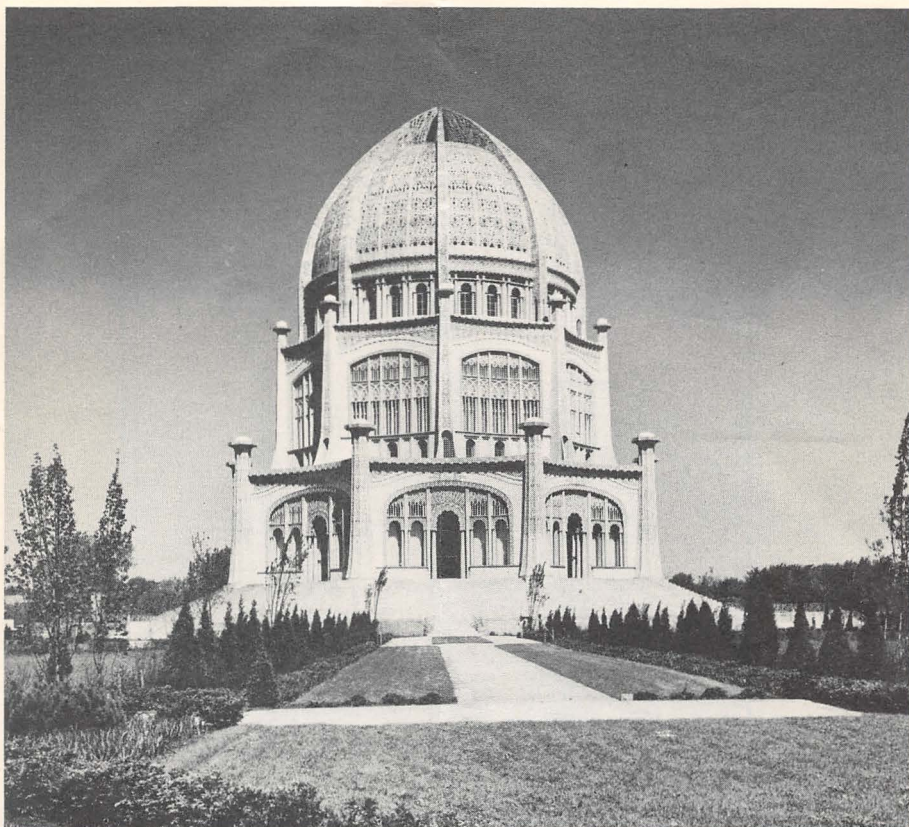


THE  
BAHÁ'Í  
HOUSE  
OF  
WORSHIP



THE BAHÁ'Í HOUSE OF WORSHIP  
WILMETTE, ILL.

NINE SELECTED UTTERANCES OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH  
CARVED ABOVE THE ENTRANCES OF THE TEMPLE

"The earth is but one country; and mankind its citizens."

"The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me."

"My love is My stronghold; he that entereth therein is safe and secure."

"Breathe not the sins of others so long as thou art thyself a sinner."

"Thy heart is My home; sanctify it for My descent."

"I have made death a messenger of joy to thee; wherefore dost thou grieve?"

"Make mention of Me on My earth that in My heaven I may remember thee."

"O rich ones on earth! The poor in your midst are My trust; guard ye My Trust."

"The source of all learning is the knowledge of God, exalted be His glory."

# The Meaning of the Temple

W. KENNETH CHRISTIAN

**A**LL THROUGH the ages men have erected places of worship to express their belief in God and their idea of religion. Thus men have been gathered together in prayer and worship. In varied ways men have reached out to God — the Jew, the Hindu, the Buddhist, the Christian, the Muslim, in synagogues, temples, cathedrals, and mosques.

Now that the world is a neighborhood, the building of this House of Worship has a special meaning. In an age that demands unity for survival, men no longer can afford the price of separation. This House of Worship is a symbol of hope to those men and women who want to live in a united and peaceful world.

## The Building of the Temple

Bahá'u'lláh, the Founder of the Bahá'í World Faith, was born in Persia in 1817. He died in 1892, a religious exile banished to the Holy Land. He taught that the time had come for the people of the world to unite in a common faith and a common social order.

Among His teachings was a plan for a community center. Bahá'u'lláh wrote that in every community there should be a beautiful House of Worship open to all men and women for prayer and meditation. This building should be surrounded by scientific, educational, and humanitarian institutions to apply religion in all phases of life.

