

GLEANINGS

#12

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.

TWELFTH SESSION'S SELECTIONS (CXIII-CXIV)

The two excerpts from the Writings of Baha'u'llah found in this session are both from the Suratu'l Muluk (سورة الملك) of Baha'u'llah, with the first addressed to Haji Mirza Husayn Khan, the Persian ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, whose capital was in Istanbul (Constantinople), and the second addressed to Sultan 'Abdu'l-'Aziz, the reigning monarch of the Ottoman Empire and Khilafa (Caliph) of the Sunni Muslims, residing in the same City. The Suriy-i-Muluk was written in 1867-1873. Its name and content recall and may have been intended to be compared with the Siyar al-Muluk (سير الملوك), also called the Siyasat-i-nameh (سياست نامه) of Nizamu'l-Mulk (1018-1092), perhaps the most famous Muslim manual on good governance, written in 1086-1091 and addressed to Sultan Malikshah, who, like Sultan 'Abdu'l-'Aziz, was the reigning monarch and caliph of the Ottoman Empire. Unlike Nizamu'l-Mulk, Baha'u'llah was not the grand vizier of an empire, but the Supreme Manifestation of God inaugurating not only the Baha'i Dispensation of at least 1000 years but also the Baha'i Cycle of at least 500,000 years. Hence, He may have intended for His readers to compare the contents of Suratu'l-Muluk with the sixty seventh chapter of the Qur'an, entitled Suratu'l-Mulk (سورة الملك), also revealed in Arabic, which refers to God as the King of Kings, and the first chapter (with the same name) of the Qayyumu'l-Asma' (قيوم الأسماء) of the Bab, revealed in Arabic in May of 1844,

– CXIII –

Dost thou imagine, O Minister of the Sháh in the City (Constantinople), that I hold within My grasp the ultimate destiny of the Cause of God? Thinkest thou that My imprisonment, or the shame I have been made to suffer, or even My death and utter annihilation, can deflect its course? Wretched is what thou hast imagined in thine heart! Thou art indeed of them that walk after the vain imaginings which their hearts devise. No God is there but Him. Powerful is He to manifest His Cause, and to exalt His testimony, and to establish whatsoever is His Will, and to elevate it to so eminent

a position that neither thine own hands, nor the hands of them that have turned away from Him, can ever touch or harm it.

Baha'u'llah affirms that He is not in charge...God is in charge. “Powerful is He to manifest His Cause...”

Dost thou believe thou hast the power to frustrate His Will, to hinder Him from executing His judgment, or to deter Him from exercising His sovereignty? Pretendest thou that aught in the heavens or in the earth can resist His Faith? No, by Him Who is the Eternal Truth! Nothing whatsoever in the whole of creation can thwart His Purpose. Cast away, therefore, the mere conceit thou dost follow, for mere conceit can never take the place of truth. Be thou of them that have truly repented and returned to God, the God Who hath created thee, Who hath nourished thee, and made thee a minister among them that profess thy faith.

Not just this minister of the Shah but all those who serve in government are called upon to be “of them that have truly repented and returned to God” for it is He Who “made thee a minister among them that profess thy faith.”

Know thou, moreover, that He it is Who hath, by His own behest, created all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth. How can, then, the thing that hath been created at His bidding prevail against Him? High is God exalted above what ye imagine about Him, ye people of malice! If this Cause be of God, no man can prevail against it; and if it be not of God, the divines amongst you, and they that follow their corrupt desires and such as have rebelled against Him will surely suffice to overpower it.

Baha'u'llah affirms that “If this Cause be of God, no man can prevail against it; and if it be not of God, the divines amongst you, and they that follow their corrupt desires and such as have rebelled against Him will surely suffice to overpower it.” It should be noted that the latter parties have been largely successful at prevailing against the Faith of Baha'u'llah in its homeland, but powerless to halt its advancement elsewhere in the world. Less than one hundred years after the founding of this religion, it was established in more countries than any other religion except for Christianity, which has been in existence for two thousand years.

Hast thou not heard what a man of the family of Pharaoh, a believer, hath said of old, and which God recounted unto His Apostle, Whom He hath chosen above all human beings, and entrusted with His Message, and made the source of His mercy unto all them that dwell on earth? He said, and He, verily, speaketh the truth: “Will ye slay a man because he saith my Lord is God, when he hath already come to you with proofs of his mission? And if he be a liar, on him will be his lie, but if he be a man of truth, part at least of what he threateneth will fall upon you.” This is what God hath revealed unto His Well-Beloved One, in His unerring Book.

*This is the quotation from Qur'an 40:28, which was said to Moses and then to Muhammad. These same words were included in a prayer of Baha'u'llah to commemorate the martyrdom of the Bab. While similar words have not yet been found in the Torah, the prophet Jeremiah, in chapter 17 of His book speaks these words: “**5**Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. **6**For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. **7**Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. **8**For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit. **9**The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? **10**I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings. **11**As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not; so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool. **12**A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary. **13**O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters. **14**Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise. **15**Behold, they say unto me, Where is the word of the LORD? let it come now. **16**As for me, I have not hastened from being a pastor to follow thee: neither have I desired the woeful day; thou knowest: that which came out of my lips was right before thee. **17**Be not a terror unto me: thou art my hope in the day of evil. **18**Let them be confounded that persecute me, but let not me be confounded: let them be dismayed, but let not me be dismayed: bring upon them the day of evil, and destroy them with double destruction.”*

And yet, ye have failed to incline your ears unto His bidding, have disregarded His law, have rejected His counsel as recorded in His Book, and have been of them that have strayed far from Him. How many those who, every year, and every month, have because of you been put to death! How manifold the injustices ye have perpetrated— injustices the like of which the eye of creation hath not seen, which no chronicler hath ever recorded! How numerous the babes and sucklings who were made orphans, and the fathers who lost their sons, because of your cruelty, O ye unjust doers! How oft hath a sister pined away and mourned over her brother, and how oft hath a wife lamented after her husband and sole sustainer!

