

MEMORANDUM

To: The Universal House of Justice

Date: 2 April 1999

From: Research Department

**“...were He to pronounce one of the leaves to be the
manifestation of all His excellent titles...”**

The Research Department has studied the query in the email message of 28 February 1999 from Dr. Bijan Ma'sumian. He states that he and his wife, Mrs. Farnaz Ma'sumian, “are working on a book on the lives of the founders of major world religions” and one chapter will cover “references to future manifestations in the scriptures of different religious systems”. Among the statements of Bahá'u'lláh on this subject they are thinking of including is “an intriguing, but not often quoted passage” in Bahá'u'lláh's *Súriy-i-Vafá* where He “appears to hint at (or at least leave the door open to) the possibility that, in the future, women may be chosen as Manifestations”. The statement in question is the following:

Know thou moreover that in the Day of Revelation were He to pronounce one of the leaves to be the manifestation of all His excellent titles, unto no one is given the right to utter why or wherefore, and should one do so he would be regarded as a disbeliever in God and be numbered with such as have repudiated His Truth.¹

In support of this understanding of the passage, Dr. Ma'sumian cites the phrases “in the Day of Revelation” and “the manifestation of [ALL] His excellent titles”, as well as His “clear reference to women (LEAVES)”. However, he also says that they are aware of another reading of the passage, namely, that “Bahá'u'lláh is emphasizing God's principle of ‘He doeth whatsoever He Willeth’ ... and He is simply picking this, at the time, ‘far-fetched’ idea as an example.”

The Research Department has not found an elucidation of the passage in question in the Writings of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá or of Shoghi Effendi. However, based on a close reading of the passage in the original Arabic and the context in which it appears, it seems to us that the second reading offered by the Ma'sumians is consistent with the text. As they are doubtless aware, in the preceding paragraph, Bahá'u'lláh emphasizes the power and authority demonstrated by the Báb when He “pronounced the First One² to believe in Him to be Muḥammad, the Messenger of God”, and “His return and resurrection”. Then, in the passage in question, He draws attention to His own Revelation, and the measure of His own power and authority, such that He could “pronounce one of the leaves to be the manifestation of all His excellent titles” and “unto no one is given the right to utter why or wherefore....”

¹ *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1997), p. 185.

² Mullá Ḥusayn.

**“...were He to pronounce one of the leaves to be
the manifestation of all His excellent titles....”**

2 April 1999
Page 2

Regarding specific characteristics of the next and future Manifestations, in a letter of 13 November 1986 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual, it states, “The House of Justice is not aware of anything in the Writings that specifies the sex of the next and future Manifestations of God.”

It seems to us that the passage in question does appear to suggest that the Will of God is untrammelled to such a degree as to encompass the possibility of a woman being designated a Manifestation of God.