

GLEANINGS

#8

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...

“...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.

EIGHTH WEEK'S SELECTIONS (LXXVI-LXXXII)

The principal themes in the seven excerpts from the Writings of Baha'u'llah collected here are the purpose of the creation of man, His Messengers, the Day of God, and the revelations of the Bab and Baha'u'llah [LXXVI]; the creation of man [LXXVII]; the origin of creation [LXXVIII]; the worlds of God [LXXIX]; the existence of man after physical death [LXXX]; the soul of man after physical death [LXXXI]; the nature of the soul [LXXXII].

– LXXVI –

Give ear, O My servant, unto that which is being sent down unto thee from the Throne of thy Lord, the Inaccessible, the Most Great. There is none other God but Him. He hath called into being His creatures, that they may know Him, Who is the Compassionate, the All-Merciful. Unto the cities of all nations He hath sent His Messengers, Whom He hath commissioned to announce unto men tidings of the Paradise of His good pleasure, and to draw them nigh unto the Haven of abiding security, the Seat of eternal holiness and transcendent glory.

*This Tablet, allegedly revealed for Ahmad Quli-Khan, in Arabic, provides summaries of seminal Baha'i teachings. The first paragraph provides a summary of “**the changeless Faith of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future**” Kitab-i-Aqdas, #182).*

Some were guided by the Light of God, gained admittance into the court of His presence, and quaffed, from the hand of resignation, the waters of everlasting life, and were accounted of them that have truly recognized and believed in Him. Others rebelled against Him, and rejected the signs of God, the Most Powerful, the Almighty, the All-Wise.

This is a short statement of the separation between those who affirm and those who reject the Cause of God, which is one of the perennial truths revealed by all of the Manifestations of God.

Ages rolled away, until they attained their consummation in this, the Lord of days, the Day whereon the Daystar of the Bayán manifested itself above the horizon of mercy, the Day in which the Beauty of the All-Glorious shone forth in the exalted person of ‘Alí-Muḥammad, the Báb. No sooner did He reveal Himself, than all the people rose up against Him. By some He was denounced as one that hath uttered slanders against God, the Almighty, the Ancient of Days. Others regarded Him as a man smitten with madness, an allegation which I, Myself, have heard from the lips of one of the divines. Still others disputed His claim to be the Mouthpiece of God, and stigmatized Him as one who had stolen and used as his the words of the Almighty, who had perverted their meaning, and mingled them with his own. The Eye of Grandeur weepeth sore for the things which their mouths have uttered, while they continue to rejoice upon their seats.

The second paragraph describes the twin revelations of the Bab and Baha'u'llah that have appeared in this “Lord of days”, elsewhere depicted in the Baha’i Writings as “the Cycle of fulfillment” and “the coming of age of humanity”. Both of these Manifestations of God have been accused of gross immorality for making untrue claims, of madness and other calumnies. As Baha'u'llah points out in many Tablets, this was the treatment meted out to all of the Manifestations of God.

“God,” said He, “is My witness, O people! I am come to you with a Revelation from the Lord, your God, the Lord of your fathers of old. Look not, O people, at the things ye possess. Look rather at the things God hath sent down unto you. This, surely, will be better for you than the whole of creation, could ye but perceive it. Repeat the gaze, O people, and consider the testimony of God and His proof which are in your possession, and compare them unto the Revelation sent down unto you in this Day, that the truth, the infallible truth, may be indubitably manifested unto you. Follow not, O people, the steps of the Evil One; follow ye the Faith of the All-Merciful, and be ye of them that truly believe. What would it profit man, if he were to fail to recognize the Revelation of God? Nothing whatever. To this Mine own Self, the Omnipotent, the Omniscient, the All-Wise, will testify.”

The Tablet in which these of the Bab were originally revealed has not been identified, to the knowledge of this reader. However, His meaning is as clear as day. As Shoghi Effendi stated, the Bab was, first and foremost, an independent Manifestation of God, and secondarily, the Herald of Baha'u'llah.

The more He exhorted them, the fiercer grew their enmity, till, at the last, they put Him to death with shameful cruelty. The curse of God be upon the oppressors!