Baha'u'llah refers in this passage to the persecutions of the Babis and Baha'is by the Persian government, which resulted in something approaching 20,000 martyrs in the space of a few years. According to some estimates, during the first three centuries of Christianity, around 2 million Christians were martyred because of their faith.

Your iniquity waxed greater and greater until ye slew Him Who had never taken His eyes away from the face of God, the Most Exalted, the Most Great. Would that ye had put Him to death after the manner men are wont to put one another to death! Ye slew Him, however, in such circumstances as no man hath ever witnessed. The heavens wept sore over Him, and the souls of them who are nigh unto God cried out for His affliction. Was He not a Scion of your Prophet's ancient House? Had not His fame as a direct descendant of the Apostle been spread abroad amongst you? Why, then, did ye inflict upon Him what no man, however far ye may look back, hath inflicted upon another? By God! The eye of creation hath never beheld your like. Ye slay Him Who is a Scion of your Prophet's House, and rejoice and make merry while seated on your seats of honor! Ye utter your imprecations against them who were before you, and who have perpetrated what ye have perpetrated, and remain yourselves all the time unaware of your enormities!

Baha'u'llah mourns the death of the Bab, and the manner in which He was slain, which was before a vast crowd and whose leaders, the mullas of Iran, did “rejoice and make merry while seated on your seats of honor”.

Be fair in your judgment. Did they whom you curse, upon whom ye invoke evil, act differently from yourselves? Have they not slain the descendant of their Prophet as ye

have slain the descendant of your own? Is not your conduct similar to their conduct? Wherefore, then, claim ye to be different from them, O ye sowers of dissension amongst men?

Here Baha'u'llah refers to the Jewish people “whom you curse; upon whom ye invoke evil”, comparing them to the Persian Muslims responsible for the death of the Bab, saying “Have they not slain the descendant of their Prophet”, for Jesus was accounted a descendant of Abraham and David, both of whom are regarded as Prophets by Muslims (and something akin to prophets by Jews), and then asked “Is not your conduct similar to their conduct?”

And when ye took away His life, one of His followers arose to avenge His death. He was unknown of men, and the design he had conceived was unnoticed by anyone. Eventually he committed what had been preordained. It behooveth you, therefore, to attach blame to no one except to yourselves, for the things ye have committed, if ye but judge fairly. Who is there on the whole earth who hath done what ye have done? None, by Him Who is the Lord of all worlds!

Historians have argued about whether the attempt on the life of Nasiri'd-Din Shah, in 1852, was carried out by one or more Babis. Baha'u'llah weighs in here to state that it was “one of His followers” who “arose to avenge His death...unknown of men” and He furthermore attested that “the design he had conceived was unnoticed by anyone.” His statement is of great importance, because Muslim accounts have indicated that this attempt was planned and executed by several Babis and was known to others, and that they were traitors to the crown and not only heretics and trouble-makers. Baha'u'llah holds the brutal killing of thousands of Babis as unwarranted, implying that the Babis were peaceful and not opposed to the Shah. He therefore insists that “It behooveth you, therefore, to attach blame to no one except to yourselves, for the things ye have committed, if ye but judge fairly.”

All the rulers and kings of the earth honor and revere the descendants of their Prophets and holy men, could ye but perceive it. Ye, on the other hand, are responsible for such acts as no man hath, at any time, performed. Your misdeeds have caused every understanding heart to be consumed with grief. And yet, ye have remained sunk in your heedlessness, and failed to realize the wickedness of your actions.

*Not only did the Persian rulers and kings kill the Bab but also other “**descendants of their Prophets and holy men**”, who were indiscriminately murdered in such manner “**as no man hath, at any time, performed.**” The Dawn-Breakers of Nabil-i-A’zam attests to this in considerable and gory detail. When He wrote “**Your misdeeds have caused every understanding heart to be consumed with grief**” it should be recognized that the newspaper and other written accounts of these massacres did indeed provoke much sympathy among European and perhaps also American readers. This is attested in the written chronicles subsequently written by scholars, in Italian, German, English and French.*

Ye have persisted in your waywardness until ye rose up against Us, though We had committed nothing to justify your enmity. Fear ye not God Who hath created you, and fashioned you, and caused you to attain your strength, and joined you with them that have resigned themselves to Him (Muslims)? How long will ye persist in your waywardness? How long will ye refuse to reflect? How long ere ye shake off your slumber and are roused from your heedlessness? How long will ye remain unaware of the truth?

*Baha’u’llah states that He was also made a target of this tyrannical repression, “**ye rose up against Us, though We had committed nothing to justify your enmity**”. He chastises them for their “**waywardness**”, their “**slumber**” and “**heedlessness**”, which persists to this day. The Baha’is compose less than half of 1% of the population of Iran. Notwithstanding the burgeoning support for Muslims in Europe and the Americas, and high rate of conversions to Islam in Africa and other regions, the Baha’is continue to be oppressed in virtually all of those countries with large Muslim populations. “**How long will ye remain unaware of the truth?**” Already nearly two centuries, and perhaps for much longer.*

Ponder in thine heart. Did ye, notwithstanding your behavior and the things your hands have wrought, succeed in quenching the fire of God or in putting out the light of His Revelation—a light that hath enveloped with its brightness them that are immersed in the billowing oceans of immortality, and hath attracted the souls of such as truly believe in and uphold His unity? Know ye not that the Hand of God is over your hands, that His irrevocable Decree transcendeth all your devices, that He is supreme over His servants, that He is equal to His Purpose, that He doth what He wisheth, that He shall not be asked of whatever He willeth, that He ordaineth what He

pleaseth, that He is the Most Powerful, the Almighty? If ye believe this to be the truth, wherefore, then, will ye not cease from troubling and be at peace with yourselves?

