prayer, meditate upon the Creative Word, be transported on the wings of the spirit, and commune with the one Beloved".[32] The holding of such gatherings is "a further step in the implementation" of the law of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár,[33] one that evokes the spirit of the House of Worship in any locality.[34]

A third theme is the manner in which worship is conducted within the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. Houses of Worship, 'Abdu'l-Bahá asserts, "bestow firmness and constancy upon the friends" and "are places of supplication and invocation to the Threshold of His grandeur".[35] Vital to such worship and the creation of what Shoghi Effendi describes as "a serenely spiritual atmosphere"[36] is the setting aside of rituals and rites. As the House of Justice observes, Shoghi Effendi

> decries the trappings of elaborate and ostentatious ceremony and warns against any inference "that the interior of the central Edifice itself will be converted into a conglomeration of religious services" offering "a spectacle of incoherent and confused sectarian observances and rites."[37]

Instead, devotional services are to be unhampered by uniformity or ritualistic forms of any kind,[38] and are, Shoghi Effendi advises in a letter written on his behalf, to be "simple, dignified, and designed to uplift the soul and educate it through hearing the creative word".[39] In another letter written on his behalf he states, "The more universal and informal the character of Bahá'í worship in the Temple the better."[40]

Such worship may also include vocal music.[41] In letters written on its behalf, the House of Justice clarifies that lyrics sung in the House of Worship should be "based upon Bahá'í or other sacred writings", including the Writings and talks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, should "contain Bahá'í themes",[42] may involve "the repetition of verses from prayers or selections from the Writings", and may allow for "slight alterations in the text … to conform with musical requirements".[43] "The

musical style of the piece can be determined by the composer, provided that he or she bears in mind the spiritual obligation to treat the Sacred Texts with the propriety, dignity and reverence due them."[44]

Through such an unassuming but embracing approach, the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár embodies a distinguishing feature of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh—the principle of unity in diversity—and marks, according to Shoghi Effendi, the establishment "upon the face of the earth, in the most visible and tangible manner, a beauteous likeness and enduring expression of the vital and unbounded spirit of the Cause of Him Who is the Lord of all worlds".[45] 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself asserts:

> The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is a divine edifice in this nether world and a means for attaining the oneness of humanity, inasmuch as all the peoples of the world shall gather in fellowship and harmony within the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and, chanting the anthems of Divine Unity, engage in the praise and glorification of the Lord of Hosts.[46]

3. Worship and Service

As potent and far-reaching as are the spiritual forces released by individual and collective devotions offered within the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and as essential as is a vibrant devotional life to one's spiritual development, worship must also result, the House of Justice notes, in "deeds that give outward expression to that inner transformation".[47] Shoghi Effendi points out that the "very purpose" of the community—a community that is "divinely ordained, organically united, clear-visioned, vibrant with life"—is "regulated by the twin directing principles of the worship of God and of service to one's fellow-men".[48] Indeed, the indispensable connection between these directing principles is integral to the oneness of humankind, which, as the House of Justice notes, "is at once the operating principle and ultimate goal" of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation.[49]

The inseparability of worship and service, which finds full expression in the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, is progressively manifesting itself as the community implements the provisions of its framework for action with increasing effectiveness. The House of Justice observes that the friends "have not failed to appreciate the dynamic interaction between worship and endeavours to uplift the spiritual, social, and material conditions of society".[50] In its Riḍván 2012 message to the Bahá'ís of the world, the House of Justice states:

> The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, described by 'Abdu'l-Bahá as "one of the most vital institutions in the world", weds two essential, inseparable aspects of Bahá'í life: worship and service. The union of these two is also reflected in the coherence that exists among the community-building features of the Plan, particularly the burgeoning of a devotional spirit that finds expression in gatherings for prayer and an educational process that builds capacity for service to humanity. The correlation of worship and service is especially pronounced in those clusters around the world where Bahá'í communities have significantly grown in size and vitality, and where engagement in social action is apparent.[51]

4. Dependencies of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár

In the fullness of time, Shoghi Effendi states, the central edifice of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár will be surrounded by "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".[52] The indispensability of "a dynamic coherence between the spiritual and practical requirements of life on earth", the House of Justice writes, "is unmistakably illustrated" in Bahá'u'lláh's "ordination of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, the spiritual centre of every Bahá'í community round which must flourish dependencies dedicated to the social, humanitarian, educational and scientific advancement of mankind".[53] 'Abdu'l-Bahá explains in this regard that

the House of Worship is "connected with a hospital, a drug dispensary, a traveler's hospice, a school for orphans, and a university for advanced studies". As such, "The Temple is not only a place for worship; rather, in every respect is it complete and whole".[54]

Shoghi Effendi highlights the vital interplay between worship and service and offers the following vision of the corresponding interrelationship between the central edifice and its dependencies:

> Divorced from the social, humanitarian, educational, and scientific pursuits centring around the Dependencies of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, Bahá'í worship, however exalted in its conception, however passionate in fervour, 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. 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 centring 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 centring 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.[55]

The first stirrings of the relationship between the spiritual and the practical as embodied in a House of Worship can be found in the pioneering efforts of the believers in 'Ishqábád. In its letter dated 1 August 2014 to the Bahá'ís of the World, the House of Justice recounts:

> On a befitting tract of land in the centre of the city that had been obtained some years before with the consent of the Blessed Beauty Himself, facilities were built for communal well-being —a meeting hall, schools for children, a hostel for visitors, and a small clinic, among others. A sign of the notable achievements of the Bahá'ís in 'Ishqábád, who in those productive years became distinguished for their prosperity, magnanimity, and intellectual and cultural attainments, was their attention to ensuring that all Bahá'í children and youth were literate in a society with rampant illiteracy, especially among girls.... For over twenty years, the friends experienced the heavenly joy of having realized their lofty aim: the establishment of a focal point of worship, a nerve centre of community life, a place where souls gathered at daybreak for humble invocation and communion before flowing out of its doors to engage in their daily pursuits.[56]

In other words, the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, the House of Justice relates in a subsequent letter, is concurrently "the place from which spiritual forces are to radiate", "the focal point for dependencies to be raised up for the well-being of humanity", and "the expression of a common will and eagerness to serve".[57] "These dependencies", the same letter continues, are "centres of education and scientific learning as well as cultural and humanitarian endeavour" that "embody

the ideals of social and spiritual progress to be achieved through the application of knowledge, and demonstrate how, when religion and science are in harmony, they elevate the station of the human being and lead to the flourishing of civilization".[58]

5. Raising up a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár

Since the revelation of the law of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár by the Pen of Bahá'u'lláh, its implementation has followed a process of gradual, organic unfoldment commensurate with the capacity of the community. 'Abdu'l-Bahá states that these "Dawning-Points of God's Remembrance ... must, at the direction of the Most Exalted Pen, be established in every hamlet and city".[59] Their beginnings, the Master indicates, could assume even the humblest of forms:

> As to the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, it is of the utmost importance. The purpose is this: A spot should be designated, even if it is a small place beneath layers of earth and stone, and it should, out of prudence, be kept hidden and concealed lest it arouse the hostility of the mischief-makers. At least once a week, it should become the gathering place of the chosen friends who have discovered the secrets and become the intimates of divine mysteries. It may assume any form, for even if it be an underground pit, that pit shall become a sheltering paradise, an exalted bower, and a garden of delight.[60]

Opportunities first arose for the establishment of a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in 'Ishqábád and in Wilmette during the Ministry of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Subsequently, a continental House of Worship was established in seven other locations around the world, culminating in October 2016 with the inauguration of the Temple in Santiago, Chile. Yet, even as the continental stage was drawing to a close, a new horizon was opening up to the Bahá'í world owing to the growing momentum in community building—founded on collective worship and raising capacity for service—that had been stimulated by the series of global Plans beginning in 1996. In its Riḍván message to the Bahá'ís of the world that year, the House of Justice emphasized that "the flourishing of the community, especially at the local level, demands a significant enhancement in patterns of behaviour" involving "the practice of collective worship of God". It was, therefore, "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".[61] In its Riḍván message five years later, the House of Justice anticipated the building of national Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs during the Fifth Epoch of the Formative Age, a development that would "unfold throughout successive stages of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan".[62] Specifically, it observed:

> A feature of the Fifth Epoch will be the enrichment of the devotional life of the community through the raising up of national Houses of Worship, as circumstances in national communities permit. The scheduling of these projects will be determined by the Universal House of Justice in relation to the advancement of the process of entry by troops within countries.[63]

By 2012, the requisite criteria were "demonstrably met"[64] in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Papua New Guinea. This was a highly significant development. "With the construction of the last of the continental temples in Santiago under way," the House of Justice stated that year in its Riḍván message, "the initiation of projects for building national Houses of Worship offers yet another gratifying evidence of the penetration of the Faith of God into the soil of society."[65] The House of Justice also affirmed in a subsequent letter written on its behalf that the House of Worship is "an integral part of the process of community building, and its construction represents an important milestone in the development of a community".[66]

Equally encouraging was that by Riḍván 2012 it had become clear that the emergence of a local House of Worship could be contemplated in clusters serving as sites for the dissemination of learning about the junior youth spiritual empowerment programme and where "the entire scheme

of expansion and consolidation"[67] was being fortified—specifically, at that time, in Battambang, Cambodia; Bihar Sharif, India; Matunda Soy, Kenya; Norte del Cauca, Colombia; and Tanna, Vanuatu. Expounding on this vision, the following passage from the Riḍván 2014 message directly correlated the evolution of the programme of growth in a cluster with the establishment of a local Mashriqu'l-Adhkár:

> In more and more clusters, the programme of growth is increasing in scope and complexity, commensurate with the rising capacity of the Plan's three protagonists—the individual, the community, and the institutions of the Faith—to create a mutually supportive environment. And we are delighted that, as anticipated, there are a growing number of clusters where a hundred or more individuals are now facilitating the engagement of a thousand or more in weaving a pattern of life, spiritual, dynamic, transformative. Underlying the process even from the start is, of course, a collective movement towards the vision of material and spiritual prosperity set forth by Him Who is the Lifegiver of the World. But when such large numbers are involved, the movement of an entire population becomes discernible.
>
> This movement is especially in evidence in those clusters where a local Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is to be established.[68]

In the Riḍván 2012 message, the House of Justice underscored the magnitude of this advance in community life and provided the following vision regarding the impending construction of both the two national and the five local Houses of Worship:

> Beloved co-workers: The ground broken by the hand of ʻAbdu'l-Bahá a hundred years ago is to be broken again in seven more countries, this being but the prelude to the day when within every city and village, in obedience to the bidding of Bahá'u'lláh, a building is upraised for the worship of the Lord. From these Dawning-Points of the Remembrance of God will shine the rays of His light and peal out the anthems of His praise.[69]

The House of Justice called attention to this same vision in its message of 1 September 2017 to those gathered for the dedication of the House of Worship in Battambang, Cambodia, announcing that "a new dawn is breaking in the development of the institution of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár" and affirming that this historic occasion prefigured

> the appearance of many more local as well as national Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs, in obedience to Bahá'u'lláh's commandment revealed in His Most Holy Book: "Build ye houses of worship throughout the lands in the name of Him Who is the Lord of all religions."[70]

The opening of this new stage of raising up national and local Temples also made it possible to learn more about what is entailed in building a House of Worship, including practical considerations such as choosing a suitable location and deciding how big the edifice should be, as well as about how a sense of ownership of the project should be fostered among the local population. The selection of architects was identified as a special concern, since they, according to the House of Justice,

> are presented with the singular challenge of designing Temples "as perfect as is possible in the world of being" that harmonize naturally with the local culture and the daily lives of those who will gather to pray and meditate therein. The task calls for creativity and skill to combine beauty, grace, and dignity with modesty, functionality, and economy.[71]

Throughout this evolutionary process, the community has had increasing opportunities to explore how indispensable is the spirit of unity in which such efforts are undertaken. In this regard, ʻAbdu'l-Bahá states the following concerning the development of plans for the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in ʻIshqábád:

All matters must be made a means of unity and concord, so that fellowship and harmony among the beloved of God might increase as day followeth day.

