

GLEANINGS

#5

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'ullah 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 or the equivalent to understand the Writings of Baha'u'llah.

The second is...

Baha'u'llah's principal argument in this treatise is that “Whether too soon or too late, the evidences of His effulgent glory are now actually manifest. It behooveth you to ascertain “...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.

A participant in this course recommended the following:

Immerse yourselves in the ocean of My words, that ye may unravel its secrets, and discover all the pearls of wisdom that lie hid in its depths. (Kitab-i-Aqdas #182)

A similar and complementary verse is this:

Recite ye the verses of God every morn and eventide. Whoso faileth to recite them hath not been faithful to the Covenant of God and His Testament, and whoso turneth away from these

holy verses in this Day is of those who throughout eternity have turned away from God.
(Kitab-i-Aqdas #149)

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

FIFTH WEEK'S SELECTIONS (XXXV-L)

The principal themes in the sixteen excerpts from the Writings of Baha'u'llah collected here are the reason for the opposition to the Manifestations of God (XXXV), the effects upon humanity from the crucifixion of Jesus (XXXVI), the infallibility of the Manifestation of God (XXXVII), the progressive revelation of God is according to the capacity of humanity (XXXVIII), the unity of the Manifestations and their sufferings (XXXIX), the transformation of Baha'u'llah (XL), the prophetic calling of Baha'u'llah in the Siyah-Chal (XLI), progressive revelation (XLII), Afnan called to serve the Cause and love humanity (XLIII), all scriptures have referred to Baha'u'llah (XLIV), Baha'u'llah has suffered in order to redeem humanity (XLV), the sufferings of Baha'u'llah that sorrow Him are caused by the disobedience of His followers (XLVI), the unity of the Manifestations (XLVII), Baha'u'llah forgives but God's Will is that justice prevails (XLVIII), the dual human and divine nature of the Manifestation (XLIX), and a call for humanity to awaken from its slumber.

– XXXV –

Ponder awhile. What is it that prompted, in every Dispensation, the peoples of the earth to shun the Manifestation of the All-Merciful? What could have impelled them to turn away from Him and to challenge His authority? Were men to meditate on these words which have flowed from the Pen of the Divine Ordainer, they would, one and all, hasten to embrace the truth of this God-given, and ever-enduring Revelation, and would testify to that which He Himself hath solemnly affirmed. It is the veil of idle imaginations which, in the days of the Manifestations of the Unity of God and the Daysprings of His everlasting glory, hath intervened, and will continue to intervene, between them and the rest of mankind. For in those days, He Who is the Eternal Truth manifesteth Himself in conformity with that which He Himself hath purposed, and not according to the desires and expectations of men. Even as He hath revealed: “So oft, then, as an Apostle cometh to you with that which your souls desire not, do ye swell with pride, and treat some as impostors, and slay others.”[Qur'an 2:87]

Is the rejection of Baha'u'llah by most of our fellow human beings a unique phenomenon that has never occurred before? No. It is perennial. It happens every time a Manifestation appears. This

statement is most elaborately developed in the Kitab-i-Iqan, in a passage that begins: “Reflect, what could have been the motive for such deeds? What could have prompted such behavior towards the Revelers of the beauty of the All-Glorious? Whatever in days gone by hath been the cause of the denial and opposition of those people hath now led to the perversity of the people of this age.”

There can be no doubt whatever that had these Apostles appeared, in bygone ages and cycles, in accordance with the vain imaginations which the hearts of men had devised, no one would have repudiated the truth of these sanctified Beings. Though such men have been, night and day, remembering the one true God, and have been devoutly engaged in the exercise of their devotions, yet they failed in the end to recognize, and partake of the grace of, the Daysprings of the signs of God and the Manifestations of His irrefutable evidences. To this the Scriptures bear witness. Thou hast, no doubt, heard about it.

In the Kitab-i-Iqan and the Jawahiru'l-Asrar, Baha'u'llah states that the abrogation of the previous laws revealed by the Manifestations of God is one of the reasons why humanity has rejected the new Manifestation. Also, if the new Manifestation had exhibited all of the signs predicted by His predecessor exactly as the people expected, He would likewise not have been rejected. It is this recognition of the new Manifestation that is the cause of human salvation, not “the exercise of their devotions”, for ritual action without understanding is of no spiritual value.

Consider the Dispensation of Jesus Christ. Behold, how all the learned men of that generation, though eagerly anticipating the coming of the Promised One, have nevertheless denied Him. Both Annas, the most learned among the divines of His day, and Caiaphas, the high priest, denounced Him and pronounced the sentence of His death.

*A version of this story is also found in the **Suriy-i-Haykal**, in Baha'u'llah's remarks addressed to or in honor of Nasiri'd-Din Shah. The theme, of the failure of the learned in religion to recognize the Manifestation of God, is one of the principal teachings of Baha'u'llah, set forth in the Kitab-i-Iqan, the Jawahiru'l-Asrar and other Tablets. As we see here, Baha'u'llah considered it important that the monarch, the king be informed of this truth, so that he would rely upon the Manifestation of God and not the learned men of his day.*

In like manner, when Muḥammad, the Prophet of God — may all men be a sacrifice unto Him — appeared, the learned men of Mecca and Medina arose, in the early days of His Revelation, against Him and rejected His Message, while they who were destitute of all learning recognized and embraced His Faith. Ponder awhile. Consider how Balál, the Ethiopian,

unlettered though he was, ascended into the heaven of faith and certitude, whilst ‘Abdu’lláh Ubayy, a leader among the learned, maliciously strove to oppose Him. Behold, how a mere shepherd was so carried away by the ecstasy of the words of God that he was able to gain admittance into the habitation of his Best-Beloved, and was united to Him Who is the Lord of Mankind, whilst they who prided themselves on their knowledge and wisdom strayed far from His path and remained deprived of His grace. For this reason He hath written: “He that is exalted among you shall be abased, and he that is abased shall be exalted.” References to this theme are to be found in most of the heavenly Books, as well as in the sayings of the Prophets and Messengers of God.

The story of Balal can be read here – https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bilal_ibn_Rabah and the story of ‘Abdu’llah Ubayy here – https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abd_Allah_ibn_Ubayy. The quotation cited by Baha’u’llah is from the gospels of Matthew (23:12), Mark (10:31) and Luke (14:11, 18:14). There are similar verses in Isaiah 40:4, which were cited in the Gospels of Matthew (3:3), Mark (1:3) and Luke (3:5). Baha’u’llah’s intent is that His reader understand that it is the purity of heart and recognition of the truth that matters, not the rank of the person.