In 1903 the American Bahá'ís wanted to build such a Temple. They were only a few hundred in number. They had no funds and owned no property.

They had no architectural design. But their faith was deep, so they made a beginning.

Slowly they collected funds and bought the property on which the Temple now stands. In 1920 a competition was held for architects in order to get a design. At a national convention of Bahá'ís held in New York City that year, the design of Louis Bourgeois, a French-Canadian architect, was selected.

In 1920-21 the caissons for the building were sunk down to bedrock, and the foundation basement for the future Temple was completed. For about ten years no further progress was made. This enabled the Bahá'ís to accumulate the needed funds for the next stage of construction. And it gave the engineers time to solve some unprecedented construction problems.

The major problem was how to create Bourgeois' magnificent design in permanent material. John J. Earley, an architectural sculptor, finally solved this problem. He developed a method of using cement as a plastic material and casting it in forms. The pattern for each form was first cut in plaster by sculptors. Also, he worked out a formula for casting a mixture of white cement and portions of ground crystalline quartz in the sculptured molds. The resulting sections of cast stone were hung piece by piece as the permanent ornamentation for the Temple.

Work on the superstructure began in 1930. In structure the Temple is actually a great concrete, steel and glass building, to which, both inside and



VIEW OF THE TEMPLE AUDITORIUM

NINE SELECTED UTTERANCES OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH  
APPEARING IN THE TEMPLE ALCOVES

- “All the prophets of God proclaim the same faith.”  
“Religion is a radiant light and an impregnable stronghold.”  
“Ye are the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch.”  
“So powerful is unity's light that it can illumine the whole earth.”  
“Consort with the followers of all religions with friendliness.”  
“O Son of Being! Thou art My lamp and My light is in thee.”  
“O Son of Being! Walk in My statutes for love of Me.”  
“Thy Paradise is My love; thy heavenly home reunion with Me.”  
“The light of a good character surpasseth the light of the sun.”

out, has been applied the plastic-type, pre-cast stone. In June, 1932 the task of applying the ornamentation to the superstructure was started. One section was finished at a time, as funds were available to the Bahá'ís. In January, 1943 all of the exterior, including the steps, was finished.

During the war no further work was undertaken. Then in November, 1947 work began on the interior. The same kind of material used for the exterior of the Temple was chosen. Landscaping of the grounds started in April, 1952. The public service of dedication was held on May 2, 1953.

Because the design is unusual, people try to find a single term for the Temple architecture. Some point out traces of different styles — Egyptian, Romanesque, Arabic, Renaissance and Byzantine. By suggestions of these various styles Bourgeois has indicated the repeated efforts of men to glorify God. Although individuals may see various meanings in the architecture and design, the essential thing is that the Temple stands for unity.

Each Bahá'í Temple is to have nine sides. This is the only architectural requirement in the Bahá'í teachings. Nine is the largest single number and symbolizes comprehensiveness, oneness, and unity.

### **Bahá'í Worship**

The purpose of a House of Worship is to bring men and women together in unity. "For thousands of years the human race has been at war. It is enough. . . . For thousands of years the nations have denied each other, considering each other as infidel and inferior. It is sufficient. We must now realize that we are the servants of one God, that we turn to one beneficent Father, live under one divine law, seek one reality and have one desire. Thus may we live in the utmost friendship and love, and in return the favors and bounties of God shall surround us, the world of humanity will be reformed, mankind enjoy a new life . . ."

The auditorium of the Temple is open to all people for prayer and meditation. No race or religion is barred. Services here are not elaborate. There is no ritualism or set form. Bahá'ís have no professional clergy to preside. Sermons or lectures are not permitted in the auditorium. Services are for prayer, meditation, and the reading of selections from the Sacred Scriptures of the Bahá'í Faith and the other great Faiths of the world. The only music is by soloists and a cappella choir.

The curtains at the windows in the auditorium insure the privacy of the worshipper. The quotations from the writings of Bahá'u'lláh which appear in the alcoves attest to the unity of religion and its power to transform human character.

The seats in the central part of the auditorium face the Holy Land. Above the heads of the worshippers, in the apex of the dome, is the symbol of the Greatest Name. This is an invocation to God in Arabic script which may be translated as "O Glory of the All-Glorious."