Now, this matter of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár must itself be implemented in such a manner as to foster unity and concord among the friends. That is to say, ye should first consult together, and thereafter devise a plan. If ye follow these steps, divine confirmations shall continuously be vouchsafed unto you.[72]

The Master also provides the following counsel:

The foundation of life and existence is cooperation and mutual aid, whereas the cause of annihilation and deterioration is the cessation of aid and assistance. The higher the realm of existence, the stronger and more vital this weighty matter of cooperation and assistance doth become. In the realm of humanity, therefore, cooperation and mutual aid are in a greater degree of completeness and perfection than that which prevaileth in the other realms of existence—so much so, that the life of humanity dependeth entirely upon this principle. Among the friends of God, in particular, this strong foundation must be fortified in such wise that each soul may help the other in all matters, whether pertaining to spiritual realities and inner truths or to the material and physical aspects of life. Such is especially the case with regard to the founding of public institutions that benefit all people, and, in particular, the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, which constituteth the greatest of divine foundations.[73]

Expanding on the concept of collaboration, Shoghi Effendi, in a letter written on his behalf, stresses that laying the foundation of the House of Worship "requires ceaseless cooperation and mutual support, and is conditioned upon sacrifice".[74] In another letter written on his behalf he cautions, "It is devotion, sincerity and genuine enthusiasm which in the long run can ensure the completion of our beloved Temple." And he states, "Material considerations, though essential, are not the most vital by any means."[75] Similarly, the House of Justice, in expressing how moved it was by the worldwide response to its call for seven new Houses of Worship, offers the following observation:

Particularly in the nations and localities recently designated for the construction of a House of Worship, we have witnessed the friends' spontaneous expressions of joy; their immediate and heartfelt commitment to lend their share in carrying out the critical work at hand and to increase the dynamism of those activities integral to the emergence of a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár within a population; their sacrificial contributions of time, energy, and material resources, in a variety of forms; and their sustained efforts to awaken growing contingents to the vision of those edifices dedicated wholly to the remembrance of God that will be founded in their midst. Indeed, the ready response of the community of the Greatest Name augurs well for its ability to further these collective undertakings.[76]

With this guidance in mind and in order to appreciate the spirit of true service required for the establishment of this lofty institution, it is helpful to reflect on 'Abdu'l-Bahá's longing to participate in the construction of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in 'Ishqábád and on His earnest appeal that the friends carry it out in His stead.

Do thou on behalf of 'Abdu'l-Bahá move the earth, carry the mortar, and haul the stones for the building of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár so that the rapture of this service may bring joy and gladness to the Centre of Servitude. That Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is the first visible and manifest establishment of the Lord. Therefore, it is this servant's hope that each and every virtuous and righteous soul will sacrifice his all, evince great happiness and exultation, and rejoice in carrying the earth and mortar so that this Divine Edifice may be raised, the Cause of God may spread, and in every corner of the world the friends may arise with the utmost resolve to accomplish this great task. Were 'Abdu'l-Bahá not imprisoned and were there not obstacles in his path, he himself would assuredly hasten to 'Ishqábád and carry the earth for the

building of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár with the utmost joy and gladness. It behoveth the friends now to arise with this intention in mind and serve in my place so that in a short time this Edifice may be revealed to all eyes, the loved ones of God may engage in making mention of the Abhá Beauty, the melodies of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár may rise at dawntide to the Concourse on high, and the songs of the nightingales of God may bring joy and ecstasy to the denizens of the All-Glorious Realm. Thus will the hearts rejoice, the souls delight in joyful tidings, and the minds be illumined. This is the highest hope of the sincere ones; this is the dearest wish of them that are nigh unto God.[77]

The Institution of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár

A Compilation of Extracts from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá,
the Writings of Shoghi Effendi, and the Letters of the Universal House of Justice

Prepared by the Research Department of the
Universal House of Justice

September 2017

From the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh

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. Then, with radiance and joy, celebrate therein the praise of your Lord, the Most Compassionate. Verily, by His remembrance the eye is cheered and the heart is filled with light.

(*The Kitáb-i-Aqdas: The Most Holy Book* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1993, 2009 printing), par. 31) **[1]**

Blessed is he who, at the hour of dawn, centering 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. 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.

(*The Kitáb-i-Aqdas: The Most Holy Book*, par. 115) **[2]**

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.

(*The Kitáb-i-Aqdas: The Most Holy Book*, par. 150) **[3]**

Regarding what ye had written as to the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár's having been established in the Land of Ṭá[1] and that, by the grace of God, it hath been and is being instituted in other places: this matter was mentioned in His Holy and Most Exalted Presence, whereupon the tongue of the Ancient of Days made answer: "Blessed is the spot, and the house, and the place, and the city, and the heart, and the mountain, and the refuge, and the cave, and the valley, and the land, and the sea, and the island, and the meadow where mention of God hath been made, and His praise glorified."

(From a Tablet—translated from the Arabic and Persian) **[4]**

This is that which hath been uttered by the Tongue of the Unconstrained concerning the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. He, glorified be His might and exalted His dominion, saith:

"Render thou praise unto Him Who is the Desire of the world for having confirmed thee in the service of His Cause. The people of the world are agitated, mischief and sedition abound, and all have arisen to extinguish His light. Yet despite this, thou and His chosen ones have been actively engaged in the mention and remembrance of God.

"This edifice shall be remembered eternally, for it hath been reared in the name of the One true God and during the days of God, and hath been adorned with the ornament of His behest. Beseech Him Who is the Eternal Truth to confirm each and every soul in the service of His Cause, that all may remain steadfast and abide by what God hath sent down in His Book.

"How altogether vain and fleeting are the things of this world. Erelong shall all return to nothingness, and only that will endure which the Most Exalted Pen hath ordained at the bidding of God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting."

(From a Tablet—translated from the Arabic and Persian) **[5]**

Blessed are they that occupy themselves in the House of Worship with the remembrance of Him Who is the Lord of the righteous! Blessed are they that arise in the service of this House! Blessed are they that have raised up this House! They enter therein in a state of peace and yearning, and take their leave therefrom with reluctance and regret. We beseech God, immeasurably exalted is He, Our Lord and your Lord, to assist you by means both visible and invisible, and to ordain for you that which shall last as long as His name shall endure, a name that overshadoweth all other names. No God is there but Him, the Ever-Forgiving, the All-Merciful.

(From a Tablet—translated from the Arabic and Persian) **[6]**

By My life and My Cause! Round about whatever dwelling the friends of God may enter, and from which their cry shall rise as they praise and glorify the Lord, shall circle the souls of true believers and all the favoured angels. And should the door of the true eye be opened unto some, they shall witness the Supreme Concourse as it circleth and crieth: "Blessed art thou, O house, for God hath made thee a resting-place for those He favoureth, and a lodging for those He holdeth dear, and a home for those in whom He hath placed His trust. Unto thee be His praise and His glory and His endless grace."

(From a Tablet—translated from the Arabic and Persian) **[7]**

From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

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 ... These spiritual gatherings must be held with the utmost purity and consecration, so that from the site itself, and its earth and the air about it, one will inhale the fragrant breathings of the Holy Spirit.

(*Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1997, 2009 printing), no. 55.1) **[8]**

O ye true friends of 'Abdu'l-Bahá! At this moment my thoughts are turned towards you. Sunset is drawing nigh and a multitude of hardships have deprived me of comfort, yet calling you to mind bringeth me the utmost joy and delight. Thus do I turn to the Ever-Forgiving Lord, beseeching Him to reinforce you with an abundant measure of His mighty grace.

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is the dawning-place of lights and the gathering place of the righteous. Whenever a company of noble souls assemble in a heavenly gathering there and offer supplications, intone divine verses, and chant prayers with wondrous melodies, the inmates of the Concourse on high hearken and call out, crying, "Happy are we; let all the world rejoice!" for, praise be unto God, souls from among the angels of the Kingdom of Glory have arisen in the nether world to commune with their Lord and intone the verses of Divine Unity in a gathering of holiness. What bounty is there greater than this?

(From a Tablet—translated from the Persian) **[9]**

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. Blessed are ye for having thought of this and intended to erect such an edifice, surpassing all in devoting your wealth to this great purpose and this splendid undertaking. Ye will soon see the angels of confirmation successively sustaining you, and the hosts of reinforcement rushing forth before you.

When the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is completed, when the lights are emanating therefrom, and the righteous assemble therein, when prayers are offered to the Kingdom of divine mysteries and the voice of glorification is raised to the Supreme Lord, then shall the believers rejoice, and their hearts be dilated, overflowing with the love of the ever-living and self-subsisting God.

The people shall hasten to worship in that heavenly Temple, the fragrance of God will be diffused, the Divine Teachings will take root in the hearts like unto the establishment of the spirit in the souls of men, and the people will stand firm in the Cause of your Lord, the All-Merciful.

(From a Tablet—translated from the Arabic) **[10]**

Of those who arise in the service of this edifice there shall be no soul but shall be imbued by God with a power emanating from His mighty Kingdom, and upon him shall rain such spiritual, heavenly blessings as shall fill his heart with a wondrous light and illumine his eyes to behold the glory of the Ancient of Days.

