

Mashriqu'l-Adhkar

by Bahá'u'lláh, Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi and Universal House of Justice

Compiled by Sen McGlinn.

While engulfed in tribulations I heard a most wondrous, a most sweet voice, calling above My head. Turning My face, I beheld a Maiden—the embodiment of the remembrance of the name of My Lord...

(Baha'u'llah, The Summons of the Lord of Hosts, p. 5)

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 Kitab-i-Aqdas, pp. 29-30, para 31)

Blessed is he who, at the hour of dawn, centring his thoughts on God, occupied with His remembrance, and supplicating His forgiveness, directeth his steps to the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar 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-Adhkar 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 Kitab-i-Aqdas, p. 61 para 115)

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-Adhkar. 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 Kitab-i-Aqdas, para 150, p. 74)

QUESTION: Concerning mosques, chapels and temples.

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

(The Kitab-i-Aqdas: Questions and Answers, p. 134)

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

(Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá, pp. 94-95)

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

(Bahá'í Administration, p. 108)

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

(World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 80)

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

(World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, pages 156-157)

The Universal House of Justice, in its Social and Economic Development letter

The readiness of your Assembly, as expressed in your recently cabled message, to transfer the National Bahá'í Secretariat to the vicinity of the Temple in Wilmette has evoked within me the deepest feelings of thankfulness and joy. Your historic decision, so wise and timely, so surprising in its suddenness, so far-reaching in its consequences, is one that I cannot but heartily and unreservedly applaud. To each one of your brethren in the Faith, throughout the United States and Canada, who are witnessing, from day to day and at an ever-hastening speed, the approaching completion of their National House of Worship, the great Mother Temple of the West, your resolution to establish within its hallowed precincts and in the heart of the North American continent the Administrative Seat of their beloved Faith cannot but denote henceforward a closer association, a more constant communion, and a higher degree of coordination between the two primary agencies providentially ordained for the enrichment of their spiritual life and for the conduct and regulation of their administrative affairs. To the far-flung Bahá'í communities of East and West, most of which are being increasingly proscribed and ill-treated, and none of which can claim to have had a share of the dual blessings which a specially designed and constructed House of Worship and a fully and efficiently functioning Administrative Order invariably confer, the concentration in a single locality of what will come to be regarded as the fountain-head of the community's spiritual life and what is already recognized as the mainspring of the administrative activities, signals 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.

(Messages to America, p. 23-24)

The Mashrak-el-Azcar is the most important matter and the greatest divine institute. Consider how the first institute of His Holiness Moses, after His exodus from Egypt, was the “Tent of Martyrdom” which He raised and which was the traveling Temple. It was a tent which they pitched in the desert, wherever they abode, and worshipped in it. Likewise, after His Holiness Christ—may the spirit of the world be a sacrifice to Him!—the first institute by the disciples was a Temple. They planned a church in every country. Consider the Gospel (read it) and the importance of the Mashrak-el-Azcar will become evident.

(Tablets of `Abdu'l-Bahá Abbas, pp. 633-634)

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

(Tablets of `Abdu'l-Bahá Abbas, p. 678)

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

(Tablets of `Abdu'l-Bahá Abbas, p. 681)

When the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar is accomplished, when the lights are emanating therefrom, the righteous ones are presenting themselves therein, the prayers are performed with supplication towards the mysterious Kingdom, the voice of glorification is raised to the Lord, the Supreme, then the believers shall rejoice, the hearts shall be dilated and overflow with the love of the All-living and Self-existent God. The people shall hasten to worship in that heavenly Temple, the fragrances of God will be elevated, the divine teachings will be established in the hearts like the establishment of the Spirit in mankind; the people will then stand firm in the Cause of your Lord, the Merciful. Praise and greetings be upon you.

Now the day has arrived in which the edifice of God, the divine sanctuary, the spiritual temple, shall be

erected in America! I entreat God to assist the confirmed believers in accomplishing this great service and with entire zeal to rear this mighty structure which shall be renowned throughout the world. ... The Temple is the most great foundation of the world of humanity and it hath many branches. Although the Temple is the place of worship, with it is connected a hospital, pharmacy, pilgrims' house, school for the orphans, and a university for the study of high sciences. ... The Temple is not only a place for worship; nay, it is perfect in every way....

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkar is the most important matter and the greatest divine institute. Consider how the first institute of His Holiness Moses, after His exodus from Egypt, was the “Tent of Martyrdom” which He raised and which was the traveling Temple. It was a tent which they pitched in the desert, wherever they abode, and worshipped in it. Likewise, after His Holiness Christ—may the spirit of the world be a sacrifice to Him!—the first institute by the disciples was a Temple. They planned a church in every country. Consider the Gospel and the importance of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar will become evident.