But Bahá'í worship means more than prayer and meditation. Bahá'u'lláh said that any work done in a spirit of service is a form of prayer. The educational, humanitarian, and scientific institutions to be built around the Temple will complete the dedication of the individual to God. To the Bahá'í there is no rigid division between the spiritual and practical parts of life.

Bahá'ís do not solicit funds from the public for any of their activities. From all over the world the Bahá'ís have contributed to the erection of this building. Funds have come from Persia, India — in fact, from all the five continents. This Temple is both a gift from Bahá'ís and a demonstration of their Faith. Here is a building where men and women of all races and religions are welcome to come for prayer. Here no creed stigmatizes the follower of any great faith as infidel or pagan. Here all men may turn their hearts to God and know that they are brothers.

# The Faith of Bahá'ís

**T**HE PEOPLE who built this House of Worship are Bahá'ís. They bear this name as members of a World Faith. The word "Bahá'í" comes from the name of the Founder of the Faith — Bahá'u'lláh ("the Glory of God"). Bahá'í simply means "a follower of Bahá'u'lláh."

The Faith of Bahá'u'lláh is called the "Bahá'í World Faith." There are three reasons for this.

First, Bahá'ís live in more than two hundred countries of the world. Bahá'ís are people who formerly had different and conflicting religious backgrounds. They had been Buddhists, Jews, Muslims, Zoroastrians, Hindus, Christians, or else people who had no religion at all. They have found in the Bahá'í Faith a basis of unity that makes the competition of sects and denominations seem unimportant to them. Bahá'ís are people of different economic and social classes. Through a common devotion, rich and poor mingle as equals and work together to establish a world order for all men and women. They are people of different national and racial backgrounds. But the Bahá'í teachings have given them a higher loyalty — the loyalty to humanity. Bahá'ís have no "color line" or racial segregation. In this Faith, people of all races find equality with each other because they are equal before God.

Second, the Bahá'í Faith develops world-mindedness. Read these well-known Bahá'í quotations: . . . "Let your vision be world-embracing, rather than confined to your own selves." . . . "That one indeed is a man who, today, dedicateth himself to the service of the entire human race."

Third, the Bahá'í Faith offers a clear pattern of world order. It does not have any secret mystic doctrines; it does not have any priesthood or professional clergy. People find this a practical, spiritual religion with the mission of uniting the world in one common faith and one order. Bahá'u'lláh declared that in our time religion must unite people or else it has no social value.

He declared that religion must show men how to build a just world. He emphasized that justice is the greatest good in the sight of God. To show men how to achieve this, He outlined a pattern of world order.

Bahá'u'lláh's vision of a united world begins with each man and woman. Individuals must have high moral standards and a new basis of belief if they are to become citizens of one world.

Bahá'ís believe in one God, even though men have called Him by different names. God has revealed His Word in each period of history through a chosen Individual Whom Bahá'ís call "the Manifestation of God." He re-states in every age God's purpose and will. His teachings are a revelation from God. Abraham, Moses, Buddha, Zoroaster, Christ, and Muḥammad were Manifestations of God. Each gave men divine teachings to live by. Bahá'ís believe that true religion is the real basis of civilized life.

Since there is one God, these Manifestations of God have each taught the same religious faith. They have developed and adapted it to meet the needs of the people in each period of history. This unfoldment of religion from age to age is called "progressive revelation." Bahá'u'lláh, the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, is the Manifestation of God for our time.

This is the basis of Bahá'í belief: one God has given men one Faith through progressive revelations of His Will in each age of history, and Bahá'u'lláh reveals the Will of God for men and women of the present age. This basic belief enables Bahá'ís to unite and work together in spite of different religious backgrounds.

The Oneness of Mankind is like a pivot around which all the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh revolve. This means that men and women of all races are equal in the sight of God and equal in the Bahá'í community. People of different races must have equal educational and economic opportunity, equal

access to decent living conditions — and equal responsibilities. In the Bahá'í view, there is no superior race or superior nation.

Bahá'u'lláh declared that a House of Justice must be established in each community. This body, elected by the people, is to be composed of men and women so qualified that they may be "trustees of the Merciful among men." Each nation will have a Secondary or National House of Justice whose members will elect the International House of Justice. This international legislature will make the laws for a federalized world.