(From a Tablet—translated from the Arabic) **[11]**

O thou who art firm in the Covenant! Thy letter was received and its purport was made plain and evident. Thou hadst written of the high endeavour, the exertion and the determination evinced by the loved ones of God, of their irrepressible enthusiasm for the construction of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, and of the engagement of their blessed persons in carrying its building stones. In truth, this news brought such joy to the hearts as is impossible to describe or recount, for it conjured the image of that noble assemblage bearing stones in the utmost humility and meekness and yet considering themselves exalted above the kings of the world.

(From a Tablet—translated from the Persian) **[12]**

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.

(*Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, no. 58.1) **[13]**

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 ʻAbdu'l-Bahá*, no. 57.1) **[14]**

In the future, God willing, there will be erected throughout all the regions ... temples of outstanding beauty and dignity, in which grace and elegance combine with a fineness of proportion that is delightful to behold.

(From a Tablet—translated from the Persian) **[15]**

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 center 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 ʻAbdu'l-Bahá*, no. 60.1) **[16]**

Jináb-i-Karbilá'í Muḥammad-Hádí, the custodian of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, is my master. In other words, I am his servant, for he is a servant of the Blessed Beauty. He sweepeth the grounds of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. This is not servitude, but sovereignty. The service he rendereth is no mere ordinary thing; nay, it is a bounty from God, pure and true.

(From a Tablet—translated from the Persian) **[17]**

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 traveler'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 ʻAbdu'l-Bahá*, no. 64.1) **[18]**

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 ʻAbdu'l-Bahá*, no. 56.1) **[19]**

Thy letter and the two plans for the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár were received. Both plans were reviewed, and cheered the hearts. The loved ones and handmaids of God engaged, each and every one, in speaking thy praise. Thou shouldst, however, consult with the members of the Spiritual Assembly concerning the form and design of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, in order that ye may reach a decision together. All matters must be made a means of unity and concord, so that fellowship and harmony among the beloved of God might increase as day followeth day.

Now, this matter of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár must itself be implemented in such a manner as to foster unity and concord among the friends. That is to say, ye should first consult together, and thereafter devise a plan. If ye follow these steps, divine confirmations shall continuously be vouchsafed unto you. The friends in 'Ishqábád made the raising up of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár the means of creating perfect fellowship. With the utmost love and sincerity, they elected a committee, and that committee attended to establishing, organizing, arranging, and designing the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. Divine confirmations were vouchsafed day after day, and—praised be God!—it was constructed in great soundness and majesty.

(From a Tablet—translated from the Persian) **[20]**

Truly, pure and radiant hearts are the dawning-places of the mention of God from which the melodies of supplication and prayer continually reach the Concourse on high. I beg of God to make each of your hearts a divine temple in which the lamp of the Most Great Guidance may be lit. Should the hearts receive a bounty such as this, they would assuredly exert the utmost endeavour and become fully determined to build the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, so that the outward frame may reveal the inward reality and the outer form give tidings of the inner meaning.

(From a Tablet—translated from the Persian) **[21]**

O ye friends of the East and the West! Among the foundations of the religion of God, the inner significances of the Word of God, and the duties of the friends of God, the greatest is cooperation and mutual aid, for the realm of humanity—nay, all the innumerable beings found in the world of existence—depend upon it. Should cooperation and mutual aid cease to exist among created things, the world of being would disintegrate utterly....

The foundation of life and existence is cooperation and mutual aid, whereas the cause of annihilation and deterioration is the cessation of aid and assistance. The higher the realm of existence, the stronger and more vital this weighty matter of cooperation and assistance doth become. In the realm of humanity, therefore, cooperation and mutual aid are in a greater degree of completeness and perfection than that which prevaileth in the other realms of existence—so much so, that the life of humanity dependeth entirely upon this principle. Among the friends of God, in particular, this strong foundation must be fortified in such wise that each soul may help the other in all matters, whether pertaining to spiritual realities and inner truths or to the material and physical aspects of life. Such is especially the case with regard to the founding of public institutions that benefit all people, and, in particular, the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, which constituteth the greatest of divine foundations.

(From a Tablet—translated from the Persian) **[22]**

Thou hadst written that the friends intend to contribute towards the cost of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. This news imparted infinite joy, inasmuch as the abundant effusions of the Kingdom, the heavenly outpourings of God's grace, and His unfailing confirmations are directed towards the establishment of the bonds of unity, harmony, and fellowship in the world of humanity. Therefore, this worthy act on the part of the friends in the East to gather and send contributions to the West is praiseworthy, meritorious, and among the distinctive characteristics of this Dispensation. It was unheard of in the past for the East to lend its material support to the West, that is, for the friends in Persia to aid in the building of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in America. This is the first occasion of its kind; therefore, its effects will surely be laudable and it will bring forth admirable results.

Praise be to the Ancient Beauty for having conferred such ties of friendship and harmony upon the human race, for having established such a mighty foundation, and for having promoted such a sublime aspiration. Thanks be to the Most Great Name for having raised aloft such a tabernacle in the midmost heart of the world, through which the various nations of the earth shall become unified and associate with one another in friendship; the disparate nations of the world

shall become one country and its numerous lands one homeland; all the different governments shall join together in union and harmony; the roots of injustice shall be eradicated; and the foundations of war, conflict, pillage, plunder, hatred, and hostility shall be destroyed. This cooperation and collaboration between the East and the West provideth sufficient and irrefutable proof that this blessed aim will be achieved.

(From a Tablet—translated from the Persian) **[23]**

O thou who art firm in the Covenant! The glad-tidings of the impending completion of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, the arrangement of its gardens, and, erelong, the flowing of its fountains, brought infinite joy. The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár shall truly become a place of great happiness and joy. The strength and elegance of its structure, the orderly arrangement of its pathways, the design of its flowerbeds, the gushing of its fountains, the blossoming of its trees, the freshness of its air, and the charm and beauty of its appearance combine to create a paradise of utmost delight. It shall truly be without peer or likeness.

(From a Tablet—translated from the Persian) **[24]**

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is a divine edifice in this nether world and a means for attaining the oneness of humanity, inasmuch as all the peoples of the world shall gather in fellowship and harmony within the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and, chanting the anthems of Divine Unity, engage in the praise and glorification of the Lord of Hosts. Thy joy must, of a certainty, rest in diffusing the light of divine guidance.

(From a Tablet—translated from the Persian) **[25]**

The first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in America was instituted in Chicago, and this honor and distinction is infinite in value. Out of this Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, without doubt, thousands of Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs will be born.

(*Tablets of the Divine Plan* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1993, 2006 printing) p. 78) **[26]**

Thy letter dated 23 November 1918 was received. Its contents indicated that, praise be to God, thou art engaged in the service of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, so that this universal edifice may be established. Indeed thou hast exerted great effort in this respect, and I entertain the hope that this endeavour may grow day by day. Deeds are like unto trees; planting a tree is easy, while nurturing it until it yieldeth its fruit is difficult. So far, effort hath been expended in laying the foundations of the Temple, but its completion is a difficult matter. My hope is that the friends of God may be assisted therein.

(From a Tablet—translated from the Persian) **[27]**

O ye who are firm in the Covenant and Testament of God! The notebook containing your plans for the establishment of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and its dependencies—consisting of a hospital, schools, a hostel, and homes for the infirm and the poor—and furthermore, the names of those who have contributed funds for this endeavour, was received and read. Praise be to God that He hath assisted blessed souls to arise and accomplish such a momentous task and to lay the foundation of an edifice that shall endure for all eternity, whose pinnacles shall soar to the apex of heaven.

Although this Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is being built upon earth, in reality it is an institution of the Concourse on high, and therefore it can be said to reach the highest heavens. Render ye thanks unto God that ye have arisen to offer such a momentous service, inasmuch as in this age and century the establishment of Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs is of the utmost importance. These edifices will bestow firmness and constancy upon the friends. They are places of supplication and invocation to

the Threshold of His grandeur and are the greatest means of diffusing the sweet savours of the Lord. In these days, laying but one brick for the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár or one of its dependencies is like unto building a lofty edifice. I am, therefore, well pleased with the beloved of the Lord for having succeeded in rendering so vital and important a service. It is my hope that this structure will be established in the utmost beauty and strength and that its dependencies will gradually be completed.

(From a Tablet—translated from the Persian) **[28]**

... consider thou the manner in which Ḥájí Mírzá Muḥammad-Taqí Afnán, that sanctified spirit and confirmed soul, arose to serve this great Cause. Forsaking a life of ease and comfort in Yazd, he hastened to 'Ishqábád to labour for the Cause of God. How self-sacrificing he was in the rearing of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár! He dedicated his life wholly to this task, until he succeeded in establishing the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in that land. How extraordinary indeed was his service, for this is the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár that hath been raised up in the world in God's name. Its significance, therefore, is very great. And yet, in the future a hundred thousand Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs shall be reared in glory, dignity, and utmost majesty. The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of 'Ishqábád hath the station of the mother, and the other Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs are like unto spiritual children that shall be born of it.

(From a Tablet—translated from the Persian) **[29]**

O ye loved ones of God! The news was received that a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár hath been established, that in that land the praise and glorification of God hath reached the Kingdom of Glory and the melodies of worship and praise of that glorious Beloved have ascended to the Concourse on high. What boundless joy and delight were produced by these glad-tidings, inasmuch as the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár causeth the friends to be awakened, to remember God, and to be in a state of humble prayer. The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár causeth hearts to be illumined, souls to become spiritual, and the fragrances of the Kingdom of Glory to be inhaled. The world of humanity is thereby transformed into another world, and the susceptibilities of the heart are heightened to such a degree that they encompass the entire creation. My hope is that a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár be established in every quarter and in each corner of the country, even if this be done with the utmost discretion and circumspection, and, for prudence's sake, be confined to chosen and trusted friends among the loved ones of God, until such time as the spread of its fame may not arouse dismay and turmoil among the heedless.

O ye beloved of God! Behold how abundant shall be the freshness, tenderness, spirituality, and radiance that are attained when ye assemble in that gathering place of the spirit, occupy yourselves at dawn[2] with the remembrance of God, and, after reciting prayers, make mention together of the Most Bountiful Lord in sweet melodies. These melodies shall reach unto the Kingdom of Glory, and these songs shall cheer and gladden the Concourse on high.

(From a Tablet—translated from the Persian) **[30]**

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is the lodestone of divine confirmations. The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is the mighty foundation of the Lord, the firm pillar of the Faith of God. The establishment of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is a means for the exaltation of the Word of God. The praise and glorification emanating from it cheereth the heart of every righteous soul. The holy fragrances of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár vivify the souls of the righteous, and its vitalizing breezes confer life upon the pure in heart. The lamps of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, like unto the resplendent rays of dawn, illuminate the horizons. The melody of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár cheereth the souls of the Concourse on high, and the recitation within it of the verses of His Divine Unity bringeth joy and gladness to the inmates of the Kingdom of Glory.

