

# GLEANINGS

## #3

### Introduction

Whenever we are studying the Word of God, that is, the revelations of the Manifestations of God, there are some principles derived from the Writings of Baha'u'llah that we might keep in mind. These were cited in the first lesson, repeated in the second lesson, and will remain in this position in case you need reminding:

The first is...

**“The understanding of His words and the comprehension of the utterances of the Birds of Heaven are in no wise dependent upon human learning. They depend solely upon purity of heart, chastity of soul, and freedom of spirit.”** (Kitab-i-Iqan)

In other words, you don't need an academic degree to understand Baha'u'llah.

The second is...

**“...in every age, the reading of the scriptures and holy books is for no other purpose except to enable the reader to apprehend their meaning and unravel their innermost mysteries. Otherwise reading, without understanding, is of no abiding profit unto man.”** (Kitab-i-Iqan)

In other words, you do need to know how to read, and to make the effort to understand what you are reading...because reading without understanding is of no value.

The third is...

**“It is evident unto thee that the Birds of Heaven and Doves of Eternity speak a twofold language. One language, the outward language, is devoid of allusions, is unconcealed and unveiled...The other language is veiled and concealed, so that whatever lieth hidden in the heart of the malevolent may be made manifest and their innermost being be disclosed...None apprehendeth the meaning of these utterances except them whose hearts are assured, whose souls have found favor with God, and whose minds are detached from all else but Him. In**

**such utterances, the literal meaning, as generally understood by the people, is not what hath been intended.”** (Kitab-i-Iqan)

In other words, the Manifestations sometimes intend for their words to be understood literally, and in other cases to be understood symbolically. We can do both, as long as we are “detached from all else but Him”, that is, not assuming that our prior knowledge will enable us to understand what He is saying. We need to be prepared to learn something new, all the time.

The fourth is this...

**“Know assuredly that just as thou firmly believest that the Word of God, exalted be His glory, endureth forever, thou must, likewise, believe with undoubting faith that its meaning can never be exhausted.”** (Gleanings LXXXIX)

In other words, the words revealed by the Manifestations, in this case by Baha'u'llah, have many meanings, not just one meaning.

A fifth principle, which will be readily recognized as we read GLEANINGS, is no doubt found in the Writings of Baha'u'llah, but is best known as it is described in a letter written on behalf of the Guardian:

**“One might liken Bahá'u'lláh's teachings to a sphere; there are points poles apart, and in between the thoughts and doctrines that unite them.”** (Shoghi Effendi, 5 July 1947, Scholarship, p. 2)

In other words, we need to keep the big picture in mind as we read and think about the Baha'i teachings, rather than looking at every teaching in isolation.

If you would like to bring up other principles, please email me at [peterry19@gmail.com](mailto:peterry19@gmail.com) so that I can share them with everyone taking this course.

### **THIRD WEEK'S SELECTIONS (XIX-XXVI)**

The principal themes in the eight excerpts from the Writings of Baha'u'llah collected here are God and His Manifestations (XIX-XXI), the unity of the Manifestations (XXII,XXIV), the rejection of the Manifestations by humanity (XXIII), the Day of each of the Manifestations and the Day of Day of Baha'u'llah (XXV) and God and His presence in the Person and Book of the Manifestation (XXVI).

## XIX

**To every discerning and illuminated heart it is evident that God, the unknowable Essence, the Divine Being, is immensely exalted beyond every human attribute, such as corporeal existence, ascent and descent, egress and regress.**

The source of most of the teachings of Baha'u'llah related to the nature of God and His Manifestations are found in the Kitab-i-Iqan, and the following are all quotations from that Book.

