

BAHÁ'Í HOUSE OF WORSHIP



The Bahá'í Faith, arising in Persia and Palestine in the mid-nineteenth century, brought principles of enlightenment for modern man. The great Teacher of the Bahá'í Faith, Baha'u'lláh (the Glory of God), spoke memorable words of Guidance for humankind. The nine inscriptions over each arch of the main doorways belong to everyone's religious heritage.

"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."

Bahá'u'lláh



A Temple of Light

The uniquely beautiful Bahá'í House of Worship has been aptly called the Temple of Light by its millions of visitors. It is the architectural symbol of modern religious enlightenment. Its true name, "The Dawning Place of the Mention of God,"* describes its function as a temple for the worship of God. It faces east to the dawn and outward on all sides to the new age. Its presence has turned the quiet suburban village of Wilmette, north of Evanston and metropolitan Chicago; into a mecca for those seeking an esthetic and spiritual experience. It is there on the shores of Lake Michigan that the Bahá'í House of Worship crowns the horizon as a symbol of beauty by day and night. It is a beacon to the airman, a lighthouse to the sailor, a landmark to every passerby.

The Bahá'í House of Worship was designed by the distinguished architect Louis J. Bourgeois. Born on a farm near St. Celestin, Quebec, in March 1856, he died in Wilmette in August, 1930. His education at

*MASHRIQU' L-ADHKAR IN PERSIAN



the Beaux Arts in Paris first led him to the building of Gothic churches in France. Later, upon his return to America, he turned to the design and building of homes, notably in California and New York. While he lived in West Englewood, New Jersey, with his offices in New York City, he fashioned the original Bahá'í Temple model, completing it in 1920.

Since the oneness of revealed religion may be regarded as the very core of the Bahá'í teachings, Mr. Bourgeois focussed upon this theme in his grand design and incorporated it into many of the

crucial details. The tracery of the great exterior pylons displays the looped symbol of life from Egyptian antiquities. Religious symbols rising in chronological order from the pylon bases typify the evolution of religion, each major Faith arising from its predecessors. At the bottom of each pylon is the ancient hooked cross found in Egyptian hieroglyphics; next the six-pointed star of Judaism; above, the cross of Christianity; next above, the star and crescent of Islam. Topmost is the nine-petaled Bahá'í rosette, symbolizing the coming of religious unity.

Much of the grace of the building lies in the harmony of its proportions, along with the inspired blending of architectural forms enjoyed by man for centuries. Its beauty is uniquely expressive of the unifying purposes to which it is dedicated: recognition of the unity of God, the unity of His Prophets and the unity of mankind.

There is no single term to describe the architecture of the Bahá'í House of Worship. It is an architectural innovation, neither trapped "in the grip of the rigid stylism and painstaking archaeology" of the 1920's, nor "committed to a wholehearted expression of function and structure as the supreme objective", as in the 1950's. "Had Bourgeois been content to swim along in the main stream of 1920 American architecture he would have clad his design in a medley of architectural styles. Instead he put away his books of archaeology and brought forth a flowing, dynamic type of ornamentation that defies placing as to specific source . . ."

* ROBERT W. MC LAUGHLIN, DEAN, GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE, PRINCETON UNIVERSITY





Temple and gardens from the southwest. Sheridan Road, Wilmette Harbor and Lake Michigan above