In this day, the greatest matter and most consummate service to be offered at the Sacred Threshold of God is the establishment of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár.... The purpose is that the loved ones of God should, while exercising the utmost wisdom, be occupied therein with prayer and the worship of God, the recitation of the verses and words of God, and the chanting of heavenly odes in glorification of the All-Merciful.

(From a Tablet—translated from the Persian) **[31]**

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—translated from the Persian) **[32]**

Verily, with a sincere heart, I have rendered thanks unto God for His having aided the friends, despite their poverty and lowliness, to contribute to the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, the pillars of which will soon be raised in the midmost heart of America.

(From a Tablet—translated from the Arabic) **[33]**

O thou true friend of 'Abdu'l-Bahá! Thy most ardent wish was for the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár to be reared and established. For each and every thing there is a prescribed season—and praise be to God, the time to build the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár hath now come! The greatest endeavour must therefore be exerted that this mighty edifice may be erected solidly and firmly, with refinement and grace. This is a great service to the Sacred Threshold, the renown of which shall gladden, through all eternity, the hearts of the Concourse on high in the Kingdom of holiness.

(From a Tablet—translated from the Persian) **[34]**

As to the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, it is of the utmost importance. The purpose is this: A spot should be designated, even if it is a small place beneath layers of earth and stone, and it should, out of prudence, be kept hidden and concealed lest it arouse the hostility of the mischief-makers. At least once a week, it should become the gathering place of the chosen friends who have discovered the secrets and become the intimates of divine mysteries. It may assume any form, for even if it be an underground pit, that pit shall become a sheltering paradise, an exalted bower, and a garden of delight. It shall become a centre wherein the spirits are gladdened and the hearts attracted to the Abhá Kingdom.

(From a Tablet—translated from the Persian) **[35]**

As to the design of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár: it should resemble the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of 'Ishqábád. That is, it must be a nine-sided edifice and should be erected so as to evince the utmost spirituality, elegance, loftiness, refinement, and grace, in such wise that it becometh a place which is full of charm. Insofar as possible, effort should be exerted towards ensuring the pleasantness of the site, its freshness and beauty.

(From a Tablet—translated from the Persian) **[36]**

From the Writings of Shoghi Effendi

With the passage of time, the lofty edifice of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár may be reared in the vicinity and surroundings of the historic Bahá'í holy places, enhancing the lustre, spirituality, splendour, grace, and majesty of the Bahá'í institutions and establishing upon the face of the earth, in the most visible and tangible manner, a beauteous likeness and enduring expression of the vital and unbounded spirit of the Cause of Him Who is the Lord of all worlds.

(From a letter dated August 1927 to several National Spiritual Assemblies—translated from the Persian) **[37]**

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 for ever 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. Theirs will be the conviction that an all-loving and ever-watchful Father Who, in the past and at various stages in the evolution of mankind, has sent forth His Prophets as the Bearers of His Message and the Manifestations of His Light to mankind, cannot at this critical period of their civilization withhold from His children the Guidance which they sorely need amid the darkness which has beset them, and which neither the light of Science nor that of human intellect and wisdom can succeed to dissipate. And thus 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.

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 centring around the Dependencies of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, Bahá'í worship, however exalted in its conception, however passionate in fervour, 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. 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 centring 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 centring 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.

(From a letter dated 25 October 1929 to the beloved of the Lord and the handmaids of the Merciful throughout the United States and Canada, in *Bahá'í Administration: Selected Messages 1922–1932* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974, 1998 printing), pp. 184–86) **[38]**

Prayers in any language may be offered in the Temple. Nor is the offering of prayer confined to children. Slight alterations in the text of the prayers are permissible, and I would advise you to give a musical form to the revealed word itself which I feel will be exceedingly effective. I will pray that the Beloved may inspire you to accomplish this great service to His Cause.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 8 April 1931 written on his behalf to an individual believer) **[39]**

I deeply appreciate the continued and self-sacrificing endeavours of the American believers in the face of the grave financial and economic depression into which their country and the whole world is now plunged. That the Temple Edifice should arise under such circumstances, that its elaborate and exquisite ornamentation should be carried out, through the efforts of a mere handful of Bahá'í followers despite the gloom, the uncertainty and the dangers which surround them, is but another evidence of the mysterious, all-compelling power of Bahá'u'lláh Whose blessings will be bountifully vouchsafed to all who arise to carry out His purpose. The Cause is entering upon a period of unprecedented achievements. The full measure of its glory and power will be gradually manifested, if we on our part execute in their entirety the instructions and behests bequeathed to us by our beloved Master.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 20 December 1931 written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada) **[40]**

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 its 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.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 4 July 1939 written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada) **[41]**

From the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, ordained as a house of worship by Bahá'u'lláh in the Kitáb-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 Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds—the scene of their administrative activities—their duties and responsibilities as befits the chosen stewards of His Faith.

(*God Passes By* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974, 2012 printing), p. 539) **[42]**

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.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 25 June 1954 written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, in *The Light of Divine Guidance: The Messages from the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith to the Bahá'ís of Germany and Austria*, vol. 1 (Hofheim-Langenhain: Bahá'í-Verlag, 1982), p. 219) **[43]**

From Letters Written on Behalf of Shoghi Effendi

Among the signs of enkindlement, of grace and edification, of cheer and spirituality, is gathering in the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár at the hour of dawn and offering supplications and prayers in that majestic and luminous Temple. This matter is important and will produce great results. The mere gathering of the friends at dawntide in the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár shall demonstrate the power of the Cause, display the potency and influence of the Word of God, evince the attachment of the hearts to the divine commandments, and clearly manifest the turning of the souls towards the shore of His oneness. Negligence and indifference with respect to this pious act are in no wise permitted.

(From a letter dated 13 December 1928 to the Bahá'ís of Ishqábád—translated from the Persian) **[44]**

As to the character of the meetings in the auditorium of the Temple, he feels that they should be purely devotional in character, Bahá'í addresses and lectures should be strictly excluded. For the present he feels that there would be no objection to having Bahá'í meetings, including addresses and the business sessions of the Convention, held in the Foundation Hall. 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. The more universal and informal the character of Bahá'í worship in the Temple the better. Images and pictures, with the exception of the Greatest Name, should be strictly excluded. 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.

(From a letter dated 11 April 1931 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada) **[45]**

He sincerely hopes that the sight of the Temple, as well as the principles it stands for, will sink down in the heart of the people in that locality and help to attract them to the Faith. It is not sufficient to build a beautiful edifice, we have to fill it with sincere and devoted souls who will seek its spiritual atmosphere.

(From a letter dated 6 May 1931 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada) **[46]**

You asked concerning some plans whereby funds could be gathered for the Temple. Shoghi Effendi believes that the best and noblest method is to have free donations that are made spontaneously and with the sense of making some sacrifice in furthering the Cause. It is with sacrifice that this Temple is to be built. This is the truly worthy method. This principle therefore excludes any method whereby the help of non-Bahá'ís is included. A Bahá'í Temple should be built by the Bahá'ís alone; it is not an ordinary humanitarian activity in which the help of any person could be solicited.

(From a letter dated 14 April 1932 to the Bahá'ís of Kenosha, Wisconsin) **[47]**

Your donations to the Temple as well as the remarkable manner in which you are assisting the believers in their efforts to widen the scope of their publicity work are real and abiding contributions you have made to the Faith. And although at present you are unable to contribute financially as much as you did in former years you should not feel discouraged, much less disappointed. For the best way in which you can effectively support the Temple cause is not through material means but by the moral help which is your primary obligation to extend to those who are in charge of the building of that sacred and unique Edifice. It is devotion, sincerity and genuine enthusiasm which in the long run can ensure the completion of our beloved Temple. Material considerations, though essential, are not the most vital by any means. Had it been otherwise the Temple would have never reached the stage of progress which it has already so well attained. For the resources of the community are limited, and have been severely affected during the last two years by an unprecedented and world-wide economic crisis. But despite all these material obstacles the Temple has made a steady progress and this alone is sufficient to convince every unbiased observer of the divine potency animating the Faith—a potency before which all material difficulties must inevitably wane.

(From a letter dated 30 December 1933 to individual believers) **[48]**

As regards 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 whatever 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 ruling 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.

(From a letter dated 15 June 1935 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada) **[49]**

He was particularly delighted by the efforts that have been exerted to purchase land for the Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds as well as the contributions that have been collected for this eagerly anticipated and meritorious endeavour.... He earnestly hopes that in the course of the current year, the friends will be confirmed in unitedly laying the foundation of that edifice and acquiring a suitable piece of land in the capital city of that country. He stated, moreover, that the completion of this endeavour requires ceaseless cooperation and mutual support, and is conditioned upon sacrifice. This

momentous project will be a prelude to the establishment of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in that region, thus increasing the number of the agencies of the Cause, strengthening its divine institutions, adding to the community's influence and power, and shedding lustre and glory upon them all.

(From a letter dated 14 May 1936 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Egypt—translated from the Arabic) **[50]**

This Bahá'í teaching of human fellowship and kindness implies that we must be always ready to extend every assistance and help we can to those who are in distress and suffering. Bahá'í charity is of the very essence of the Teachings, and should therefore be developed in every Bahá'í community. Charitable institutions, such as orphanages, free schools and hospitals for the poor, constitute an indispensable part of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. It is the responsibility of every local Bahá'í community to ensure the welfare of its poor and needy members, through whatever means possible.

(From a letter dated 26 June 1936 to an individual believer) **[51]**

Concerning the copy of a Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá which you had enclosed in your letter of October 20th and in which the Master defines the order in which Temple accessory buildings are to be constructed: This Tablet, Shoghi Effendi feels, should not be interpreted too rigidly as giving strictly the exact order in which these accessories are to be built. Nor should it be regarded as providing an exhaustive list of the buildings which will in future be erected around the central edifice of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. The International House of Justice will have to lay down definitely the number and order of these future Temple accessories, and to define their relationships to each other, and to the Temple itself. If available, the Guardian would appreciate your sending him the original text of that Tablet.

As to the question of the relationship of an administrative building to the Temple: this also will have to be defined in future, but whatever the actual form which such a relationship may assume, and whatever its details, it should be based on the general principle that these two sets of Bahá'í institutions embody two vital and distinct, yet inseparable, aspects of Bahá'í life: worship and service. The central edifice of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, which is exclusively devoted to purposes of worship, represents the spiritual element, and therefore fulfils a primary function in every Bahá'í Community, whereas all other Temple accessories, whether of a strictly administrative, cultural or humanitarian character, are secondary, and come next in importance to the House of Worship itself.