Verily I say, such is the greatness of this Cause that the father flieth from his son, and the son flieth from his father. Call ye to mind the story of Noah and Canaan. God grant that, in these days of heavenly delight, ye may not deprive yourselves of the sweet savors of the All-Glorious God, and may partake, in this spiritual Springtime, of the outpourings of His grace. Arise in the name of Him Who is the Object of all knowledge, and, with absolute detachment from the learning of men, lift up your voices and proclaim His Cause. I swear by the Daystar of Divine Revelation! The very moment ye arise, ye will witness how a flood of Divine knowledge will gush out of your hearts, and will behold the wonders of His heavenly wisdom manifested in all their glory before you. Were ye to taste of the sweetness of the sayings of the All-Merciful, ye would unhesitatingly forsake your selves, and would lay down your lives for the Well-Beloved.

Baha’u’llah cites the prediction of Jesus regarding what will happen when He returns, reported in two of the gospels (Matthew 24:10, Mark 13:12) and the day of judgment in the Qur’an (80:33-37). The story of Noah and Canaan, wherein the youngest son of Noah dishonors or disobeys him and is condemned, told in the Bible (Genesis 9:20-27) and the Qur’an (11:42-47). He warns His reader not to follow those who engage in conflict with their families, or are disobedient and disrespectful, and to be entirely detached “from the learning of men”.

Who can ever believe that this Servant of God hath at any time cherished in His heart a desire for any earthly honor or benefit? The Cause associated with His Name is far above the transitory things of this world. Behold Him, an exile, a victim of tyranny, in this Most Great Prison. His enemies have assailed Him on every side, and will continue to do so till the end of His life. Whatever, therefore, He saith unto you is wholly for the sake of God, that haply the peoples of the earth may cleanse their hearts from the stain of evil desire, may rend its veil asunder, and attain unto the knowledge of the one true God — the most exalted station to which any man can aspire. Their belief or disbelief in My Cause can neither profit nor harm Me. We summon them wholly for the sake of God. He, verily, can afford to dispense with all creatures.

Baha'u'llah affirms that he has never, “at any time cherished in His heart a desire for any earthly honor or benefit”. He points out that He has spent His life as “an exile, a victim of tyranny” and a prisoner. He is entirely independent of the judgment of anyone because He listens to God, and summons humanity “wholly for the sake of God.” ‘Abdu’l-Baha referred to His father’s generosity (The Promulgation of Universal Peace #11), and His sister, Bahiyyih Khanum described her father and mother’s generosity and absence of worldly desire (The Chosen Highway by Lady Blomfield). Nabil-i-A’zam related a story conveyed to him by Mirza Musa, brother of Baha’u’llah, of a conversation between Mulla Husayn and Mullá Muḥammad-i-Mu’allim, in which the latter described Baha’u’llah as having the same characteristics reported of Him by His son and daughter (The Dawn-Breakers, pp. 104ff) At that time, Baha’u’llah was the heir to the fortune of Mirza Buzurg, a highly placed member of the court the Shah of Iran, and could have lived in luxury and indolence, but instead He devoted Himself to the poor.

– XXXVI –

Know thou that when the Son of Man yielded up His breath to God, the whole creation wept with a great weeping. By sacrificing Himself, however, a fresh capacity was infused into all created things. Its evidences, as witnessed in all the peoples of the earth, are now manifest before thee. The deepest wisdom which the sages have uttered, the profoundest learning which any mind hath unfolded, the arts which the ablest hands have produced, the influence exerted by the most potent of rulers, are but manifestations of the quickening power released by His transcendent, His all-pervasive, and resplendent Spirit.

We testify that when He came into the world, He shed the splendor of His glory upon all created things. Through Him the leper recovered from the leprosy of perversity and ignorance. Through Him, the unchaste and wayward were healed. Through His power, born of Almighty God, the eyes of the blind were opened, and the soul of the sinner sanctified.

This magnificent tribute to Jesus was apparently addressed to Fath-i-A'zam, a Bishop of the Eastern Orthodox Church and resident of Istanbul. Baha'u'llah depicts the spiritual potency released by the sacrificial death of Jesus as a living force in the present day, not something of the past. Consider how all-encompassing is this statement: "Its evidences, as witnessed in all the peoples of the earth, are now manifest before thee. The deepest wisdom which the sages have uttered, the profoundest learning which any mind hath unfolded, the arts which the ablest hands have produced, the influence exerted by the most potent of rulers, are but manifestations of the quickening power released by His transcendent, His all-pervasive, and resplendent Spirit." To a lesser degree, the souls of those who have faithfully followed the Manifestation of God are described: "The Prophets and Messengers of God have been sent down for the sole purpose of guiding mankind to the straight Path of Truth. The purpose underlying Their revelation hath been to educate all men, that they may, at the hour of death, ascend, in the utmost purity and sanctity and with absolute detachment, to the throne of the Most High. The light which these souls radiate is responsible for the progress of the world and the advancement of its peoples. They are like unto leaven which leaveneth the world of being, and constitute the animating force through which the arts and wonders of the world are made manifest." (GL:LXXXI) "The soul that hath remained faithful to the Cause of God, and stood unwaveringly firm in His Path shall, after his ascension, be possessed of such power that all the worlds which the Almighty hath created can benefit through him. Such a soul provideth, at the bidding of the Ideal King and Divine Educator, the pure leaven that leaveneth the world of being, and furnisheth the power through which the arts and wonders of the world are made manifest. Consider how meal needeth leaven to be leavened with. Those souls that are the symbols of detachment are the leaven of the world." (GL: LXXXII)

Leprosy may be interpreted as any veil that interveneth between man and the recognition of the Lord, his God. Whoso alloweth himself to be shut out from Him is indeed a leper, who shall not be remembered in the Kingdom of God, the Mighty, the All-Praised. We bear witness that through the power of the Word of God every leper was cleansed, every sickness was healed, every human infirmity was banished. He it is Who purified the world. Blessed is the man who, with a face beaming with light, hath turned towards Him.

Baha'u'llah describes the physical ailments that were cured by Jesus as "any veil that interveneth between man and the recognition of the Lord, his God." Rather than narrowing the meaning and denying the physical miracles of Jesus reported in the Gospels, this explanation broadens their

meaning and affirms that they have spiritual significance that is far more important than the physical one that is generally recognized by His followers.

– XXXVII –

Blessed is the man that hath acknowledged his belief in God and in His signs, and recognized that “He shall not be asked of His doings.” Such a recognition hath been made by God the ornament of every belief, and its very foundation. Upon it must depend the acceptance of every goodly deed. Fasten your eyes upon it, that haply the whisperings of the rebellious may not cause you to slip.

Were He to decree as lawful the thing which from time immemorial had been forbidden, and forbid that which had, at all times, been regarded as lawful, to none is given the right to question His authority. Whoso will hesitate, though it be for less than a moment, should be regarded as a transgressor.