*Baha'u'llah, notwithstanding the blindness and opposition of the Iranian people, calls them to recognize that human beings cannot “**succeed in quenching the fire of God or in putting out the light of His Revelation**”. In attacking the Baha'i revelation, they are not just engaged in “**troubling**” others, but are not “**at peace with yourselves**”. Baha'u'llah wrote so often that the Cause of God is eternal and unchanging, not restricted to the followers of one sect of Islam.*

Ye perpetrate every day a fresh injustice, and treat Me as ye treated Me in times past, though I never attempted to meddle with your affairs. At no time have I opposed you, neither have I rebelled against your laws. Behold how ye have, at the last, made Me a prisoner in this far-off land! Know for a certainty, however, that whatever your hands or the hands of the infidels have wrought will never, as they never did of old, change the Cause of God or alter His ways.

*When Baha'u'llah refers to those who “**treat Me as ye treated Me in times past**” He is not alluding to an earlier time in His life, but to the many times in which the leaders have mistreated the Prophets of God, whether the attack on Moses and the Israelites by the Pharaoh and his army, the attack on Jesus and the Christians by the Jewish and Roman leaders, the attack on Muhammad and His followers by the Meccans and then the Yathribis, and the attack on the Imams, from 'Ali onwards, by their enemies. Baha'u'llah states that this behavior will not achieve its desired objective – “**Know for a certainty, however, that whatever your hands or the hands of the infidels have wrought will never, as they never did of old, change the Cause of God or alter His ways.**” The Baha'is should take this to heart, for it applies as much to those who oppose the Faith in our own day as it did in the past.*

Give heed to My warning, ye people of Persia! If I be slain at your hands, God will assuredly raise up one who will fill the seat made vacant through My death, for such is God's method carried into effect of old, and no change can ye find in God's method of dealing. Seek ye to put out God's light that shineth upon His earth? Averse is God from what ye desire. He shall perfect His light, albeit ye abhor it in the secret of your hearts.

*Baha'u'llah did not make this statement without a plan in mind. He appointed His eldest son to continue to promote His Cause, and established a Covenant with His followers to continue that succession of Baha'is who would **"fill the seat made vacant through My death"**. Did the death of Moses before reaching the Holy Land result in the dispersion of His followers and the failure of the plan of God for them to establish themselves in the land? It did not. God did **"assuredly raise up one who"** filled **"the seat made vacant by"** His **"death"**, and that was Joshua. Did the death of Jesus result in the extinction of Christianity? It did not. God appointed Peter to assume leadership of the disciples, and then inspired Paul to do so. Baha'u'llah assures His reader **"such is God's method carried into effect of old, and no change can ye find in God's method of dealing."***

Pause for but a little while and reflect, O Minister, and be fair in thy judgment. What is it that We have committed that could justify thee in having slandered Us unto the King's Ministers, in following thy desires, in perverting the truth, and in uttering thy calumnies against Us? We have never met each other except when We met thee in thy father's house, in the days when the martyrdom of Imám Husayn was being commemorated. On those occasions no one could have the chance of making known to others his views and beliefs in conversation or in discourse. Thou wilt bear witness to the truth of My words, if thou be of the truthful. I have frequented no other gatherings in which thou couldst have learned My mind or in which any other could have done so. How, then, didst thou pronounce thy verdict against Me, when thou hadst not heard My testimony from Mine own lips? Hast thou not heard what God, exalted be His glory, hath said: "Say not to every one who meeteth you with a greeting, 'Thou art not a believer'." "Thrust not away those who cry to their Lord at morn and even, craving to behold His face." Thou hast indeed forsaken what the Book of God hath prescribed, and yet thou deemest thyself to be a believer!

*Baha'u'llah points out the injustice this minister and quotes to him the statements condemning those who judge without knowing in Qur'an 4:94 and 6:52. Baha'u'llah always seeks to convince His reader based upon verses from the very **"Book of God"** in which he **"deemest thyself to be a believer"**. In one passage He states this principle with utter simplicity and clarity as applying to all followers of religion: **"In mine hand I carry the testimony of God, your Lord and the Lord of your sires of old. Weigh it with the just Balance that ye possess, the Balance of the testimony of the Prophets and Messengers of God. If ye find it to be established in truth, if ye believe it to be of God,***

beware, then, lest ye cavil at it, and render your works vain, and be numbered with the infidels. It is indeed the sign of God that hath been sent down through the power of truth, through which the validity of His Cause hath been demonstrated unto His creatures, and the ensigns of purity lifted up betwixt earth and heaven.” (Gleanings CXXIX)

Despite what thou hast done I entertain—and to this God is My witness—no ill-will against thee, nor against anyone, though from thee and others We receive such hurt as no believer in the unity of God can sustain. My cause is in the hand of none except God, and My trust is in no one else but Him. Erelong shall your days pass away, as shall pass away the days of those who now, with flagrant pride, vaunt themselves over their neighbor. Soon shall ye be gathered together in the presence of God, and shall be asked of your doings, and shall be repaid for what your hands have wrought, and wretched the abode of the wicked doers!

Baha’u’llah assures the readers who have rejected His revelation that “Soon shall ye be gathered together together in the presence of God, and shall be asked of your doings, and shall be repaid for what your hands have wrought, and wretched the abode of the wicked doers!” This might be a good place to assure the reader that there are indeed consequences for evil actions as well as good actions in the world beyond this world and the life after this life. “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.” (Gleanings, CLXV) “It is clear and evident that all men shall, after their physical death, estimate the worth of their deeds, and realize all that their hands have wrought. I swear by the Daystar that shineth above the horizon of Divine power! They that are the followers of the one true God shall, the moment they depart out of this life, experience such joy and gladness as would be impossible to describe, while they that live in error shall be seized with such fear and trembling, and shall be filled with such consternation, as nothing can exceed.” (Gleanings, LXXXVI) “How often hath a sinner attained, at the hour of death, to the essence of faith, and, quaffing the immortal draught, hath taken his flight unto the Concourse on high! And how often hath a devout believer, at the hour of his soul’s ascension, been so changed as to fall into the nethermost fire!” (Gleanings, CXXV) “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.” (Gleanings, LXXXI)

