

# ELUCIDATIONS

## Inmates of the Celestial Pavilion

Research department of the Bahá'í World Centre

### M E M O R A N D U M

To: The Universal House of Justice

Date: 15 June 1994

From: Research Department

#### Inmates of the Celestial Pavilion

The Research Department has considered the questions about the meaning of a passage from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh raised by Mr. . . . in his electronic mail message of 20 May 1994. The passage in question appears in Adib Taherzadeh's *The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh*.<sup>1</sup> Bahá'u'lláh states:

*These are the days in which God hath proved the hearts of the entire company of His Messengers and Prophets, and beyond them those that stand guard over His sacred and inviolable Sanctuary, the inmates of the celestial Pavilion and dwellers of the Tabernacle of Glory. How severe, therefore, the test to which they who join partners with God must needs be subjected!*

Mr. . . . enquires about the meaning of a number of phrases in this extract. We provide the following response.

By way of introduction, we wish to note that, as Mr. . . . undoubtedly knows, authoritative interpretation of the Writings is the exclusive province of the designated interpreters, 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the Guardian. To date, the Research Department has not been able to locate any reference in the Writings or the letters of Shoghi Effendi which interprets this particular passage from Gleanings. It is not, therefore, possible for us to state with any certainty what the text means. Mr. . . . is encouraged to arrive at his own understanding of the statement.

#### 1. "God hath proved the hearts. . ."

To assist Mr. . . . in thinking about the meaning of the above phrase, it is suggested that it might well be helpful to consider the phrase within the context of the overall passage. The passage appears to underline the power of God, the greatness of the Revelation and the judgment to which all will be subjected in these "days". As if to emphasize the pervasiveness of this "test", it seems that Bahá'u'lláh is calling attention to the fact that, not only are "they who join partners with God" to be "subjected" to a "severe" test, but also that "God hath proved the hearts" of the other souls mentioned in the passage.

For additional statements about “they who join partners with God”, Mr. . . . is referred to *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*; see, for example, pp. 99-100, p. 166, p. 192, pp. 197-198,<sup>2</sup> and *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 124 and p. 185.<sup>3</sup>

2. “those that stand guard over His sacred and inviolable Sanctuary, the inmates of the celestial Pavilion and dwellers of the Tabernacle of Glory”

With regard to the identity of “those that stand guard. . .”, the Research Department has not been able to find any statement in the Writings which helps to clarify their identity. While we also have not been able to locate any references in the Writings or letters of Shoghi Effendi which identify the other entities mentioned above, there are many references to “inmates” and “dwellers”. Such entities would appear to inhabit the spiritual realms. It is suggested that Mr. . . . might well gain a deeper understanding of this subject by studying the Tablets revealed by Bahá'u'lláh in which these terms appear.

3. Spiritual “locations”

Mr. . . . enquires whether different spiritual “locations” or “stations” are implied in Bahá'u'lláh's reference to “His sacred and inviolable Sanctuary”, “the celestial Pavilion”, and “the Tabernacle of Glory”.

While the Bahá'í Writings contain many references to the spiritual worlds, this subject tends to remain shrouded in mystery. Indeed, with regard to the “worlds of God”, Bahá'u'lláh affirms that:

*. . . the worlds of God are countless in their number, and infinite in their range. None can reckon or comprehend them except God, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.*<sup>4</sup>

Further, 'Abdu'l-Bahá states that the Kingdom of God

*is not a material place; it is sanctified from time and place. It is a spiritual world, a divine world, and the center of the Sovereignty of God; it is freed from body and that which is corporeal, and it is purified and sanctified from the imaginations of the human world. To be limited to place is a property of bodies and not of spirits. Place and time surround the body, not the mind and spirit.*<sup>5</sup>

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1) *The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1992), p. 55. The extract, taken from *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, sec. VIII, is also quoted by Shoghi Effendi in *God Passes By* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1987), p. 99.

2) Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1983

3) Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988

4) *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 151-152

5) *Some Answered Questions* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1984), p. 241