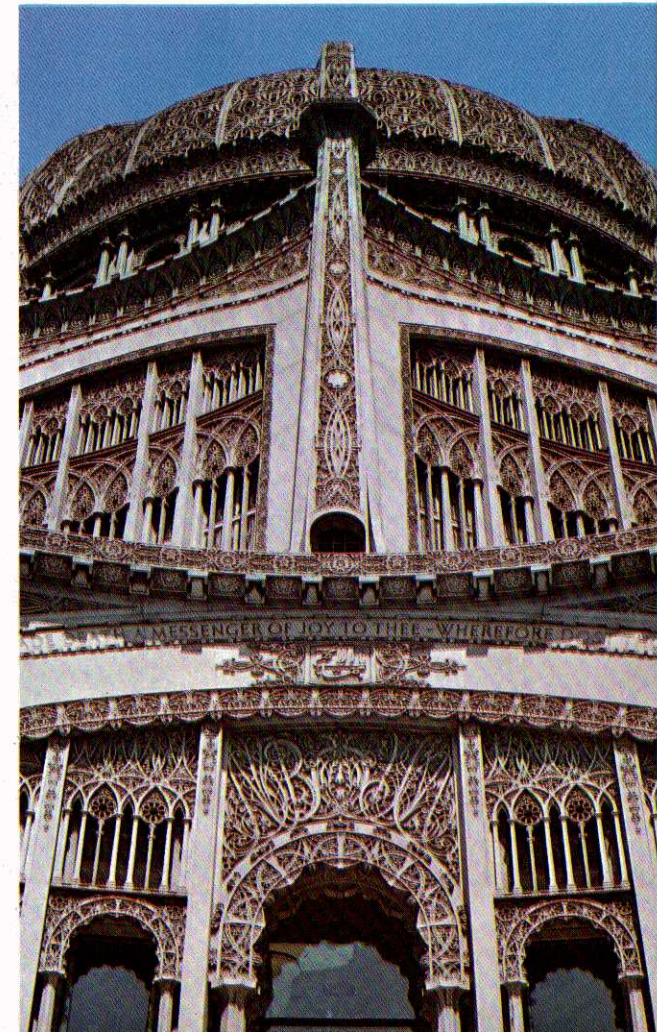
Seen from the air, the building is a giant Bahá'í nine-pointed star. Its nine radiating gardens are green petals of a Bahá'í rosette. "It is the first new idea in architecture since the thirteenth century," said the magazine *Architecture*. Yet structure, as usually understood, is concealed and support is not plainly visible. An intricate system of lacy ornamentation covers the columns, surrounds the windows and doors, and comprises the dome itself.

In the ornamentation of the first story one finds elaborate window grilles, carved borders, and leaf motifs. Flowing lines interwoven with leaves outline the doorways.

The second story's elegant windows are graced by interlaced arches above the windows and buttresses. There are pointed arches, leafy ornamentation and elaborate grilles over the gallery windows and buttress-like pylons.

The clerestory is quiet and restful in feeling, with its heavy projecting horizontal cornice, deeply carved.

The drum beneath the dome is a full story high, and is encircled with windows. The dome above arches to its 191 foot peak. Nine rib-like arms meet at its top to give it an infinite upward flow of line, while design elements of all the stories are quietly repeated in its filigree.

