

GLEANINGS

#7

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.

SEVENTH WEEK'S SELECTIONS (LXVI-LXXV)

The principal themes in the ten excerpts from the Writings of Baha'u'llah collected here are Baha'u'llah in Istanbul [Constantinople] (LXVI); the request for a proof from the 'ulama and Baha'u'llah's offer to present any proof (LXVII); two kinds of predestination (LXIII); the death of a child and its mother (LXIX); New World Order (LXX); Baha'u'llah calls us to teach the Cause when He dies (LXXI); wisdom in Baha'u'llah's absence (LXXII); signs of God in all created things and the purpose of creation is the true believer (LXXIII); the influence of the Word of God (LXXIV); duty of each person to seek the truth for himself (LXXV).

– LXVI –

Fear God, ye inhabitants of the City (Constantinople), and sow not the seeds of dissension amongst men. Walk not in the paths of the Evil One. Walk ye, during the few remaining days of your life, in the ways of the one true God. Your days shall pass away as have the days of them who were before you. To dust shall ye return, even as your fathers of old did return.

This passage is from the Suriy-i-Muluk (Chapter of the Kings) that Baha'u'llah revealed in Arabic, in the city of Edirne (Adrianople), and the year 1867. This Tablet addressed the monarchs of the world. He announced to the Christian monarchs that He was the return of Jesus of Nazareth, predicted in specific verses of the Gospels. He castigated the Ottoman officials for exiling Him from Baghdad to Istanbul and then to Edirne. He also addressed the Ottoman Emperor, Sultan 'Abdu'l-'Aziz, various officials of the Ottoman and Persian governments. In this passage He spoke to the people of Istanbul, that is, the Sunni Muslim inhabitants of the capital of the Ottoman Empire.

Know ye that I am afraid of none except God. In none but Him have I placed My trust; to none will I cleave but Him, and wish for naught except the thing He hath wished for Me. This, indeed, is My heart's desire, did ye but know it. I have offered up My soul and My body as a

sacrifice for God, the Lord of all worlds. Whoso hath known God shall know none but Him, and he that feareth God shall be afraid of no one except Him, though the powers of the whole earth rise up and be arrayed against him. I speak naught except at His bidding, and follow naught, through the power of God and His might, except His truth. He, verily, shall recompense the truthful.

Narrate, O Servant, the things Thou didst behold at the time of Thine arrival in the City, that Thy testimony may endure amongst men, and serve as a warning unto them that believe. We found, upon Our arrival in the City, its governors and elders as children gathered about and disporting themselves with clay. We perceived no one sufficiently mature to acquire from Us the truths which God hath taught Us, nor ripe for Our wondrous words of wisdom. Our inner eye wept sore over them, and over their transgressions and their total disregard of the thing for which they were created. This is what We observed in that City, and which We have chosen to note down in Our Book, that it may serve as a warning unto them, and unto the rest of mankind.

Apparently God speaks to Baha'u'llah, and instructs to "Narrate, O Servant, the things Thou didst behold at the time of Thine arrival in the City, that Thy testimony may endure amongst men, and serve as a warning unto them that believe."

Say: If ye be seekers after this life and the vanities thereof, ye should have sought them while ye were still enclosed in your mothers' wombs, for at that time ye were continually approaching them, could ye but perceive it. Ye have, on the other hand, ever since ye were born and attained maturity, been all the while receding from the world and drawing closer to dust. Why, then, exhibit such greed in amassing the treasures of the earth, when your days are numbered and your chance is well-nigh lost? Will ye not, then, O heedless ones, shake off your slumber?

This counsel to humanity in its entirety, to prepare for the next world, which it has been approaching since birth rather than the affairs of this world is described in a unique manner.

Incline your ears to the counsels which this Servant giveth you for the sake of God. He, verily, asketh no recompense from you and is resigned to what God hath ordained for Him, and is entirely submissive to God's Will.

As in an earlier passage (LIV), Baha'u'llah insisted that He made no claims nor had any ambitions to assume governance of the world, here He affirms that He wants nothing from humanity, and that He gives His “counsels...for the sake of God” and “asketh no recompense from you”.

The days of your life are far spent, O people, and your end is fast approaching. Put away, therefore, the things ye have devised and to which ye cleave, and take firm hold on the precepts of God, that haply ye may attain that which He hath purposed for you, and be of them that pursue a right course. Delight not yourselves in the things of the world and its vain ornaments, neither set your hopes on them. Let your reliance be on the remembrance of God, the Most Exalted, the Most Great. He will, ere long, bring to naught all the things ye possess. Let Him be your fear, and forget not His covenant with you, and be not of them that are shut out as by a veil from Him.

This advice is found in many of Baha'u'llah's Writings, from the Hidden Words to the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf. It recalls the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, as reported in the sixth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew: [19](#)“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust^e destroy and where thieves break in and steal, [20](#)but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. [21](#)For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also...[24](#)“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

Beware that ye swell not with pride before God, and disdainfully reject His loved ones. Defer ye humbly to the faithful, they that have believed in God and in His signs, whose hearts witness to His unity, whose tongues proclaim His oneness, and who speak not except by His leave. Thus do We exhort you with justice, and warn you with truth, that perchance ye may be awakened.

Lay not on any soul a load which ye would not wish to be laid upon you, and desire not for anyone the things ye would not desire for yourselves. This is My best counsel unto you, did ye but observe it.