*A succinct account of what happened to the Bab. The greater the outpouring of His revelation, “**the fiercer grew their enmity**” until “**they put Him to death**”, a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, “**with shameful cruelty.**” “**The curse of God be upon the oppressors**” is similar, in its uncompromising severity, to Baha'u'llah's words in reference to anyone who claims to reveal the Word of God prior to the expiration of a thousand years: “**If, however, he persisteth in his error, God will, assuredly, send down one who will deal mercilessly with him. Terrible, indeed, is God in punishing!**” (GL, CLXVI)*

A few believed in Him; few of Our servants are the thankful. These He admonished, in all His Tablets—nay, in every passage of His wondrous writings—not to give themselves up in the Day of the promised Revelation to anything whatever, be it in the heaven or in the earth. “O people!” said He, “I have revealed Myself for His Manifestation, and have caused My Book, the Bayán, to descend upon you for no other purpose except to establish the truth of His Cause. Fear ye God, and contend not with Him as the people of the Qur’án have contended with Me. At whatever time ye hear of Him, hasten ye towards Him, and cleave ye to whatsoever He may reveal unto you. Naught else besides Him can ever profit you, no, not though ye produce from first to last the testimonies of all those who were before you.”

*This passage from the Writings of the Bab refers to His prophetic successor, Whom we often call “Him Whom God shall make manifest”. Indeed, this Name is repeated more often in the Persian Bayan than any other theme. The Bab warns His own followers “contend not with Him as the people of the Qur’an have contended with Me.” His statement that “**A few believed in Him; few of Our***

servants are the thankful” refers to Himself and it is reminiscent of these words of Jesus of Nazareth: “For many are called, but few are chosen.” (Matthew, chapter 22:14)

And when after the lapse of a few years the heaven of Divine decree was cleft asunder, and the Beauty of the Báb appeared in the clouds of the names of God, arrayed in a new raiment, these same people maliciously rose up against Him, Whose light embraceth all created things. They broke His Covenant, rejected His truth, contended with Him, caviled at His signs, treated His testimony as falsehood, and joined the company of the infidels. Eventually, they determined to take away His life. Such is the state of them who are in a far-gone error!

*While “few of Our servants are the thankful. These He admonished, in all His Tablets”, referred to the Bab, “these same people maliciously rose up against Him” and “they broke His Covenant, rejected His truth...and joined the company of the infidels...Eventually, they determined to take away His life” refer to Baha’u’llah. Indeed, the latter precisely and succinctly depict what befell Baha’u’llah at the hands of Mirza Yahya, other members of His family, and the Babis they grievously misled so that they failed to recognize and follow Baha’u’llah, notwithstanding the Bab’s clear references to Him in the Persian Bayan and other revealed treatises. This turning away of most members of His family after His declaration is foreshadowed in the treatment of Jesus by His family, alluded to in the Gospels: **46While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. 47Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. 48But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? 49And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! 50For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.** (Matthew 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8:19-21)*

And when they realized their powerlessness to achieve their purpose, they arose to plot against Him. Witness how every moment they devise a fresh device to harm Him, that they may injure and dishonor the Cause of God. Say: Woe be to you! By God! Your schemings cover you with shame. Your Lord, the God of mercy, can well dispense with all creatures.

Nothing whatever can either increase or diminish the things He doth possess. If ye believe, to your own behoof will ye believe; and if ye believe not, ye yourselves will suffer. At no time can the hand of the infidel profane the hem of His Robe.

Baha'u'llah affirms that the Cause of God cannot be harmed by those who “injure and dishonor the Cause of God...Your schemings cover you with shame...Nothing whatever can either increase or diminish the things He doth possess...at no time can the hand of the infidel profane the hem of His Robe.” The “infidels” refers to all those who rejected the revelation of Baha'u'llah, in this context principally the Imami Shi'i Muslims and the Babis who rejected His claims.

O My servant that believest in God! By the righteousness of the Almighty! Were I to recount to thee the tale of the things that have befallen Me, the souls and minds of men would be incapable of sustaining its weight. God Himself beareth Me witness. Watch over thyself, and follow not the footsteps of these people. Meditate diligently upon the Cause of thy Lord. Strive to know Him through His own Self and not through others. For no one else besides Him can ever profit thee. To this all created things will testify, couldst thou but perceive it.