**“Far be it from His glory that human tongue should adequately recount His praise, or that human heart comprehend His fathomless mystery. He is, and hath ever been, veiled in the ancient eternity of His Essence, and will remain in His Reality everlastingly hidden from the sight of men. “No vision taketh in Him, but He taketh in all vision; He is the Subtile, the All-Perceiving.”... (19.1)**

In the following paragraph, “Ancient of Days”, “the Source of infinite grace”, “ the unchangeable Being” and “His imperishable Essence” pertain to God while, “those luminous Gems of Holiness” refers to the Manifestations of God:

**“The door of the knowledge of the Ancient of Days being thus closed in the face of all beings, the Source of infinite grace, according to His saying, “His grace hath transcended all things; My grace hath encompassed them all,” hath caused those luminous Gems of Holiness to appear out of the realm of the spirit, in the noble form of the human temple, and be made manifest unto all men, that they may impart unto the world the mysteries of the unchangeable Being, and tell of the subtleties of His imperishable Essence.” (19.2)**

In this paragraph, “these sanctified Mirrors, these Daysprings of ancient glory...the Exponents on earth of Him Who is the central Orb of the universe...the Treasuries of Divine knowledge, and the Repositories of celestial wisdom...these Tabernacles of Holiness, these Primal Mirrors, these Gems of divine virtue” are, one and all, references to the Manifestations of God:

**“These sanctified Mirrors, these Daysprings of ancient glory, are, one and all, the Exponents on earth of Him Who is the central Orb of the universe, its Essence and ultimate Purpose. From Him proceed their knowledge and power; from Him is derived their sovereignty. The**

beauty of their countenance is but a reflection of His image, and their revelation a sign of His deathless glory. They are the Treasuries of Divine knowledge, and the Repositories of celestial wisdom. Through them is transmitted a grace that is infinite, and by them is revealed the Light that can never fade.... These Tabernacles of Holiness, these Primal Mirrors which reflect the light of unfading glory, are but expressions of Him Who is the Invisible of the Invisibles. By the revelation of these Gems of Divine virtue all the names and attributes of God, such as knowledge and power, sovereignty and dominion, mercy and wisdom, glory, bounty, and grace, are made manifest. (9.3)

The Prophets of God, His holy and chosen Messengers...also called “Apostles” in the Qur’an, are, all of them Manifestations of God, however, as ‘Abdu’l-Baha explained in His Tablets and talks, they are equal – there are greater and lesser Prophets, and they are described in detail in Some Answered Questions, chapter 37:

“These attributes of God are not, and have never been, vouchsafed specially unto certain Prophets, and withheld from others. Nay, all the Prophets of God, His well-favored, His holy and chosen Messengers are, without exception, the bearers of His names, and the embodiments of His attributes. They only differ in the intensity of their revelation, and the comparative potency of their light. Even as He hath revealed: “Some of the Apostles We have caused to excel the others.” (9.4)

“It hath, therefore, become manifest and evident that within the tabernacles of these Prophets and chosen Ones of God the light of His infinite names and exalted attributes hath been reflected, even though the light of some of these attributes may or may not be outwardly revealed from these luminous Temples to the eyes of men. That a certain attribute of God hath not been outwardly manifested by these Essences of Detachment doth in no wise imply that they who are the Daysprings of God’s attributes and the Treasuries of His holy names did not actually possess it. Therefore, these illuminated Souls, these beauteous Countenances have, each and every one of them, been endowed with all the attributes of God, such as sovereignty, dominion, and the like, even though to outward seeming they be shorn of all earthly majesty.... (19.5)

The next selection was revealed in Arabic for two Baha’is – Muhammad Ibrahim Khalil Muballigh and Shaykh Salmam Hindijani. It’s focus is upon the **“certainty that the Unseen can in no wise incarnate His Essence”**. This teaching is reiterated by the Guardian in “The Dispensation of Baha’u’llah”:

## XX

**“The human temple that has been made the vehicle of so overpowering a Revelation must, if we be faithful to the tenets of our Faith, ever remain entirely distinguished from that “innermost Spirit of Spirits” and “eternal Essence of Essences” — that invisible yet rational God Who, however much we extol the divinity of His Manifestations on earth, can in no wise incarnate His infinite, His unknowable, His incorruptible and all-embracing Reality in the concrete and limited frame of a mortal being. Indeed, the God Who could so incarnate His own reality would, in the light of the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh, cease immediately to be God. So crude and fantastic a theory of Divine incarnation is as removed from, and incompatible with, the essentials of Bahá’í belief as are the no less inadmissible pantheistic and anthropomorphic conceptions of God — both of which the utterances of Bahá’u’lláh emphatically repudiate and the fallacy of which they expose. (Published in “The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh”, 6.37)**

**“Know thou of a certainty that the Unseen can in no wise incarnate His Essence and reveal it unto men. He is, and hath ever been, immensely exalted beyond all that can either be recounted or perceived. From His retreat of glory His voice is ever proclaiming: “Verily, I am God; there is none other God besides Me, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. I have manifested Myself unto men, and have sent down Him Who is the Dayspring of the signs of My Revelation. Through Him I have caused all creation to testify that there is none other God except Him, the Incomparable, the All-Informed, the All-Wise.” He Who is everlastingly hidden from the eyes of men can never be known except through His Manifestation, and His Manifestation can adduce no greater proof of the truth of His Mission than the proof of His own Person.”**

This is one of the passages from Baha’u’llah’s Tablet addressed to Shaykh Salman-i-Hindijan found in the Gleanings, this one devoted to an exposition on the unknowability of God except through the Manifestations Who have revealed Him to humanity. In this passage, “the Ancient Being” refers to God, and **“the Daystars of His divine guidance, the Symbols of His divine unity...these sanctified Beings...the Voice of God...the Way of God...the Standard of His Truth...are the Manifestations of God amidst men, the evidences of His Truth, and the signs of His glory.”**

## XXI

**“O Salmán! The door of the knowledge of the Ancient Being hath ever been, and will continue forever to be, closed in the face of men. No man’s understanding shall ever gain access unto His holy court. As a token of His mercy, however, and as a proof of His loving-kindness, He hath manifested unto men the Daystars of His divine guidance, the Symbols of His divine unity, and hath ordained the knowledge of these sanctified Beings to be identical with the knowledge of His own Self. Whoso recognizeth them hath recognized God. Whoso hearkeneth to their call, hath hearkened to the Voice of God, and whoso testifieth to the truth of their Revelation, hath testified to the truth of God Himself. Whoso turneth away from them, hath turned away from God, and whoso disbelieveth in them, hath disbelieved in God. Every one of them is the Way of God that connecteth this world with the realms above, and the Standard of His Truth unto every one in the kingdoms of earth and heaven. They are the Manifestations of God amidst men, the evidences of His Truth, and the signs of His glory.”**

Likewise, in these passages from the Kitab-i-Iqan, the Manifestations of God provide humanity with a relationship with God, and they are called **“Bearers of the Trust of God...the Exponents of a new Cause and the Revelers of a new Message...Birds of the celestial Throne”**. Those who see God in Krishna, in Zoroaster and in Baha’u’llah are comforted to hear that **“Were any of the all-embracing Manifestations of God to declare: “I am God,” He, verily, speaketh the truth, and no doubt attacheth thereto”**, which Baha’u’llah explains in such a way as to harmonize the other characteristics of the Manifestations of God:

## XXII

**“The Bearers of the Trust of God are made manifest unto the peoples of the earth as the Exponents of a new Cause and the Revelers of a new Message. Inasmuch as these Birds of the celestial Throne are all sent down from the heaven of the Will of God, and as they all arise to proclaim His irresistible Faith, they, therefore, are regarded as one soul and the same person. For they all drink from the one Cup of the love of God, and all partake of the fruit of the same Tree of Oneness. (22.1)**