(From a letter dated 28 January 1939 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada) **[52]**

As regards the whole question of the Temple and services held in it:

He wishes to emphasize that he is very anxious, now that this first and greatest Temple of the West has been built, and will, within a few years, be used for worship and regular services by the Bahá'ís, that no forms, no rituals, no set customs be introduced over and above the bare minimum outlined in the teachings. The nature of these gatherings is for prayer, meditation and the reading of writings from the Sacred Scriptures of our Faith and other Faiths; there can be one or a number of readers; any Bahá'í chosen, or even non-Bahá'í, may read. The gatherings should be simple, dignified, and designed to uplift the soul and educate it through hearing the creative word. No speeches may be made, no extraneous matter introduced.

The use of pulpits is forbidden by Bahá'u'lláh; if, in order to be more clearly heard, the person reading stands on a low platform, there is no objection, but this should not be incorporated as an architectural feature of the building.

...

The reader should stand where he or she will be best seen and heard by all. All minor details regarding this matter are left to the discretion of your Assembly to decide after receiving the advice of experts. As he already informed you, he suggests using fixed rather than movable seats.

Vocal music alone may be used and the position of the singers, or singer, is also a matter for your Assembly to decide; but again, there should be no fixed point, no architectural details marking a special spot. Acoustics should certainly be the main consideration in placing the singers.

...

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.... 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.

(From a letter dated 20 July 1946 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada) **[53]**

The essentials of the design, as stipulated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, are that the building should be nine-sided, and circular in shape. Aside from this, the architect is not restricted in any way in choosing his style of design.

(From a letter dated 25 June 1954 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, in *The Light of Divine Guidance: The Messages from the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith to the Bahá'ís of Germany and Austria*, vol. 1, p. 216) **[54]**

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.

(From a letter dated 10 February 1955 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, in *The Light of Divine Guidance: The Messages from the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith to the Bahá'ís of Germany and Austria*, vol. 1, p. 227) **[55]**

In building the Temple, one must be careful not to be carried away with the ideals and emotions of the situation, but keep oneself firmly on the ground, and realize they are buildings of steel and stone. That which will produce a House of Worship that is pleasing and attractive is what is required—not a replica of the Shrine of the Báb, or the Temple in Wilmette. We are not seeking outstanding examples of architecture, but rather the release that will come from the construction of the first spiritual edifice in Europe.

(From a letter dated 9 November 1956 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria) **[56]**

The influence that this Mother Temple of the whole Pacific area will exert when constructed is incalculable and mysterious. The beloved Master told the American friends that their Temple would be the greatest silent teacher, and there is no doubt that this one building has exerted a profound influence on the spread of the Faith, not only in the United States and the Western Hemisphere, but throughout the world. We can therefore expect that the construction of another

"Mother Temple" in the heart of Australasia, and one in the centre of Africa, as well as one in the heart of Europe, will exert a tremendous influence, both locally and internationally.

(From a letter dated 19 July 1957 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia, in *Messages to the Antipodes: Communications from Shoghi Effendi to the Bahá'í Communities of Australasia* (Mona Vale: Bahá'í Publications Australia, 1997), p. 439) **[57]**

From Letters Written by the Universal House of Justice

We have given careful consideration to the questions you have raised in your letter of January 23, 1964 about the use of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár.

Your Assembly is free to use its discretion in choosing excerpts from the generally recognized scriptures of the older religions.

With reference to your query about the use of several readers in unison, this is permissible provided it does not seem, or become, theatrical in the view of your Assembly. Concerning the placement of the reader, the beloved Guardian has already indicated, "the reader should stand where he or she will best be seen and heard by all."

Music in the House of Worship is to be vocal only, whether by singers or a singer. It does not matter if a guest, a capella choir or soloist is used, provided such use is not made the occasion to publicise services of Worship and the precautions you mention are taken. No doubt the excellent recordings available today would assure the highest quality of performance at low cost, but all references to vocal music in the central Edifice imply the physical presence of the singers.

In a letter through his secretary to a Chicago believer in 1931, "Bahá'í News" No. 55, page 4, Shoghi Effendi expressed the hope that "Now that the Temple is completed it will be filled to the full with pure seeking souls. It should be different from the other Houses of Worship which, even if they are filled, their source of attraction is the music heard. Here the spirit should be so powerful as to awaken the heart of everyone that enters, to the Glory of Bahá'u'lláh."

In conclusion, a review of the closing paragraphs of the beloved Guardian's illuminating message of October 25, 1929, addressed to the American Bahá'í Community, clearly reveals the true nature of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. In them he decries the trappings of elaborate and ostentatious ceremony and warns against any inference "that the interior of the central Edifice itself will be converted into a conglomeration of religious services" offering "a spectacle of incoherent and confused sectarian observances and rites." In his concluding words, Shoghi Effendi links Bahá'í worship and service arising from the Institution of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár as vital to the regeneration of the world, and the secret of the unique position occupied by this lofty, potent and outstanding institution.

(From a letter dated 13 March 1964 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States) **[58]**

Concerning Bahá'í marriage ceremonies, we see no objection to the ceremony being performed on the steps outside the central hall, but we suggest that an even more appropriate place would be the lodge on the Temple grounds. Also, it would be appropriate either before or after the ceremony for prayers and meditations to be recited or chanted in the Temple itself.

(From a letter dated 29 July 1973 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Panama) **[59]**

From the beginning of His stupendous mission, Bahá'u'lláh urged upon the attention of nations the necessity of ordering human affairs in such a way as to bring into being a world unified in all the essential aspects of its life. In unnumbered verses and tablets He repeatedly and variously declared the "progress of the world" and the "development of nations" as being among

the ordinances of God for this day. The oneness of mankind, which is at once the operating principle and ultimate goal of His Revelation, 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 centre of every Bahá'í community round which must flourish dependencies dedicated to the social, humanitarian, educational and scientific advancement of mankind.

(From a letter dated 20 October 1983 to the Bahá'ís of the World) **[60]**

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.

(Riḍván 1996 message to the Bahá'ís of the World) **[61]**

In every land we see a growing thirst for spiritual life and moral clarity. There is recognition of the ineffectiveness of plans and programs for human betterment which are not rooted in lives of spiritual awareness and ethical virtue. Who should be better equipped to satisfy this longing than those who are already inspired by the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and aided by His Power?

...

The spiritual growth generated by individual devotions is reinforced by loving association among the friends in every locality, by worship as a community and by service to the Faith and to one's fellow human beings. These communal aspects of the godly life relate to the law of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár which appears in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. Although the time has not come for the building of local Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs, the holding of regular meetings for worship open to all and the involvement of Bahá'í communities in projects of humanitarian service are expressions of this element of Bahá'í life and a further step in the implementation of the Law of God.

Bahá'u'lláh has written: "We have adorned the heaven of utterance with the stars of divine wisdom and holy ordinances as a bounty on Our part. Verily, We are the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Generous. O friends of God throughout the regions! Know ye the value of these days and cling unto whatsoever hath been sent down from God, the Most Great, the Most Exalted. Verily, He remembereth you in the Most Great Prison, and instructeth you in that which will cause you to draw nigh unto a station that delighteth the eyes of the pure in heart. Glory rest upon you and upon those who have attained unto that living fountain which floweth forth from My wondrous Pen."

It is our prayer at the Sacred Threshold that the greater attention to the spiritual heart of the Teachings which these laws express will enhance the devotion of the friends to the Source of all bounties and attract to the Cause the receptive souls among His spiritually famished children.

(From a letter dated 28 December 1999 to the Bahá'ís of the World) **[62]**

A feature of the Fifth Epoch will be the enrichment of the devotional life of the community through the raising up of national Houses of Worship, as circumstances in national communities permit. The scheduling of these projects will be determined by the Universal House of Justice in

relation to the advancement of the process of entry by troops within countries. This development will unfold throughout successive stages of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Divine Plan. Upon the completion of the Mother Temple of the West, the Guardian started a programme of constructing continental temples. The first among these were the Mashriqu’l-Adhkárs in Kampala, Sydney and Frankfurt, which were built in response to Ten Year Plan goals. The Universal House of Justice continued along these lines with the building of Temples in Panama City, Apia, and New Delhi. But this continental stage has yet to be completed: one more edifice remains to be built. It is with profound thankfulness and joy that we announce at this auspicious moment the decision to proceed with this last project. During the Five Year Plan, erection of the Mother Temple of South America in Santiago, Chile, will commence and thus fulfil a wish clearly expressed by Shoghi Effendi.

(Riḍván 2001 message to the Bahá’ís of the World) **[63]**

Midafternoon on the eleventh day of the Riḍván festival one hundred years ago, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, standing before an audience several hundred strong, lifted a workman’s axe and pierced the turf covering the Temple site at Grosse Pointe, north of Chicago. Those invited to break the ground with Him on that spring day came from diverse backgrounds—Norwegian, Indian, French, Japanese, Persian, indigenous American, to name but a few. It was as if the House of Worship, yet unbuilt, was fulfilling the wishes of the Master, expressed on the eve of the ceremony, for every such edifice: “that humanity might find a place of meeting” and “that the proclamation of the oneness of mankind shall go forth from its open courts of holiness”.

His listeners on that occasion, and all who heard Him in the course of His travels to Egypt and the West, must have but dimly comprehended the far-reaching implications of His words for society, for its values and preoccupations. Still today, can anyone claim to have glimpsed anything but an intimation, distant and indistinct, of the future society to which the Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh is destined to give rise? For let none suppose that the civilization towards which the divine teachings impel humankind will follow merely from adjustments to the present order. Far from it. In a talk delivered some days after He laid the cornerstone of the Mother Temple of the West, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stated that “among the results of the manifestation of spiritual forces will be that the human world will adapt itself to a new social form,” that “the justice of God will become manifest throughout human affairs”. These, and countless other utterances of the Master to which the Bahá’í community is turning time and again in this centennial period, raise awareness of the distance that separates society as it is now arranged from the stupendous vision His Father gifted to the world.

…

In our Riḍván message of 2001, we indicated that in countries where the process of entry by troops was sufficiently well advanced and conditions in national communities were favourable, we would approve the establishment of Houses of Worship at the national level, whose emergence would become a feature of the Fifth Epoch of the Formative Age of the Faith. With exceeding joy we now announce that national Mashriqu’l-Adhkárs are to be raised up in two countries: the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Papua New Guinea. In these, the criteria we set are demonstrably met, and the response of their peoples to the possibilities created by the current series of Plans has been nothing short of remarkable. With the construction of the last of the continental temples in Santiago under way, the initiation of projects for building national Houses of Worship offers yet another gratifying evidence of the penetration of the Faith of God into the soil of society.