Baha'u'llah often uses the expression “know Him through His own Self and not through others” and in other words, insisting that every effort must be made by the individual to recognize Him through the actions and words that have manifested His prophetic nature and not “through others.” When He speaks of “see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbor” (Arabic Hidden Words #2) and “the understanding of His words and the comprehension of the utterances of the Birds of Heaven are in no wise dependent upon human learning...depend solely upon purity of heart, chastity of soul, and freedom of spirit...evidenced by those who, today, though without a single letter of the accepted standards of learning, are occupying the loftiest seats of knowledge” (Kitab-i-Iqan), and when ‘Abdu’l-Baha speaks of the independent investigation of truth, He is appealing to each person to learn the truth for himself. For “the faith of no man can be conditioned by anyone except himself.” (GL, LXXV)

Emerge from behind the veil, by the leave of thy Lord, the All-Glorious, the Most Powerful, and seize, before the eyes of those who are in the heavens and those who are on the earth, the Chalice of Immortality, in the name of thy Lord, the Inaccessible, the Most High, and quaff

thy fill, and be not of them that tarry. I swear by God! The moment thou touchest the Cup with thy lips, the Concourse on high will acclaim thee saying, **“Drink with healthy relish, O man that hast truly believed in God!”** and the inhabitants of the Cities of Immortality will cry out, **“Joy be to thee, O thou that hast drained the Cup of His love!”** and the Tongue of Grandeur will hail thee, **“Great is the blessedness that awaiteth thee, O My servant, for thou hast attained unto that which none hath attained, except such as have detached themselves from all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth, and who are the emblems of true detachment.”**

The highlighted passages refer to the life of the true believer, the loyal servant of God in the next world. As for those who have sought details regarding the worlds they will inhabit, Baha'u'llah makes a comprehensive statement on that regard, in the penultimate passage of Gleanings:

The mysteries of man's physical death and of his return have not been divulged, and still remain unread. By the righteousness of God! Were they to be revealed, they would evoke such fear and sorrow that some would perish, while others would be so filled with gladness as to wish for death, and beseech, with unceasing longing, the one true God—exalted be His glory—to hasten their end.

Death proffereth unto every confident believer the cup that is life indeed. It bestoweth joy, and is the bearer of gladness. It conferreth the gift of everlasting life.

As to those that have tasted of the fruit of man's earthly existence, which is the recognition of the one true God, exalted be His glory, their life hereafter is such as We are unable to describe. The knowledge thereof is with God, alone, the Lord of all worlds. (CLXV)

This is a particularly fascinating statement, when one considers that every religion has elaborate accounts of what both the true believer and the unbeliever can expect in the next world. However, inasmuch as the “mysteries of man's physical death and of his return have not been divulged, and still remain unread”, it is evident that these accounts are among the human interpretations and imaginations that have been added to the canonical literature of the various religious traditions.

– LXXVII –

And now, concerning thy question regarding the creation of man. Know thou that all men have been created in the nature made by God, the Guardian, the Self-Subsisting. Unto each one hath been prescribed a preordained measure, as decreed in God's mighty and guarded

Tablets. All that which ye potentially possess can, however, be manifested only as a result of your own volition. Your own acts testify to this truth. Consider, for instance, that which hath been forbidden, in the Bayán, unto men. God hath in that Book, and by His behest, decreed as lawful whatsoever He hath pleased to decree, and hath, through the power of His sovereign might, forbidden whatsoever He elected to forbid. To this testifieth the text of that Book. Will ye not bear witness? Men, however, have wittingly broken His law. Is such a behavior to be attributed to God, or to their proper selves? Be fair in your judgment. Every good thing is of God, and every evil thing is from yourselves. Will ye not comprehend? This same truth hath been revealed in all the Scriptures, if ye be of them that understand. Every act ye meditate is as clear to Him as is that act when already accomplished. There is none other God besides Him. His is all creation and its empire. All stands revealed before Him; all is recorded in His holy and hidden Tablets. This foreknowledge of God, however, should not be regarded as having caused the actions of men, just as your own previous knowledge that a certain event is to occur, or your desire that it should happen, is not and can never be the reason for its occurrence.