Bahá'u'lláh emphasized certain principles to help bind people together in a united world:

Men must seek for truth in spite of custom, prejudice, and tradition.

Men and women must have equal opportunities, rights, and privileges.

The nations must choose an international language to be used along with the mother tongue.

All children must receive a basic education.

Men must make a systematic effort to wipe out all those prejudices which divide people.

Men must recognize that religion should go hand-in-hand with science.

Men must work to abolish extreme wealth and extreme poverty.

This Faith and these challenging ideas originated in Persia (Írán) in 1844. In that year a young Man Who called Himself the Báb (or "Gate") began to teach that God would soon "make manifest" a World Teacher to unite men and women and usher in an age of peace. The Báb attracted so many followers that the Persian government and the Islamic clergy united to kill Him. And they massacred more than twenty thousand of His followers.

In 1863 Bahá'u'lláh announced to the few remaining followers of the Báb that He was the chosen Manifestation of God for this age. He called upon people to unite; He said that only in one common faith and one order could the world find an enduring peace. He declared that terrible wars would sweep the face of the earth and destroy the institutions and ideas that keep men from their rightful unity.

The teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are a ringing call to action. They offer hope, courage, and vision. The books of Bahá'u'lláh in English are: *The Hidden Words*, *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, *The Book of Certitude*, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, *Prayers and Meditations*, and *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. A selection of His writings is in the anthology called *Bahá'í World Faith*.

But Bahá'u'lláh was not greeted with enthusiasm by the religious leaders of Islám. As they saw His Faith spread, their hatred grew. They forced Him into exile — first to Baghdád, then to Constantinople, to Adrianople, and finally to 'Akká, Palestine. There He died, still an exile and prisoner, in 1892.

Bahá'u'lláh appointed 'Abdu'l-Bahá, His eldest son, as the Interpreter of His teachings and the Exemplar of the Faith. Under the leadership of 'Abdu'l-Bahá the Faith was introduced to Europe and America. After He was freed from prison in 1908, 'Abdu'l-Bahá made several missionary journeys. In 1912 He was in America for eight months during which time He laid the cornerstone of this Temple.

In 1921 'Abdu'l-Bahá died and left a will naming His eldest grandson, Shoghi Effendi, the first Guardian of the Faith and the interpreter of the teachings. Under Shoghi Effendi's direction the Bahá'ís throughout the world have adopted an administrative order that is an application of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings for a world order. Thus Bahá'ís have begun to practice in their own affairs the social teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

Local and National Bahá'í Spiritual Assemblies are the pattern for the Houses of Justice of tomorrow. Bahá'ís know from increasing experience that differences of nation, race, class, and religion can be removed by the uniting power of Bahá'u'lláh. Bahá'ís know from increasing experience that this Faith can save men and women from the hatreds, the pessimism, the corruption, and the materialism of our age. They know this because they have seen it and experienced it. They invite you to investigate this Faith and share in this spiritual adventure.

# Statistical Data

Total cost of construction .....	\$2,613,012
Area of Temple property .....	6.97 acres
Seating capacity of auditorium .....	1,200

## Chief dimensions of structure:

Height from floor of basement to pinnacle of dome ribs .....	191 feet
Height of structure from main floor to pinnacle of dome ribs ..	165 feet
Height of auditorium from main floor to inside apex of dome .	138 feet
Depth of caissons .....	120 feet
Diameter of basement floor .....	204 feet
Diameter of circular platform at top of outside steps .....	152 feet
Height of first gallery above main floor .....	36 feet
Height of mainstory pylons .....	45 feet
Height from first gallery to second gallery .....	45 feet
Clerestory height to base of dome .....	19 feet
Height of dome .....	49 feet
Outside diameter of dome .....	90 feet
Inside diameter of dome .....	72 feet
Number of sections of ornamentation comprising the dome and ribs .....	387
Perforation of dome surface .....	30%

Architect — Louis J. Bourgeois

Architect for Interior Design — Alfred P. Shaw, of Shaw, Metz and Dolio

Ornamentation Process — John J. Earley Studios

Landscape Architect — Hilbert E. Dahl, of Berg and Dahl

Supervising Engineers —

Major Henry J. Burt  
Benjamin B. Shapiro  
F. H. Newell  
Allen B. McDaniel

General Contractors —

George A. Fuller Company