

is the Lord of all religions. Make them as perfect as is possible in the world of being, and adorn them with takes on greater social significance in that which befitteth them, not with images and effigies. Then, with radiance and joy, celebrate therein the charitable, educational, and scientific purpraise of your Lord, the Most Compassionate.” While Baha’i temit was Bahá’u’lláh who instituted the Baha’i temple, it ple “is one of the most vital institutions in the world,” was ‘Abdu’l-Baha (1844–1921)—Bahá’u’lláh’s eldest son, interpreter, and successor—who further elaborated on its essential architectural character and social purposes. ‘Abdu’l-Baha encouraged Baha’is to establish and “other philanthropic buildings”—such as Mashriqu’l-Adhkars in every “hamlet and city.” If not the aged—open to people of all races, relipossible due to persecution, then a Mashriqu’l-Adhkar gions, and ethnicities. Thus the Baha’i temple is part could even be “underground.” vision of community building and urban

Linking

house of worship

that it is not

to medical,

your Lord, the Most

a hospital, a

school for

studies”

a home for

of a grand

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planning, universally conceived and locally planned. preached nor rituals performed. Sermons In the words of Shoghi Effendi, Bahá’u’lláh’s grand-rituals, as commonly understood, are not part of son and “Guardian” of the Baha’i Faith from 1921 to practice anywhere, and the Baha’i Faith has no 1957, each house of worship and its dependencies pulpits is expressly forbidden in the “shall afford relief to the suffering, sustenance to the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, not just in the temples. No fixed speakpoor, shelter to the wayfarer, solace to the bereaved, er’s platforms or altars are allowed, although readers and education to the ignorant.” sacred scriptures from behind an unadorned, Also associated with each Baha’i house of worship During devotional programs, invited —although not part of the temple complex, strictly any faith—recite or chant, in any language, speaking—is a center for Baha’i administration, known

mons may be

and

Baha’i

clergy. Use of

may read

portable lectern.

readers—of

the sacred

scriptures of the Baha'i Faith and of other religions. as a Haziratu'l-Quds (an Arabic term meaning "Sa-Bahá'u'lláh exhorts parents to teach their children to cred Fold"), although it is not to be connected to the children to memorize passages from the Baha'i writings, so that Baha'i temple as such. An institution complementary to the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar, the Haziratu'l-Quds may they may chant or recite them in the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar. In the Baha'i house of worship consist of a council chamber, secretariat, treasury, public in Wilmette, devotional services are currently held at 12:30 p.m. lishing trust, archives, library, and assembly hall, and daily. may be situated near the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar, although Music is regarded as a vital part of worship. Prayers and readings set this is not a requirement, as is already the case in Wilmette, Illinois, where the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar—as the soloists a cappella, as only the human voice, with no accompaniment by headquarters of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States—is located in Wilmette toned during musical instruments, may be in- worship in the and in nearby Evanston. Temple Auditorium, not to Baha'i wor- ship generally, The basic design for a Baha'i house of worship is which includes music of all kinds. Indistinctive in that each temple requires three essential struments may be played in the vicinity of the Baha'i elements: (1) a nine-sided, (2) circular shape, (3) sur- temple, however. On November 22, 2000, in New Delhi, India, for rounded by nine gardens with walkways. In Baha'i instance, the opening ceremony of the interthought, the number nine symbolizes completion, per- national "Colloquium on Science, Religion and Develfection, and the unity of religions in their pure form. opment" featured a concert of classical Indian music performed, with Nine likewise represents the numerical value of the Ara- performed, with traditional instruments, on the grounds bic word, "Bahá'," from which the words "Bahá'u'lláh" of the Baha'i Lotus Temple in New Delhi, India. In the and "Baha'i" (follower of Bahá'u'lláh) are derived. the Wilmette temple, instrumental music has been per- formed in the While a dome is not an essential requirement, it has so formed in the meeting room below. At far been a structural feature of all Baha'i temples, as present, there is a Baha'i house of worship on Shoghi Effendi advised in 1955 that "at this time all each continent of the world, with the construction of