One more step is possible. The Mashriqu’l-Adhkár, described by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as “one of the most vital institutions in the world”, weds two essential, inseparable aspects of Bahá’í life: worship and service. The union of these two is also reflected in the coherence that exists among the community-building features of the Plan, particularly the burgeoning of a devotional spirit that finds expression in gatherings for prayer and an educational process that builds capacity for

service to humanity. The correlation of worship and service is especially pronounced in those clusters around the world where Bahá'í communities have significantly grown in size and vitality, and where engagement in social action is apparent. Some of these have been designated as sites for the dissemination of learning so as to nurture the friends' ability to advance the junior youth programme in associated regions. The capacity to sustain this programme, as we have recently indicated, also fuels the development of study circles and children's classes. Thus, beyond its primary purpose, the learning site fortifies the entire scheme of expansion and consolidation. It is within these clusters that, in the coming years, the emergence of a local Mashriqu'l-Adhkár can be contemplated. Our hearts brimming with thankfulness to the Ancient Beauty, we rejoice to inform you that we are entering into consultations with respective National Spiritual Assemblies regarding the erection of the first local House of Worship in each of the following clusters: Battambang, Cambodia; Bihar Sharif, India; Matunda Soy, Kenya; Norte del Cauca, Colombia; and Tanna, Vanuatu.

To support the construction of the two national and five local Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs, we have decided to establish a Temples Fund at the Bahá'í World Centre for the benefit of all such projects. The friends everywhere are invited to contribute to it sacrificially, as their means allow.

Beloved co-workers: The ground broken by the hand of 'Abdu'l-Bahá a hundred years ago is to be broken again in seven more countries, this being but the prelude to the day when within every city and village, in obedience to the bidding of Bahá'u'lláh, a building is upraised for the worship of the Lord. From these Dawning-Points of the Remembrance of God will shine the rays of His light and peal out the anthems of His praise.

(Riḍván 2012 message to the Bahá'ís of the World) **[64]**

In more and more clusters, the programme of growth is increasing in scope and complexity, commensurate with the rising capacity of the Plan's three protagonists—the individual, the community, and the institutions of the Faith—to create a mutually supportive environment. And we are delighted that, as anticipated, there are a growing number of clusters where a hundred or more individuals are now facilitating the engagement of a thousand or more in weaving a pattern of life, spiritual, dynamic, transformative. Underlying the process even from the start is, of course, a collective movement towards the vision of material and spiritual prosperity set forth by Him Who is the Lifegiver of the World. But when such large numbers are involved, the movement of an entire population becomes discernible.

This movement is especially in evidence in those clusters where a local Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is to be established. One such, by way of example, is in Vanuatu.... [A]gainst the background of ongoing expansion and consolidation—the thirtieth cycle of the intensive programme of growth has recently concluded—that the friends are actively exploring, with the rest of the island's inhabitants, what it means for a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, a "collective centre for men's souls", to be raised up in their midst. With the active support of traditional leaders, Tanna islanders have offered no less than a hundred design ideas for the Temple, demonstrating the extent to which the House of Worship has captured imaginations, and opening up enthralling prospects for the influence it is set to exert on the lives lived beneath its shade.

(Riḍván 2014 message to the Bahá'ís of the World) **[65]**

Over two years have elapsed since our announcement at Riḍván 2012 of projects to raise two national and five local Houses of Worship, to be pursued in conjunction with the construction in Santiago, Chile, of the last of the continental Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs. These undertakings, inextricably linked to the development of community life now being fostered everywhere through acts of devotion and service, are further steps in the sublime task entrusted to humanity by Bahá'u'lláh to build Houses of Worship "throughout the lands in the name of Him Who is the Lord of all religions"—centres in which souls may gather "harmoniously attuned one to another"

to hear the divine verses and to offer supplications, and from which "the voices of praise may rise to the Kingdom" and the "fragrance of God" be diffused.

We are deeply moved by the response in every part of the world to our call. Particularly in the nations and localities recently designated for the construction of a House of Worship, we have witnessed the friends' spontaneous expressions of joy; their immediate and heartfelt commitment to lend their share in carrying out the critical work at hand and to increase the dynamism of those activities integral to the emergence of a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár within a population; their sacrificial contributions of time, energy, and material resources, in a variety of forms; and their sustained efforts to awaken growing contingents to the vision of those edifices dedicated wholly to the remembrance of God that will be founded in their midst. Indeed, the ready response of the community of the Greatest Name augurs well for its ability to further these collective undertakings.

...

In four countries, the projects have reached the stage of preparing a design for the Temple edifice. This begins with the selection of potential architects and the formulation of an architectural brief defining the requirements for the structure, and it ultimately results in a contract for the final design. Architects are presented with the singular challenge of designing Temples "as perfect as is possible in the world of being" that harmonize naturally with the local culture and the daily lives of those who will gather to pray and meditate therein. The task calls for creativity and skill to combine beauty, grace, and dignity with modesty, functionality, and economy. A number of architects from near and far have gladly offered their services, and while such contributions are of course welcomed, National Assemblies are giving due regard to the value of engaging architects who are well acquainted with the area where the edifice will be built.

...

As the friends worldwide rejoice in these heartening advances, their energies remain focused on the processes gaining strength in cluster after cluster. In this, they have not failed to appreciate the dynamic interaction between worship and endeavours to uplift the spiritual, social, and material conditions of society. May all those who are thus labouring in towns and cities, neighbourhoods and villages, derive insights from the exertions made to raise up the first two Houses of Worship at the turn of the twentieth century, in the East and then in the West.

In the city of 'Ishqábád, a devoted band of believers who settled from Persia, and who, for a time, found peace and tranquillity in Turkistán, bent their energies towards the creation of a pattern of life that would reflect the exalted spiritual and social principles enshrined in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. In a span of a few decades, this group, originally consisting of a handful of families, was joined there by others and grew to a few thousand believers. This community, fortified by ties of camaraderie and animated by unity of purpose and a spirit of faithfulness, was enabled to reach a high degree of cohesiveness and development, for which it gained renown throughout the Bahá'í world. These friends, guided by their understanding of the divine Teachings, and within the bounds of the religious freedom they were accorded, toiled to create the conditions that would lead to the founding of a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, that "crowning institution in every Bahá'í community". On a befitting tract of land in the centre of the city that had been obtained some years before with the consent of the Blessed Beauty Himself, facilities were built for communal well-being—a meeting hall, schools for children, a hostel for visitors, and a small clinic, among others. A sign of the notable achievements of the Bahá'ís in 'Ishqábád, who in those productive years became distinguished for their prosperity, magnanimity, and intellectual and cultural attainments, was their attention to ensuring that all Bahá'í children and youth were literate in a society with rampant illiteracy, especially among girls. Within such an environment of unified endeavour and progress, and fostered at every stage of development by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, a magnificent House of Worship emerged—the most prominent edifice in the area. For over twenty

years, the friends experienced the heavenly joy of having realized their lofty aim: the establishment of a focal point of worship, a nerve centre of community life, a place where souls gathered at daybreak for humble invocation and communion before flowing out of its doors to engage in their daily pursuits. While the forces of irreligion eventually swept through the region and thwarted hopes, the brief appearance of a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in 'Ishqábád is an enduring testament to the volition and effort of a body of believers who established a rich pattern of life deriving its impetus from the power of the Creative Word.

In the Western Hemisphere, shortly after work commenced on the House of Worship in 'Ishqábád, the members of the nascent Bahá'í community in North America were galvanized to demonstrate their faith and devotion by constructing a Temple of their own, and they wrote in 1903 to seek the Master's consent. From that moment, the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár became inseparably intertwined with the fate of those dedicated servants of Bahá'u'lláh. While progress on this complex project was obstructed over decades by the effects of two world wars and a widespread economic depression, each stage in its development was intimately tied to the expansion of the community and the unfoldment of its administration. On the same day as the interment of the sacred remains of the Báb on Mount Carmel in March 1909, delegates gathered to establish the Bahá'í Temple Unity, a national organization whose elected Board became the nucleus of the far-flung local communities of the continent. This development soon gave rise to the formation of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada. 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself laid the cornerstone of the building during His travels to North America, endowing the Mother Temple of the West with tremendous spiritual potentialities. And contributions for this historic enterprise flowed from Bahá'í centres in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the Pacific—a demonstration of the solidarity and sacrifice of the Bahá'ís of the East and West.

As the followers of Bahá'u'lláh in every land centre their thoughts on God and occupy themselves each day with His remembrance, ceaselessly exerting effort in His Name, let them draw inspiration from these stirring words addressed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to a believer who was devoted to building the first House of Worship, raised under His close and loving direction:

> Hasten now to 'Ishqábád, in the utmost detachment and aflame with the fire of attraction, and convey to the friends of God ardent greetings from 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Kiss thou each one's face and express this servant's deep and sincere affection to all. Do thou on behalf of 'Abdu'l-Bahá move the earth, carry the mortar, and haul the stones for the building of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár so that the rapture of this service may bring joy and gladness to the Centre of Servitude. That Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is the first visible and manifest establishment of the Lord. Therefore, it is this servant's hope that each and every virtuous and righteous soul will sacrifice his all, evince great happiness and exultation, and rejoice in carrying the earth and mortar so that this Divine Edifice may be raised, the Cause of God may spread, and in every corner of the world the friends may arise with the utmost resolve to accomplish this great task. Were 'Abdu'l-Bahá not imprisoned and were there not obstacles in his path, he himself would assuredly hasten to 'Ishqábád and carry the earth for the building of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár with the utmost joy and gladness. It behoveth the friends now to arise with this intention in mind and serve in my place so that in a short time this Edifice may be revealed to all eyes, the loved ones of God may engage in making mention of the Abhá Beauty, the melodies of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár may rise at dawntide to the Concourse on high, and the songs of the nightingales of God may bring joy and ecstasy to the denizens of the All-Glorious Realm. Thus will the hearts rejoice, the souls delight in joyful tidings, and the minds be illumined. This is the highest hope of the sincere ones; this is the dearest wish of them that are nigh unto God.
>
> (From a letter dated 1 August 2014 to the Bahá'ís of the World) **[66]**

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is a unique concept in the annals of religion and symbolizes the teachings of the new Day of God. A collective centre of society to promote cordial affection, the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár stands as a universal place of worship open to all the inhabitants of a locality irrespective of their religious affiliation, background, ethnicity, or gender and a haven for the deepest contemplation on spiritual reality and foundational questions of life, including individual and collective responsibility for the betterment of society. Men and women, children and youth, are held in its embrace as equals. This singular and integral universality is captured in the very structure of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, whose design as a nine-sided edifice conveys a sense of completeness and perfection symbolized by that number.

