

GLEANINGS

#15

Introduction

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

The first is...

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

In other words, you don't need an academic degree 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.

FIFTEENTH SESSION'S SELECTIONS (CXXIX-CXXXVII)

The nine excerpts from the Writings of Baha'u'llah found in this session begin with a citation from the Suratu'l-Bayan, in Arabic, which addresses a number of topics (CXXIX); the second passage is from a Tablet to Badi'u'llah, son of Baha'u'llah, in Arabic, which cites a collection of moral admonitions reminiscent of the Sermon on the Mount and Sermon on the Plain of Jesus and the anonymous Desiderata (CXXX); the third passage was addressed to 'Ali Akbar in Persian, refers to the transformative power of righteous deeds in this Day (CXXXI); the fourth passage is from the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, and it states that religion was never intended to "foster the feelings of animosity among men", a principle that 'Abdu'l-Baha spoke about frequently during His sojourn in Europe and North America (CXXXII); the fifth passage is from a Tablet to Shaykh Salman, in Persian, calls upon all of humanity to observe "the ordinances of God" which "have been sent down from the heaven of His most august Revelation" (CXXXIII); the sixth passage, in Persian, speaks of the "recognition of Him Who is the Eternal Truth" as the "first and foremost duty prescribed unto men", a theme that is also found in the opening passage of the Kitab-i-Aqdas (CXXXIV); the seventh passage is addressed to Muhammad Baqir, a Letter of the Living appointed by the Bab, who recognized Baha'u'llah as the promised one of the Bab, called "Him Whom God shall make manifest" in the Bayan-i-Farsi (CXXXV); the eighth passage is addressed to Haji Muhammad Ibrahim-i-Qazvini, also called Khalil, summoning him to observe the highest standard of behavior, to teach the Faith (CXXXVI); the ninth passage, in Persian, describes the purposes for which God has sent forth His Prophets (CXXXVII).

- CXXIX -

O wayfarer in the path of God! Take thou thy portion of the ocean of His grace, and deprive not thyself of the things that lie hidden in its depths. Be thou of them that have partaken of its treasures. A dewdrop out of this ocean would, if shed upon all that are in the heavens and on the earth, suffice to enrich them with the bounty of God, the

Almighty, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. With the hands of renunciation draw forth from its life-giving waters, and sprinkle therewith all created things, that they may be cleansed from all man-made limitations and may approach the mighty seat of God, this hallowed and resplendent Spot.

Baha'u'llah calls upon His follower to “take thou thy portion of the ocean of His grace”, that “all created things...may be cleansed from all man-made limitations and may approach the mighty seat of God”.

Be not grieved if thou performest it thyself alone. Let God be all-sufficient for thee. Commune intimately with His Spirit, and be thou of the thankful. Proclaim the Cause of thy Lord unto all who are in the heavens and on the earth. Should any man respond to thy call, lay bare before him the pearls of the wisdom of the Lord, thy God, which His Spirit hath sent down unto thee, and be thou of them that truly believe. And should anyone reject thine offer, turn thou away from him, and put thy trust and confidence in the Lord, thy God, the Lord of all worlds.

This is one of the many texts in which Baha'u'llah encourages the believer to take action on his own and without requiring the approval of others – “Be not grieved if thou performest it thyself alone.”

By the righteousness of God! Whoso openeth his lips in this Day and maketh mention of the name of his Lord, the hosts of Divine inspiration shall descend upon him from the heaven of My name, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. On him shall also descend the Concourse on high, each bearing aloft a chalice of pure light. Thus hath it been foreordained in the realm of God's Revelation, by the behest of Him Who is the All-Glorious, the Most Powerful.