Respect ye the divines and learned amongst you, they whose conduct accords with their professions, who transgress not the bounds which God hath fixed, whose judgments are in conformity with His behests as revealed in His Book. Know ye that they are the lamps of guidance unto them that are in the heavens and on the earth. They who disregard and neglect the divines and learned that live amongst them—these have truly changed the favor with which God hath favored them.

*Considering that Baha'u'llah was very critical of the “**divines and learned amongst you**” in Kitab-i-Iqan and other Writings, this counsel to the people of Istanbul is quite remarkable. However, the key requirement that Baha'u'llah invokes for “**respect**” to be shown to the clergy and philosophers is that their “**conduct accords with their professions**” that they “**transgress not the bounds that God hath fixed**” and “**whose judgments are in conformity with His behests as revealed in His Book.**” However, most of the clergy and the learned have rejected the Manifestations of God in the Day of their appearance, and this Day is no different from any other in that respect. This is a very important statement inasmuch as it does not universally condemn those who are learned, whether in religion or in other matters, but only those who reject the truth because of their arrogant assumption of superiority to the Manifestations of God, and, in particular, to Baha'u'llah.*

Say: Await ye till God will have changed His favor unto you. Nothing whatsoever escapeth Him. He knoweth the secrets both of the heavens and of the earth. His knowledge embraceth all things. Rejoice not in what ye have done, or will do in the future, nor delight in the tribulation with which ye have afflicted Us, for ye are unable by such means as these to exalt your stations, were ye to examine your works with acute discernment. Neither will ye be capable of detracting from the loftiness of Our state. Nay, God will add unto the recompense with which He shall reward Us, for having sustained with persevering patience the

tribulations We have suffered. He, verily, shall increase the reward of them that endure with patience.

Know ye that trials and tribulations have, from time immemorial, been the lot of the chosen Ones of God and His beloved, and such of His servants as are detached from all else but Him, they whom neither merchandise nor traffic beguile from the remembrance of the Almighty, they that speak not till He hath spoken, and act according to His commandment. Such is God's method carried into effect of old, and such will it remain in the future. Blessed are the steadfastly enduring, they that are patient under ills and hardships, who lament not over anything that befalleth them, and who tread the path of resignation....

Baha'u'llah indicates that these teachings are perennial, not unique to this Day.

The day is approaching when God will have raised up a people who will call to remembrance Our days, who will tell the tale of Our trials, who will demand the restitution of Our rights from them that, without a tittle of evidence, have treated Us with manifest injustice. God, assuredly, dominateth the lives of them that wronged Us, and is well aware of their doings. He will, most certainly, lay hold on them for their sins. He, verily, is the fiercest of avengers.

Thus have We recounted unto you the tales of the one true God, and sent down unto you the things He had preordained, that haply ye may ask forgiveness of Him, may return unto Him, may truly repent, may realize your misdeeds, may shake off your slumber, may be roused from your heedlessness, may atone for the things that have escaped you, and be of them that do good. Let him who will, acknowledge the truth of My words; and as to him that willet not, let him turn aside. My sole duty is to remind you of your failure in duty towards the Cause of God, if perchance ye may be of them that heed My warning. Wherefore, hearken ye unto My speech, and return ye to God and repent, that He, through His grace, may have mercy upon you, may wash away your sins, and forgive your trespasses. The greatness of His mercy surpasseth the fury of His wrath, and His grace encompasseth all who have been called into being and been clothed with the robe of life, be they of the past or of the future.

Shoghi Effendi cited this passage among the quotations from Baha'u'llah that he included in The Advent of Divine Justice, one of his most important letters, in which he described the Baha'is who will appear in the future and usher in the triumph of the Cause of God.

– LXVII –

There hath appeared in this Revelation what hath never appeared before. As to the infidels that have witnessed what hath been manifested, they murmur and say: “Verily, this is a sorcerer who hath devised a lie against God.” They are indeed an outcast people.

Shoghi Effendi juxtaposed a perennial teaching of religion with this assertion that there are characteristics that have been unique to the revelation of Baha'u'llah. This passage is from the Lawh-i-'Amr (Tablet of the Command), revealed for Mulla 'Ali Bajistani, in which He describes His offer to present any proof to the religious officials. Instead of agreeing upon a sign to require of Baha'u'llah, they responded in the very same way that the polytheists of Mecca repudiated Muhammad, as stated in the Qur'an (23:40, 38:3 and 51:52).

Tell out to the nations, O Pen of the Ancient of Days, the things that have happened in 'Iráq. Tell them of the messenger whom the congregation of the divines of that land had delegated to meet Us, who, when attaining Our presence, questioned Us concerning certain sciences, and whom We answered by virtue of the knowledge We inherently possess. Thy Lord is, verily, the Knower of things unseen. “We testify,” said he, “that the knowledge Thou dost possess is such as none can rival. Such a knowledge, however, is insufficient to vindicate the exalted station which the people ascribe to Thee. Produce, if Thou speakest the truth, what the combined forces of the peoples of the earth are powerless to produce.” Thus was it irrevocably decreed in the court of the presence of thy Lord, the All-Glorious, the Loving.