By God! Wert thou to realize what thou hast done, thou wouldst surely weep sore over thyself, and wouldst flee for refuge to God, and wouldst pine away and mourn all the days of thy life, till God will have forgiven thee, for He, verily, is the Most Generous, the All-Bountiful. Thou wilt, however, persist, till the hour of thy death, in thy heedlessness, inasmuch as thou hast, with all thine heart, thy soul and inmost being, busied thyself with the vanities of the world. Thou shalt, after thy departure, discover what We have revealed unto thee, and shalt find all thy doings recorded in the Book wherein the works of all them that dwell on earth, be they greater or less than the weight of an atom, are noted down. Heed, therefore, My counsel, and hearken thou, with the hearing of thine heart, unto My speech, and be not careless of My words, nor be of them that reject My truth. Glory not in the things that have been given thee. Set before thine eyes what hath been revealed in the Book of God, the Help in Peril, the All-Glorious: *“And when they had forgotten their warnings, We set open to them the gates of all things,”* even as We did set open to thee and to thy like the gates of this earth and the ornaments thereof. Wait thou, therefore, for what hath been promised in the latter part of this holy verse, for this is a promise from Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Wise—a promise that will not prove untrue.

After quoting Qur'an 6:44, Baha'u'llah further confirms the statements cited in the previous paragraph and the supplementary quotations: “Thou shalt, after thy departure, discover what We have revealed unto thee, and shall find all thy doings recorded in the Book wherein the works of all them that dwell on earth, be they greater or less than the weight of an atom, are noted down.” After that He quotes Qur'an 6:44, stating that “We did set open to thee and to thy like the gates of this earth and the ornaments thereof...the things that have been given thee” and that likewise “We will set open to them the gates of all things”, “a promise from His Who is the Almighty, the All-Wise – a promise that will not prove untrue”, which is that there is divine punishment awaiting those who do not hearken to the commandments of God.

I know not the path ye have chosen and which ye tread, O congregation of My ill-wishers! We summon you to God, We remind you of His Day, We announce unto you

tidings of your reunion with Him, We draw you nigh unto His court, and send down upon you tokens of His wondrous wisdom, and yet lo, behold how ye reject Us, how ye condemn Us, through the things which your lying mouths have uttered, as an infidel, how ye devise your devices against Us! And when We manifest unto you what God hath, through His bountiful favor, bestowed upon Us, ye say, "It is but plain magic." The same words were spoken by the generations that were before you and were what you are, did ye but perceive it. Ye have thereby deprived yourselves of the bounty of God and of His grace, and shall never obtain them till the day when God will have judged between Us and you, and He, verily, is the best of Judges.

He quotes the Qur'an (46:7; 27:13) regarding the retort of those who deny the authenticity of divine revelation. Of course this is also alleged in our day, where divine revelation is called mythical, superstitious, unverifiable and hence purely voluntary.

Certain ones among you have said: "He it is Who hath laid claim to be God." By God! This is a gross calumny. I am but a servant of God Who hath believed in Him and in His signs, and in His Prophets and in His angels. My tongue, and My heart, and My inner and My outer being testify that there is no God but Him, that all others have been created by His behest, and been fashioned through the operation of His Will. There is none other God but Him, the Creator, the Raiser from the dead, the Quickener, the Slayer. I am He that telleth abroad the favors with which God hath, through His bounty, favored Me. If this be My transgression, then I am truly the first of the transgressors. I and My kindred are at your mercy. Do ye as ye please, and be not of them that hesitate, that I might return to God My Lord, and reach the place where I can no longer behold your faces. This, indeed, is My dearest wish, My most ardent desire. Of My state God is, verily, sufficiently informed, observant.

Baha'u'llah was often alleged to have "laid claim to be God". This is how He explained the true meaning of divine nature made by Himself or any other Manifestation of God, in the Kitab-i-Iqan: "Were any of the all-embracing Manifestations of God to declare: "I am God!" He, verily, speaketh the truth, and no doubt attacheth thereto. For it hath been repeatedly demonstrated that through their Revelation, their attributes and names, the Revelation of God, His name and His attributes, are made manifest in the world. Thus, He hath revealed: "Those shafts were God's, not Thine!" (Qur'an 8:17) And also He saith: "In truth, they who plighted fealty unto thee, really plighted that fealty unto God."

(Qur'an 48:10)" In the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, Baha'u'llah made a few references to this theme, including the following: "Either thou or someone else hath said: "Let the Súrih of Tawhíd be translated, so that all may know and be fully persuaded that the one true God begetteth not, nor is He begotten. Moreover, the Bábís believe in his (Bahá'u'lláh's) Divinity and Godhood." O Shaykh! This station is the station in which one dieth to himself and liveth in God. Divinity, whenever I mention it, indicateth My complete and absolute self-effacement. This is the station in which I have no control over mine own weal or woe nor over my life nor over my resurrection."

Imagine thyself to be under the eye of God, O Minister! If thou seest Him not, He, in truth, clearly seeth thee. Observe, and judge fairly Our Cause. What is it that We have committed that could have induced thee to rise up against Us, and to slander Us to the people, if thou be of them who are just? We departed out of Tíhrán, at the bidding of the King, and, by his leave, transferred Our residence to 'Iráq. If I had transgressed against him, why, then, did he release Me? And if I were innocent of guilt, wherefore did ye afflict Us with such tribulation as none among them that profess your faith hath suffered? Hath any of Mine acts, after Mine arrival in 'Iráq, been such as to subvert the authority of the government? Who is it that can be said to have detected any thing reprehensible in Our behavior? Enquire for thyself of its people, that thou mayest be of them who have discerned the truth.