One of the many assurances in passages that the Guardian included in Gleanings which call upon the believer to teach the Faith and assure him that “Whoso openeth his lips in this Day and maketh mention of the name of his Lord, the hosts of Divine inspiration shall descend upon him from the heaven of My Name...” and “On him shall also descend the Concourse on high...” This recalls the promises of Jesus, that in His return He the Son of man coming in the glory of the Father would come with “the hosts of Divine inspiration” and “the Concourse on high”, the Lord of hosts, the Father with His angels.

There lay concealed within the Holy Veil, and prepared for the service of God, a company of His chosen ones who shall be manifested unto men, who shall aid His Cause, who shall be afraid of no one, though the entire human race rise up and war against them. These are the ones who, before the gaze of the dwellers on earth and the denizens of heaven, shall arise and, shouting aloud, acclaim the name of the Almighty, and summon the children of men to the path of God, the All-Glorious, the All-Praised. Walk thou in their way, and let no one dismay thee. Be of them whom the tumult of the world, however much it may agitate them in the path of their Creator, can never sadden, whose purpose the blame of the blamer will never defeat.

Baha'u'llah predicts that “a company of His chosen ones...shall be manifested unto men”, a promise that the Guardian cited among the many quotations from Baha'u'llah included in The Advent of Divine Justice, a letter addressed to the North American Baha'is. These souls will be great teachers of the Faith.

Go forth with the Tablet of God and His signs, and rejoin them that have believed in Me, and announce unto them tidings of Our most holy Paradise. Warn, then, those that have joined partners with Him. Say: I am come to you, O people, from the Throne of glory, and bear you an announcement from God, the Most Powerful, the Most Exalted, the Most Great. 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.

Baha'u'llah summons His followers to “rejoin them that have believed in Me”, that is, to teach believers in God. Those believers can and must “weigh” His revelation “with the just Balance that ye possess, the Balance of the testimony of the Prophets and Messengers of God.” God has given them the means to discern truth from falsehood in the Books revealed by previous Prophets.

Say: This is the sealed and mystic Scroll, the repository of God's irrevocable Decree, bearing the words which the Finger of Holiness hath traced, that lay wrapt within the veil of impenetrable mystery, and hath now been sent down as a token of the grace of Him Who is the Almighty, the Ancient of Days. In it have We decreed the destinies of all the dwellers of the earth and the denizens of heaven, and written down the knowledge of all things from first to last. Nothing whatsoever can escape or frustrate Him, whether created in the past or to be created in the future, could ye but perceive it.

Baha'u'llah assures His reader that "Nothing whatsoever can escape or frustrate Him, whether created in the past or to be created in the future". It is this assurance that inspires the Baha'is to have confidence that, notwithstanding the multiple betrayals that have beset the Babis and Baha'is, the Cause of God will triumph.

Say: The Revelation sent down by God hath most surely been repeated, and the outstretched Hand of Our power hath overshadowed all that are in the heavens and all that are on the earth. We have, through the power of truth, the very truth, manifested an infinitesimal glimmer of Our impenetrable Mystery, and lo, they that have recognized the radiance of the Sinaitic splendor expired, as they caught a lightening glimpse of this Crimson Light enveloping the Sinai of Our Revelation. Thus hath He Who is the Beauty of the All-Merciful come down in the clouds of His testimony, and the decree been accomplished by virtue of the Will of God, the All-Glorious, the All-Wise.

Baha'u'llah explains that in His Revelation, previous Revelations have "surely been repeated" and "hath overshadowed all that are in the heavens and all that are on the earth."

Say: Step out of Thy holy chamber, O Maid of Heaven, inmate of the Exalted Paradise! Drape thyself in whatever manner pleaseth Thee in the silken Vesture of Immortality, and put on, in the name of the All-Glorious, the broidered Robe of Light. Hear, then, the sweet, the wondrous accent of the Voice that cometh from the Throne of Thy Lord, the Inaccessible, the Most High. Unveil Thy face, and manifest the beauty of the black-eyed Damsel, and suffer not the servants of God to be deprived of the light of Thy shining countenance. Grieve not if Thou hearest the sighs of the dwellers of the earth, or the voice of the lamentation of the denizens of heaven. Leave them to perish on the dust of extinction. Let them be reduced to nothingness, inasmuch as the flame of hatred hath been kindled within their breasts. Intone, then, before the face of the peoples of earth

and heaven, and in a most melodious voice, the anthem of praise, for a remembrance of Him Who is the King of the names and attributes of God. Thus have We decreed Thy destiny. Well able are We to achieve Our purpose.