Whoso hath not recognized this sublime and fundamental verity, and hath failed to attain this most exalted station, the winds of doubt will agitate him, and the sayings of the infidels will distract his soul. He that hath acknowledged this principle will be endowed with the most perfect constancy. All honor to this all-glorious station, the remembrance of which adorneth every exalted Tablet. Such is the teaching which God bestoweth on you, a teaching that will deliver you from all manner of doubt and perplexity, and enable you to attain unto salvation in both this world and in the next. He, verily, is the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Bountiful.

Initially citing the Qur’an (21:23), this passage (XXXVII), from the Kitab-i-Aqdas (#161), sets forth the requirements for recognition of Baha’u’llah, the Manifestation of God whose teachings are binding upon humanity for at least a millennium and whose revelation will overshadow the future for at least a half million years. They describe the station with which every Manifestation of God is endowed, the Most Great Infallibility, cited in the Kitab-i-Aqdas (#47) and elaborated in the Ishraqat, a Tablet revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas.

– XXXVIII –

Know of a certainty that in every Dispensation the light of Divine Revelation hath been vouchsafed unto men in direct proportion to their spiritual capacity. Consider the sun. How feeble its rays the moment it appeareth above the horizon. How gradually its warmth and

potency increase as it approacheth its zenith, enabling meanwhile all created things to adapt themselves to the growing intensity of its light. How steadily it declineth until it reacheth its setting point. Were it, all of a sudden, to manifest the energies latent within it, it would, no doubt, cause injury to all created things.... In like manner, if the Sun of Truth were suddenly to reveal, at the earliest stages of its manifestation, the full measure of the potencies which the providence of the Almighty hath bestowed upon it, the earth of human understanding would waste away and be consumed; for men's hearts would neither sustain the intensity of its revelation, nor be able to mirror forth the radiance of its light. Dismayed and overpowered, they would cease to exist.

*In this Tablet, one of those revealed in Arabic for Muhammad Ibrahim Khalil Muballigh, the teaching of progressive revelation is explained as necessitated by human nature, for "if the Sun of Truth were suddenly to reveal, at the earliest stages of its manifestation, the full measure of the potencies which the providence of the Almighty hath bestowed upon it, the earth of human understanding would waste away and be consumed; for men's hearts would neither sustain the intensity of its revelation, nor be able to mirror forth the radiance of its light. Dismayed and overpowered, they would cease to exist." This teaching is also explained in another Tablet: "How great the multitude of truths which the garment of words can never contain! How vast the number of such verities as no expression can adequately describe, whose significance can never be unfolded, and to which not even the remotest allusions can be made! How manifold are the truths which must remain unuttered until the appointed time is come! Even as it hath been said: **"Not everything that a man knoweth can be disclosed, nor can everything that he can disclose be regarded as timely, nor can every timely utterance be considered as suited to the capacity of those who hear it."** Of these truths some can be disclosed only to the extent of the capacity of the repositories of the light of Our knowledge, and the recipients of Our hidden grace." (GL: LXXXIX)*

– XXXIX –

Praise be to Thee, O Lord My God, for the wondrous revelations of Thy inscrutable decree and the manifold woes and trials Thou hast destined for myself. At one time Thou didst deliver me into the hands of Nimrod; at another Thou hast allowed Pharaoh's rod to persecute me. Thou, alone, canst estimate, through Thine all-encompassing knowledge and the operation of Thy Will, the incalculable afflictions I have suffered at their hands. Again Thou didst cast me into the prison-cell of the ungodly, for no reason except that I was moved to whisper into the ears of the well-favored denizens of Thy Kingdom an intimation of the vision with which Thou hadst, through Thy knowledge, inspired me, and revealed to me its meaning through the potency of Thy might. And again Thou didst decree that I be beheaded by the sword of the infidel. Again I was crucified for having unveiled to men's eyes the hidden gems of Thy

glorious unity, for having revealed to them the wondrous signs of Thy sovereign and everlasting power. How bitter the humiliations heaped upon me, in a subsequent age, on the plain of Karbilá! How lonely did I feel amidst Thy people! To what a state of helplessness I was reduced in that land! Unsatisfied with such indignities, my persecutors decapitated me, and, carrying aloft my head from land to land paraded it before the gaze of the unbelieving multitude, and deposited it on the seats of the perverse and faithless. In a later age, I was suspended, and my breast was made a target to the darts of the malicious cruelty of my foes. My limbs were riddled with bullets, and my body was torn asunder. Finally, behold how, in this Day, my treacherous enemies have leagued themselves against me, and are continually plotting to instill the venom of hate and malice into the souls of Thy servants. With all their might they are scheming to accomplish their purpose.... Grievous as is my plight, O God, my Well-Beloved, I render thanks unto Thee, and my Spirit is grateful for whatsoever hath befallen me in the path of Thy good-pleasure. I am well pleased with that which Thou didst ordain for me, and welcome, however calamitous, the pains and sorrows I am made to suffer.

In this Tablet, revealed for Nabil-i-A'zam and entitled Suriy-i-Damm, cites a number of the prophets of God with whom Baha'u'llah identifies Himself, exemplary of His the principle of the unity of the Manifestations. It was Abraham who was delivered "into the hands of Nimrod" (Qur'an 2:256); Moses whom God "allowed Pharaoh's rod to persecute"; Joseph wherefore he was cast "into the prison-cell of the ungodly"; John the Baptist who was "beheaded by the sword of the infidel"; Jesus who "was crucified for having unveiled to men's eyes the hidden gems of Thy glorious unity"; the Imam Husayn who "on the plain of Karbilá" was "decapitated", with his murderers "carrying aloft my head"; the Bab "was suspended...My limbs were riddled with bullets..." But Baha'u'llah does not complain for this treatment, rather "I render thanks unto Thee, and my Spirit is grateful for whatsoever hath befallen me in the path of Thy good-pleasure. I am well pleased with that which Thou didst ordain for me, and welcome, however calamitous, the pains and sorrows I am made to suffer." The better we understand Baha'u'llah's willing, nay, eager, anticipation of sacrificing His life for the spiritual uplift of others, the more we understand what He wishes for us.

– XL –

O My Well-Beloved! Thou hast breathed Thy Breath into Me, and divorced Me from Mine own Self. Thou didst, subsequently, decree that no more than a faint reflection, a mere emblem of Thy Reality within Me be left among the perverse and envious. Behold, how, deluded by this emblem, they have risen against Me, and heaped upon Me their denials! Uncover Thy Self, therefore, O My Best-Beloved, and deliver Me from My plight.

Thereupon a Voice replied: “I love, I dearly cherish this emblem. How can I consent that Mine eyes, alone, gaze upon this emblem, and that no heart except Mine heart recognize it? By My Beauty, which is the same as Thy Beauty! My wish is to hide Thee from Mine own eyes: how much more from the eyes of men!”

I was preparing to make reply, when lo, the Tablet was suddenly ended, leaving My theme unfinished, and the pearl of Mine utterance unstrung.