*This Tablet was revealed in Arabic for Muhammad Ibrahim Khalil, also called Haji Muhammad Ibrahim-i-Qazvini, and is mentioned by Adib Taherzadeh in volume 2 of The Revelation of Baha'u'llah. Baha'u'llah has spelled out many teachings that were alluded to by previous Manifestations, and one of them is addressed in this selection: “**All that which ye potentially possess can, however, be manifested only as a result of your own volition.**” The responsibility of the individual to assume responsibility for his own spiritual growth is stated here and in other Tablets included in Gleanings. This teaching is alluded to by previous prophets including in these verses: “**17I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me**” (Proverbs, chapter 8) **7Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: 8For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.** (Matthew 7:7-8; Luke 11:9-10)*

As to thy question concerning the origin of creation. Know assuredly that God's creation hath existed from eternity, and will continue to exist forever. Its beginning hath had no beginning, and its end knoweth no end. His name, the Creator, presupposeth a creation, even as His title, the Lord of Men, must involve the existence of a servant.

*This selection is from the Lawh-i-'Abdu'r-Razzaq, in Persian, a Tablet that will be cited later in Gleanings. Baha'u'llah affirms an understanding of the origin of all created things which is logically concurrent with the name of God, **"the Creator"**, for the names of God have neither beginning nor end. This perspective matches the many statements in which the religion of God, the Word of God and the Manifestations of God are affirmed as eternal in the past and future. But it is not the current understanding of scientists and interpreters of scripture, who believe in a "Big Bang" or in an historical time of creation. Baha'u'llah explains the true meaning of **"In the beginning was God; there was no creature to know Him"**:*

As to those sayings, attributed to the Prophets of old, such as, **"In the beginning was God; there was no creature to know Him,"** and **"The Lord was alone; with no one to adore Him,"** the meaning of these and similar sayings is clear and evident, and should at no time be misapprehended. To this same truth bear witness these words which He hath revealed: **"God was alone; there was none else besides Him. He will always remain what He hath ever been."** Every discerning eye will readily perceive that the Lord is now manifest, yet there is none to recognize His glory. By this is meant that the habitation wherein the Divine Being dwelleth is far above the reach and ken of anyone besides Him. Whatsoever in the contingent world can either be expressed or apprehended, can never transgress the limits which, by its inherent nature, have been imposed upon it. God, alone, transcendeth such limitations. He, verily, is from everlasting. No peer or partner has been, or can ever be, joined with Him. No name can be compared with His Name. No pen can portray His nature, neither can any tongue depict His glory. He will, forever, remain immeasurably exalted above anyone except Himself.

Rather than discrediting the doctrine of creation as it has been understood for millennia as indicative of a particular moment in time for the generation of all things, Baha'u'llah gives an explanation of the meaning intended by this teaching. Thereby the two perspectives are harmonized and both of them validated.

Consider the hour at which the supreme Manifestation of God revealeth Himself unto men. Ere that hour cometh, the Ancient Being, Who is still unknown of men and hath not as yet given utterance to the Word of God, is Himself the All-Knower in a world devoid of any man that hath known Him. He is indeed the Creator without a creation. For at the very moment preceding His Revelation, each and every created thing shall be made to yield up its soul to God. This is indeed the Day of which it hath been written: “Whose shall be the Kingdom this Day?**” [Qur'an 40:16] And none can be found ready to answer!**

This phrase points out that this fundamental principle of the eternal sovereignty of God is not understood by those who account themselves believers in Him.

– LXXIX –

As to thy question concerning the worlds of God. Know thou of a truth that the worlds of God are countless in their number, and infinite in their range. None can reckon or comprehend them except God, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. Consider thy state when asleep. Verily, I say, this phenomenon is the most mysterious of the signs of God amongst men, were they to ponder it in their hearts. Behold how the thing which thou hast seen in thy dream is, after a considerable lapse of time, fully realized. Had the world in which thou didst find thyself in thy dream been identical with the world in which thou livest, it would have been necessary for the event occurring in that dream to have transpired in this world at the very moment of its occurrence. Were it so, thou thyself wouldst have borne witness unto it. This being not the case, however, it must necessarily follow that the world in which thou livest is different and apart from that which thou hast experienced in thy dream. This latter world hath neither beginning nor end. It would be true if thou wert to contend that this same world is, as

decreed by the All-Glorious and Almighty God, within thy proper self and is wrapped up within thee. It would equally be true to maintain that thy spirit, having transcended the limitations of sleep and having stripped itself of all earthly attachment, hath, by the act of God, been made to traverse a realm which lieth hidden in the innermost reality of this world. Verily I say, the creation of God embraceth worlds besides this world, and creatures apart from these creatures. In each of these worlds He hath ordained things which none can search except Himself, the All-Searching, the All-Wise. Do thou meditate on that which We have revealed unto thee, that thou mayest discover the purpose of God, thy Lord, and the Lord of all worlds. In these words the mysteries of Divine Wisdom have been treasured. We have refrained from dwelling upon this theme owing to the sorrow that hath encompassed Us from the actions of them that have been created through Our words, if ye be of them that will hearken unto Our Voice.