“Witness! What is it thou seest?” He was dumbfounded. And when he came to himself, he said: “I truly believe in God, the All-Glorious, the All-Praised.” “Go thou to the people, and tell them: ‘Ask whatsoever ye please. Powerful is He to do what He willeth. Nothing whatsoever,

be it of the past or of the future, can frustrate His Will.’ Say: ‘O ye congregation of the divines! Choose any matter ye desire, and ask your Lord, the God of Mercy, to reveal it unto you. If He fulfill your wish, by virtue of His sovereignty, believe ye then in Him, and be not of those that reject His truth.’” “The dawn of understanding hath now broken,” said he, “and the testimony of the All-Merciful is fulfilled.” He arose and returned unto them that sent him, at the bidding of God, the All-Glorious, the Well-Beloved.

Days passed and he failed to come back to Us. Eventually, there came another messenger who informed Us that the people had given up what they originally had purposed. They are indeed a contemptible people. This is what happened in ‘Iráq, and to what I reveal I Myself am witness. This happening was noised abroad, yet none was found to comprehend its meaning. Thus did We ordain it. Would that ye knew this!

By My Self! Whoso hath in bygone ages asked Us to produce the signs of God, hath, no sooner had We revealed them to him, repudiated God’s truth. The people, however, have, for the most part, remained heedless. They whose eyes are illumined with the light of understanding will perceive the sweet savors of the All-Merciful, and will embrace His truth. These are they who are truly sincere.

Baha’u’llah affirms that the “signs of God” have been rejected by most of those who asked for them. The example of Jesus of Nazareth is salient, in particular because Baha’u’llah claimed to be His return. Jesus agreed to give only one sign, and it was that after three days He would raise from the dead, similar to the appearance of Jonah after three days in the belly of a whale. This sign was asked for by the Jewish clergy because they were familiar with the statement in Deuteronomy that a true prophet’s prediction will come true while the prophecy of a false prophet will not. The Jewish clergy rejected Jesus as Messiah and as Son of God. What was unique about Baha’u’llah’s promise to give a sign was that He agreed to give any sign that the Muslim clergy would agree to require of Him. There is no record of a previous Manifestation offering to present any sign whatsoever.

O thou who art the fruit of My Tree and the leaf thereof! On thee be My glory and My mercy. Let not thine heart grieve over what hath befallen thee. Wert thou to scan the pages of the Book of Life, thou wouldst, most certainly, discover that which would dissipate thy sorrows and dissolve thine anguish.

This Tablet was revealed for a woman who has recently lost a child. She may have been a member of the family of Baha'u'llah, as she is called "the fruit of My Tree and the leaf thereof". Baha'u'llah explains the two kinds of predestination, and counsels this grieving mother to read the divinely revealed Word, where He assures her that she will "certainly, discover that would dissipate thy sorrows and dissolve thine anguish." This recalls Baha'u'llah's praise of the mother of Ashraf, a Babi martyr, in a passage cited by the Guardian in the very next selection (LXIX) and also in Epistle to the Son of the Wolf. This passage concludes with a prayer that Baha'u'llah revealed for this "leaf".

Know thou, O fruit of My Tree, that the decrees of the Sovereign Ordainer, as related to fate and predestination, are of two kinds. Both are to be obeyed and accepted. The one is irrevocable, the other is, as termed by men, impending. To the former all must unreservedly submit, inasmuch as it is fixed and settled. God, however, is able to alter or repeal it. As the harm that must result from such a change will be greater than if the decree had remained unaltered, all, therefore, should willingly acquiesce in what God hath willed and confidently abide by the same.

The decree that is impending, however, is such that prayer and entreaty can succeed in averting it.

God grant that thou who art the fruit of My Tree, and they that are associated with thee, may be shielded from its evil consequences.

Say: O God, my God! Thou hast committed into mine hands a trust from Thee, and hast now according to the good-pleasure of Thy Will called it back to Thyself. It is not for me, who am

a handmaid of Thine, to say, whence is this to me or wherefore hath it happened, inasmuch as Thou art glorified in all Thine acts, and art to be obeyed in Thy decree. Thine handmaid, O my Lord, hath set her hopes on Thy grace and bounty. Grant that she may obtain that which will draw her nigh unto Thee, and will profit her in every world of Thine. Thou art the Forgiving, the All-Bountiful. There is none other God but Thee, the Ordainer, the Ancient of Days.

Vouchsafe Thy blessings, O Lord, my God, unto them that have quaffed the wine of Thy love before the face of men, and, in spite of Thine enemies, have acknowledged Thy unity, testified to Thy oneness, and confessed their belief in that which hath made the limbs of the oppressors among Thy creatures to quake, and the flesh of the proud ones of the earth to tremble. I bear witness that Thy Sovereignty can never perish, nor Thy Will be altered. Ordain for them that have set their faces towards Thee, and for Thine handmaids that have held fast by Thy Cord, that which beseemeth the Ocean of Thy bounty and the Heaven of Thy grace.

Thou art He, O God, Who hath proclaimed Himself as the Lord of Wealth, and characterized all that serve Him as poor and needy. Even as Thou hast written: "O ye that believe! Ye are but paupers in need of God; but God is the All-Possessing, the All-Praised." Having acknowledged my poverty, and recognized Thy wealth, suffer me not to be deprived of the glory of Thy riches. Thou art, verily, the Supreme Protector, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

– LXIX –

Call thou to mind the behavior of Ashraf's mother, whose son laid down his life in the Land of Zá (Zanján). He, most certainly, is in the seat of truth, in the presence of One Who is the Most Powerful, the Almighty.