The Manifestation of God does not reveal Himself fully to humanity, and yet, the “emblem” that we can experience is cherished by God, and while God’s wish “is to hide Thee from Mine own eyes: how much more from the eyes of men” He loves humanity sufficiently to share that “emblem” with us. This affirmation of the love of God for His Manifestation and for humanity is beautifully expressed in this verse from the Gospel of John (chapter 3): [16](#)For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

– XLI –

God is My witness, O people! I was asleep on My couch, when lo, the Breeze of God wafting over Me roused Me from My slumber. His quickening Spirit revived Me, and My tongue was unloosed to voice His Call. Accuse Me not of having transgressed against God. Behold Me, not with your eyes but with Mine. Thus admonisheth you He Who is the Gracious, the All-Knowing. Think ye, O people, that I hold within My grasp the control of God’s ultimate Will and Purpose? Far be it from Me to advance such claim. To this I testify before God, the Almighty, the Exalted, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. Had the ultimate destiny of God’s Faith been in Mine hands, I would have never consented, even though for one moment, to manifest Myself unto you, nor would I have allowed one word to fall from My lips. Of this God Himself is, verily, a witness.

This Tablet, revealed in Arabic for Abu’l-Hasan-i-Shin, describes His summons to prophethood by God in the Siyah-Chal. This summons is also described in Suriy-i-Haykal, to Nasiri’d-Din Shah and to Napoleon III; in Epistle to the Son of the Wolf; and in a Tablet in Prayers and Meditations of Baha’u’llah (LXXIV). Contrary to what is often alleged, it was not Baha’u’llah’s choice to become a Manifestation of God, or to declare His station to humanity. He was compelled to do so by God. When He calls upon His followers to submit to the Will of God, it is not to do what He has not done, but to follow in His footsteps.

– XLII –

O Son of Justice! In the night season the beauty of the immortal Being hath repaired from the emerald height of fidelity unto the Sadratu'l-Muntahá, and wept with such a weeping that the Concourse on high and the dwellers of the realms above wailed at His lamenting. Whereupon there was asked, Why the wailing and weeping? He made reply: As bidden I waited expectant upon the hill of faithfulness, yet inhaled not from them that dwell on earth the fragrance of fidelity. Then summoned to return I beheld, and lo! certain doves of holiness were sore tried within the claws of the dogs of earth. Thereupon the Maid of Heaven hastened forth unveiled and resplendent from Her mystic mansion, and asked of their names, and all were told but one. And when urged, the first letter thereof was uttered, whereupon the dwellers of the celestial chambers rushed forth out of their habitation of glory. And whilst the second letter was pronounced they fell down, one and all, upon the dust. At that moment a voice was heard from the inmost shrine: "Thus far and no farther." Verily, We bear witness unto that which they have done, and now are doing.

This Hidden Word in Persian (#77) refers to progressive revelation and, according to the Guardian, the promise that future Manifestations of God will appear, after the millennium decreed by Baha'u'llah as the Baha'i Dispensation. The phrase "thus far and no farther" may echo God's pronouncement in Job 38:11, and Qur'an 53:14. In both cases it establishes that the ultimate boundaries are set by God and not by man.

– XLIII –

O Afnán, O thou that hast branched from Mine ancient Stock! My glory and My loving-kindness rest upon thee. How vast is the tabernacle of the Cause of God! It hath overshadowed all the peoples and kindreds of the earth, and will, ere long, gather together the whole of mankind beneath its shelter. Thy day of service is now come. Countless Tablets bear the testimony of the bounties vouchsafed unto thee. Arise for the triumph of My Cause, and, through the power of thine utterance, subdue the hearts of men. Thou must show forth that which will ensure the peace and the well-being of the miserable and the downtrodden. Gird up the loins of thine endeavor, that perchance thou mayest release the captive from his chains, and enable him to attain unto true liberty.

This Tablet is entitled Lāwḥ-i-Dunya and was addressed to an Afnan, that is, a male relative of the Bab, named Mírzá Aqay-i-Afnán (1842-1905). There is one brief biography online of the recipient of this Tablet: https://bahai-library.com/bahauallah_aqa_mirza_aqa. The Tablet mentions two other Afnan, 'Alí-Akbar Shahmirzadí Ayadí (1842-1910) and Hají Abu'l-Hasan Amin Ardikani (1831-1928). Baha'u'llah may have referred these two Afnans in another Tablet, as He wrote "God hath made each of you a bough of this Ancient Root" and in the same Tablet "Ye are the hands of His Cause in

*His lands” (Additional Tablets and Extracts from Tablets revealed by Baha’u’llah), as both were appointed Hands of the Cause of God. These relatives of the Bab are called upon to serve the Cause, and they did so with distinction. There are two short biographies online of Haji Abu’l-Hasan Amin Ardikani: https://bahai-library.com/momen_encyclopedia_amin_haji and https://bahai-library.com/maceoin_iranica_hajji_ardakani. The recipient is addressed as “thou hast branched from Mine ancient Stock”, which we are familiar with in the case of Baha’u’llah’s sons, and in particular ‘Abdu’l-Baha, addressed as such in the Kitab-i-Aqdas (#121) “When the ocean of My presence hath ebbed and the Book of My Revelation is ended, turn your faces towards Him Whom God hath purposed, **Who hath branched from this Ancient Root**” and (#174): “O people of the world! When the Mystic Dove will have winged its flight from its Sanctuary of Praise and sought its far-off goal, its hidden habitation, refer ye whatsoever ye understand not in the Book to Him **Who hath branched from this mighty Stock.**” Notwithstanding this manner of address to His sons and the relatives of the Bab, there was no confusion with regard to the successor to Baha’u’llah, because He wrote in His will, the Kitab-i-Ahd: “The Will of the divine Testator is this: **It is incumbent upon the Aghsán, the Afán and My Kindred to turn, one and all, their faces towards the Most Mighty Branch.** Consider that which We have revealed in Our Most Holy Book: “When the ocean of My presence hath ebbed and the Book of My Revelation is ended, turn your faces towards Him Whom God hath purposed, Who hath branched from this Ancient Root.” The object of this sacred verse is none except the Most Mighty Branch [‘Abdu’l-Bahá]. Thus have We graciously revealed unto you Our potent Will, and I am verily the Gracious, the All-Bountiful. Verily God hath ordained the station of the Greater Branch [Muḥammad ‘Alí] to be beneath that of the Most Great Branch [‘Abdu’l-Bahá]. He is in truth the Ordainer, the All-Wise. We have chosen “the Greater” after “the Most Great,” as decreed by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed.”*

Justice is, in this day, bewailing its plight, and Equity groaneth beneath the yoke of oppression. The thick clouds of tyranny have darkened the face of the earth, and enveloped its peoples. Through the movement of Our Pen of glory We have, at the bidding of the omnipotent Ordainer, breathed a new life into every human frame, and instilled into every word a fresh potency. All created things proclaim the evidences of this worldwide regeneration. This is the most great, the most joyful tidings imparted by the Pen of this wronged One to mankind. Wherefore fear ye, O My well-beloved ones? Who is it that can dismay you? A touch of moisture sufficeth to dissolve the hardened clay out of which this perverse generation is molded. The mere act of your gathering together is enough to scatter the forces of these vain and worthless people....