This theme will be sounded repeatedly in the Tablets revealed by Baha'u'llah to the kings and other rulers – that He is obedient to government, and that He enjoins obedience upon His followers.

For eleven years We dwelt in that land, until the Minister representing thy government arrived, whose name Our pen is loath to mention, who was given to wine, who followed his lusts, and committed wickedness, and was corrupt and corrupted 'Iráq. To this will bear witness most of the inhabitants of Baghdád, wert thou to inquire of them, and be of such as seek the truth. He it was who wrongfully seized the substance of his fellowmen, who forsook all the commandments of God, and perpetrated whatever God had forbidden. Eventually, he, following his desires, rose up against Us, and walked in the ways of the unjust. He accused Us, in his letter to thee, and thou didst believe him and followed in his way, without seeking any proof or trustworthy evidence from him. Thou didst ask for no explanation, nor didst thou

attempt either to investigate or ascertain the matter, that the truth might be distinguished from falsehood in thy sight, and that thou mightest be clear in thy discernment. Find out for thyself the sort of man he was by asking those Ministers who were, at that time, in 'Iráq, as well as the Governor of the City (Baghdád) and its high Counselor, that the truth may be revealed to thee, and that thou mayest be of the well-informed.

Baha'u'llah again points out that He has been condemned without any evidence, and that the “sort of man” who has charged Him with wrongdoing is, on the contrary, disobedient to the law of God.

God is Our witness! We have, under no circumstances, opposed either him, or others. We observed, under all conditions, the precepts of God, and were never one of those that wrought disorders. To this he himself doth testify. His intention was to lay hold on Us, and send Us back to Persia, that he might thereby exalt his fame and reputation. Thou hast committed the same crime, and for the self-same purpose. Ye both are of equal grade in the sight of God, the sovereign Lord of all, the All-Knowing.

Baha'u'llah reiterates that He has always “observed, under all conditions, the precepts of God, and were never one of those that wrought disorders.” While Baha'u'llah attested that the laws revealed by God are for humanity and that the Manifestations are not to be judged according to those laws, He was, nevertheless, a model of the behavior He enjoined upon others.

It is not Our purpose in addressing to thee these words to lighten the burden of Our woe, or to induce thee to intercede for Us with anyone. No, by Him Who is the Lord of all worlds! We have set forth the whole matter before thee, that perchance thou might realize what thou hast done, might desist from inflicting on others the hurt thou hast inflicted on Us, and might be of them that have truly repented to God, Who created thee and created all things, and might act with discernment in the future. Better is this for thee than all thou dost possess, than thy ministry whose days are numbered.

Baha'u'llah denies seeking favor from those in authority, and insists that His intention is that in setting “forth the whole matter before thee, that perchance thou might realize what thou hast done, might desist from inflicting on others the hurt thou hast inflicted on Us, and might be of them that have truly repented to God.” His aim is that they might “act

with discernment in the future”. Baha’u’llah is the divine counselor, seeking what is best for us, not because it will bring any benefit to Him, but because He loves us and wishes us well.

Beware lest thou be led to connive at injustice. Set thy heart firmly upon justice, and alter not the Cause of God, and be of them whose eyes are directed towards the things that have been revealed in His Book. Follow not, under any condition, the promptings of thine evil desires. Keep thou the law of God, thy Lord, the Beneficent, the Ancient of Days. Thou shalt most certainly return to dust, and shalt perish like all the things in which thou takest delight. This is what the Tongue of truth and glory hath spoken. Rememberest thou not God’s warning uttered in times past, that thou mayest be of them that heed His warning? He said, and He, verily, speaketh the truth: “From it (earth) have We created you, and unto it will We return you, and out of it will We bring you forth a second time.” [Quran 20:55] This is what God ordained unto all them that dwell on earth, be they high or low. It behooveth not, therefore, him who was created from dust, who will return unto it, and will again be brought forth out of it, to swell with pride before God, and before His loved ones, to proudly scorn them, and be filled with disdainful arrogance. Nay, rather it behooveth thee and those like thee to submit yourselves to them Who are the Manifestations of the unity of God, and to defer humbly to the faithful, who have forsaken their all for the sake of God, and have detached themselves from the things which engross men’s attention, and lead them astray from the path of God, the All-Glorious, the All-Praised. Thus do We send down upon you that which shall profit you and profit them that have placed their whole trust and confidence in their Lord.

The verse which Baha’u’llah cites from the Qur’an (20:55), has been understood to indicate that after this life we return to the earth and are reincarnated. There are some Muslims who believe this to be the case. But Baha’u’llah points to the true meaning in His verses that follow -- “him who was created from dust, who will return unto it, and will again be brought forth out of it” – for the human being was made of matter, and when he dies, he will be buried and his body will return to the earth, but his soul will “be brought forth out of it” for the soul of man has eternal life. In this context, He disparages man who is a creature controlled by God for having swollen “with pride before God, and before His loved ones”, for being “filled with disdainful arrogance.”

Hearken, O King (Sulṭān ‘Abdu’l-‘Azíz), to the speech of Him that speaketh the truth, Him that doth not ask thee to recompense Him with the things God hath chosen to bestow upon thee, Him Who unerringly treadeth the straight Path. He it is Who summoneth thee unto God, thy Lord, Who showeth thee the right course, the way that leadeth to true felicity, that haply thou mayest be of them with whom it shall be well. Beware, O King, that thou gather not around thee such ministers as follow the desires of a corrupt inclination, as have cast behind their backs that which hath been committed into their hands and manifestly betrayed their trust. Be bounteous to others as God hath been bounteous to thee, and abandon not the interests of thy people to the mercy of such ministers as these. Lay not aside the fear of God, and be thou of them that act uprightly. Gather around thee those ministers from whom thou canst perceive the fragrance of faith and of justice, and take thou counsel with them, and choose whatever is best in thy sight, and be of them that act generously.