When the infidels, so unjustly, decided to put him to death, they sent and fetched his mother, that perchance she might admonish him, and induce him to recant his faith, and follow in the footsteps of them that have repudiated the truth of God, the Lord of all worlds.

No sooner did she behold the face of her son, than she spoke to him such words as caused the hearts of the lovers of God, and beyond them those of the Concourse on high, to cry out and be sore pained with grief. Truly, thy Lord knoweth what My tongue speaketh. He Himself beareth witness to My words.

And when addressing him she said: “My son, mine own son! Fail not to offer up thyself in the path of thy Lord. Beware that thou betray not thy faith in Him before Whose face have bowed down in adoration all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth. Go thou straight on, O my son, and persevere in the path of the Lord, thy God. Haste thee to attain the presence of Him Who is the Well-Beloved of all worlds.”

On her be My blessings, and My mercy, and My praise, and My glory. I Myself shall atone for the loss of her son—a son who now dwelleth within the tabernacle of My majesty and glory, and whose face beameth with a light that envelopeth with its radiance the Maids of Heaven in their celestial chambers, and beyond them the inmates of My Paradise, and the denizens of the Cities of Holiness. Were any eye to gaze on his face, he would exclaim: “Lo, this is no other than a noble angel!”

*This passage is from an Arabic Tablet revealed for the mother of Ashraf, referring to the martyrdom of her son, a tale that is told in The Dawn-Breakers by Nabil-i-’A’zam (pp. 562–63). Baha’u’llah conferred His blessings upon many martyrs and their families. This passage from the Hidden Words explains that their sacrifice is “**sweeter indeed to Me than all else**”:*

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O Son of Man!

Write all that We have revealed unto thee with the ink of light upon the tablet of thy spirit. Should this not be in thy power, then make thine ink of the essence of thy heart. If this thou canst not do, then write with that crimson ink that hath been shed in My path. Sweeter indeed is this to Me than all else, that its light may endure forever. (Arabic Hidden Word #71)

– LXX –

The world's equilibrium hath been upset through the vibrating influence of this most great, this new World Order. Mankind's ordered life hath been revolutionized through the agency of this unique, this wondrous System—the like of which mortal eyes have never witnessed.

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. Take heed that ye do not vacillate in your determination to embrace the truth of this Cause—a Cause through which the potentialities of the might of God have been revealed, and His sovereignty established. With faces beaming with joy, hasten ye unto Him. This is the changeless Faith of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future. Let him that seeketh, attain it; and as to him that hath refused to seek it—verily, God is Self-Sufficient, above any need of His creatures.

Say: This is the infallible Balance which the Hand of God is holding, in which all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth are weighed, and their fate determined, if ye be of them that believe and recognize this truth. Say: Through it the poor have been enriched, the learned enlightened, and the seekers enabled to ascend unto the presence of God. Beware, lest ye make it a cause of dissension amongst you. Be ye as firmly settled as the immovable mountain in the Cause of your Lord, the Mighty, the Loving.

These are passages cited from the Kitab-i-Aqdas, the first of which proclaims that “Mankind's ordered life hath been revolutionized through the agency of this unique...this most great, this new World Order...this wondrous System—the like of which mortal eyes have never witnessed.”

The **system** that Baha'u'llah proclaimed in the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* has been described in detail by the Guardian, including in a letter entitled "The Unfoldment of World Civilization":

"The unity of the human race, as envisaged by Bahá'u'lláh, implies the establishment of a world commonwealth in which all nations, races, creeds and classes are closely and permanently united, and in which the autonomy of its state members and the personal freedom and initiative of the individuals that compose them are definitely and completely safeguarded. This commonwealth must, as far as we can visualize it, consist of a world legislature, whose members will, as the trustees of the whole of mankind, ultimately control the entire resources of all the component nations, and will enact such laws as shall be required to regulate the life, satisfy the needs and adjust the relationships of all races and peoples. A world executive, backed by an international Force, will carry out the decisions arrived at, and apply the laws enacted by, this world legislature, and will safeguard the organic unity of the whole commonwealth. A world tribunal will adjudicate and deliver its compulsory and final verdict in all and any disputes that may arise between the various elements constituting this universal system. A mechanism of world inter-communication will be devised, embracing the whole planet, freed from national hindrances and restrictions, and functioning with marvellous swiftness and perfect regularity. A world metropolis will act as the nerve center of a world civilization, the focus towards which the unifying forces of life will converge and from which its energizing influences will radiate. A world language will either be invented or chosen from among the existing languages and will be taught in the schools of all the federated nations as an auxiliary to their mother tongue. A world script, a world literature, a uniform and universal system of currency, of weights and measures, will simplify and facilitate intercourse and understanding among the nations and races of mankind. In such a world society, science and religion, the two most potent forces in human life, will be reconciled, will coöperate, and will harmoniously develop. The press will, under such a system, while giving full scope to the expression of the diversified views and convictions of mankind, cease to be mischievously manipulated by vested interests, whether private or public, and will be liberated from the influence of contending governments and peoples. The economic resources of the world will be organized, its sources of raw materials will be tapped and fully utilized, its markets will be coördinated and developed, and the distribution of its products will be equitably regulated.