In fine, I hope that all the beloved of God, collectively, in the continent of America, men and women, will strive night and day until the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar be erected in the utmost solidity and beauty.

(Bahá'í World Faith, pp. 414-419)

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

(Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 94)

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

(Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 94)

O ye dear friends of mine! Light up this Assembly with the splendour of God's love. Make it ring out with the joyous music of the hallowed spheres, make it thrive on those foods that are served at the Lord's Supper, at the heavenly banquet table of God. Come ye together in gladness unalloyed, and at the beginning of the meeting, recite ye this prayer:

O Thou Lord of the Kingdom! Though our bodies be gathered here together, yet our spellbound hearts are carried away by Thy love, and yet are we transported by the rays of Thy resplendent face. Weak though we be, we await the revelations of Thy might and power. Poor though we be, with neither goods nor means, still take we riches from the treasures of Thy Kingdom. Drops though we be, still do we draw from out Thy ocean deeps. Motes though we be, still do we gleam in the glory of Thy splendid Sun. O Thou our Provider! Send down Thine aid, that each one gathered here may become a lighted candle, each one a centre of attraction, each one a summoner to Thy heavenly realms, till at last we make this nether world the mirror image of Thy Paradise.

(Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 78)

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.

(Universal House of Justice, Ridvan Message, 1996. The theme of the message was 'Entry by Troops')

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-Adhkar, 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, pp. 93-94)

God willing, in all the states of America in the future there will be erected Temples with infinite architectural beauty, art, with pleasing proportion and handsome and attractive appearances; especially in New York. But for the present, be ye satisfied with a rented place.

(Tablets of `Abdu'l-Bahá Abbas, p. 437)

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

(Tablets of `Abdu'l-Bahá Abbas, p. 418)

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

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

Now, praised be God, ye have succeeded in this. Engage ye in the remembrance of God at dawn; rise ye up to praise and glorify Him. Blessed are ye, and joy be yours, O ye the righteous, for having established the Dawning-Point of the Praises of God. Verily I ask of the Lord that He make you standards of salvation and banners of redemption, rippling high over the valleys and hills.

(Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 95)

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

(Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 95-6)

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkar is one of the most vital institutions in the world, and it hath many subsidiary branches. Although it is a House of Worship, it is also connected with a hospital, a drug dispensary, a traveller's hospice, a school for orphans, and a university for advanced studies. Every Mashriqu'l-Adhkar is connected with these five things. My hope is that the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar 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.

O thou dear handmaid of God! If only thou couldst know what a high station is destined for those souls who are severed from the world, are powerfully attracted to the Faith, and are teaching, under the sheltering shadow of Bahá'u'lláh! How thou wouldst rejoice, how thou wouldst, in exultation and

rapture, spread thy wings and soar heavenward - for being a follower of such a way, and a traveller toward such a Kingdom.

(Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá, pp. 99-100; Tablets of `Abdu'l-Bahá Abbas, p. 627)

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

(Memorials of the Faithful, page 20)

The House of Worship forms the central edifice of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar (the Dawning-place of the Praise of God), a complex which, as it unfolds in the future, will comprise in addition to the House of Worship a number of dependencies dedicated to social, humanitarian, educational, and scientific pursuits. [Bahá'í Administration p. 184] ... Shoghi Effendi envisages that the House of Worship and its dependencies "shall afford relief to the suffering, sustenance to the poor, shelter to the wayfarer, solace to the bereaved, and education to the ignorant".

(The Kitab-i-Aqdas: Notes, pp. 190-191)

It cannot afford lasting satisfaction and benefit to the worshiper 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-Adhkar to facilitate and promote.

(Bahá'í Administration, p. 185)

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

As to your second query, your desire to write a novel in which the general principles underlying the institution of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar would be presented is praiseworthy. The medium of a novel offers a great deal of latitude for an author to elaborate ideas and areas of thought hitherto unexplored. You should be careful, however, not to go beyond what we know about the institution of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar or give interpretations that may not be correct if the Faith and its Teachings are to be explicit in the novel. If, on the other hand, there is no clear connection to the Faith in the novel, you would be free to use your imagination in exploring any ideas which have as their source the principles of the Faith.

(Letter from the Dept of the Secretariat at the Baha'i World Centre to an individual in the UK, dated 15 February 1994).