Baha’u’llah gives counsel directly to the Sultan, assuring him that He is not asking for any temporal “recompense”, that His only purpose is to summon him “unto God, thy Lord, Who showeth thee the right course, the way that leadeth to true felicity, that haply thou mayest be of them with whom it shall be well.”

Know thou for a certainty that whoso disbelieveth in God is neither trustworthy nor truthful. This, indeed, is the truth, the undoubted truth. He that acteth treacherously towards God will, also, act treacherously towards his king. Nothing whatever can deter such a man from evil, nothing can hinder him from betraying his neighbor, nothing can induce him to walk uprightly.

Advising the Sultan about his choice of “ministers”, He cautions him to choose those who believe in God and are obedient to His commandments. Why is this? “He that acteth treacherously towards God will, also, act treacherously towards his king.” The logic is inescapable. In a similar vein, in the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, Baha’u’llah writes: “He Who is the Spirit (Jesus)—may peace be upon Him—was asked: “O Spirit of God! Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not?” And He made reply: “Yea, render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s.” He forbade it not. These two sayings are, in the estimation of men of insight, one and the same, for if that which

belonged to Caesar had not come from God, He would have forbidden it. And likewise in the sacred verse: "Obey God and obey the Apostle, and those among you invested with authority." By "those invested with authority" is meant primarily and more especially the Imáms—the blessings of God rest upon them! They, verily, are the manifestations of the power of God, and the sources of His authority, and the repositories of His knowledge, and the daysprings of His commandments. Secondly these words refer unto the kings and rulers—those through the brightness of whose justice the horizons of the world are resplendent and luminous. We fain would hope that His Majesty the Sháh will shine forth with a light of justice whose radiance will envelop all the kindreds of the earth. It is incumbent upon every one to beseech the one true God on his behalf for that which is meet and seemly in this day." By citing Jesus, Baha'u'llah is not only affirming the authenticity and truth of this saying, and of the gospels in general, but also that in His revelation the revelations of the past are confirmed and treated as foundations for His own followers and for all of humanity. Both of these sayings -- "He that acteth treacherously towards God will, also, act treacherously towards his king" and "Yea, render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." He forbade it not. These two sayings are, in the estimation of men of insight, one and the same, for if that which belonged to Caesar had not come from God, He would have forbidden it" -- affirm the principle that the way we regard and treat God is the way we will regard and treat the king, the temporal ruler. The two are complementary, not separate. The very foundation of the state is established in obedience to the law of God.

Take heed that thou resign not the reins of the affairs of thy state into the hands of others, and repose not thy confidence in ministers unworthy of thy trust, and be not of them that live in heedlessness. Shun them whose hearts are turned away from thee, and place not thy confidence in them, and entrust them not with thine affairs and the affairs of such as profess thy faith. Beware that thou allow not the wolf to become the shepherd of God's flock, and surrender not the fate of His loved ones to the mercy of the malicious. Expect not that they who violate the ordinances of God will be trustworthy or sincere in the faith they profess. Avoid them, and preserve strict guard over thyself, lest their devices and mischief hurt thee. Turn away from them, and fix thy gaze upon God, thy Lord, the All-Glorious, the Most Bountiful. He that giveth up himself wholly to God, God shall, assuredly, be with him; and he that placeth his complete trust in God, God shall, verily, protect him from whatsoever may harm him, and shield him from the wickedness of every evil plotter.

*Baha'u'llah enjoins all kings and other rulers to trust in God first, and to weigh every decision in that light of His revelation, and to “**resign not the reins of the affairs of thy state into the hands of others**”. This is a message not only to monarchies but also to representative governments, for surely the rulers elected by the people must also follow this principle, for “**he that placeth his complete trust in God, God shall, verily, protect him from whatsoever may harm him, and shield him from the wickedness of every evil plotter.**”*

Wert thou to incline thine ear unto My speech and observe My counsel, God would exalt thee to so eminent a position that the designs of no man on the whole earth can ever touch or hurt thee. Observe, O King, with thine inmost heart and with thy whole being, the precepts of God, and walk not in the paths of the oppressor. Seize thou, and hold firmly within the grasp of thy might, the reins of the affairs of thy people, and examine in person whatever pertaineth unto them. Let nothing escape thee, for therein lieth the highest good.

*The king must follow, with his “**inmost heart and with thy whole being, the precepts of God**” and then “**hold firmly within the grasp of thy might, the reins of the affairs of thy people...let nothing escape thee, for therein lieth the highest good.**” When Baha'u'llah spoke approvingly of kings that would appear in the future, this is the standard He set for them. They were to be entirely dedicated to whatsoever was revealed in His Book, and to “**hold firmly within the grasp of thy might, the reins of the affairs of thy people**”. The same was required of the members of the Houses of Justice, at all levels. This principle is not only theocratic, it is rooted in the divine commandments. Even as Muslim governments were intended to follow and enforce the shari'ah, so Baha'i governments were required to follow and enforce the Baha'i laws, those revealed by Baha'u'llah, and those enacted by the House of Justice.*

Render thanks unto God for having chosen thee out of the whole world, and made thee king over them that profess thy faith. It well beseemeth thee to appreciate the wondrous favors with which God hath favored thee, and to magnify continually His name. Thou canst best praise Him if thou lovest His loved ones, and dost safeguard and protect His servants from the mischief of the treacherous, that none may any longer oppress them. Thou shouldst, moreover, arise to enforce the law of God amongst them, that thou mayest be of those who are firmly established in His law.

The just king will love “His loved ones”, that is, the followers of Baha’u’llah, and will “enforce the law of God amongst them”.

Shouldst thou cause rivers of justice to spread their waters amongst thy subjects, God would surely aid thee with the hosts of the unseen and of the seen, and would strengthen thee in thine affairs. No God is there but Him. All creation and its empire are His. Unto Him return the works of the faithful.

Even as Baha’u’llah promised that the men of the Houses of Justice would be inspired by the Holy Spirit, here Baha’u’llah assures the monarch that “God would surely aid thee with the hosts of the unseen and of the seen, and would strengthen thee in thine affairs.”