“National rivalries, hatreds, and intrigues will cease, and racial animosity and prejudice will be replaced by racial amity, understanding and coöperation. The causes of religious strife will be permanently removed, economic barriers and restrictions will be completely abolished, and the inordinate distinction between classes will be obliterated. Destitution on the one hand, and gross accumulation of ownership on the other, will disappear. The enormous energy dissipated and wasted on war, whether economic or political, will be consecrated to such ends as will extend the range of human inventions and technical development, to the increase of the productivity of mankind, to the extermination of disease, to the extension of scientific research, to the raising of the standard of physical health, to the sharpening and refinement of the human brain, to the exploitation of the unused and unsuspected resources of the planet, to the prolongation of human life, and to the furtherance of any other agency that can stimulate the intellectual, the moral, and spiritual life of the entire human race.

*“A **world federal system**, ruling the whole earth and exercising unchallengeable authority over its unimaginably vast resources, blending and embodying the ideals of both the East and the West, liberated from the curse of war and its miseries, and bent on the exploitation of all the available sources of energy on the surface of the planet, **a system** in which Force is made the servant of Justice, whose life is sustained by its universal recognition of one God and by its allegiance to one common Revelation—such is the goal towards which humanity, impelled by the unifying forces of life, is moving.”* (Shoghi Effendi, “The Unfoldment of World Civilization”, dated 11 March 1936, in *The World Order of Baha’u’llah*)

*The Guardian also described this “New World Order” in God Passes By as well, where he identified the “**world metropolis**” as the joining together of ‘Akka and Haifa:*

*“They foreshadow the gathering of the children of Israel in their ancient homeland; the erection of the banner of Bahá’u’lláh in the Egyptian citadel of Sunní Islám; the extinction of the powerful influence wielded by the Shí’ah ecclesiastics in Persia; the load of misery which must needs oppress the pitiful remnants of the breakers of Bahá’u’lláh’s Covenant at the world center of His Faith; **the splendor of the institutions which that triumphant Faith must erect on the slopes of a mountain, destined to be so linked with the city of ‘Akká that a single grand metropolis will be formed to enshrine***

the spiritual as well as the administrative seats of the future Bahá'í Commonwealth; the conspicuous honor which the inhabitants of Bahá'u'lláh's native land in general, and its government in particular, must enjoy in a distant future; the unique and enviable position which the community of the Most Great Name in the North American continent must occupy, as a direct consequence of the execution of the world mission which He entrusted to them: finally they foreshadow, as the sum and summit of all, the "hoisting of the standard of God among all nations" and the unification of the entire human race, when "all men will adhere to one religion ... will be blended into one race, and become a single people." (Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, chapter 21)

The Guardian gave the most complete depiction of this new "system" in "The Dispensation of Baha'u'llah":

*"A word should now be said regarding the theory on which this Administrative Order is based and the principle that must govern the operation of its chief institutions. It would be utterly misleading to attempt a comparison between **this unique, this divinely-conceived Order** and any of the diverse systems which the minds of men, at various periods of their history, have contrived for the government of human institutions. Such an attempt would in itself betray a lack of complete appreciation of the excellence of the handiwork of its great Author. How could it be otherwise when we remember that **this Order** constitutes the very pattern of that divine civilization which the almighty Law of Bahá'u'lláh is designed to establish upon earth? The divers and ever-shifting systems of human polity, whether past or present, whether originating in the East or in the West, offer no adequate criterion wherewith to estimate the potency of its hidden virtues or to appraise the solidity of its foundations. "The Bahá'í Commonwealth of the future, of which this vast Administrative **Order** is the sole framework, is, both in theory and practice, not only unique in the entire history of political institutions, but can find no parallel in the annals of any of the world's recognized religious systems. No form of democratic government; no system of autocracy or of dictatorship, whether monarchical or republican; no intermediary scheme of a purely aristocratic order; nor even any of the recognized types of theocracy, whether it be the Hebrew Commonwealth, or the various Christian ecclesiastical organizations, or the Imamate or the Caliphate in Islám—none of these can be identified or be said to conform with the Administrative **Order** which the master-hand of its perfect Architect has fashioned. "This new-born Administrative Order incorporates within its structure certain elements which are to be found in each of the three recognized forms of secular government, without being in any sense a mere replica of any one of them, and without introducing within its machinery any of the objectionable features which they inherently possess. It blends and harmonizes, as no government fashioned by mortal hands has as yet accomplished, the salutary truths which each of these systems*

undoubtedly contains without vitiating the integrity of those God-given verities on which it is ultimately founded.