Baha'u'llah calls His Holy Spirit, the “Maid of Heaven” and “the black-eyed Damsel”, recalling His statement in another Tablet that the supreme sign of the coming of age of humanity which He proclaims in His Revelation is the “sister of prophethood”. He calls upon His believer to “intone...before the peoples of earth and heaven, and in a most melodious voice, the anthem of praise”, reiterating the passage in His Tablet to Khalil (CXXXVI).

Beware that Thou divest not Thyself, Thou Who art the Essence of Purity, of Thy robe of effulgent glory. Nay, enrich Thyself increasingly, in the kingdom of creation, with the incorruptible vestures of Thy God, that the beauteous image of the Almighty may be reflected through Thee in all created things and the grace of Thy Lord be infused in the plenitude of its power into the entire creation.

This passage is addressed to the “Maid of Heaven”.

If Thou smellest from anyone the smell of the love of Thy Lord, offer up Thyself for him, for We have created Thee to this end, and have covenanted with Thee, from time immemorial, and in the presence of the congregation of Our well-favored ones, for this very purpose. Be not impatient if the blind in heart hurl down the shafts of their idle fancies upon Thee. Leave them to themselves, for they follow the promptings of the evil ones.

This passage is also addressed to the “Maid of Heaven”.

Cry out before the gaze of the dwellers of heaven and of earth: I am the Maid of Heaven, the Offspring begotten by the Spirit of Bahá. My habitation is the Mansion of His Name, the All-Glorious. Before the Concourse on high I was adorned with the ornament of His names. I was wrapt within the veil of an inviolable security, and lay hidden from the eyes of men. Methinks that I heard a Voice of divine and incomparable sweetness, proceeding from the right hand of the God of Mercy, and lo, the whole Paradise stirred and trembled before Me, in its longing to hear its accents, and gaze on the beauty of Him that uttered

them. Thus have We revealed in this luminous Tablet, and in the sweetest of languages, the verses which the Tongue of Eternity was moved to utter in the Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'.

The "Maid of Heaven" is to proclaim the sublime "sovereignty" of the promised one alluded to in the Qayyumu'l-Asma'.

Say: He ordaineth as He pleaseth, by virtue of His sovereignty, and doeth whatsoever He willeth at His own behest. He shall not be asked of the things it pleaseth Him to ordain. He, in truth, is the Unrestrained, the All-Powerful, the All-Wise.

The Manifestation of God is independent of human judgment and represents God Himself to His creation, including humanity.

They that have disbelieved in God and rebelled against His sovereignty are the helpless victims of their corrupt inclinations and desires. These shall return to their abode in the fire of hell: wretched is the abode of the deniers!

Baha'u'llah states that those who have rejected Him "are the helpless victims of their corrupt inclinations and desires" and that "their abode" is "in the fire of hell".

- CXXX -

Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity. Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbor, and look upon him with a bright and friendly face. Be a treasure to the poor, an admonisher to the rich, an answerer of the cry of the needy, a preserver of the sanctity of thy pledge. Be fair in thy judgment, and guarded in thy speech. Be unjust to no man, and show all meekness to all men. Be as a lamp unto them that walk in darkness, a joy to the sorrowful, a sea for the thirsty, a haven for the distressed, an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression. Let integrity and uprightness distinguish all thine acts. Be a home for the stranger, a balm to the suffering, a tower of strength for the fugitive. Be eyes to the blind, and a guiding light unto the feet of the erring. Be an ornament to the countenance of truth, a crown to the brow of fidelity, a pillar of the temple of righteousness, a breath of life to the body of mankind, an ensign of the hosts of justice, a luminary above the horizon of virtue, a dew to the soil of the human heart, an ark on the ocean of knowledge, a sun in the heaven of bounty, a gem on the diadem

of wisdom, a shining light in the firmament of thy generation, a fruit upon the tree of humility.

