

MEMORANDUM

To: The Universal House of Justice

Date: 29 September 2002

From: Research Department

The Original Text of the Súriy-i-Haykal

The Research Department has been asked by the Universal House of Justice to provide a summary of the considerations that led to its choice of the manuscript which served as the basis for the translation of the Súriy-i-Haykal.

The question of the authenticity of the numerous transcribed copies of the Súriy-i-Haykal held in the Bahá'í World Centre Archives, as well as of the various printed editions, was the subject of detailed study by the Research Department during the preparation of *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*. Its manuscript history can be summarized as follows: Originally revealed in Adrianople, the Súriy-i-Haykal in its initial form had limited circulation and was addressed principally to members of the Bábí community who had not yet recognized Bahá'u'lláh. Soon after the arrival of the exiles in 'Akká it was recast in scope and content and expanded to include five of Bahá'u'lláh's principal messages to individual kings and rulers. This early 'Akká-period text, which can be regarded for all intents and purposes as a separately revealed work, was later revised in the Holy Land, at Bahá'u'lláh's initiative, in preparation for its publication in Bombay in 1308 A.H. (1890-91) as the first and longest Tablet of the *Kitáb-i-Mubín*. The bulk of these final revisions are primarily stylistic in nature, although in a few cases, such as in paragraph 80 of the translation of the Súriy-i-Haykal, the changes are more substantial.

The Research Department's conclusion that the final revisions were undertaken with Bahá'u'lláh's approval is based primarily on the existence of three manuscripts held in the Bahá'í World Centre Archives which corroborate the reading of the Súriy-i-Haykal in the *Kitáb-i-Mubín*. The first, which was donated to the Archives in 1990, is in the hand of Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin and is dated 30 Jamádíyu'th-Thání 1307 (21 February 1890). The other two are undated draft copies, both in the hand of Mírzá Áqá Ján and also held in the Archives. These three manuscripts match closely the reading of the Bombay *Kitáb-i-Mubín*, including the revised wording of paragraph 80:

By My Beauty! My purpose in revealing these words is to cause all men to draw nigh unto God, the All-Glorious, the All-Praised. Beware lest ye deal with Me as ye dealt with My Herald.

(*The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, ¶80)

The existence of these manuscripts, two in the hand of Bahá'u'lláh's personal secretary and one in the hand of His most trusted scribe, provides strong evidence that the revisions to the

Súriy-i-Haykal represented in the *Kitáb-i-Mubín* were authentic. It is also very significant that, where portions of the Tablets to Napoleon III and Queen Victoria are quoted by Bahá'u'lláh in Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, which was revealed subsequently to the publication of the *Kitáb-i-Mubín*, their wording corresponds to the revised version of the Súriy-i-Haykal included in that volume.

We have therefore, as is the case with certain other Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, more than one fully authenticated version of the Súriy-i-Haykal. However, in view of the Research Department's conclusion that the latest version is the one which Bahá'u'lláh sent for publication, this was the text chosen for translation in *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*.

This conclusion also explains certain facts which are not consistent with the popular assumption, reflected in most of the secondary literature, that the text of the *Kitáb-i-Mubín* had been corrupted by Mírzá Muhammad-Ali, in whose hand the volume was written—namely, that no record has been found of any challenge by Bahá'u'lláh to the integrity of this book during the last two years of His life following its publication; that on several occasions 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in the course of His journeys in the West, referred His audience without qualification to the version of the Súriy-i-Haykal published some 30 or 35 years previously in Bombay;¹ and that the previous translations of the Súriy-i-Haykal, namely, Anton Haddad's English rendering of 1900 and the French translation by Hippolyte Dreyfus of 1924, were made from the Bombay *Kitáb-i-Mubín*.

As to the long-standing concerns regarding the possible corruption of the *Kitáb-i-Mubín*, while 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote in the Lawh-i-Hizár Bayti, revealed some five years after Bahá'u'lláh's ascension, that the Covenant-breakers had completely removed some verses of the Súriy-i-Haykal and altered others, he does not mention Mírzá Muhammad-'Alí by name, nor when and where this tampering took place, what part of the text was altered, or whether it affected the *Kitáb-i-Mubín* specifically. Regarding Shoghi Effendi's statement on page 249 of *God Passes By* that Mírzá Muhammad-'Alí, "when sent on a mission to India, had tampered with the text of the holy writings entrusted to his care for publication", the *Kitáb-i-Mubín* and the Súriy-i-Haykal are not mentioned by name and further details are not provided. The precise nature and timing of the interference with the Sacred Text committed by Mírzá Muhammad-'Alí remains to be determined. As there is no evidence of such activity in the early texts published in Bombay, including the *Kitáb-i-Mubín*, it is possible that any tampering was discovered and corrected at that time.

Owing to the suspicions which Persian Bahá'í scholars had later raised with respect to the Bombay edition of the Súriy-i-Haykal, the unrevised Akká-period text, based on a manuscript in the hand of Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin, was arbitrarily substituted in place of the Bombay version when the *Kitáb-i-Mubín* was reprinted in Iran in 1964 as volume one of the series *Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá*. This is also the version found in the 1996 reprinting of volume one of

¹ See *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), pp. 372, 398, 432; cf. p.223.

Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá by the Canadian Institute for Bahá'í Studies in Persian. Although this earlier version of the text was not used in the translation of *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, it is equally authentic, and thus there is no difficulty in the fact that the Guardian himself quotes from it in his translation of paragraph 80 from the *Súriy-i-Haykal* in "The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh".

An Arabic and Persian edition of *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts* based on the revised texts used in the translation is currently in preparation.