Baha'u'llah had implacable confidence in the capacity of the Afnan He addressed to bring about the "new life" and "joyful tidings imparted by the Pen of this wronged One to mankind". "The mere act of your gathering together is enough to scatter the forces of these vain and worthless people." If we do not feel that our "gathering together" has this capacity perhaps we need to remind ourselves of these words of Jesus to Peter, His first apostle when did not trust with word of his Lord: "31And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Gospel of Matthew, chapter 14) When the whole company of His disciples failed to cure by faith, the following conversation ensued: "16And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. 17Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. 18And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. 19Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? 20And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." (Matthew, chapter 17)

Every man of insight will, in this day, readily admit that the counsels which the Pen of this wronged One hath revealed constitute the supreme animating power for the advancement of the world and the exaltation of its peoples. Arise, O people, and, by the power of God's might, resolve to gain the victory over your own selves, that haply the whole earth may be freed and sanctified from its servitude to the gods of its idle fancies — gods that have inflicted such loss upon, and are responsible for the misery of, their wretched worshipers. These idols form the obstacle that impedeth man in his efforts to advance in the path of perfection. We cherish the hope that the Hand of Divine power may lend its assistance to mankind, and deliver it from its state of grievous abasement.

While the world is full of people who are convinced that either they have what it takes to promote the best interests of humanity, or that someone else has what it takes but it certainly can't be Baha'u'llah; while they may believe that His solutions are old and won't work for the 21st century, let alone the rest of the thousand years that He claimed for His Dispensation, He does not hesitate to claim that He is the Divine Physician and He has the remedy to all our ills. Furthermore, He states that the other people who are claiming to be physicians are fakes and what they prescribe won't work.

Elsewhere in the Lawh-i-Dunya, Baha'u'llah wrote:

"Were men to strictly observe that which the Pen of the Most High hath revealed in the Crimson Book, they could then well afford to dispense with the regulations which prevail in the world. Certain exhortations have repeatedly streamed forth from the Pen of the Most High that

perchance the manifestations of power and the dawning-places of might may, sometime, be enabled to enforce them.”

And in the Suriy-i-Muluk He wrote this challenge to the Ottoman authorities:

Say: If the laws and regulations to which ye cleave be of your own making, We will, in no wise, follow them. Thus have I been instructed by Him Who is the All-Wise, the All-Informed. Such hath been My way in the past, and such will it remain in the future, through the power of God and His might. This, indeed, is the true and right way. If they be ordained by God, bring forth, then, your proofs, if ye be of them that speak the truth. (Suriy-i-Muluk #25)

In one of the Tablets these words have been revealed: O people of God! Do not busy yourselves in your own concerns; let your thoughts be fixed upon that which will rehabilitate the fortunes of mankind and sanctify the hearts and souls of men. This can best be achieved through pure and holy deeds, through a virtuous life and a goodly behavior. Valiant acts will ensure the triumph of this Cause, and a saintly character will reinforce its power. Cleave unto righteousness, O people of Bahá! This, verily, is the commandment which this wronged One hath given unto you, and the first choice of His unrestrained Will for every one of you.

Baha'u'llah repeated these counsels in so many of His Tablets that it might be impossible to cite all of them. But this citation probably suffices, if we take it to heart and put it in action: “Say: O brethren! Let deeds, not words, be your adorning.” (Arabic Hidden Words #5)

O friends! It behooveth you to refresh and revive your souls through the gracious favors which in this Divine, this soul-stirring Springtime are being showered upon you. The Daystar of His great glory hath shed its radiance upon you, and the clouds of His limitless grace have overshadowed you. How high the reward of him that hath not deprived himself of so great a bounty, nor failed to recognize the beauty of his Best-Beloved in this, His new attire. Watch over yourselves, for the Evil One is lying in wait, ready to entrap you. Gird yourselves against his wicked devices, and, led by the light of the name of the All-Seeing God, make your escape from the darkness that surroundeth you. Let your vision be world-embracing, rather than confined to your own self. The Evil One is he that hindereth the rise and obstructeth the spiritual progress of the children of men.

In case anyone might get hung up on what Baha'u'llah means by “the Evil One”, He tells us before the end of the paragraph – “The Evil One is he that hindereth the rise and obstructeth the spiritual progress of the children of men.” Anyone who gets in the way of this divine objective is Satan. Do you remember this story? “[21](#)From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his

disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. 22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. 23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.” (Matthew, chapter 16) Satan is not a metaphysical reality, or a mere nonexistence. It is a stumbling block to the spiritual progress of others.

It is incumbent upon every man, in this Day, to hold fast unto whatsoever will promote the interests, and exalt the station, of all nations and just governments. Through each and every one of the verses which the Pen of the Most High hath revealed, the doors of love and unity have been unlocked and flung open to the face of men. We have erewhile declared — and Our Word is the truth — : “Consort with the followers of all religions in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship.” Whatsoever hath led the children of men to shun one another, and hath caused dissensions and divisions amongst them, hath, through the revelation of these words, been nullified and abolished. From the heaven of God’s Will, and for the purpose of ennobling the world of being and of elevating the minds and souls of men, hath been sent down that which is the most effective instrument for the education of the whole human race. The highest essence and most perfect expression of whatsoever the peoples of old have either said or written hath, through this most potent Revelation, been sent down from the heaven of the Will of the All-Possessing, the Ever-Abiding God. Of old it hath been revealed: “Love of one’s country is an element of the Faith of God.” The Tongue of Grandeur hath, however, in the day of His manifestation proclaimed: “It is not his to boast who loveth his country, but it is his who loveth the world.” Through the power released by these exalted words He hath lent a fresh impulse, and set a new direction, to the birds of men’s hearts, and hath obliterated every trace of restriction and limitation from God’s holy Book.

Jews love their homeland, Israel and there is plenty of justification for them to do so in their scriptures. Christians love their homeland, and they are all over the world, and they can cite chapter and verse in support of that conviction. Muslims can justify their love of their homeland, be it Iran for the Imami Shi’i, a host of countries for the Sunnis, and they can cite verses from the Qur’an and many hadith. But Baha’is are unique because they are not looking to the unification of humanity in the future, but in the now. The promised day is come. And in this day “It is not his to boast who loveth his country, but it is his who loveth the world.”

Baha’u’llah wrote His last book book, the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, in which He stated this principle in what might be the most powerful manner imaginable:

“The utterance of God is a lamp, whose light is these words: Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch. Deal ye one with another with the utmost love and harmony, with friendliness and fellowship. He Who is the Daystar of Truth beareth Me witness! So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth. The One true God, He Who knoweth all things, Himself testifieth to the truth of these words.