**“These Manifestations of God have each a twofold station. One is the station of pure abstraction and essential unity. In this respect, if thou callest them all by one name, and dost ascribe to them the same attributes, thou hast not erred from the truth. Even as He hath revealed: “No distinction do We make between any of His Messengers.” For they, one and all, summon the people of the earth to acknowledge the unity of God, and herald unto them the Kawthar of an infinite grace and bounty. They are all invested with the robe of prophethood, and are honored with the mantle of glory. Thus hath Muḥammad, the Point of the Qur’án,**

revealed: “I am all the Prophets.” Likewise, He saith: “I am the first Adam, Noah, Moses, and Jesus.” Similar statements have been made by Imám ‘Alí. Sayings such as these, which indicate the essential unity of those Exponents of Oneness, have also emanated from the Channels of God’s immortal utterance, and the Treasuries of the gems of Divine knowledge, and have been recorded in the Scriptures. These Countenances are the recipients of the Divine Command, and the Daysprings of His Revelation. This Revelation is exalted above the veils of plurality and the exigencies of number. Thus He saith: “Our Cause is but One.” Inasmuch as the Cause is one and the same, the Exponents thereof also must needs be one and the same. Likewise, the Imáms of the Muḥammadan Faith, those lamps of certitude, have said: “Muḥammad is our first, Muḥammad is our last, Muḥammad our all.” (22.2)

“It is clear and evident to thee that all the Prophets are the Temples of the Cause of God, Who have appeared clothed in divers attire. If thou wilt observe with discriminating eyes, thou wilt behold Them all abiding in the same tabernacle, soaring in the same heaven, seated upon the same throne, uttering the same speech, and proclaiming the same Faith. Such is the unity of those Essences of Being, those Luminaries of infinite and immeasurable splendor! Wherefore, should one of these Manifestations of Holiness proclaim saying: “I am the return of all the Prophets,” He, verily, speaketh the truth. In like manner, in every subsequent Revelation, the return of the former Revelation is a fact, the truth of which is firmly established.... (22.3)

“The other station is the station of distinction, and pertaineth to the world of creation, and to the limitations thereof. In this respect, each Manifestation of God hath a distinct individuality, a definitely prescribed mission, a predestined revelation, and specially designated limitations. Each one of them is known by a different name, is characterized by a special attribute, fulfills a definite mission, and is entrusted with a particular Revelation. Even as He saith: “Some of the Apostles We have caused to excel the others. To some God hath spoken, some He hath raised and exalted. And to Jesus, Son of Mary, We gave manifest signs, and We strengthened Him with the Holy Spirit.” (22.4)

“It is because of this difference in their station and mission that the words and utterances flowing from these Wellsprings of Divine knowledge appear to diverge and differ. Otherwise, in the eyes of them that are initiated into the mysteries of Divine wisdom, all their utterances are, in reality, but the expressions of one Truth. As most of the people have failed to appreciate those stations to which We have referred, they, therefore, feel perplexed and dismayed at the varying utterances pronounced by Manifestations that are essentially one and the same. (22.5)

**“It hath ever been evident that all these divergencies of utterance are attributable to differences of station. Thus, viewed from the standpoint of their oneness and sublime detachment, the attributes of Godhead, Divinity, Supreme Singleness, and Inmost Essence, have been, and are applicable to those Essences of Being, inasmuch as they all abide on the throne of Divine Revelation, and are established upon the seat of Divine Concealment. Through their appearance the Revelation of God is made manifest, and by their countenance the Beauty of God is revealed. Thus it is that the accents of God Himself have been heard uttered by these Manifestations of the Divine Being. (22.6)**

**“Viewed in the light of their second station — the station of distinction, differentiation, temporal limitations, characteristics and standards — they manifest absolute servitude, utter destitution, and complete self-effacement. Even as He saith: “I am the servant of God. I am but a man like you.”... (22.7)**