Nor will the exertions, no matter how disinterested and strenuous, of those who within the precincts of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar will be engaged in administering the affairs of the future Bahá'í Commonwealth, fructify and prosper unless they are brought into close and daily communion with those spiritual agencies centering in and radiating from the central Shrine of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar. Nothing short of direct and constant interaction between the spiritual forces emanating from this House of Worship centering in the heart of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar, 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. ... And of all the institutions that stand associated with His Holy Name, surely none save the institution of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar 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-Adhkar as one of the outstanding institutions conceived by Bahá'u'lláh.

(Bahá'í Administration, p. 186)

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

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

(God Passes By, pp. 339-340)

O thou who art attracted by the Fragrances of God!

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

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

(Tablets of `Abdu'l-Bahá, pp. 57-58)

With reference to the matter of meeting in the Foundation Hall of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar, I feel that the Foundation Hall should serve the purpose both of devotional gatherings where the revealed Word of God is read and chanted, and meetings at which subjects strictly Bahá'í in character are presented, propounded and discussed. I have no doubt that every conscientious and thoughtful Bahá'í will scrupulously and at all times observe the commandment of Bahá'u'lláh and the instructions of Abdu'l-Bahá relative to the maintenance of the sacredness, the dignity, and the universality of an edifice that will in time become God's universal House of Worship.

(Bahá'í Administration, p. 77)

I feel thoroughly convinced, and am moved to share this firm conviction within me with that great company of western believers, that in the speedy resumption of the sorely-neglected construction of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar at Wilmette lies our undoubted privilege, our primary obligation, our most vital opportunity to lend an unprecedented impetus to the advancement of the Cause, not only throughout the West but in every country of the world. I would not stress at this moment the prestige and good name of the Cause, much as they are involved in this most pressing issue, I would not dwell upon the eager expectancy with which the unnumbered followers of the Faith as well as the vast number of the non-believers in almost every section of society throughout the East are awaiting to behold that noble structure rear its head in the heart of that far-western continent; nor would I expatiate on the ineffable beauty of this holy Edifice, its towering glory, its artistic design, its unique character, or its functions in the organic life of the Bahá'í community of the future. But I would with all the strength of my conviction emphasize the immeasurable spiritual significance of an Edifice, so beautiful, so holy, erected solely by the concerted efforts, strained to the utmost degree of self-sacrifice, of the entire body of the believers who are fully conscious of the significance of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. In this vast endeavor, unparalleled in modern times, its world-wide range, its spontaneity, its heroic and holy character, the

American believers, on the soil of whose country Bahá'u'lláh's first universal House of Worship is to be built, must, if they be faithful to their trust, claim and fulfill a pre-eminent share in the collective contributions offered by the Bahá'ís of the world.

(Bahá'í Administration, p. 153)

Again I feel the urge to remind you one and all of the necessity of keeping ever in mind this fundamental verity that the efficacy of the spiritual forces centering in, and radiating from, the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkar in the West will in a great measure depend upon the extent to which we, the pioneer workers in that land will, with clear vision, unquenchable faith, and inflexible determination, resolve to voluntarily abnegate temporal advantages in our support of so meritorious an endeavor. The higher the degree of our renunciation and self-sacrifice, the wider the range of the contributing believers, the more apparent will become the vitalizing forces that are to emanate from this unique and sacred Edifice; and the greater, in consequence, the stimulating effect it will exert upon the propagation of the Faith in the days to come. Not by the abundance of our donations, not even by the spontaneity of our efforts, but rather by the degree of self-abnegation which our contributions will entail, can we effectively promote the speedy realization of Abdu'l-Bahá's cherished desire. How great our responsibility, how immense our task, how priceless the advantages that we can reap!

(Bahá'í Administration, page 154)

As I have already intimated in the course of my conversations with visiting pilgrims, so vast and significant an enterprise as the construction of the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkar of the West should be supported, not by the munificence of a few but by the joint contributions of the entire mass of the convinced followers of the Faith. It cannot be denied that the emanations of spiritual power and inspiration destined to radiate from the central Edifice of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar will to a very large extent depend upon the range and variety of the contributing believers, as well as upon the nature and degree of self-abnegation which their unsolicited offerings will entail. Moreover, we should, I feel, regard it as an axiom and guiding principle of Bahá'í administration that in the conduct of every specific Bahá'í activity, as different from undertakings of a humanitarian, philanthropic or charitable character, which may in future be conducted under Bahá'í auspices, only those who have already identified themselves with the Faith and are regarded as its avowed and unreserved supporters should be invited to join and collaborate. For apart from the consideration of embarrassing complications which the association of non-believers in the financing of institutions of a strictly Bahá'í character may conceivably engender in the administration of the Bahá'í community of the future, it should be remembered that these specific Bahá'í institutions, which should be viewed in the light of Bahá'u'lláh's gifts bestowed upon the world, can best function and most powerfully exert their influence in the world only if reared and maintained solely by the support of those who are fully conscious of, and are unreservedly submissive to, the claims inherent in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh.