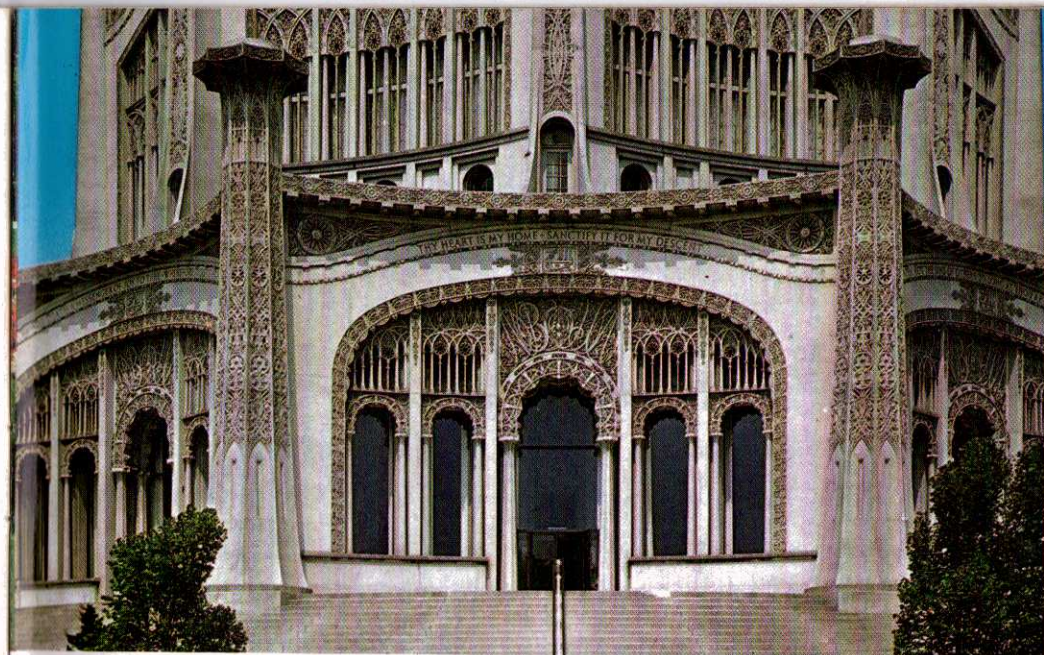
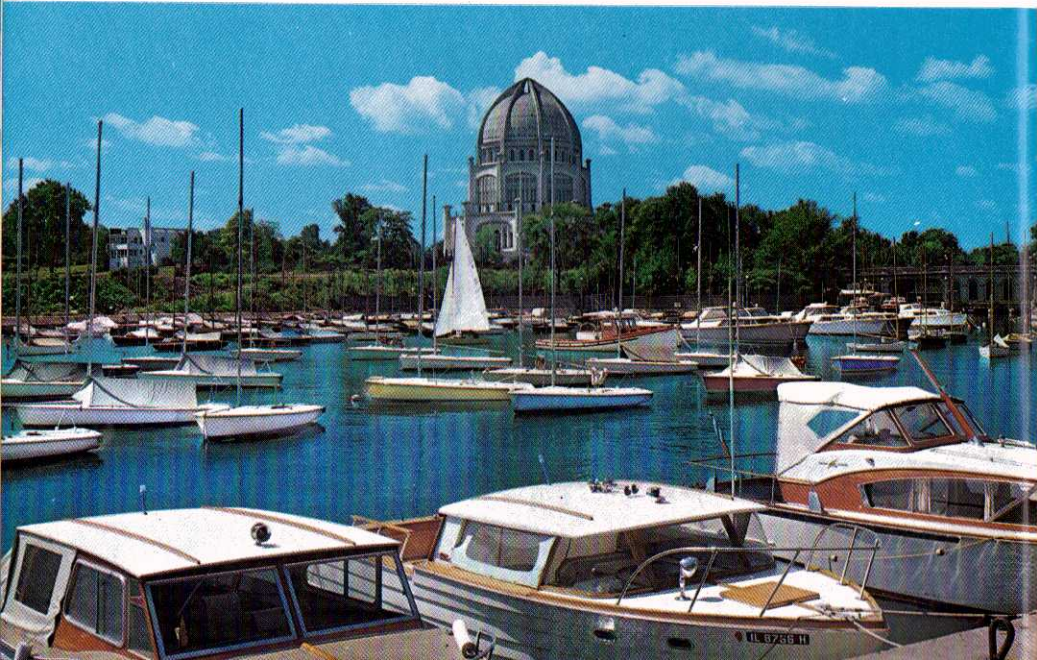


Looking upward from the steps at the main doorway, the rich ornamentation of the gallery, clerestory and dome presents a tapestry of designs.

As it stands mirrored in harbor and lake, the House of Worship provides a place for the quiet exercise of prayer and meditation. It is "a House solely designed and entirely dedicated to the worship of God." And it will be the heart of institutions of social service yet to be built that will give . . . "sustenance to the poor, shelter to the wayfarer, solace to the bereaved, and education to the ignorant . . ."

Mr. Bourgeois strove to incorporate the enlightenment of the Bahá'í Faith into his designs. Therefore, he made the building into the very essence of light. There is no gloom in the Bahá'í teachings, nor is there a single corner of darkness in the Bahá'í House of Worship.