“Exert yourselves that ye may attain this transcendent and most sublime station, the station that can insure the protection and security of all mankind. This goal excelleth every other goal, and this aspiration is the monarch of all aspirations...At one time We spoke in the language of the lawgiver; at another in that of the truth-seeker and the mystic, and yet Our supreme purpose and highest wish hath always been to disclose the glory and sublimity of this station. God, verily, is a sufficient witness!”

O people of Justice! Be as brilliant as the light, and as splendid as the fire that blazed in the Burning Bush. The brightness of the fire of your love will no doubt fuse and unify the contending peoples and kindreds of the earth, whilst the fierceness of the flame of enmity and hatred cannot but result in strife and ruin. We beseech God that He may shield His creatures from the evil designs of His enemies. He verily hath power over all things.

Baha'u'llah calls us the “people of Justice”! And then He says that “the brightness of the fire of your love will no doubt fuse and unify the contending peoples and kindreds of the earth”. Not our intelligence or our knowledge; not our wealth or our power; not our uniformity or our diversity; not even our intuition or our faith...one thing only has that capacity, and that is “the brightness of the fire of your love”. This is the way for us to be the “people of Justice”. His prayer for us is real indeed, for “the evil designs of His enemies” are all of those things that would distract us from “the brightness of the fire of your love”.

All praise be to the one true God — exalted be His glory — inasmuch as He hath, through the Pen of the Most High, unlocked the doors of men's hearts. Every verse which this Pen hath revealed is a bright and shining portal that discloseth the glories of a saintly and pious life, of pure and stainless deeds. The summons and the message which We gave were never intended to reach or to benefit one land or one people only. Mankind in its entirety must firmly adhere to whatsoever hath been revealed and vouchsafed unto it. Then and only then will it attain unto true liberty. The whole earth is illuminated with the resplendent glory of God's Revelation. In the year sixty He Who heralded the light of Divine Guidance — may all creation be a sacrifice unto Him — arose to announce a fresh revelation of the Divine Spirit, and was followed, twenty years later, by Him through Whose coming the world was made the recipient of this promised glory, this wondrous favor. Behold how the generality of mankind hath been

endued with the capacity to hearken unto God's most exalted Word — the Word upon which must depend the gathering together and spiritual resurrection of all men....

True liberty is distinguished from what the world considers to be liberty. Baha'u'llah summarizes the meaning of true liberty in Kitab-i-Aqdas (#122-25):

“Consider the pettiness of men's minds. They ask for that which injureth them, and cast away the thing that profiteth them. They are, indeed, of those that are far astray. We find some men desiring liberty, and priding themselves therein. Such men are in the depths of ignorance.

“Liberty must, in the end, lead to sedition, whose flames none can quench. Thus warneth you He Who is the Reckoner, the All-Knowing. Know ye that the embodiment of liberty and its symbol is the animal. That which beseemeth man is submission unto such restraints as will protect him from his own ignorance, and guard him against the harm of the mischief maker. Liberty causeth man to overstep the bounds of propriety, and to infringe on the dignity of his station. It debaseth him to the level of extreme depravity and wickedness.

“Regard men as a flock of sheep that need a shepherd for their protection. This, verily, is the truth, the certain truth. We approve of liberty in certain circumstances, and refuse to sanction it in others. We, verily, are the All-Knowing.

“Say: True liberty consisteth in man's submission unto My commandments, little as ye know it. Were men to observe that which We have sent down unto them from the Heaven of Revelation, they would, of a certainty, attain unto perfect liberty. Happy is the man that hath apprehended the Purpose of God in whatever He hath revealed from the Heaven of His Will that pervadeth all created things. Say: The liberty that profiteth you is to be found nowhere except in complete servitude unto God, the Eternal Truth. Whoso hath tasted of its sweetness will refuse to barter it for all the dominion of earth and heaven.”

The world is full of people who worship liberty, who long for liberty, who live and die for liberty, who have made liberty the foundation of their governments and who believe anything other than liberty is tyranny, is a return to the oppressive ways of the past, is to be resisted with every means at our disposal. Billions of Christians, the largest community of believers on planet earth are convinced that liberty is what distinguishes their religion from every other one, and which makes it most suitable to everyone and the true salvation for humanity. But they have failed to understand this statement of Jesus:

34A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. 35By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. (Gospel of John, chapter 13)

15If ye love me, keep my commandments...21He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him...If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. 24He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. (Gospel of John, chapter 14)

Sound familiar? How about “the brightness of the fire of your love will no doubt fuse and unify the contending peoples and kindreds of the earth”. Jesus was seeking to unify His followers. Baha’u’llah is seeking to unify humanity. Both objectives are accomplished through love and love alone.

Incline your hearts, O people of God, unto the counsels of your true, your incomparable Friend. The Word of God may be likened unto a sapling, whose roots have been implanted in the hearts of men. It is incumbent upon you to foster its growth through the living waters of wisdom, of sanctified and holy words, so that its root may become firmly fixed and its branches may spread out as high as the heavens and beyond.

The Word of God is so important to our spiritual liberation, our spiritual education and advancement that Baha’u’llah tells us:

“Intone, O My servant, the verses of God that have been received by thee, as intoned by them who have drawn nigh unto Him, that the sweetness of thy melody may kindle thine own soul, and attract the hearts of all men. Whoso reciteth, in the privacy of his chamber, the verses revealed by God, the scattering angels of the Almighty shall scatter abroad the fragrance of the words uttered by his mouth, and shall cause the heart of every righteous man to throb. Though he may, at first, remain unaware of its effect, yet the virtue of the grace vouchsafed unto him must needs sooner or later exercise its influence upon his soul. Thus have the mysteries of the Revelation of God been decreed by virtue of the Will of Him Who is the Source of power and wisdom.” (GL: CXXXVI)

“Recite ye the verses of God every morn and eventide. Whoso faileth to recite them hath not been faithful to the Covenant of God and His Testament, and whoso turneth away from these holy verses in this Day is of those who throughout eternity have turned away from God.” (Kitab-i-Aqdas #149)

O ye that dwell on earth! The distinguishing feature that marketh the preeminent character of this Supreme Revelation consisteth in that We have, on the one hand, blotted out from the pages of God’s holy Book whatsoever hath been the cause of strife, of malice and mischief

amongst the children of men, and have, on the other, laid down the essential prerequisites of concord, of understanding, of complete and enduring unity. Well is it with them that keep My statutes.

Baha'u'llah has "blotted out from the pages of God's holy Book whatsoever hath been the cause of strife, of malice and mischief amongst the children of men" and now it is we who must take action. He has done what He came to do, and we need to do what we have been created to do. Once more, He promises that "the brightness of the fire of your love will no doubt fuse and unify the contending peoples and kindreds of the earth".