As the place from which spiritual forces are to radiate, the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is the focal point for dependencies to be raised up for the well-being of humanity and is the expression of a common will and eagerness to serve. These dependencies—centres of education and scientific learning as well as cultural and humanitarian endeavour—embody the ideals of social and spiritual progress to be achieved through the application of knowledge, and demonstrate how, when religion and science are in harmony, they elevate the station of the human being and lead to the flourishing of civilization. As your lives amply demonstrate, worship, though essential to the inner life of the human being and vital to spiritual development, must also lead to deeds that give outward expression to that inner transformation. This concept of worship—inseparable from service—is promulgated by the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. In this connection Shoghi Effendi states:

> Divorced from the social, humanitarian, educational, and scientific pursuits centring around the Dependencies of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, Bahá'í worship, however exalted in its conception, however passionate in fervour, 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.

The Twin Luminaries of this resplendent age have taught us this: Prayer is the essential spiritual conversation of the soul with its Maker, direct and without intermediation. It is the spiritual food that sustains the life of the spirit. Like the morning's dew, it brings freshness to the heart and cleanses it, purifying it from attachments of the insistent self. It is a fire that burns away the veils and a light that leads to the ocean of reunion with the Almighty. On its wings does the soul soar in the heavens of God and draw closer to the divine reality. Upon its quality depend the development of the limitless capacities of the soul and the attraction of the bounties of God, but the prolongation of prayer is not desirable. The powers latent in prayer are manifested when it is motivated by the love of God, beyond any fear or favour, and free from ostentation and superstition. It is to be expressed with a sincere and pure heart conducive to contemplation and meditation so that the rational faculty can be illumined by its effects. Such prayer will transcend the limitation of words and go well beyond mere sounds. The sweetness of its melodies must gladden and uplift the heart and reinforce the penetrating power of the Word, transmuting earthly inclinations into heavenly attributes and inspiring selfless service to humankind.

...

We have called upon the Bahá'ís to see in their endeavours of community building the creation of a new pattern of how society can be. Taken in its entirety, that pattern fosters capacity for service—for the education of young generations, for the empowerment of the youth, for the spiritual education of children, for the enhancement of the capacity to draw upon the influence of the Word of God in accompanying others into the field of service, and for the social and economic advancement of a people in the light of the divine teachings for the age. Essential to that pattern

is the devotional meeting—a communal aspect of the godly life and a dimension of the concept of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár—which represents a marvellous opportunity for your community not only to worship the Almighty and seek His benedictions in your own lives, but to extend to your fellow citizens the spiritual energies of prayer, to restore for them the purity of worship, to kindle in their hearts faith in the confirmations of God, and to strengthen in them, no less than in yourselves, eagerness to serve the nation and humanity and to show constructive resilience in the path of justice.

Beloved friends: Gatherings dedicated to prayer throughout your blessed land, in every neighbourhood, town, village, and hamlet, and the increasing access that your compatriots are gaining to Bahá'í prayers are enabling your community to shine the light of unity in the assemblage of humanity, lending a share to the endeavours of your fellow believers throughout the world. Plant, then, the seeds of future Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs for the benefit of all, and ignite countless beacons of light against the gloom of hatred and inequity.

(From a letter dated 18 December 2014 to the Bahá'ís in Iran) **[67]**

The systematic pursuit of the Plan in all its dimensions gives rise to a pattern of collective endeavour distinguished not only for its commitment to service, but also for its attraction to worship. The intensification of activity which the next five years requires will further enrich the devotional life shared by those who serve side by side in clusters around the world. This process of enrichment is already much advanced: witness, for instance, how gatherings for worship have been integrated into the core of community life. Devotional meetings are occasions where any soul may enter, inhale the heavenly fragrances, experience the sweetness of prayer, meditate upon the Creative Word, be transported on the wings of the spirit, and commune with the one Beloved. Feelings of fellowship and common cause are generated, particularly in the spiritually heightened conversations that naturally occur at such times and through which the "city of the human heart" may be opened. By convening a gathering for worship at which adults and children of any background are welcome, the spirit of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is evoked in any locality. The enhancement of the devotional character of a community also has an effect on the Nineteen Day Feast and can be felt at other times when the friends come together.

(From a letter dated 29 December 2015 to the Conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors) **[68]**

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is "one of the most vital institutions in the world". A Temple and its associated dependencies embody two essential and inseparable aspects of Bahá'í life: worship and service. As a potent symbol and an integral element of the divine civilization towards which Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation ushers all peoples, the House of Worship becomes the focal point of the community from which it emerges. "The holy fragrances of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár", 'Abdu'l-Bahá explains, "vivify the souls of the righteous, and its vitalizing breezes confer life upon the pure in heart." Indeed, its influence is such as to galvanize an entire people to reach for a more profound sense of unified purpose. The gaze of the Bahá'í world is at this hour fixed upon its newly dedicated Temple, and we are certain that this longed-for victory will bring jubilation to the friends everywhere. Yet they will surely not be content to simply rejoice amongst themselves. Inspired by all that this sublime edifice stands for, let them invite others to discover the abiding joy that comes from the praise of God and from service to humankind.

Bowing our heads at the Threshold of the Ancient Beauty, we give thanks that He has enabled His devoted followers to construct so striking a Temple fashioned of glass, stone, and light, nurturing an attraction to the sacred. The gratitude we feel increases our longing for that glorious day when the blessing of a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár will be conferred upon every city and village, and we look first with eagerness to those countries where national and local Houses of Worship are beginning to emerge. May the resplendent sight of what the community of the

Greatest Name has now accomplished in Santiago spur the faithful everywhere to intensify their service, however humble, rendered for the betterment of the world, offered to the Glory of God.

(From a letter dated 14 October 2016 to the Friends Gathered in Santiago, Chile, for the Dedication of the Mother Temple of South America) **[69]**

A full year has yet to pass since the Bahá'í world marked the completion of the last of the continental Houses of Worship, and already a new dawn is breaking in the development of the institution of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. You are gathered at the very dawning-place itself—the site of the first local House of Worship to rise above the horizon in the stage that has now opened. The dedication of this unique edifice is a historic occasion, prefiguring the appearance of many more local as well as national Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs, in obedience to Bahá'u'lláh's commandment revealed in His Most Holy Book: "Build ye houses of worship throughout the lands in the name of Him Who is the Lord of all religions."

...

The emergence of a House of Worship in Battambang ... is a testament to how brightly the light of faith shines in the hearts of the friends there. Its design, the work of an accomplished Cambodian architect, reflects the grace and beauty of that nation's culture; it uses innovative techniques but blends them with forms traditional to the region; it unquestionably belongs to the land from which it has risen. Even before its dedication, the Temple has succeeded in elevating the consciousness of those who reside in its shadow about a theme that is integral to the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár—the inseparability of worship and service in the life of a community. It has fostered a greater appreciation of the importance of unity, now reinforced through the collective worship that will occur within its walls. Its emergence is a spur to the efforts being made to nurture communities of spiritual distinction. It is an edifice of noble purpose, erected by a people of noble spirit.

(From a letter dated 1 September 2017 to the Friends Gathered in Battambang, Cambodia, for the Dedication of the House of Worship) **[70]**

From Letters Written on Behalf of the Universal House of Justice

About the dependencies of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, there are a number of references to these "important accessories" in the Tablets and Addresses of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. For example, He lists a school for orphan children, hospital and dispensary for the poor, home for the incapable, college for higher scientific education and hospice. In another place after listing the foregoing institutions He states that other philanthropic buildings are to be built.... The Universal House of Justice has also said that it has not seen any text requiring that the number of dependencies should be nine.

(From a letter dated 18 March 1974 to an individual believer) **[71]**

A symbol of this process [Bahá'í involvement in development projects] may be seen in the House of Worship and its dependencies. The first part to be built is the central edifice which is the spiritual heart of the community. Then, gradually, as the outward expression of this spiritual heart, the various dependencies, those "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" are erected and function. This process begins in an embryonic way long before a Bahá'í community reaches the stage of building its own Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, for even the first local centre that a Bahá'í community erects can begin to serve not only as the spiritual and administrative centre and gathering place of the community, but also as the site of a tutorial school and the heart of other aspects of community life. The principle remains, however, that the spiritual precedes the material. First comes the illumination of hearts and minds by the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, and then the grass roots stirring of the believers wishing to apply these teachings to the daily life of their community.

(From a letter dated 8 May 1984 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Brazil) **[72]**

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.

(From a letter dated 20 April 1997 to an individual believer) **[73]**

The term "Mashriqu'l-Adhkár", when it refers to a House of Worship, denotes a building, the centre in which the people gather to hear the Word of God and to worship Him. Surrounding this central House of Worship are the dependencies of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, which express worship in the form of service to humanity.

(From a letter dated 24 February 1998 to an individual believer) **[74]**

In carrying out this review, it should be noted that it is permissible to use selections from the Holy Writings as lyrics to be accompanied by musical compositions, and to repeat verses or words. A composer is free to determine the musical style, bearing in mind the spiritual obligation to treat the Sacred Texts with propriety, dignity and reverence....

Furthermore, there is no objection to the repetition of verses from prayers or selections from the Writings in songs in order to conform with musical requirements.

As stated above, slight alterations in the text are permissible, as is repetition of lines as a chorus or of short phrases such as "O God, my God" in order to conform with musical requirements. The musical style of the piece can be determined by the composer, provided that he or she bears in mind the spiritual obligation to treat the Sacred Texts with the propriety, dignity and reverence due them.

(From a letter dated 14 February 2001 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia) **[75]**

The House of Justice was especially delighted to learn of the significant increase in the level of activity at the Temple, including the growing number of core activities involving participants from the wider community.... Building on this foundation, an issue of central importance for your National Assembly to earnestly address concerns the need to foster unity of thought and purpose among the believers regarding ways to bring about an even greater degree of coherence between the endeavours at the House of Worship and the work of expansion and consolidation in the Upolu cluster.

At the heart of these exertions will be the teaching activities and processes of community-building taking place at the Temple. In particular, efforts to share the fundamental teachings of the Faith with visitors and those living in the vicinity and to extend to them an invitation to engage in study circles, devotional gatherings, children's classes, and junior youth groups held on the Temple grounds and in other parts of the cluster will need to be systematized and supported with the necessary human and financial resources. Consideration may also be given to developing a special programme that aims to share a vision of the House of Worship as the spiritual centre of the community and of the influence it can exert in the lives of the surrounding population—a vision of a Temple for the people of Samoa.