Place not thy reliance on thy treasures. Put thy whole confidence in the grace of God, thy Lord. Let Him be thy trust in whatever thou doest, and be of them that have submitted themselves to His Will. Let Him be thy helper and enrich thyself with His treasures, for with Him are the treasures of the heavens and of the earth. He bestoweth them upon whom He will, and from whom He will He withholdeth them. There is none other God but Him, the All-Possessing, the All-Praised. All are but paupers at the door of His mercy; all are helpless before the revelation of His sovereignty, and beseech His favors.

*These words of counsel to the Sultan are remarkably similar to those of Jesus addressed to His followers, two thousand years prior: “**19**Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: **20**But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: **21**For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also...**24**No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” (Matthew, chapter 6)*

Overstep not the bounds of moderation, and deal justly with them that serve thee. Bestow upon them according to their needs, and not to the extent that will enable them to lay up riches for themselves, to deck their persons, to embellish their homes, to acquire the things that are of no benefit unto them, and to be numbered with the

extravagant. Deal with them with undeviating justice, so that none among them may either suffer want, or be pampered with luxuries. This is but manifest justice.

Baha'u'llah has a very parsimonious and frugal take on what human beings actually need in this world, similar to that of the Greek Stoics, the Jewish Kabbalists and the Christian hermits and monastics. His vision of “undeviating justice”, which is that no one should “either suffer want, or be pampered with luxuries” goes against the consumerist culture of our contemporaries. It might well be considered by most of them to be Puritan and entirely retrograde, a relic from the past. But what if He is right? What if we don't need much to be comfortable and happy in this world, and that our attention should be directed to preparing for our eternity out of this world?

Allow not the abject to rule over and dominate them who are noble and worthy of honor, and suffer not the high-minded to be at the mercy of the contemptible and worthless, for this is what We observed upon Our arrival in the City (Constantinople), and to it We bear witness. We found among its inhabitants some who were possessed of an affluent fortune and lived in the midst of excessive riches, while others were in dire want and abject poverty. This ill beseemeth thy sovereignty, and is unworthy of thy rank.

This advocacy for redressing the balance between the “affluent” and the “abject” was articulated in many of the talks given by ‘Abdu’l-Baha in North America, and it was understood as calling for a socialist or communist society by many people. This is because North Americans have generally believed that they had every right to acquire unlimited wealth and no obligation to help those in poverty. The alleviation of poverty was the job of the religious institutions, and there was a strict separation of Church and State. Hence, the redress of this balance could only happen if it were to be forced upon the wealthy. Whether forced or undertaken voluntarily, Baha'u'llah says to the Sultan that this disparity “ill beseemeth thy sovereignty, and is unworthy of thy rank”. It is the monarch's responsibility to provide for everyone, not just for those who are already rich. In some of their Writings, Baha'u'llah and ‘Abdu’l-Baha have encouraged the rich to voluntarily aid the poor, however this is not the whole story. They established the principle that the state must also contribute to the support of those who are the most vulnerable, with the revival of the Qur'anic zakat and the establishment of the Huququ'llah by Baha'u'llah, and the recommendation of the village storehouse by ‘Abdu’l-Baha.

Let My counsel be acceptable to thee, and strive thou to rule with equity among men, that God may exalt thy name and spread abroad the fame of thy justice in all the world. Beware lest thou aggrandize thy ministers at the expense of thy subjects. Fear the sighs of the poor and of the upright in heart who, at every break of day, bewail their plight, and be unto them a benignant sovereign. They, verily, are thy treasures on earth. It behooveth thee, therefore, to safeguard thy treasures from the assaults of them who wish to rob thee. Inquire into their affairs, and ascertain, every year, nay every month, their condition, and be not of them that are careless of their duty.

The Sultan is called upon to recognize that the poor “are thy treasures on earth”, not the rich, who “wish to rob thee”.

Set before thine eyes God’s unerring Balance and, as one standing in His Presence, weigh in that Balance thine actions every day, every moment of thy life. Bring thyself to account ere thou art summoned to a reckoning, on the Day when no man shall have strength to stand for fear of God, the Day when the hearts of the heedless ones shall be made to tremble.

What is “God’s unerring Balance”? It is the Will of God, revealed in the Book. And, as Baha’u’llah has demonstrated, that Will is that equity and justice prevail, which is moderation, the middle way, neither the extreme of wealth nor the extreme of poverty.

It behooveth every king to be as bountiful as the sun, which fostereth the growth of all beings, and giveth to each its due, whose benefits are not inherent in itself, but are ordained by Him Who is the Most Powerful, the Almighty. The King should be as generous, as liberal in his mercy as the clouds, the outpourings of whose bounty are showered upon every land, by the behest of Him Who is the Supreme Ordainer, the All-Knowing.

It is not enough for the king to be just, to be equitable. He must also “be as generous, as liberal in his mercy as the clouds”, which rain down upon the earth.

Have a care not to entrust thine affairs of state entirely into another’s hands. None can discharge thy functions better than thine own self. Thus do We make clear unto thee Our words of wisdom, and send down upon thee that which can enable thee to pass

over from the left hand of oppression to the right hand of justice, and approach the resplendent ocean of His favors. Such is the path which the kings that were before thee have trodden, they that acted equitably towards their subjects, and walked in the ways of undeviating justice.

For the second time He calls upon the king “not to entrust thine affairs of state entirely into another’s hands”. It is not possible to act “equitably” and with “undeviating justice” without assuming responsibility for the care of one’s subjects.