Time and again have We admonished Our beloved ones to avoid, nay to flee from, anything whatsoever from which the odor of mischief can be detected. The world is in great turmoil, and the minds of its people are in a state of utter confusion. We entreat the Almighty that He may graciously illuminate them with the glory of His Justice, and enable them to discover that which will be profitable unto them at all times and under all conditions. He, verily is the All-Possessing, the Most High.

Why has Baha'u'llah "Time and again admonished Our loved ones" – that's us – "to avoid, nay to flee from, anything whatsoever from which the odor of mischief can be detected"? Because we didn't listen and learn the first time He told us. Or the second time. Or most of us anytime. We are part of the "world" that "is in great turmoil" and our minds "are in a state of utter confusion". We must do what we were told to do rather than engage in "mischief" and end up in "confusion". And He tells us that we will accomplish that by what He called "the brightness of the fire of your love".

– XLIV –

Lay not aside the fear of God, O ye the learned of the world, and judge fairly the Cause of this unlettered One to Whom all the Books of God, the Protector, the Self-Subsisting, have testified.... Will not the dread of Divine displeasure, the fear of Him Who hath no peer or equal, arouse you? He Whom the world hath wronged hath, at no time, associated with you, hath never studied your writings, nor participated in any of your disputations. The garb He weareth, His flowing locks, His headdress, attest the truth of His words. How long will ye persist in your injustice? Witness the habitation in which He, Who is the incarnation of justice, hath been forced to dwell. Open your eyes, and, beholding His plight, meditate diligently upon that which your hands have wrought, that haply ye may not be deprived of the light of His Divine utterance, nor remain bereft of your share of the ocean of His knowledge.

Bahá'u'llah addressed this Tablet to Mashadi Isma'il-i-Zarqani and it is in Persian. It speaks to the learned people of the world, and in particular those with religious learning. In 19th century Iran, the profession and social standing of a man could be recognized by his appearance, and in particular the length of his hair, the cut of his beard, the kind of head covering he wore and the style of his garments. An incident in Baha'u'llah's life recounted in The Dawn-Breakers (chapter 5) may lend us some insight into the significance of this custom.

“Bahá'u'lláh had already, prior to the declaration of the Báb, visited the district of Núr, at a time when the celebrated mujtahid Mírzá Muḥammad-Taqíy-i-Núrí was at the height of his authority and influence. Such was the eminence of his position, that they who sat at his feet regarded themselves each as the authorised exponent of the Faith and Law of Islám. The mujtahid was addressing a company of over two hundred of such disciples, and was expatiating upon a dark passage of the reported utterances of the imáms, when Bahá'u'lláh, followed by a number of His companions, passed by that place, and paused for a while to listen to his discourse. The mujtahid asked his disciples to elucidate an abstruse theory relating to the metaphysical aspects of the Islamic teachings. As they all confessed their inability to explain it, Bahá'u'lláh was moved to give, in brief but convincing language, a lucid exposition of that theory. The mujtahid was greatly annoyed at the incompetence of his disciples. “For years I have been instructing you,” he angrily exclaimed, “and have patiently striven to instil into your minds the profoundest truths and the noblest principles of the Faith. And yet you allow, after all these years of persistent study, this youth, a wearer of the kuláh, who has had no share in scholarly training, and who is entirely unfamiliar with your academic learning, to demonstrate his superiority over you!”

While the headgear of the religiously learned had various different names, one of them was decided not kulah! That was worn by government officials and others involved in the secular world. In His maturity, Baha'u'llah grew His hair and beard long, colored it with henna, wore headgear that was decidedly not clerical, wore long robes of a different design from those of the 'ulama.

Certain ones among both commoners and nobles have objected that this wronged One is neither a member of the ecclesiastical order nor a descendant of the Prophet. Say: O ye that claim to be just! Reflect a little while, and ye shall recognize how infinitely exalted is His present state above the station ye claim He should possess. The Will of the Almighty hath decreed that out of a house wholly devoid of all that the divines, the doctors, the sages, and scholars commonly possess His Cause should proceed and be made manifest.

*Baha'u'llah did not fit the bill that Iranians had concocted over the course of centuries. They believed that a man learned in spiritual matters must be a member of a Sufi tariqah (brotherhood) or a mulla, mujtahid or other highly trained expert in Islamic law and traditions, or at least a Siyyid, a descendant of Muhammad. Of course Baha'u'llah was none of those things. But He points out that it was God's Will that one **"out of a house"**, that is from a family that was **"wholly devoid of all that the divines, the doctors, the sages, and scholars commonly possess"** should come forth the Cause of God. As Baha'u'llah explained at length in *Kitab-i-Iqan*, the religious by profession have, generally speaking, looked after themselves and not the generality of the people. The Manifestations of God have never been members of that religious class.*

The Breathings of the Divine Spirit awoke Him, and bade Him arise and proclaim His Revelation. No sooner was He roused from His slumber than He lifted up His voice and summoned the whole of mankind unto God, the Lord of all worlds. We have been moved to reveal these words in consideration of the weakness and frailty of men; otherwise, the Cause We have proclaimed is such as no pen can ever describe, nor any mind conceive its greatness. To this beareth witness He with Whom is the Mother Book.

*With such brevity He sums up His summons from God, His adaptation of the Word to the **"weakness and frailty of men"** and **"the Cause"** He has **"proclaimed"** to be beyond the capacity of pen to describe and mind to conceive. And whenever we think that we have understood all there is to know about Baha'u'llah, we have only to recall these words to be reminded that we have just begun.*

– XLV –

The Ancient Beauty hath consented to be bound with chains that mankind may be released from its bondage, and hath accepted to be made a prisoner within this most mighty Stronghold that the whole world may attain unto true liberty. He hath drained to its dregs the cup of sorrow, that all the peoples of the earth may attain unto abiding joy, and be filled with gladness. This is of the mercy of your Lord, the Compassionate, the Most Merciful. We have accepted to be abased, O believers in the Unity of God, that ye may be exalted, and have suffered manifold afflictions, that ye might prosper and flourish. He Who hath come to build anew the whole world, behold, how they that have joined partners with God have forced Him to dwell within the most desolate of cities!

In this Tablet, addressed to Muhammad Rida, who may have been Mullá Muhammad-i-Ridáy-i-Muhammmad-Ábádí (1814-1897), for whom there is an online biography: https://bahaipedia.org/Mull%C3%A1_Muhammad-i-Rid%C3%A1y-i-Muhammmad-

[%C3%81b%C3%A1d%C3%AD](#), speaks about the purpose of His sacrifices, which is so “that the whole world may attain unto true liberty...that all the peoples of the earth may attain unto abiding joy, and be filled with gladness...that ye may be exalted...that ye might prosper and flourish”. If this sounds very similar to the reason Jesus gave for giving His life, that is not surprising, because Baha’u’llah taught that all of the Manifestations have followed this path of self-sacrifice.