**“Were any of the all-embracing Manifestations of God to declare: “I am God,” He, verily, speaketh the truth, and no doubt attacheth thereto. For it hath been repeatedly demonstrated that through their Revelation, their attributes and names, the Revelation of God, His names and His attributes, are made manifest in the world. Thus, He hath revealed: “Those shafts were God’s, not Thine.” And also He saith: “In truth, they who plighted fealty unto Thee, really plighted that fealty unto God.” And were any of them to voice the utterance, “I am the Messenger of God,” He, also, speaketh the truth, the indubitable truth. Even as He saith: “Muḥammad is not the father of any man among you, but He is the Messenger of God.” Viewed in this light, they are all but Messengers of that ideal King, that unchangeable Essence. And were they all to proclaim, “I am the Seal of the Prophets,” they, verily, utter but the truth, beyond the faintest shadow of doubt. For they are all but one person, one soul, one spirit, one being, one revelation. They are all the manifestation of the “Beginning” and the “End,” the “First” and the “Last,” the “Seen” and the “Hidden” — all of which pertain to Him Who is the Innermost Spirit of Spirits and Eternal Essence of Essences. And were they to say, “We are the Servants of God,” this also is a manifest and indisputable fact. For they have been made manifest in the uttermost state of servitude, a servitude the like of which no man can possibly attain. Thus in moments in which these Essences of Being were deep immersed beneath the oceans of ancient and everlasting holiness, or when they soared to the loftiest summits of Divine mysteries, they claimed their utterances to be the Voice of Divinity, the Call of God Himself. (22.8)**



**“Were the eye of discernment to be opened, it would recognize that in this very state, they have considered themselves utterly effaced and nonexistent in the face of Him Who is the All-Pervading, the Incorruptible. Methinks, they have regarded themselves as utter nothingness, and deemed their mention in that Court an act of blasphemy. For the slightest whispering of self within such a Court is an evidence of self-assertion and independent existence. In the eyes of them that have attained unto that Court, such a suggestion is itself a grievous transgression. How much more grievous would it be, were aught else to be mentioned in that Presence, were man’s heart, his tongue, his mind, or his soul, to be busied with anyone but the Well-Beloved, were his eyes to behold any countenance other than His beauty, were his ear to be inclined to any melody but His Voice, and were his feet to tread any way but His way.... (22.9)**

**“By virtue of this station they have claimed for themselves the Voice of Divinity and the like, whilst by virtue of their station of Messengership, they have declared themselves the Messengers of God. In every instance they have voiced an utterance that would conform to the requirements of the occasion, and have ascribed all these declarations to Themselves, declarations ranging from the realm of Divine Revelation to the realm of creation, and from the domain of Divinity even unto the domain of earthly existence. Thus it is that whatsoever be their utterance, whether it pertain to the realm of Divinity, Lordship, Prophethood, Messengership, Guardianship, Apostleship, or Servitude, all is true, beyond the shadow of a doubt. Therefore these sayings which We have quoted in support of Our argument must be attentively considered, that the divergent utterances of the Manifestations of the Unseen and Daysprings of Holiness may cease to agitate the soul and perplex the mind.” (22.10)**

The next passage is originally in Persian, in a Tablet revealed for ‘Abbas Faruq, which speaks about humanity’s rejection of the Manifestations of God, for which He holds responsible **“the leaders of men”** who **“have invariably striven to hinder their followers from turning”** to each of the Manifestations of God:

### XXIII

**“Consider the former generations. Witness how every time the Daystar of Divine bounty hath shed the light of His Revelation upon the world, the people of His Day have arisen against Him, and repudiated His truth. They who were regarded as the leaders of men have invariably striven to hinder their followers from turning unto Him Who is the Ocean of God’s limitless bounty.**