*“The Administrative **Order** of the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh must in no wise be regarded as purely democratic in character inasmuch as the basic assumption which requires all democracies to depend fundamentally upon getting their mandate from the people is altogether lacking in this Dispensation. In the conduct of the administrative affairs of the Faith, in the enactment of the legislation necessary to supplement the laws of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the members of the Universal House of Justice, it should be borne in mind, are not, as Bahá’u’lláh’s utterances clearly imply, responsible to those whom they represent, nor are they allowed to be governed by the feelings, the general opinion, and even the convictions of the mass of the faithful, or of those who directly elect them. They are to follow, in a prayerful attitude, the dictates and promptings of their conscience. They may, indeed they must, acquaint themselves with the conditions prevailing among the community, must weigh dispassionately in their minds the merits of any case presented for their consideration, but must reserve for themselves the right of an unfettered decision. “God will verily inspire them with whatsoever He willeth,” is Bahá’u’lláh’s incontrovertible assurance. They, and not the body of those who either directly or indirectly elect them, have thus been made the recipients of the divine guidance which is at once the life-blood and ultimate safeguard of this Revelation. Moreover, he who symbolizes the hereditary principle in this Dispensation has been made the interpreter of the words of its Author, and ceases consequently, by virtue of the actual authority vested in him, to be the figurehead invariably associated with the prevailing systems of constitutional monarchies.*

*“Nor can the Bahá’í Administrative **Order** be dismissed as a hard and rigid system of unmitigated autocracy or as an idle imitation of any form of absolutistic ecclesiastical government, whether it be the Papacy, the Imamate or any other similar institution, for the obvious reason that upon the international elected representatives of the followers of Bahá’u’lláh has been conferred the exclusive right of legislating on matters not expressly revealed in the Bahá’í writings. Neither the Guardian of the Faith nor any institution apart from the International House of Justice can ever usurp this vital and essential power or encroach upon that sacred right. The abolition of professional priesthood with its accompanying sacraments of baptism, of communion and of confession of sins, the laws requiring the election by universal suffrage of all local, national, and international Houses of Justice, the total absence of episcopal authority with its attendant privileges, corruptions and bureaucratic tendencies, are further evidences of the non-autocratic character of the Bahá’í Administrative Order and of its inclination to democratic methods in the administration of its affairs.*

*“Nor is **this Order identified with the name of Bahá’u’lláh** to be confused with any system of purely aristocratic government in view of the fact that it upholds, on the one hand, the hereditary principle and entrusts the Guardian of the Faith with the obligation of interpreting its teachings, and provides, on the other, for the free and direct election from among the mass of the faithful of the body that constitutes its highest legislative organ.*

*“Whereas this Administrative **Order** cannot be said to have been modeled after any of these recognized systems of government, it nevertheless embodies, reconciles and assimilates within its framework such wholesome elements as are to be found in each one of them. The hereditary authority which the Guardian is called upon to exercise, the vital and essential functions which the Universal House of Justice discharges, the specific provisions requiring its democratic election by the representatives of the faithful—these combine to demonstrate the truth that this **divinely revealed Order**, which can never be identified with any of the standard types of government referred to by Aristotle in his works, embodies and blends with the spiritual verities on which it is based the beneficent elements which are to be found in each one of them. The admitted evils inherent in each of these systems being rigidly and permanently excluded, **this unique Order**, however long it may endure and however extensive its ramifications, cannot ever degenerate into any form of despotism, of oligarchy, or of demagoguery which must sooner or later corrupt the machinery of all man-made and essentially defective political institutions.”* (Shoghi Effendi, “The Dispensation of Baha’u’llah”, dated 8 February 1934; in *The World Order of Baha’u’llah*)

– LXXI –

Be not dismayed, O peoples of the world, when the daystar of My beauty is set, and the heaven of My tabernacle is concealed from your eyes. Arise to further My Cause, and to exalt My Word amongst men. We are with you at all times, and shall strengthen you through the power of truth. We are truly almighty. Whoso hath recognized Me will arise and serve Me with such determination that the powers of earth and heaven shall be unable to defeat his purpose.

The peoples of the world are fast asleep. Were they to wake from their slumber, they would hasten with eagerness unto God, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. They would cast away everything they possess, be it all the treasures of the earth, that their Lord may remember them to the extent of addressing to them but one word. Such is the instruction given you by Him Who holdeth the knowledge of things hidden, in a Tablet which the eye of creation hath not seen, and which is revealed to none except His own Self, the omnipotent protector of all worlds. So bewildered are they in the drunkenness of their evil desires, that they are powerless to recognize the Lord of all being, Whose voice calleth aloud from every direction: “There is none other God but Me, the Mighty, the All-Wise.”

Say: Rejoice not in the things ye possess; tonight they are yours, tomorrow others will possess them. Thus warneth you He Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. Say: Can ye claim that what ye own is lasting or secure? Nay! By Myself, the All-Merciful... The days of your life flee away as a breath of wind, and all your pomp and glory shall be folded up as were the pomp and glory of those gone before you. Reflect, O people! What hath become of your bygone days, your lost centuries? Happy the days that have been consecrated to the remembrance of God, and blessed the hours which have been spent in praise of Him Who is the All-Wise. By My life! Neither the pomp of the mighty, nor the wealth of the rich, nor even the ascendancy of the ungodly will endure. All will perish, at a word from Him. He, verily, is the All-Powerful, the All-Compelling, the Almighty. What advantage is there in the earthly things which men possess? That which shall profit them, they have utterly neglected. Erelong, they will awake from their slumber, and find themselves unable to obtain that which hath escaped them in the days of their Lord, the Almighty, the All-Praised. Did they but know it, they would renounce their all, that their names may be mentioned before His throne. They, verily, are accounted among the dead.