*The entirety of Suriy-i-Vafa is to be found translated in Tablets of Baha'u'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas. This citation from that Tablet, which was addressed to Shaykh Muḥammad Husayn-i-Shirazi, surnamed Vafa (faithful) by Baha'u'llah, opens with a statement that He also made in Haft Vadi (Seven Valleys), that there are infinite worlds of God, and that **“God, thy Lord”...is “the Lord of all worlds”**. It then discusses the phenomenon that we experience in our dreams, which is also alluded to in the Haft Vadi. Baha'u'llah affirms that in our dreams we experience the existence of worlds beyond this world. The great significance assigned to dreams in many cultures, and the citation of messages from other worlds that are received in dreams attest to this proof.*

– LXXX –

Thou hast asked Me whether man, as apart from the Prophets of God and His chosen ones, will retain, after his physical death, the self-same individuality, personality, consciousness, and understanding that characterize his life in this world. If this should be the case, how is it, thou hast observed, that whereas such slight injuries to his mental faculties as fainting and severe illness deprive him of his understanding and consciousness, his death, which must involve the decomposition of his body and the dissolution of its elements, is powerless to destroy that understanding and extinguish that consciousness? How can anyone imagine

that man's consciousness and personality will be maintained, when the very instruments necessary to their existence and function will have completely disintegrated?

This is another excerpt from a Tablet to 'Abdu'r-Razzaq, whose theme is principally the life of the soul after the death of the body.

Know thou that the soul of man is exalted above, and is independent of, all infirmities of body or mind. That a sick person showeth signs of weakness is due to the hindrances that interpose themselves between his soul and his body, for the soul itself remaineth unaffected by any bodily ailments. Consider the light of the lamp. Though an external object may interfere with its radiance, the light itself continueth to shine with undiminished power. In like manner, every malady afflicting the body of man is an impediment that preventeth the soul from manifesting its inherent might and power. When it leaveth the body, however, it will evince such ascendancy, and reveal such influence, as no force on earth can equal. Every pure, every refined and sanctified soul will be endowed with tremendous power, and shall rejoice with exceeding gladness.

These teachings about the independence of the soul from the body and its "ascendancy...as no force on earth can equal" is attested in the statements of Jesus about the state to which His followers will attain in the kingdom of God.

Consider the lamp which is hidden under a bushel. Though its light be shining, yet its radiance is concealed from men. Likewise, consider the sun which hath been obscured by the clouds. Observe how its splendor appeareth to have diminished, when in reality the source of that light hath remained unchanged. The soul of man should be likened unto this sun, and all things on earth should be regarded as his body. So long as no external impediment interveneth between them, the body will, in its entirety, continue to reflect the light of the soul, and to be sustained by its power. As soon as, however, a veil interposeth itself between them, the brightness of that light seemeth to lessen.

*The previous paragraph and this one are reminiscent of the challenge issued by Jesus to His followers: “**14**Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. **15**Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. **16**Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:14-16) “**21**And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick? **22**For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad. **23**If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.” (Mark 4:21-23; Luke 8:16-17) **33**No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light.” (Luke 11:33)*

Consider again the sun when it is completely hidden behind the clouds. Though the earth is still illumined with its light, yet the measure of light which it receiveth is considerably reduced. Not until the clouds have dispersed, can the sun shine again in the plenitude of its glory. Neither the presence of the cloud nor its absence can, in any way, affect the inherent splendor of the sun. The soul of man is the sun by which his body is illumined, and from which it draweth its sustenance, and should be so regarded.

Consider, moreover, how the fruit, ere it is formed, lieth potentially within the tree. Were the tree to be cut into pieces, no sign nor any part of the fruit, however small, could be detected. When it appeareth, however, it manifesteth itself, as thou hast observed, in its wondrous beauty and glorious perfection. Certain fruits, indeed, attain their fullest development only after being severed from the tree.