**“Behold how the people, as a result of the verdict pronounced by the divines of His age, have cast Abraham, the Friend of God, into fire; how Moses, He Who held converse with the Almighty, was denounced as liar and slanderer. Reflect how Jesus, the Spirit of God, was, notwithstanding His extreme meekness and perfect tender-heartedness, treated by His enemies. So fierce was the opposition which He, the Essence of Being and Lord of the visible and invisible, had to face, that He had nowhere to lay His head. He wandered continually from place to place, deprived of a permanent abode. Ponder that which befell Muḥammad, the Seal of the Prophets, may the life of all else be a sacrifice unto Him. How severe the afflictions which the leaders of the Jewish people and of the idol-worshippers caused to rain upon Him, Who is the sovereign Lord of all, in consequence of His proclamation of the unity of God and of the truth of His Message! By the righteousness of My Cause! My Pen groaneth, and all created things weep with a great weeping, as a result of the woes He suffered at the hands of them that have broken the Covenant of God, violated His Testament, rejected His proofs, and disputed His signs. Thus recount We unto thee the tale of that which happened in days past, haply thou mayest comprehend.**

**“Thou hast known how grievously the Prophets of God, His Messengers and Chosen Ones, have been afflicted. Meditate awhile on the motive and reason which have been responsible for such a persecution. At no time, in no Dispensation, have the Prophets of God escaped the blasphemy of their enemies, the cruelty of their oppressors, the denunciation of the learned of their age, who appeared in the guise of uprightness and piety. Day and night they passed through such agonies as none can ever measure, except the knowledge of the one true God, exalted be His glory.**

**“Consider this wronged One. Though the clearest proofs attest the truth of His Cause; though the prophecies He, in an unmistakable language, hath made have been fulfilled; though, in spite of His not being accounted among the learned, His being unschooled and inexperienced in the disputations current among the divines, He hath rained upon men the showers of His manifold and Divinely inspired knowledge; yet, behold how this generation hath rejected His authority, and rebelled against Him! He hath, during the greater part of His life, been sore-tried in the clutches of His enemies. His sufferings have now reached their culmination in this afflictive Prison, into which His oppressors have so unjustly thrown Him. God grant that, with a penetrating vision and radiant heart, thou mayest observe the things that have come to pass and are now happening, and, pondering them in thine heart, mayest recognize that which most men have, in this Day, failed to perceive. Please God, He may enable thee to inhale the sweet fragrance of His Day, to partake of the limitless effusions of His grace, to quaff thy fill, through His gracious favor, from the most great Ocean that**

**surgeth in this Day in the name of the Ancient King, and to remain firm and immovable as the mountain in His Cause.**

Having wished the original reader that **“thou mayest observe the things that have come to pass and are now happening, and pondering them in thine heart, mayest recognize that which most men have, in this Day, failed to perceive”** Baha’u’llah reiterates the vast difference between God and His Manifestations, lest anything replace the worship of the One Creator:

**“Say: Glory be to Thee Who hast caused all the holy Ones to confess their helplessness before the manifold revelations of Thy might, and every Prophet to acknowledge His nothingness at the effulgence of Thine abiding glory. I beseech Thee, by Thy name that hath unlocked the gates of Heaven and filled with ecstasy the Concourse on high, to enable me to serve Thee, in this Day, and to strengthen me to observe that which Thou didst prescribe in Thy Book. Thou knowest, O my Lord, what is in me; but I know not what is in Thee. Thou art the All-Knowing, the All-Informed.”**

In this next selection, revealed in Arabic with the title Madinatu’l-Tawhid (the City of the Oneness of God) for Shaykh Salman-i-Hindijani, Baha’u’llah teaches the unity of the Manifestations, a theme which is described in a number of His Writings, including in the Kitab-i-Iqan:

#### XXIV

**“Beware, O believers in the Unity of God, lest ye be tempted to make any distinction between any of the Manifestations of His Cause, or to discriminate against the signs that have accompanied and proclaimed their Revelation. This indeed is the true meaning of Divine Unity, if ye be of them that apprehend and believe this truth. Be ye assured, moreover, that the works and acts of each and every one of these Manifestations of God, nay whatever pertaineth unto them, and whatsoever they may manifest in the future, are all ordained by God, and are a reflection of His Will and Purpose. Whoso maketh the slightest possible difference between their persons, their words, their messages, their acts and manners, hath indeed disbelieved in God, hath repudiated His signs, and betrayed the Cause of His Messengers.”**