(Bahá'í Administration, pp. 181-182)

And while we bend our efforts and strain our nerves in a feverish pursuit to provide the necessary means for the speedy construction of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar, may we not pause for a moment to examine those statements which set forth the purpose as well as the functions of this symbolical yet so spiritually potent Edifice? It will be readily admitted that at a time when the tenets of a Faith, not yet fully emerged from the fires of repression, are as yet improperly defined and imperfectly understood, the utmost caution should be exercised in revealing the true nature of those institutions which are indissolubly associated with its name.

Purpose of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar

Without attempting an exhaustive survey of the distinguishing features and purpose of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar, I should feel content at the present time to draw your attention to what I regard certain misleading statements that have found currency in various quarters, and which may lead gradually to a grave misapprehension of the true purpose and essential character of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar.

It should be borne in mind that the central Edifice of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar, 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 *Kitab-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-Adhkar 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-Adhkar, will gather within its chastened walls, in a serenely spiritual atmosphere, only those who, discarding forever the trappings of elaborate and ostentatious ceremony, are willing worshipers of the one true God, as manifested in this age in the Person of Bahá'u'lláh. To them will the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar 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 in dissipating. 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-Adhkar, as designed by Bahá'u'lláh, is destined to play in the organic life of the Bahá'í community. Divorced from the social, humanitarian, educational and scientific pursuits centering around the Dependencies of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar, Bahá'í worship, however exalted in its conception, however passionate in fervor, can never hope to achieve beyond the meagre and often transitory results produced by the contemplations of the ascetic or the communion of the passive worshiper. It cannot afford lasting satisfaction and benefit to the worshiper 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-Adhkar to facilitate and promote. Nor will the exertions, no matter how disinterested and strenuous, of those who within the precincts of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar will be engaged in administering the affairs of the future Bahá'í Commonwealth, fructify and prosper unless they are brought into close and daily communion with those spiritual agencies centering in and radiating from the central Shrine of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar. Nothing short of direct and constant interaction between the spiritual forces emanating from this House of Worship centering in the heart of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar, 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-Adhkar 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-Adhkar as one of the outstanding institutions conceived by Bahá'u'lláh.

Dearly-beloved friends! May we not as the trustees of so priceless a heritage, arise to fulfill our high destiny?

Your true brother,

SHOGHI.

(Bahá'í Administration, pp. 184-187)

“A most wonderful and thrilling motion will appear in the world of existence,” are Abdu'l-Bahá's own words, predicting the release of spiritual forces that must accompany the completion of this most hallowed House of Worship. “From that point of light,” He, further glorifying that edifice, has written, “the spirit of teaching ... will permeate to all parts of the world.” And again: “Out of this Mashriqu'l-Adhkar, without doubt, thousands of Mashriqu'l-Adhkar will be born.” “It marks the inception of the Kingdom of God on earth.” Again I repeat—and I cannot overrate the vital, the unique importance of the campaign now launched to insure the completion of such an edifice—the immediate destiny of the American Bahá'í Community is intimately and inescapably bound up with the outcome of this newly launched, this severely trying, soul-purging, spiritually uplifting campaign.

(Citadel of Faith, page 69)

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

(Light of Divine Guidance Vol.1, p. 219)

16 June 1912

Talk at Central Congregational Church

Hancock Street, Brooklyn, New York

Notes by Esther Foster

This is a goodly temple and congregation, for—praise be to God!—this is a house of worship wherein conscientious opinion has free sway. Every religion and every religious aspiration may be freely voiced and expressed here. Just as in the world of politics there is need for free thought, likewise in the world of religion there should be the right of unrestricted individual belief. Consider what a vast difference exists between modern democracy and the old forms of despotism. Under an autocratic government the opinions of men are not free, and development is stifled, whereas in democracy, because thought and speech are not restricted, the greatest progress is witnessed. It is likewise true in the world of religion. When freedom of conscience, liberty of thought and right of speech prevail—that is to say, when every man according to his own idealization may give expression to his beliefs—development and growth are inevitable. Therefore, this is a blessed church because its pulpit is open to every religion, the ideals of which may be set forth with openness and freedom. For this reason I am most grateful to the reverend doctor; I find him indeed a servant of the oneness of humanity.

(Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 197)

Rough translations from Ahang Rabbani

The first source is Ishraq-Khavari's *Ganjinih Hudud va Ahkam* (The Treasury of Laws and Ordinances), starting page 230.

The first couple of verses are from *Aqdas*, so I'll skip posting them.

The next one is by Abdu'l-Bahá, addressed to the Spiritual Assembly of Bushruiyh which roughly says:

Mashriqu'l-Adhkar is the dawning place of the lights and meeting place of the pure. When the precious friends come together in those holy gatherings and commence Obligatory

Prayers (namaz), and with wondrous voices (alhan) chant the verses and song the prayers (munajat), the Concourse on High will hear them and cry out: O rejoice and hail! Praise be God that in the nether world, some of the angelic souls of the Abha Kingdom have arisen to prayer and supplication and in a sacred gathering are chanting verses.

In beloved Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablet to Mashhadi Abdu'r-Razzaq-i Qumi (pages of 231-2 of Ganjinih Hudud va Ahkam), we find the following (very tentative translation):

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkar is a magnet for attracting divine confirmations. The Mashriqu'l-Adhkar is the great foundation of the forgiving Lord. The Mashriqu'l-Adhkar is the mighty pillar of the religion of the Creator. The establishment of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar will raise the Word of God. The laudation and praise of God in the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar will gladden the heart of every pious one. The holy fragrance of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar will uplift every righteous one. The life-giving breeze of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar will resuscitate all freemen. The effulgence of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar will light the horizons like the morning sun. The melody of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar will cheer the spirits of the Concourse on High. The chanting of the verses of unity in the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar will bring joy to the denizens of the Abha Kingdom. In this day, the most important of all undertakings and the end of all services before the holy threshold is the establishment of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar.

Next comes the verses of Aqdas about chanting in the MA which everyone is familiar with followed with a series of other extracts from Aqdas about importance of praying and turning to God, etc. The next Tablet quoted by Ishraq-Khavari is from Abdu'l-Bahá and its addressed to Mirza Ali-Asghar Faridi-yi Usku'i:

Changing the location of Mashriqu'l-Adhkar to a better and improved location is permitted. Multiplicity of Mashriqu'l-Adhkar in a single locality is acceptable.

Abdu'l-Bahá has Written in Tablet of Aqa Ni`matu'llah Naraqí:

The sale of the Temple (Mashriqu'l-Adhkar) land for the purpose of repairs of another Mashriqu'l-Adhkar is referred to the House of Justice. Whenever its formed, will rule on the matter

(see also Promulgation of Universal Peace, pages 65-67; 71-72; 163-164; Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá 93-100)

And from another posting:

This is from the Hannen notes of 1909:

Wherever the heart of a believer sincerely worships there is a Mashrak-el-Azkar, but with the growth of the Cause the outward Temple is also necessary.

From the Woodcock notes of 1910:

Question: What is the difference between a church and a Mashrak-el-Azkar?

Answer: A church is a meeting house where sermons are preached by paid preachers, whereas a Mashrak-el-Azkar represents the body of the Manifestation, from which will radiate the highest religious teaching of the whole world. From the Mashrak-el-Azkar praises to God must shine forth, both spiritual and material. Divine souls must be gathered around it—souls who shine like a sun. Just as the body of Jesus confirmed His Manifestation, so will the Mashrak-el-Azkar confirm the Manifestation of Bahá-o-llah.

The most important point is that from the Mashrak-el-Azkar must go forth not only Spiritual necessities, but also material needs such as hospitals, schools, orphanages, hospices, etc., etc.

From the Sears' party's notes of 1954:

Ruhiyyih Khanum told Shoghi Effendi that she thought that one of the pilgrims was being too spiritual,

and that the pilgrim should not go up to the Shrine at dawn each morning but should remain in bed the next morning and rest. Shoghi Effendi replied that it is good to be both spiritually active and administratively active, both spiritual and material. This is essential, he said. We must have both. Activity he said, increases spirituality. But, he added, it is possible to be active without being spiritual. We must pray, supplicate, then serve. We have our spiritual center, the Shrine, now we are erecting our administrative center, the auxiliary buildings. It is like the Temple and its dependencies. First the spiritual center, then the social or welfare agencies where this spirit can be put into operation. Both are necessary. Both, he said, are necessary for the life of the individual, as well as for the life of the institution or the life of society.

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