Temple from Gilson Park and Wilmette Harbor



The Main doorway from the southwest walk

The House of Worship is open to all people for prayer. It is a place of meditation for all, a gift from the Bahá'ís and a demonstration of their Faith. It is a place of worship where men may turn their hearts to God and know truly that they are brothers.

Worship services in the Temple are not elaborate. Devotions include prayer, meditation, and readings from the Sacred Scriptures of the Bahá'í Faith and other great world religions. An a cappella choir sounds the praise of God with the human voice. Choral selections are joyous and majestic, focusing upon the theme of praise of God.

The Building of the Temple

The actual construction of this first Bahá'í House of Worship in the Western Hemisphere was a giant task. The architect toiled for three years on the plans, while funds were contributed by Bahá'ís in many parts of the world. Eight years after the dedication of the site in 1912, the Temple Board met in New York City in 1920 to appoint a committee of architects and engineers who would study and determine the methods and materials for the construction of Mr. Bourgeois' dream.

When funds for the foundation were available, nine concrete caissons were sunk through the glacial soil to bed rock one hundred and twenty feet below. Supported on the caissons and concrete-capped piles, the flat-topped circular Foundation Hall made of reinforced concrete was completed in 1922 and stood unchanged for eight more years while additional funds were being given by Bahá'ís across the world.

In 1930 the superstructure was begun. The skeleton framework of steel appeared first, and was quickly enveloped in concrete. Metal-framed glass then enclosed the entire superstructure. By 1931 the application of the exterior ornamentation could begin and in 1932, a new material was discovered from which the ornamental finish could be fashioned.

Ornamentation for the Exterior and Interior

After much research for a weather-resistant, practical and economical material, the John J. Earley Studios of Rosslyn, Virginia, had developed architectural concrete — crystalline and white quartzes mixed with Portland cement. Poured into molds, the mixture produced gleaming architectural forms.

All casts for the ornamentation were prepared from clay models by a sculptor. Negative plaster impressions followed, and final castings for the identical nine sides were then made. All castings were done at the plant in Virginia for shipment to Illinois, except for certain large flat pieces and the heavy pylons, which had to be poured in Wilmette because of their great size.

Work upon the ornamentation began with the nine castings of the dome. After completion of the dome the nineteen foot high frieze immediately below was begun. The work of applying the finished architectural concrete castings continued downward until the entire building was sheathed with the lace-like designs. In 1942, after ten and one half years of continuous work, the exterior was completed.



In 1947 the interior ornamentation was begun, using similar materials. It was necessary to prepare new architectural plans from the sketches Mr. Bourgeois had made before his death, and Chicago architect Alfred P. Shaw was asked to undertake this work. His drawings evolved in a modified and simplified form, but with no loss of Bourgeois' original spirit and conception. The interior was finished in 1951.

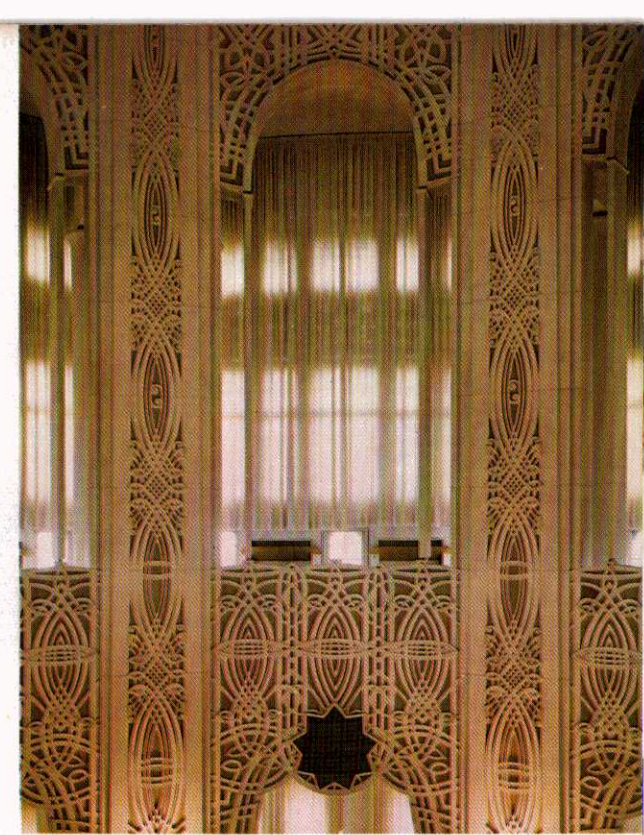
Like the exterior, the interior ornamental shell is perforated so that the sun shines through in the daytime, while at night the lighted interior stands resplendent against the darkened sky.