Baha'i temples should have a dome." Beyond these national and local houses of worship reserved for the future, as essentials, a Baha'i temple is typically designed to be future, as resources permit. The resources, or funds, necessary to culturally distinctive, often incorporating indigenous necessary to erect and maintain these institutions comes from the regular architectural influences in the design. Each design is selected for its intrinsic merit, irrespective of whether the or earmarked contributions of Baha'is only. Accepting donations from outside sources is strictly architect is Baha'i or not. Two houses of worship—in Frankfurt and Panama—were designed by architects of contributing to the Baha'i funds. While each Baha'i temple is not affiliated with the Baha'i Faith, while other non-administered and maintained by the naaffiliated architects have collaborated in perfecting the tional Baha'i council (known as a National Spiritual designs in Ishqabad and Sydney. Assembly) of the country in which the temple is located, the ultimate The doors of all Baha'i houses of worship are open cated, the ultimate oversight of the continental Baha'i houses of to people of all religions, races, and nations. No ser- worship is by the international governing

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Temples—Baha'i Faith | 2819

Baha'i council, called the Universal House of Justice, Shoghi Effendi, is "the noblest structure reared in the first Baha'i established in 1963. There are now seven Baha'i tem- century, and the symbol and precursor of ples, with a eighth under construction, although the a future world civilization."

first Baha'i temple, which no longer exists, would bring The third Baha'i temple is located in Africa, on the number to nine. Kikaya Hill on

the outskirts of Kampala, Uganda. It was designed by The first Baha'i temple was built in Ashgabat was designed by Charles Mason Remey, who worked closely with (Ashkhabad) in Russia's Transcaspian Territory (now closely with Shoghi Effendi in refining the design.

Turkmenistan). It was first planned during the ministry Building commenced in May 1957, and the temple of Bahá'u'lláh. This temple was designed by Ustad was dedicated on January 15, 1961. Standing at nearly 124.7 feet in 'Alí-Akbar Banna of Yazd, under the direct super- vision of 'Abdu'l-Baha, during the height, the temple was the highest struc- vision of 'Abdu'l-Baha, during the former's visit to ture in East Africa at the time of its

universal shelter.” ples were dedicated by Rúhíyyih Rabbani, in fact.

The principal architect, Louis J. Bourgeois (French-Canadian), who originated the exterior design in 1919, mountain seven miles north of Panama City, likened the Wilmette house of worship to a “Great cornerstone was laid on October 8, 1967. Bell, calling to America.” Alfred Shaw of Shaw, Metz, English architect Peter Tillotson, conand Dolio, designed the exterior and interior cladding, struction commenced on December 1, 1969, and the made of white Portland cement concrete with both clear temple was dedicated on April 29, 1972. The temple’s parabolic dome and white quartz aggregate. The temple was dedicated is built on the principle of a shell. Adorning the dome’s supporting walls are abstract designs, in red Register of Historic Places and has received presti-marble chips, that evoke the decor of temples of gious design awards. “This unique edifice,” wrote the ancient Americas. Mahogany seats, set

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on a terrazzo floor, complete the interior space, which the “Paul Waterbury Special Citation for Outdoor Lightseats 550 people. ing” by the Illuminating Engineering Society of North

The seventh Baha’i temple was built in Western America for what was described as “the Taj Mahal of Samoa, in the Pacific Ocean, at Tiapapata, in the hills the Twentieth Century.” In 1990, the American Conbehind Apia. Designed by Hossein Amanat, the foun-crete Institute recognized Sahba with its “Finest Condatation stone was laid on January 27, 1979, by His crete Structure in the World” award.