*The wisdom contained in these counsels will no doubt illumine the minds of many educators and physicians in the future, who will put into practice the insight that “**the fruit, ere it is formed, lieth potentially within the tree**” and “**certain fruits, indeed, attain their greatest development only after being severed from the tree.**” This is also true of the influence of the Manifestations of God*

and their true followers as Baha'u'llah stated with regard to Jesus (in Gleanings) and to Himself (in Kitab-i-Aqdas).

– LXXXI –

And now concerning thy question regarding the soul of man and its survival after death. Know thou of a truth that the soul, after its separation from the body, will continue to progress until it attaineth the presence of God, in a state and condition which neither the revolution of ages and centuries, nor the changes and chances of this world, can alter. It will endure as long as the Kingdom of God, His sovereignty, His dominion and power will endure. It will manifest the signs of God and His attributes, and will reveal His loving-kindness and bounty. The movement of My Pen is stilled when it attempteth to befittingly describe the loftiness and glory of so exalted a station. The honor with which the Hand of Mercy will invest the soul is such as no tongue can adequately reveal, nor any other earthly agency describe. Blessed is the soul which, at the hour of its separation from the body, is sanctified from the vain imaginings of the peoples of the world. Such a soul liveth and moveth in accordance with the Will of its Creator, and entereth the all-highest Paradise. The Maids of Heaven, inmates of the loftiest mansions, will circle around it, and the Prophets of God and His chosen ones will seek its companionship. With them that soul will freely converse, and will recount unto them that which it hath been made to endure in the path of God, the Lord of all worlds. If any man be told that which hath been ordained for such a soul in the worlds of God, the Lord of the throne on high and of earth below, his whole being will instantly blaze out in his great longing to attain that most exalted, that sanctified and resplendent station.... The nature of the soul after death can never be described, nor is it meet and permissible to reveal its whole character to the eyes of men. 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. Through them the clouds rain their bounty upon men, and the earth bringeth forth its fruits. All things must needs have a cause, a motive power, an animating principle. These souls and symbols of detachment have provided, and will continue to provide, the supreme moving impulse in the world of being. The world beyond is as different from this world as this world is different from that of the child while still in the womb of its mother. When the soul attaineth the Presence of God, it will assume the form that best befitteth its immortality and is worthy of its celestial habitation. Such an existence is a contingent and not an absolute existence, inasmuch as the former is preceded by a cause, whilst the latter is independent thereof. Absolute existence is strictly confined to God, exalted be His glory. Well is it with them that apprehend this truth. Wert thou to ponder in thine heart the behavior of the Prophets of God thou wouldst assuredly and readily testify that there must needs be other worlds besides this world. The majority of the truly wise and learned have, throughout the ages, as it hath been recorded by the Pen of Glory in the Tablet of Wisdom, borne witness to the truth of that which the holy Writ of God hath revealed. Even the materialists have testified in their writings to the wisdom of these divinely appointed Messengers, and have regarded the references made by the Prophets to Paradise, to hell fire, to future reward and punishment, to have been actuated by a desire to educate and uplift the souls of men. Consider, therefore, how the generality of mankind, whatever their beliefs or theories, have recognized the excellence, and admitted the superiority, of these Prophets of God. These Gems of Detachment are acclaimed by some as the embodiments of wisdom, while others believe them to be the mouthpiece of God Himself. How could such Souls have consented to surrender themselves unto their enemies if they believed all the worlds of God to have been reduced to this earthly life? Would they have willingly suffered such afflictions and torments as no man hath ever experienced or witnessed?

This selection is from the Lawh-i-'Abdu'l-Vahhab, revealed in 'Akka in Arabic. As in the previous selections, this one refers to the proofs for the existence of other worlds, indicating that the lives and behavior of the Manifestations of God are proofs of the existence of "other worlds besides this world" and compares the existence of the soul in the this world and its future existence in the other world

“as different from this world as this world is different from that of the child while in the womb of its mother”. He states “The nature of the soul after death can never be described, nor is it meet and permissible to reveal its whole character to the eyes of men” which is reaffirmed in the penultimate passage in Gleanings (CLXV): “The mysteries of man’s physical death and of his return have not been divulged, and shall remain unread.” He also teaches that the souls that are believers will, in the next world, have an incalculable influence upon “the progress of the world and the advancement of its peoples”: “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.”