This passage from the Kitab-i-Aqdas, along with the others included in Gleanings, were published in 1935, while the Synopsis and Codification of the Laws and Ordinances of the Kitab-i-Aqdas (in English) was published in 1973, and the Kitab-i-Aqdas (in English) with Questions and Answers compiled by Zaynu'l-i-Abidin, a revised "Synopsis and Codification of the Laws and Ordinances of the Kitab-i-Aqdas", and with an introduction and notes by individuals selected by the Universal House of Justice was published in 1992. While the entirety of this Most Holy Book of Baha'u'llah was not rendered into English until 1992, the selections translated by the Guardian and included in Gleanings are the texts that he considered the most important for the Baha'is to read and understand.

– LXXII –

Let not your hearts be perturbed, O people, when the glory of My Presence is withdrawn, and the ocean of My utterance is stilled. In My presence amongst you there is a wisdom, and in My absence there is yet another, inscrutable to all but God, the Incomparable, the All-Knowing.

Verily, We behold you from Our realm of glory, and shall aid whosoever will arise for the triumph of Our Cause with the hosts of the Concourse on high and a company of Our favored angels.

O peoples of the earth! God, the Eternal Truth, is My witness that streams of fresh and soft-flowing waters have gushed from the rocks, through the sweetness of the words uttered by your Lord, the Unconstrained; and still ye slumber. Cast away that which ye possess, and, on the wings of detachment, soar beyond all created things. Thus biddeth you the Lord of creation, the movement of Whose Pen hath revolutionized the soul of mankind.

Know ye from what heights your Lord, the All-Glorious is calling? Think ye that ye have recognized the Pen wherewith your Lord, the Lord of all names, commandeth you? Nay, by My life! Did ye but know it, ye would renounce the world, and would hasten with your whole hearts to the presence of the Well-Beloved. Your spirits would be so transported by His Word as to throw into commotion the Greater World—how much more this small and petty one! Thus have the showers of My bounty been poured down from the heaven of My loving-kindness, as a token of My grace that ye may be of the thankful....

Beware lest the desires of the flesh and of a corrupt inclination provoke divisions among you. Be ye as the fingers of one hand, the members of one body. Thus counseleth you the Pen of Revelation, if ye be of them that believe.

Consider the mercy of God and His gifts. He enjoineth upon you that which shall profit you, though He Himself can well dispense with all creatures. Your evil doings can never harm Us, neither can your good works profit Us. We summon you wholly for the sake of God. To this every man of understanding and insight will testify.

Not only did Baha'u'llah reiterate in the Kitab-i-Aqdas that His followers should not be troubled by His passing, but the Guardian chose to translate and include both iterations in Gleanings. The

transitions that have occurred in Babi-Baha'i history are of cardinal significance, which the Guardian clearly wanted the believers to understand.

– LXXIII –

It is clear and evident that when the veils that conceal the realities of the manifestations of the Names and Attributes of God, nay of all created things visible or invisible, have been rent asunder, nothing except the Sign of God will remain—a sign which He, Himself, hath placed within these realities. This sign will endure as long as is the wish of the Lord thy God, the Lord of the heavens and of the earth. If such be the blessings conferred on all created things, how superior must be the destiny of the true believer, whose existence and life are to be regarded as the originating purpose of all creation. Just as the conception of faith hath existed from the beginning that hath no beginning, and will endure till the end that hath no end, in like manner will the true believer eternally live and endure. His spirit will everlastingly circle round the Will of God. He will last as long as God, Himself, will last. He is revealed through the Revelation of God, and is hidden at His bidding. It is evident that the loftiest mansions in the Realm of Immortality have been ordained as the habitation of them that have truly believed in God and in His signs. Death can never invade that holy seat. Thus have We entrusted thee with the signs of thy Lord, that thou mayest persevere in thy love for Him, and be of them that comprehend this truth.

*While the universal revelation of the names, signs and attributes of God in all things is affirmed by Baha'u'llah, He also revealed, in this passage from the Kitab-i-Hadi, addressed to Mirza Hadiy-i-Qazvini, in Persian, that in comparison with this universal revelation “**nothing except the Sign of God will remain—a sign which He, Himself, hath placed within these realities**”. This “sign” is that of the Manifestation of God, as only the “true believer” recognizes the Manifestation of God in every Age in which He appears, and this it is this “true believer, “**whose existence and life are to be regarded as the originating purpose of all creation**” whose faith “**hath existed from the beginning that hath no beginning, and will endure till the end that hath no end**”, who will “**eternally live and endure**” and whose “**spirit will everlastingly circle round the Will of God. He will last as long***

as God, Himself, will last.” While all things reflect the divine attributes, it is only the “true believer” who will experience the fullness of God in all of His worlds and for eternity.

*This pronouncement recalls the words of Jesus of Nazareth in the Gospel of John: “**18**No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” (Chapter 1); “**9**Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? **10**Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. **11**Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake.” (Chapter 14). And the Gospel of Matthew: **27**All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.” (Chapter 11)*