Thou art God’s shadow on earth. Strive, therefore, to act in such a manner as befitteth so eminent, so august a station. If thou dost depart from following the things We have caused to descend upon thee and taught thee, thou wilt, assuredly, be derogating from that great and priceless honor. Return, then, and cleave wholly unto God, and cleanse thine heart from the world and all its vanities, and suffer not the love of any stranger to enter and dwell therein. Not until thou dost purify thine heart from every trace of such love can the brightness of the light of God shed its radiance upon it, for to none hath God given more than one heart. This, verily, hath been decreed and written down in His ancient Book. And as the human heart, as fashioned by God, is one and undivided, it behooveth thee to take heed that its affections be, also, one and undivided. Cleave thou, therefore, with the whole affection of thine heart, unto His love, and withdraw it from the love of anyone besides Him, that He may aid thee to immerse thyself in the ocean of His unity, and enable thee to become a true upholder of His oneness. God is My witness. My sole purpose in revealing to thee these words is to sanctify thee from the transitory things of the earth, and aid thee to enter the realm of everlasting glory, that thou mayest, by the leave of God, be of them that abide and rule therein....

Baha’u’llah here discusses the affective domain in relation to governance, wherein the monarch is enjoined to “cleave wholly unto God, and cleanse thy heart from the world and of its vanities, and suffer not the love of any stranger to enter and dwell therein.”

I swear by God, O King! It is not My wish to make My plaint to thee against them that persecute Me. I only plead My grief and My sorrow to God, Who hath created Me and them, Who well knoweth our state and Who watcheth over all things. My wish is to

warn them of the consequences of their actions, if perchance they might desist from treating others as they have treated Me, and be of them that heed My warning.

Baha'u'llah assures the Sultan that His purpose is to “warn them” who do evil so that “perchance they might desist from treating others as they have treated Me”.

The tribulations that have touched Us, the destitution from which We suffer, the various troubles with which We are encompassed, shall all pass away, as shall pass away the pleasures in which they delight and the affluence they enjoy. This is the truth which no man on earth can reject. The days in which We have been compelled to dwell in the dust will soon be ended, as will the days in which they occupied the seats of honor. God shall, assuredly, judge with truth between Us and them, and He, verily, is the best of judges.

Baha'u'llah avows absolute confidence that the Will of God will prevail, that “God shall, assuredly, judge with truth between Us and them, and He, verily, is the best of judges.” For those who believe in God, who constitute between 72% and 83% of the world’s population, this is good news. Why then have believers “been compelled to dwell in the dust”, when it is a minority which is in the ascendancy? The reason is that those who believe in God are divided into thousands of competing or non-cooperative parties. If they were to join forces, they would rule. Hence Baha'u'llah’s summons to the followers of all religions, to embrace the one Cause of the unity of God, of religion and of humanity. However, the believers have rejected this call and remain divided. They bewail their incapacity to implement the teachings of each of their religions, but they will not seek the one means whereby they can achieve their cherished objectives. How can this be achieved? Baha'u'llah does not state exactly how “the various troubles with which We are encompassed, shall all pass away”, but He has indicated that it will only occur after the nations will have realized that war will not lead to progress, that the competition between rival religions will not lead to progress, and that one religion must be chosen. And He assures us that this will take place.

We render thanks unto God for whatsoever hath befallen Us, and We patiently endure the things He hath ordained in the past or will ordain in the future. In Him have I placed My trust; and into His hands have I committed My Cause. He will, certainly, repay all them that endure with patience and put their confidence in Him. His is the creation and its empire. He exalteth whom He will, and whom He will He doth abase. He shall not be asked of His doings. He, verily, is the All-Glorious, the Almighty.

*Rather than complain about “**whatsoever hath befallen Us**”, Baha’u’llah declares “**In Him have I placed My trust; and into His hands have I committed My Cause.**” He invites all of humanity, beginning with His followers to do the same.*

Let thine ear be attentive, O King, to the words We have addressed to thee. Let the oppressor desist from his tyranny, and cut off the perpetrators of injustice from among them that profess thy faith. By the righteousness of God! The tribulations We have sustained are such that any pen that recounteth them cannot but be overwhelmed with anguish. No one of them that truly believe and uphold the unity of God can bear the burden of their recital. So great have been Our sufferings that even the eyes of Our enemies have wept over Us, and beyond them those of every discerning person. And to all these trials have We been subjected, in spite of Our action in approaching thee, and in bidding the people to enter beneath thy shadow, that thou mightest be a stronghold unto them that believe in and uphold the unity of God.

*Notwithstanding His sufferings, Baha’u’llah has bidden “**the people to enter beneath thy shadow, that thou mayest be a stronghold unto them that believe in and uphold the unity of God.**” It is in obedience to those in authority that these rulers of men can become “**a stronghold**”, for opposing them does not bring us any closer to “**the unity of God.**”*

Have I, O King, ever disobeyed thee? Have I, at any time, transgressed any of thy laws? Can any of thy ministers that represented thee in ‘Irâq produce any proof that can establish My disloyalty to thee? No, by Him Who is the Lord of all worlds! Not for one short moment did We rebel against thee, or against any of thy ministers. Never, God willing, shall We revolt against thee, though We be exposed to trials more severe than any We suffered in the past.

*To the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, Baha’u’llah pleads His obedience, His adherence to the laws of the State, His loyalty. And He states “**Never, God willing, shall We revolt against thee, though We be exposed to trials more severe than any We suffered in the past.**” Baha’u’llah’s way is the way of non-violence, of non-resistance, and thereby His teaching contrasts with the prevailing notions of justice in the world.*

In the day time and in the night season, at even and at morn, We pray to God on thy behalf, that He may graciously aid thee to be obedient unto Him and to observe His

commandment, that He may shield thee from the hosts of the evil ones. Do, therefore, as it pleaseth thee, and treat Us as befitteth thy station and beseemeth thy sovereignty. Be not forgetful of the law of God in whatever thou desirest to achieve, now or in the days to come. Say: Praise be to God, the Lord of all worlds!

Such is the generosity of spirit of Baha'u'llah that He, the Supreme Manifestation, prays to God on behalf of the Sultan, “that He may graciously aid thee to be obedient unto Him and observe His commandment” and that “He may shield thee from the hosts of the evil ones.”