The auditorium consists of a central rotunda, with nine open bays, whose 1,200 seats focus about the east doorway. Worshippers look eastward to the lake and far beyond to Israel, the Holy Land of Jews, Christians, Moslems and now of Bahá'ís.

◀ *Main Auditorium
bays and gallery*

Gallery to clerestory ▶

*Dome peak
seen from auditorium floor*





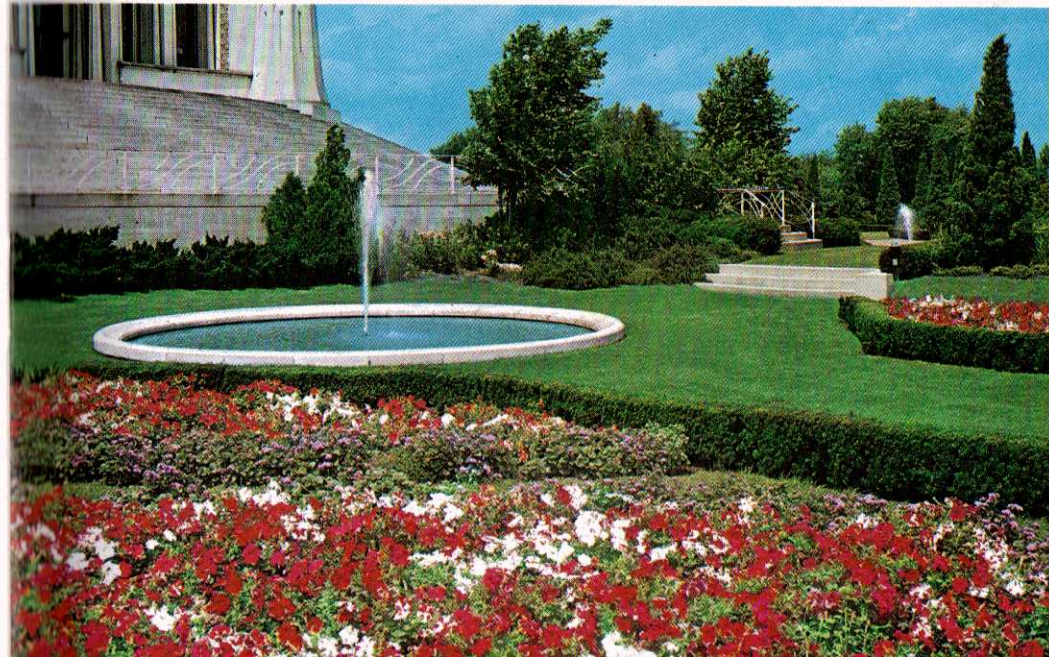
Midsummer floral brilliance: red salvia with white petunias

In the springtime there are white narcissi, red tulips, blue and pink hyacinths, crocuses and yellow jonquils. The early spring flowers are followed by lilies and anemones, and by the blooming perennials: flowering crabapples, magnolias, lilacs and hundreds of roses. In late spring the beds of annuals are planted. These include geraniums, petunias, ageratum, marigolds, salvia, sweet alyssum. In one garden alone there are seven hundred Red Flash geranium plants.

Throughout the entire summer perennials bloom in colorful succession. There are such favorites as iris, spiderwort, stokesia, peonies, shasta daisies, azaleas, chrysanthemums, phlox, delphinium, aratium lilies. And more than six hundred hybrid rose varieties bloom late into autumn, including a special planting of Marian Anderson roses.