– LXXIV –

Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God is endowed with such potency as can instill new life into every human frame, if ye be of them that comprehend this truth. All the wondrous works ye behold in this world have been manifested through the operation of His supreme and most exalted Will, His wondrous and inflexible Purpose. Through the mere revelation of the word “Fashioner,” issuing forth from His lips and proclaiming His attribute to mankind, such power is released as can generate, through successive ages, all the manifold arts which the hands of man can produce. This, verily, is a certain truth. No sooner is this resplendent word uttered, than its animating energies, stirring within all created things, give birth to the means and instruments whereby such arts can be produced and perfected. All the wondrous achievements ye now witness are the direct consequences of the revelation of this Name. In the days to come, ye will, verily, behold things of which ye have never heard before. Thus hath it been decreed in the Tablets of God, and none can comprehend it except them whose sight is sharp. In like manner, the moment the word expressing My attribute “The Omniscient” issueth forth from My mouth, every created thing will, according to its capacity

and limitations, be invested with the power to unfold the knowledge of the most marvelous sciences, and will be empowered to manifest them in the course of time at the bidding of Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Knowing. Know thou of a certainty that the revelation of every other Name is accompanied by a similar manifestation of Divine power. Every single letter proceeding out of the mouth of God is indeed a mother letter, and every word uttered by Him Who is the Wellspring of Divine Revelation is a mother word, and His Tablet a Mother Tablet. Well is it with them that apprehend this truth.

The power and potency of the Word of God, that is, the Word revealed by the Manifestation of God, for no creature apart from the Manifestation has heard this Word, is beyond anything human in nature, as has been stated by the Hebrew prophets and Jesus of Nazareth.

– LXXV –

Tear asunder, in My Name, the veils that have grievously blinded your vision, and, through the power born of your belief in the unity of God, scatter the idols of vain imitation. Enter, then, the holy paradise of the good-pleasure of the All-Merciful. Sanctify your souls from whatsoever is not of God, and taste ye the sweetness of rest within the pale of His vast and mighty Revelation, and beneath the shadow of His supreme and infallible authority. Suffer not yourselves to be wrapt in the dense veils of your selfish desires, inasmuch as I have perfected in every one of you My creation, so that the excellence of My handiwork may be fully revealed unto men. It followeth, therefore, that every man hath been, and will continue to be, able of himself to appreciate the Beauty of God, the Glorified. Had he not been endowed with such a capacity, how could he be called to account for his failure? If, in the Day when all the peoples of the earth will be gathered together, any man should, whilst standing in the presence of God, be asked: “Wherefore hast thou disbelieved in My Beauty and turned away from My Self?”, and if such a man should reply and say: “Inasmuch as all men have erred, and none hath been found willing to turn his face to the Truth, I, too, following their example, have grievously failed to recognize the Beauty of the Eternal,” such a plea will, assuredly, be rejected. For the faith of no man can be conditioned by anyone except himself.

This is one of the verities that lie enshrined in My Revelation—a verity which I have revealed in all the heavenly Books, which I have caused the Tongue of Grandeur to utter, and the Pen of Power to inscribe. Ponder awhile thereon, that with both your inner and outer eye, ye may perceive the subtleties of Divine wisdom and discover the gems of heavenly knowledge which, in clear and weighty language, I have revealed in this exalted and incorruptible Tablet, and that ye may not stray far from the All-Highest Throne, from the Tree beyond which there is no passing, from the Habitation of everlasting might and glory.

The signs of God shine as manifest and resplendent as the sun amidst the works of His creatures. Whatsoever proceedeth from Him is apart, and will always remain distinguished, from the inventions of men. From the Source of His knowledge countless Luminaries of learning and wisdom have risen, and out of the Paradise of His Pen the breath of the All-Merciful hath continually been wafted to the hearts and souls of men. Happy are they that have recognized this truth.

Baha'u'llah affirms what the prophets have always taught, which is that every human being has the capacity to recognize God and His Manifestation, and that it is the obligation of each individual to seek the truth that will set his soul free, and that “the signs of God shine as manifest and resplendent as the sun”, that “countless Luminaries of learning and wisdom have risen.” The revelation of God is not beyond the ken of any man or woman, this is His promise. “Had he not been endowed with such a capacity, how could he be called to account for his failure?”

In the Kitab-i-Iqan, Baha'u'llah made a similar statement:

“We have also heard a number of the foolish of the earth assert that the genuine text of the heavenly Gospel doth not exist amongst the Christians, that it hath ascended unto heaven. How grievously they have erred! How oblivious of the fact that such a statement imputeth the gravest injustice and tyranny to a gracious and loving Providence! How could God, when once the Daystar of the beauty of Jesus had disappeared from the sight of His people, and ascended unto the fourth heaven, cause His holy Book, His most great testimony amongst His creatures, to disappear also? What would be left to that people to cling to from the setting of the daystar of Jesus until the rise of the sun of the Muhammadan Dispensation? What law could be their stay and guide? How could such people be made the victims of the avenging wrath of God, the

omnipotent Avenger? How could they be afflicted with the scourge of chastisement by the heavenly King? Above all, how could the flow of the grace of the All-Bountiful be stayed? How could the ocean of His tender mercies be stilled? We take refuge with God, from that which His creatures have fancied about Him! Exalted is He above their comprehension!

In the Jawahiru'l-Asrar, Baha'u'llah also said:

“If so, God’s testimony to His servants would have remained incomplete and His favour proven imperfect. His mercy would not have shone resplendent, nor would His grace have overshadowed all. For if at the ascension of Jesus His Book had likewise ascended unto heaven, then how could God reprove and chastise the people on the Day of Resurrection, as hath been written by the Imáms of the Faith and affirmed by its illustrious divines?”

God holds each one of us accountable for our actions, for otherwise the punishment of the disobedient and the reward of the obedient would be unjust, when it is actually the foundation of God’s creation.