Highness Susuga Malietoa Tanumafili II, Head of State The ninth Baha’i temple, near Santiago in Chile, is the last of of Samoa—the first ruling head of state in the world to become a Baha’i—and by Hand of the Cause, Rúhíyyih by Siamak Hariri of Toronto, Canada, this temple is conceived of as a Rabbani, representing the Universal House of Justice. in the words of Hariri, both dignitaries also were prominent in the dedication the architect, be “both monumental and intimate, subtly of the house of worship on September 1, 1984. structured and ordered yet capable of

The eighth Baha'i temple, known as the Lotus Temple because of its shape, was built near Nehru Place, at Bahapur, in New Delhi, India. Designed by Fariburz Sahba, a Canadian of Iranian birth, the Lotus Temple was conceived as a lotus that appears to float allowing sunlight to filter through during the day, and emitting a warm glow from the interior lightrows of nine petals each on the outside of the temple—ing at night. Gracefully torqued, these wings wrap around the interior of the dome, creating a nest-like structure. Each wing is made of two delicate skins of semitransparent, subtly gridded alabaster, with a steel structure enclosed in curving glass in between, with its "Báb" and "Bahá'"—commemorating the two prophet-ary support members, like the structural veining within a leaf. The primary purpose of the nine surrounding ponds is to reflect the temple. In its April 2001 message, the Universal House of Justice announced that the completion of the continof the lotus blossom was revered by all the religions of tal houses of worship would pave the way for the next stage of the Indian subcontinent. Construction began on April Mashriqu'l-Adhkár development: the construc- tion of national houses of worship, as circumstances permit. Wherever possible, each National Spiritual Assembly has purchased a temple site for its national house of worship. The Lotus Temple has enjoyed international re- spected and critical acclaim, having received prestigious awards from architectural and engineering societies. In a two-square mile parcel of land, named Hadíqa, on the slopes of In northeast Tehran, Iran, for instance, 1987, the Lotus Temple received a "Structural Award"

Mount Alburz, had previously been procured from the Institution of Structural Engineers of the United Kingdom (the world's leading professional body for structural engineering) for excellence in structural engineering (excellence, creativity and innovation, sustainability, value, and buildability). In that same year, Shoghi Effendi who heralded the Baha'i Sahba was honored with the "First Honor Award—worship in Wilmette as "the symbol and precursor of a future world civilization." If their respeccon Religion, Art and Architecture Affiliate of the American Institute of Architects. In 1988, Sahba was given missions are progressively implemented, then

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the sacred purpose of the Baha'i houses of worship—Baha'i Faith; Bahá'u'lláh. continental, national, and local—will have been realized, and the concept of worship transformed into one of service to humanity. of Worship around the World. Oxford: George Ronald, 1992. Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Committee designated two Baha'i shrines in Israel—the Shrine of the Báb on Mount Carmel in Haifa, Israel, and the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh, located near Old Acre on Israel's northern coast—as World Heritage sites. They were the first modern religious edifices to be added to the UNESCO list. Not only are these Baha'i shrines places of commemoration for

See also:

Structural Design and Construction of Two the Báb (1819–1850) and Bahá'u'lláh (1817–1892), the Baha'i Houses of Worship." The Structural Engineer 65, no. 3 (1987).

eight existing Baha'i houses of worship also attracts Rafati, V[ahid] and F[ariburz] Sahba. "Bahai Faith international attention as well.

IX. Bahai Temples." In "Bahai Faith Part 2."

In 2007 the state of Illinois announced that the Encyclopedia Iranica, edited by Ehsan Yarshater. Baha'i house of worship in Wilmette (north of Chicago) had been popularly voted, in an online poll, as one of the "Seven Wonders" of Illinois. On the other side of the world, in New Delhi, India, the Baha'i Lotus Temple, with more than 4.6 million visitors in 2007, is one of the world's most popular tourist attractions today. All of the houses of worship are open to people of all faiths for prayer and meditation, reflecting the Baha'i belief that the world's great religions have come from the same God in critical moments throughout history, as part of a process called "Progressive Revelation." Beyond their popularity and critical acclaim,

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associating with each Baha'i temple a university, hos-
pital and pharmacy, school for orphans, and traveler's
hospice, among administrative and other ancillary institutions. As part of a
grand vision, Baha'i temples—as
embryonic multipurpose institutions—not only pro-
vide spiritual renewal, but are endowed with scientific,
medical, educational, and charitable purposes as well. Buddhism emerged
initially as a monk-centered faith,
For now, it is their architectural magnificence that has whose members
itinerated though most of the year.
attracted popular and international attention. Once they began
to settle in one place for the rainy
season, temples and monasteries began to emerge.

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