It is the ardent hope of the House of Justice that the agencies and believers serving in the Upolu cluster will be empowered to take full advantage of the presence of the House of Worship in their midst as they labour to advance the process of growth and that means of attracting visitors and enhancing their experience will be further refined over time. As with other aspects of Bahá'í community life, success in this endeavour will rest largely upon the friends functioning in a learning mode to ensure that methods and activities are continually reflected upon and improved.

(From a letter dated 27 December 2011 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Samoa) **[76]**

The House of Justice was delighted to learn that discussions among the believers about the significance of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár are creating strong connections with the undertaking and are leading to a broader participation of the Bahá'ís and their friends in this collective endeavour. Increased awareness among the believers in Colombia of the significance of the House of Worship has also generated material contributions from them; this is yet another sign of their spiritual commitment. It is hoped that this initial response will be sustained throughout the life of the project and foster a pattern of regular giving to the funds of the Faith.

(From a letter dated 10 December 2013 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Colombia) **[77]**

A House of Worship is, of course, an integral part of the process of community building, and its construction represents an important milestone in the development of a community. It is the hope of the House of Justice that the friends in ... will, through the zeal and determination with which they pursue the essential activities of the Five Year Plan, hasten the day when it will be timely for a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár to be built in your country.

(From a letter dated 12 December 2013 to an individual believer) **[78]**

In addition, since it is envisioned that the design of the Temple will "harmonize naturally with the local culture and the daily lives of those who will gather to pray and meditate therein", the friends could be encouraged to generate some preliminary ideas about its physical appearance. It is hoped that, ultimately, the design of the House of Worship will draw on elements and symbols with which the people of Kenya naturally identify. These ideas, forwarded to the construction office soon to be established, could be incorporated into the architectural brief defining the requirements for the project.

(From a letter dated 24 September 2014 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Kenya) **[79]**

With regard to your questions concerning the difference between continental, national and local Houses of Worship, the establishment of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár began with the construction of a Temple in various regions of the world. As they were erected, the role of these Houses of Worship in signalling the presence and promise of the Faith was emphasized often in figurative language. The Guardian wrote that a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is a "symbol and harbinger of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh" and frequently called the first in each continent or region a "mother temple". The House of Justice, when referring to the initiation of projects to construct national Houses of Worship, beginning in the Fifth Epoch and following the commencement of the construction in Chile of the last of the continental Temples, writes that it "offers yet another gratifying evidence of the penetration of the Faith of God into the soil of society."

Beyond this symbolic significance, the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is an institution with tremendous practical potentialities. It is envisioned that wherever an Assembly is established, whether local or national, the institutions of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds will in time be raised. "From the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, ordained as a house of worship by Bahá'u'lláh in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas," Shoghi Effendi wrote, "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 Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds—the scene of their administrative activities—their duties and responsibilities as befits the chosen stewards of His Faith."

Furthermore, a House of Worship is to be the spiritual centre of a community and, together with its dependencies that will be created, contributes to a flourishing pattern of collective life. Currently, the first Houses of Worship of each continent serve as the national Temples of the countries in which they are located, and they also serve the communities in their vicinity, playing a significant role in local activities. As the process of growth unfolds, Temples will increasingly be raised at the national and local levels, and much will be learned about their nature and how they contribute to the community-building process. The many aspects of the functioning of this institution will then gradually be manifest. As Shoghi Effendi wrote, "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."

(From a letter dated 26 January 2015 to an individual believer) **[80]**

Lyrics used in songs being performed in the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár need not be confined to the Writings; rather, what is required is that they be based upon Bahá'í or other sacred writings and contain Bahá'í themes. It should be noted that the standard for lyrics used in songs performed is somewhat different from the standard for Writings and prayers to be read or chanted in devotional programmes in Houses of Worship. There is therefore no objection to the use of songs based on the Writings and talks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

(From a letter dated 2 November 2015 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia) **[81]**

Selected Prayers for the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

O Lord, my God! Confirm them in Thy service! Strengthen their backs in bearing the stones for the erection of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár! O Lord, my God! Illumine the faces of these righteous ones with the light that shineth from the dawning-place of Thy mysteries. Verily, thou art the Mighty and the Unconstrained and verily, Thou art the Merciful and the Compassionate.

(From a Tablet—translated from the Arabic) **[82]**

O God, my God!

Lowly, humble, and tearful, I turn my face unto the Kingdom of Thy mercy and the realm of Thy singleness and fervently entreat Thee at the Threshold of Thy oneness to assist Thy true lovers to offer their contribution to the rearing of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in that land—that from this edifice, the splendours of His light may be shed abroad in every direction, and the joyous cries that extol and magnify Thy name may be raised at morn and eventide, ascending upward towards Thy celestial Concourse and Thine all-glorious Horizon.

O Lord, my God! Cause me to hear the accents of their voices and the lamentations of their hearts, despite the great distance that separateth this nearer side of the valley and that "faraway side,"[3] in order that my spirit may rejoice, my heart be gladdened, mine eyes be consoled, my whole being tremble for joy, and mine inmost essence be filled with bliss at such an outpouring of grace, at such manifest splendour.

O Lord, my God! Open wide the doors of Thy blessings unto every soul who ariseth to make offerings for this exalted edifice, this wondrous House of Prayer, this Dayspring of light.

Verily art Thou the Omnipotent, the Mighty, the Powerful, the Tender, the Gracious.

(From a Tablet—translated from the Arabic) **[83]**

O God, my God! I implore Thee with a throbbing heart and streaming tears to aid whosoever expendeth his energy for the erection of this House, and the construction of this Building wherein Thy name is mentioned every morn and every eve.

O God! Send down Thy divine increase on whosoever endeavoureth to serve this edifice and exerteth himself to raise it amongst the kindreds and religions of the world. Confirm him in every good deed in promoting the welfare of mankind. Open Thou the doors of wealth and abundance unto him and make him an heir to the treasures of the Kingdom, which perish not. Make him a sign of Thy bestowals among the peoples and reinforce him by the sea of Thy generosity and bounty, surging with waves of Thy grace and favour. Verily, Thou art the Generous, the Merciful and the Bountiful.

(From a Tablet—translated from the Arabic) **[84]**

O God, my God! Illumine the brows of Thy true lovers and support them with angelic hosts of certain triumph. Set firm their feet on Thy straight path, and out of Thine ancient bounty open before them the portals of Thy blessings; for they are expending on Thy pathway what Thou hast bestowed upon them, safeguarding Thy Faith, putting their trust in their remembrance of Thee, offering up their hearts for love of Thee, and withholding not what they possess in adoration for Thy Beauty and in their search for ways to please Thee.

O my Lord! Ordain for them a plenteous share, a destined recompense and sure reward.

Verily, Thou art the Sustainer, the Helper, the Generous, the Bountiful, the Ever-Bestowing.

(*Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, no. 235) **[85]**

The photograph which thou hadst sent of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár hath been received. It was a source of immense joy, for praise be to God, the beloved of God gathered in the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár with their faces aglow like unto candles, illumining that assemblage with the light of spiritual sentiments.

My God, my Beloved, my heart's Desire! These are servants of the Threshold of Thy holiness who have prostrated themselves before the door of Thy singleness. They have entered the Dawning-Place of Thy praise and the assemblage of Thy light, beseeching Thee, humbly supplicating the Kingdom of Thy oneness, and praying fervently to Thee with their hearts fixed steadfastly upon Thee.

O my Lord! Accept their deeds, commune with them in their prayers, and inspire them with the wonders of Thy mysteries, that they may become the manifestations of Thy bounty amidst Thy creatures and the company of Thy chosen ones amongst Thy people. Verily, Thou art the Gentle, the All-Bountiful, the Gracious, the Merciful, the All-Loving.

(From a Tablet—translated from the Arabic and Persian) **[86]**

Notes

A Statement and Compilation Prepared by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice

1 *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas: The Most Holy Book* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1993, 2009 printing), note 53. ↩
2 Extract 67. ↩
3 Extract 67. ↩
4 Extract 6. ↩
5 Extract 28. ↩
6 Extract 9. ↩
7 Extract 66. ↩
8 Extract 28. ↩
9 Extract 43. ↩
10 Extract 67. ↩
11 From a letter dated 14 October 2016 written by the Universal House of Justice to the friends gathered in Santiago, Chile, for the dedication of the Mother Temple of South America. ↩
12 Extract 69. ↩
13 Extract 29. ↩
14 Extract 1. ↩
15 Extract 31. ↩
16 Extract 35. ↩
17 Extract 16. ↩
18 Extract 30. ↩
19 Extract 25. ↩
20 Extract 16. ↩
21 Extract 13. ↩
22 Extract 30. ↩
23 Extract 57. ↩
24 Extract 28. ↩
25 Extract 69. ↩
26 Extract 10. ↩
27 Extract 21. ↩
28 Extract 3. ↩
29 Extract 67. ↩
30 Extract 67. ↩
31 Extract 67. ↩
32 Extract 68. ↩
33 Extract 62. ↩
34 Extract 68. ↩
35 Extract 28. ↩
36 Extract 38. ↩
37 Extract 58. ↩
38 Extract 49. ↩
39 Extract 53. ↩
40 Extract 45. ↩
41 Extract 53. ↩
42 Extract 81. ↩
43 Extract 75. ↩
44 Extract 75. ↩
45 Extract 37. ↩
46 Extract 25. ↩

47 Extract 67. ↩
48 Extract 41. ↩
49 Extract 60. ↩
50 Extract 66. ↩
51 Extract 64. ↩
52 Extract 38. ↩
53 Extract 60. ↩
54 Extract 18. ↩
55 Extract 38. ↩
56 Extract 66. ↩
57 Extract 67. ↩
58 Extract 67. ↩
59 Extract 8. ↩
60 Extract 35. ↩
61 Extract 61. ↩
62 Extract 63. ↩
63 Extract 63. ↩
64 Extract 64. ↩
65 Extract 64. ↩
66 Extract 78. ↩
67 Extract 64. ↩
68 Extract 65. ↩
69 Extract 64. ↩
70 Extract 70. ↩
71 Extract 66. ↩
72 Extract 20. ↩
73 Extract 22. ↩
74 Extract 50. ↩
75 Extract 48. ↩
76 Extract 66. ↩
77 Extract 66. ↩

A Compilation of Extracts from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Writings of Shoghi Effendi, and the Letters of the Universal House of Justice

1 Ṭihrán ↩
2 Bahá'u'lláh clarifies, in Questions and Answers, no. 15 of *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas: The Most Holy Book*, that by "dawn" is meant "the earliest dawn of day, between dawn and sunrise, or even up to two hours after sunrise." ↩
3 Qur'án 8:42. ↩

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