In the following Tablet, revealed in Persian to an unidentified person, Baha’u’llah differentiates the Day of God as the Dispensation of every Manifestation from the Day of God as the advent of a new Cycle in human existence, which, as noted previously, He identifies as lasting at least 500,000 years:

#### – XXV –

**“It is evident that every age in which a Manifestation of God hath lived is divinely ordained, and may, in a sense, be characterized as God’s appointed Day. This Day, however, is unique, and is to be distinguished from those that have preceded it. The designation “Seal of the Prophets” fully revealeth its high station. The Prophetic Cycle hath, verily, ended. The Eternal Truth is now come. He hath lifted up the Ensign of Power, and is now shedding upon the world the unclouded splendor of His Revelation.”**

In the Kitab-i-Iqan and the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, one of His first treatises and His last Book, Baha’u’llah wrote that the Manifestation of God is the presence of God amidst mankind, and hence the highest station to which any human being may aspire. A Tablet revealed in Persian and entitled Lawh-i-Tawhid (Tablet of the Oneness of God) is the final selection in this lesson:

## XXVI

**“Praise be to God, the All-Possessing, the King of incomparable glory, a praise which is immeasurably above the understanding of all created things, and is exalted beyond the grasp of the minds of men. None else besides Him hath ever been able to sing adequately His praise, nor will any man succeed at any time in describing the full measure of His glory. Who is it that can claim to have attained the heights of His exalted Essence, and what mind can measure the depths of His unfathomable mystery? From each and every revelation emanating from the Source of His glory, holy and never-ending evidences of unimaginable splendor have appeared, and out of every manifestation of His invincible power oceans of eternal light have poured. How immensely exalted are the wondrous testimonies of His almighty sovereignty, a glimmer of which, if it but touched them, would utterly consume all that are in the heavens and in the earth! How indescribably lofty are the tokens of His consummate power, a single sign of which, however inconsiderable, must transcend the comprehension of whatsoever hath, from the beginning that hath no beginning, been brought into being, or will be created in the future till the end that hath no end. All the Embodiments of His Names wander in the wilderness of search, athirst and eager to discover His Essence, and all the Manifestations of His Attributes implore Him, from the Sinai of Holiness, to unravel His mystery.**

**“A drop of the billowing ocean of His endless mercy hath adorned all creation with the ornament of existence, and a breath wafted from His peerless Paradise hath invested all beings with the robe of His sanctity and glory. A sprinkling from the unfathomed deep of His sovereign and all-pervasive Will hath, out of utter nothingness, called into being a creation which is infinite in its range and deathless in its duration. The wonders of His bounty can**

never cease, and the stream of His merciful grace can never be arrested. The process of His creation hath had no beginning, and can have no end.

**“In every age and cycle He hath, through the splendorous light shed by the Manifestations of His wondrous Essence, recreated all things, so that whatsoever reflecteth in the heavens and on the earth the signs of His glory may not be deprived of the outpourings of His mercy, nor despair of the showers of His favors. How all-encompassing are the wonders of His boundless grace! Behold how they have pervaded the whole of creation. Such is their virtue that not a single atom in the entire universe can be found which doth not declare the evidences of His might, which doth not glorify His holy Name, or is not expressive of the effulgent light of His unity. So perfect and comprehensive is His creation that no mind nor heart, however keen or pure, can ever grasp the nature of the most insignificant of His creatures; much less fathom the mystery of Him Who is the Daystar of Truth, Who is the invisible and unknowable Essence. The conceptions of the devoutest of mystics, the attainments of the most accomplished amongst men, the highest praise which human tongue or pen can render are all the product of man’s finite mind and are conditioned by its limitations. Ten thousand Prophets, each a Moses, are thunderstruck upon the Sinai of their search at His forbidding voice, “Thou shalt never behold Me!”; whilst a myriad Messengers, each as great as Jesus, stand dismayed upon their heavenly thrones by the interdiction, “Mine Essence thou shalt never apprehend!” From time immemorial He hath been veiled in the ineffable sanctity of His exalted Self, and will everlastingly continue to be wrapt in the impenetrable mystery of His unknowable Essence. Every attempt to attain to an understanding of His inaccessible Reality hath ended in complete bewilderment, and every effort to approach His exalted Self and envisage His Essence hath resulted in hopelessness and failure.**