– LXXXII –

Thou hast asked Me concerning the nature of the soul. Know, verily, that the soul is a sign of God, a heavenly gem whose reality the most learned of men hath failed to grasp, and whose mystery no mind, however acute, can ever hope to unravel. It is the first among all created things to declare the excellence of its Creator, the first to recognize His glory, to cleave to His truth, and to bow down in adoration before Him. If it be faithful to God, it will reflect His light, and will, eventually, return unto Him. If it fail, however, in its allegiance to its Creator, it will become a victim to self and passion, and will, in the end, sink in their depths.

This Tablet is addressed to Mirza Muhammad ‘Ali, first son of Baha’u’llah with His second wife, Fatimih, called Ghusn-i-Akbar, and appointed second after ‘Abdu’l-Baha, called Ghusn-i-A’zam, in the Kitab-i-Ahd. The most important teaching in this Tablet is its depiction of the human soul, “whose mystery” He says, “no mind, however acute, can ever hope to unravel.”

Whoso hath, in this Day, refused to allow the doubts and fancies of men to turn him away from Him Who is the Eternal Truth, and hath not suffered the tumult provoked by the ecclesiastical and secular authorities to deter him from recognizing His Message, such a man will be regarded by God, the Lord of all men, as one of His mighty signs, and will be

numbered among them whose names have been inscribed by the Pen of the Most High in His Book. Blessed is he that hath recognized the true stature of such a soul, that hath acknowledged its station, and discovered its virtues.

Much hath been written in the books of old concerning the various stages in the development of the soul, such as concupiscence, irascibility, inspiration, benevolence, contentment, Divine good-pleasure, and the like; the Pen of the Most High, however, is disinclined to dwell upon them. Every soul that walketh humbly with its God, in this Day, and cleaveth unto Him, shall find itself invested with the honor and glory of all goodly names and stations.

Baha'u'llah wrote about the stages of the spiritual development of the soul in a number of His treatises, including Haft Vadi (Seven Valleys), Chahar Vadi (Four Valleys), and Ṭawāhiru'l-Asrar (Gems of Divine Mysteries). In this Tablet He explains that “Much hath been written in the books of old concerning the various stages in the development of the soul, such as concupiscence, irascibility, inspiration, benevolence, contentment, Divine good-pleasure, and the like; the Pen of the Most High, however, is disinclined to dwell upon them. Every soul that walketh humbly with its God, in this Day, and cleaveth unto Him, shall find itself invested with the honor and glory of all goodly names and stations.” In Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, Baha'u'llah explained that He wrote to the “truth-seeker and the mystic” about such things for the same purpose as writing about the divine commandments: “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!” What “station” is He speaking of? In the previous paragraph He wrote: “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...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.”

When man is asleep, his soul can, in no wise, be said to have been inherently affected by any external object. It is not susceptible of any change in its original state or character. Any variation in its functions is to be ascribed to external causes. It is to these external influences

that any variations in its environment, its understanding, and perception should be attributed.

Consider the human eye. Though it hath the faculty of perceiving all created things, yet the slightest impediment may so obstruct its vision as to deprive it of the power of discerning any object whatsoever. Magnified be the name of Him Who hath created, and is the Cause of, these causes, Who hath ordained that every change and variation in the world of being be made dependent upon them. Every created thing in the whole universe is but a door leading into His knowledge, a sign of His sovereignty, a revelation of His names, a symbol of His majesty, a token of His power, a means of admittance into His straight Path....

Verily I say, the human soul is, in its essence, one of the signs of God, a mystery among His mysteries. It is one of the mighty signs of the Almighty, the harbinger that proclaimeth the reality of all the worlds of God. Within it lieth concealed that which the world is now utterly incapable of apprehending. Ponder in thine heart the revelation of the Soul of God that pervadeth all His Laws, and contrast it with that base and appetitive nature that hath rebelled against Him, that forbiddeth men to turn unto the Lord of Names, and impelleth them to walk after their lusts and wickedness. Such a soul hath, in truth, wandered far in the path of error....

Thou hast, moreover, asked Me concerning the state of the soul after its separation from the body. Know thou, of a truth, that if the soul of man hath walked in the ways of God, it will, assuredly, return and be gathered to the glory of the Beloved. By the righteousness of God! It shall attain a station such as no pen can depict, or tongue describe. 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. Meditate on this, and be of the thankful.