The beauty of each season is reflected in the gardens. The thoughts of each visitor are calmed and inspired to reverence as he approaches the House of Worship.

Calypso petunias with borders of dwarf blue ageratum





In garden nine, lemondrop marigolds bordered by dwarf blue ageratum

Tulips: Paul Richter red and White Hawk



In every dimension this "Dawning Place of the Mention of God" is truly a gift to all mankind for the worship of God in this promised day of religious fulfillment, this day of unity in diversity. The Bahá'í House of Worship is the visible utterance of these holy words:

"God grant that the light of unity may envelop the whole earth, and that the seal, 'The Kingdom is God's,' may be stamped upon the brow of all its peoples."

From dawn to sunset: a setting of rare beauty





At night the floodlit Temple invites passersby to inquire into the light which streams from the interior.

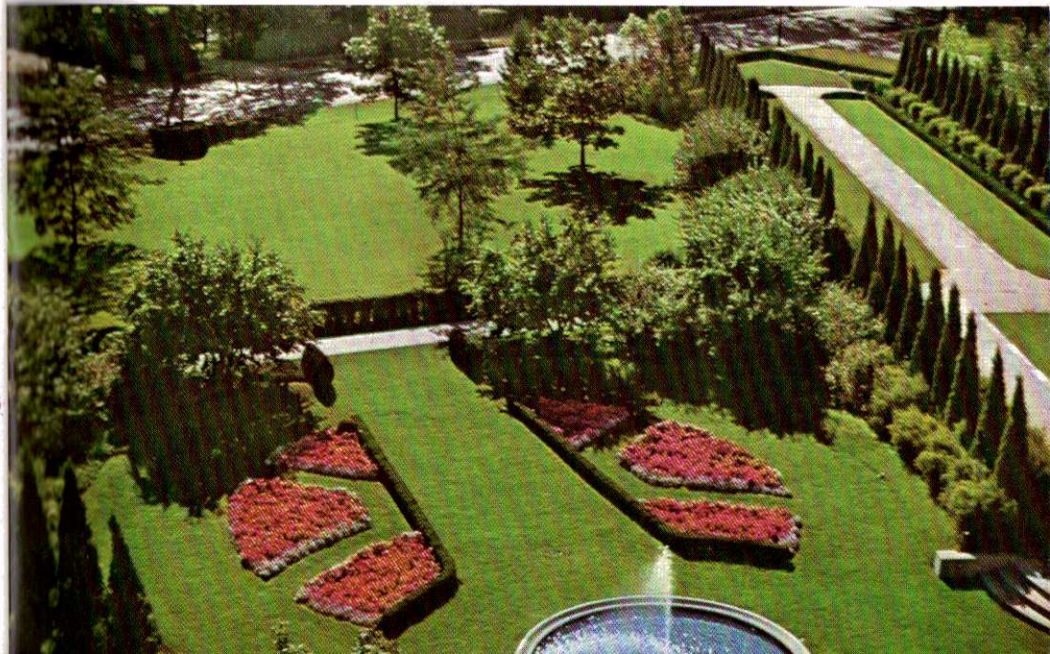
More than 100,000 visitors annually feel the illumination and warm presence of the edifice.

"This is a new creation which will revolutionize architecture in the world," declared Prof. Luigi Quaglino, professor of architecture from Turin, "and it is the most beautiful I have ever seen. Without doubt it will have a lasting page in history. It is a revelation from another world."

Bahá'í World, Vol. XI, 330.

Filtered light pours through the draperies of each bay, pervading the auditorium.

Each verdant garden is punctuated with color, here pink magic petunia with Dusty Miller border.





Some Statistics for the Fact-Seeker

Chief dimensions of the 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 main story 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
Area of Temple property	6.97 acres
Seating capacity of auditorium	1,200
Total cost of construction	\$2,613,012

The auditorium of the House of Worship is used only as a place for the mention of God in prayer, meditation and song. Above each curtained group of windows in every bay are inscribed words of faith, of hope and of love.

"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."

Bahá'u'lláh