**“How bewildering to me, insignificant as I am, is the attempt to fathom the sacred depths of Thy knowledge! How futile my efforts to visualize the magnitude of the power inherent in Thine handiwork — the revelation of Thy creative power! How can mine eye, which hath no faculty to perceive itself, claim to have discerned Thine Essence, and how can mine heart, already powerless to apprehend the significance of its own potentialities, pretend to have comprehended Thy nature? How can I claim to have known Thee, when the entire creation is bewildered by Thy mystery, and how can I confess not to have known Thee, when, lo, the whole universe proclaimeth Thy Presence and testifieth to Thy truth? The portals of Thy grace have throughout eternity been open, and the means of access unto Thy Presence made available, unto all created things, and the revelations of Thy matchless Beauty have at all times been imprinted upon the realities of all beings, visible and invisible. Yet, notwithstanding this most gracious favor, this perfect and consummate bestowal, I am**

**moved to testify that Thy court of holiness and glory is immeasurably exalted above the knowledge of all else besides Thee, and the mystery of Thy Presence is inscrutable to every mind except Thine own. No one except Thyself can unravel the secret of Thy nature, and naught else but Thy transcendental Essence can grasp the reality of Thy unsearchable being. How vast the number of those heavenly and all-glorious beings who, in the wilderness of their separation from Thee, have wandered all the days of their lives, and failed in the end to find Thee! How great the multitude of the sanctified and immortal souls who were lost and bewildered while seeking in the desert of search to behold Thy face! Myriad are Thine ardent lovers whom the consuming flame of remoteness from Thee hath caused to sink and perish, and numberless are the faithful souls who have willingly laid down their lives in the hope of gazing on the light of Thy countenance. The sighs and moans of these longing hearts that pant after Thee can never reach Thy holy court, neither can the lamentations of the wayfarers that thirst to appear before Thy face attain Thy seat of glory.”**

There are doubtless many Baha'is, especially Americans, who tend to be pragmatic and in a hurry, who are puzzled by the numerous passages that the Guardian chose from the Writings of Baha'u'llah that address the relationship between God and the Manifestation of God. Why is it so important, dear Guardian, for us to study more than one affirmation of these principles? The manifold misunderstandings of this differentiation between God and His Manifestations are cause enough for us to be well grounded in a subtle and sophisticated grasp of this subject, not merely for Baha'u'llah's teaching to be convincing to us, but, as we found in numerous passages cited earlier, to enable us to adequately teach the full range of human beings we are likely to encounter during our lives. Many of those people, most of them, do not recognize the true relationship between God and Manifestation, and hence the Baha'i is called upon to educate them all. For without understanding – and we must recall that the whole purpose of reading the Book is to understand it – this teaching we cannot teach it effectively, and without teaching it, the very bedrock of the Baha'i message is not in place. The unity of humankind, of all nations and ethnicities and religions rests upon this foundation. For the New World Order of Baha'u'llah is established upon eternal principles that, in themselves, unite our hearts, our minds, and our actions. When we recognize that we are all children of God, that we can only know Him through His Manifestations, and that His Manifestations have progressively revealed His Will to us and will continue to do so forever, only then can we join together to build the Paradise on earth that all of us have dreamed of, **“on earth as it is in heaven.”**