– XLVI –

I sorrow not for the burden of My imprisonment. Neither do I grieve over My abasement, or the tribulation I suffer at the hands of Mine enemies. By My life! They are My glory, a glory wherewith God hath adorned His own Self. Would that ye know it!

This Tablet, revealed for Mirza ‘Ali Naqi, is similar to some of the others translated by the Guardian in explaining that the sufferings of Baha’u’llah as a Manifestation have the purpose of promoting the Cause of God, and the happiness of humanity.

The shame I was made to bear hath uncovered the glory with which the whole of creation had been invested, and through the cruelties I have endured, the Daystar of Justice hath manifested itself, and shed its splendor upon men.

My sorrows are for those who have involved themselves in their corrupt passions, and claim to be associated with the Faith of God, the Gracious, the All-Praised.

The real source of His sorrow are those who call themselves Baha’is and “who have involved themselves in their corrupt passions”. It is the behavior of the Baha’is that concerns Him, not their opinions or their declarations.

It behooveth the people of Bahá to die to the world and all that is therein, to be so detached from all earthly things that the inmates of Paradise may inhale from their garment the sweet smelling savor of sanctity, that all the peoples of the earth may recognize in their faces the brightness of the All-Merciful, and that through them may be spread abroad the signs and tokens of God, the Almighty, the All-Wise. They that have tarnished the fair name of the Cause of God, by following the things of the flesh — these are in palpable error!

When Jews observe that there is nothing comparable to the Hassidim amongst the Baha’is; when Christians observe that there are no saints and no mystics comparable to those in their history amongst the Baha’is; when Muslims observe that there are no Sufi orders or saints amongst the Baha’is; when Buddhists note that we don’t have monks and lamas; and when Hindus note that we

*don't have gurus, yogis and sadhus...we have only to contemplate what Baha'u'llah calls us to do, to know that our standard of conduct is no less rigorous in its call to **"die to the world and all that is therein"** and to refrain from **"following the things of the flesh"** than any other religious tradition. And while, in most cases the most rigorous requirements of other religious communities apply only to select groups of people, in His Faith, they apply to all of us.*

– XLVII –

O Jews! If ye be intent on crucifying once again Jesus, the Spirit of God, put Me to death, for He hath once more, in My person, been made manifest unto you. Deal with Me as ye wish, for I have vowed to lay down My life in the path of God. I will fear no one, though the powers of earth and heaven be leagued against Me. Followers of the Gospel! If ye cherish the desire to slay Muḥammad, the Apostle of God, seize Me and put an end to My life, for I am He, and My Self is His Self. Do unto Me as ye like, for the deepest longing of Mine heart is to attain the presence of My Best-Beloved in His Kingdom of Glory. Such is the Divine decree, if ye know it. Followers of Muḥammad! If it be your wish to riddle with your shafts the breast of Him Who hath caused His Book the Bayán to be sent down unto you, lay hands on Me and persecute Me, for I am His Well-Beloved, the revelation of His own Self, though My name be not His name. I have come in the shadows of the clouds of glory, and am invested by God with invincible sovereignty. He, verily, is the Truth, the Knower of things unseen. I, verily, anticipate from you the treatment ye have accorded unto Him that came before Me. To this all things, verily, witness, if ye be of those who hearken. O people of the Bayán! If ye have resolved to shed the blood of Him Whose coming the Báb hath proclaimed, Whose advent Muḥammad hath prophesied, and Whose Revelation Jesus Christ Himself hath announced, behold Me standing, ready and defenseless, before you. Deal with Me after your own desires.

This Tablet recalls the previous one that identifies Baha'u'llah with a number of the Manifestations of God, once more in His willingness to suffer what each one of them endured, for the love of God.

– XLVIII –

God is my witness! Had it not been in conflict with that which the Tablets of God have decreed, I would have gladly kissed the hands of whosoever attempted to shed my blood in the path of the Well-Beloved. I would, moreover, have bestowed upon him a share of such worldly goods as God had allowed me to possess, even though he who perpetrated this act would have

provoked the wrath of the Almighty, incurred His malediction, and deserved to be tormented throughout the eternity of God, the All-Possessing, the Equitable, the All-Wise.

Baha'u'llah reiterates in this Tablet His willingness to suffer any fate whatsoever for the Cause of God, but He indicates that this is “in conflict with that which the Tablets of God have decreed” and that “he who perpetrated this act would have provoked the wrath of the Almighty, incurred His malediction, and deserved to be tormented throughout the eternity of God”. God is just. Baha'u'llah stated this in the very last Tablet cited in this collection.

– XLIX –

Know verily that whenever this Youth turneth His eyes towards His own self, he findeth it the most insignificant of all creation. When He contemplates, however, the bright effulgences He hath been empowered to manifest, lo, that self is transfigured before Him into a sovereign Potency permeating the essence of all things visible and invisible. Glory be to Him Who, through the power of truth, hath sent down the Manifestation of His own Self and entrusted Him with His message unto all mankind.

The dual nature of the Manifestation of God is the theme of this passage, and it is also found in other Writings of Baha'u'llah, including in the Kitab-i-Iqan and the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf. Sometimes Baha'u'llah refers to His nature as threefold (human, prophetic and divine) rather than twofold (human and divine). In either case He differentiates between His human nature, which He shares with all of us, and His divine nature, which is unique to the Manifestations of God and which is beyond our experience and our understanding. We only know about that nature to the degree that it is revealed to us by those who possess it...the Manifestations themselves.

– L –

Shake off, O heedless ones, the slumber of negligence, that ye may behold the radiance which His glory hath spread through the world. How foolish are those who murmur against the premature birth of His light. O ye who are inly blind! Whether too soon or too late, the evidences of His effulgent glory are now actually manifest. It behooveth you to ascertain whether or not such a light hath appeared. It is neither within your power nor mine to set the time at which it should be made manifest. God's inscrutable Wisdom hath fixed its hour beforehand. Be content, O people, with that which God hath desired for you and predestined unto you.... O my ill-wishers! The Daystar of eternal Guidance beareth me witness: Had it been in my power, I would have, under no circumstances, consented to distinguish myself amongst men, for the Name I bear utterly disdaineth to associate itself with this generation

whose tongues are sullied and whose hearts are false. And whenever I chose to hold my peace and be still, lo, the voice of the Holy Ghost, standing on my right hand, aroused me, and the Supreme Spirit appeared before my face, and Gabriel overshadowed me, and the Spirit of Glory stirred within my bosom, bidding me arise and break my silence. If your hearing be purged and your ears be attentive, ye will assuredly perceive that every limb of my body, nay all the atoms of my being, proclaim and bear witness to this call: "God, besides Whom is none other God, and He, Whose beauty is now manifest, is the reflection of His glory unto all that are in heaven and on earth."