In this Tablet, a restatement of the teaching found in the previous selection is found, indicating that the consecrated souls have, in the next world, enormous power and influence upon humanity: “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.” The honor and reverence shown by many cultures for the deceased holy souls is hence well founded upon metaphysical reality. Also attested is the phenomenon that many engaged in “the arts and wonders of the world” have reported, that their creativity is not of themselves, that it originates in another world.

In several of Our Tablets We have referred to this theme, and have set forth the various stages in the development of the soul. Verily I say, the human soul is exalted above all egress and regress. It is still, and yet it soareth; it moveth, and yet it is still. It is, in itself, a testimony that beareth witness to the existence of a world that is contingent, as well as to the reality of a world that hath neither beginning nor end. Behold how the dream thou hast dreamed is, after the lapse of many years, reenacted before thine eyes. Consider how strange is the mystery of the world that appeareth to thee in thy dream. Ponder in thine heart upon the unsearchable wisdom of God, and meditate on its manifold revelations....

Witness the wondrous evidences of God’s handiwork, and reflect upon its range and character. He Who is the Seal of the Prophets hath said: “Increase my wonder and amazement at Thee, O God!” [Qur’an 20:114]

As to thy question whether the physical world is subject to any limitations, know thou that the comprehension of this matter dependeth upon the observer himself. In one sense, it is limited; in another, it is exalted beyond all limitations. The one true God hath everlastingly existed, and will everlastingly continue to exist. His creation, likewise, hath had no

beginning, and will have no end. All that is created, however, is preceded by a cause. This fact, in itself, establisheth, beyond the shadow of a doubt, the unity of the Creator.

Baha'u'llah indicates, in Lawh-i-Hikmat, that the foundations of divine philosophy, our understanding of the world, were revealed by the prophets and then propagated by the philosophers, including Aristotle. Whereas secular historians have asserted that those who lived after Aristotle derived their understanding of cause and effect and of a creation without beginning and end from him, Baha'u'llah indicates the very opposite. Hence, Aristotle was not speculating, was not expressing a personal viewpoint...he was articulating the teachings of the prophets, which reveal the truth.

Thou hast, moreover, asked Me concerning the nature of the celestial spheres. To comprehend their nature, it would be necessary to inquire into the meaning of the allusions that have been made in the Books of old to the celestial spheres and the heavens, and to discover the character of their relationship to this physical world, and the influence which they exert upon it. Every heart is filled with wonder at so bewildering a theme, and every mind is perplexed by its mystery. God, alone, can fathom its import. The learned men, that have fixed at several thousand years the life of this earth, have failed, throughout the long period of their observation, to consider either the number or the age of the other planets. Consider, moreover, the manifold divergencies that have resulted from the theories propounded by these men. Know thou that every fixed star hath its own planets, and every planet its own creatures, whose number no man can compute.

This is one of the teachings of Baha'u'llah that are familiar to Baha'is from our cultural background. We tend to cite it in reference to the physical universe, but, as Baha'u'llah states in Tablets previously cited, it applies to all of the worlds created by God.

O thou that hast fixed thine eyes upon My countenance! The Dayspring of Glory hath, in this Day, manifested its radiance, and the Voice of the Most High is calling. We have formerly uttered these words: **“This is not the day for any man to question his Lord. It behooveth**

whosoever hath hearkened to the Call of God, as voiced by Him Who is the Dayspring of Glory, to arise and cry out: 'Here am I, here am I, O Lord of all Names; here am I, here am I, O Maker of the heavens! I testify that, through Thy Revelation, the things hidden in the Books of God have been revealed, and that whatsoever hath been recorded by Thy Messengers in the sacred Scriptures hath been fulfilled.'”

It was the Bab Who commanded His followers not to question or challenge the teachings of Him Whom God shall make manifest, as He intended for them to recognize and follow Him, as His purpose was to usher in the Cycle of Fulfillment which Him Whom God shall make manifest would overshadow, for at least a half million years. Baha'u'llah has indeed fulfilled every expectation of the Bab, for through His revelation, “the things hidden in the Books of God have been revealed, and that whatsoever hath been recorded by” the “Messengers in the sacred scriptures hath been fulfilled.” The unparalleled character of this Day and of Baha'u'llah is attest in this passage and in innumerable statements in the Persian Bayan and other Writings of the Bab.