Baha'u'llah pens verses in this Tablet which are repeated in the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, and which resemble, in their brevity and scope, the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount recorded in the Gospel of Matthew.

- CXXXI -

The Pen of the Ancient King hath never ceased to remember the loved ones of God. At one time, rivers of mercy have streamed from His Pen, at another, through its movement, God's perspicuous Book hath been revealed. He is the One to Whom none can compare, Whose utterance mortal man can never rival. He it is Who from everlasting hath been established upon the seat of ascendancy and might, He from Whose lips have gone out counsels that can satisfy the needs of the whole of mankind, and admonitions that can profit them.

Baha'u'llah has asserted in many passages of His Writings, including this passage that the revealed words of the Manifestations of God cannot, in any way, be compared to the words of mortal men. Muhammad and the Bab, as well as Baha'u'llah, asserted that the first and foremost proof of the Manifestation, apart from Himself, are the verses that He has revealed.

The One true God beareth Me witness, and His creatures will testify, that not for a moment did I allow Myself to be hidden from the eyes of men, nor did I consent to shield My person from their injury. Before the face of all men I have arisen, and bidden them fulfill My pleasure. My object is none other than the betterment of the world and the tranquillity of its peoples. The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established. This unity can never be achieved so long as the counsels which the Pen of the Most High hath revealed are suffered to pass unheeded.

Baha'u'llah insists that He has never allowed Himself "to be hidden from the eyes of men" nor did He "consent to shield My person from their injury". He then sets forth the terms whereby humanity can achieve its "well-being...its peace and security". There is no other way for us to attain this end.

Through the power of the words He hath uttered the whole of the human race can be illumined with the light of unity, and the remembrance of His Name is able to set on fire the hearts of all men, and burn away the veils that intervene between them and His glory. One righteous act is endowed with a potency that can so elevate the dust as to cause it to pass beyond the heaven of heavens. It can tear every bond asunder, and hath the power to restore the force that hath spent itself and vanished....

His words and our actions are endowed with incalculable potency.

Be pure, O people of God, be pure; be righteous, be righteous.... Say: O people of God! That which can ensure the victory of Him Who is the Eternal Truth, His hosts and helpers on earth, have been set down in the sacred Books and Scriptures, and are as clear and manifest as the sun. These hosts are such righteous deeds, such conduct and character, as are acceptable in His sight. Whoso ariseth, in this Day, to aid Our Cause, and summoneth to his assistance the hosts of a praiseworthy character and upright conduct, the influence flowing from such an action will, most certainly, be diffused throughout the whole world.

Baha'u'llah enjoins His followers to “be pure...be righteous” and to manifest “righteous deeds, such conduct and character, as are acceptable in His sight”, assuring them that with “the assistance...of a praiseworthy character and upright conduct, the influence flowing from such an action will, most certainly, be diffused throughout the world.” These deeds will have global impact, not be limited in their influence to the people with whom they come into contact.

- CXXXII -

The Purpose of the one true God, exalted be His glory, in revealing Himself unto men is to lay bare those gems that lie hidden within the mine of their true and inmost selves.... That the divers communions of the earth, and the manifold systems of religious belief, should never be allowed to foster the feelings of animosity among men, is, in this Day, of the essence of the Faith of God and His Religion. These principles and laws, these firmly established and mighty systems, have proceeded from one Source, and are the rays of one Light. That they differ one from another is to be attributed to the varying requirements of the ages in which they were promulgated.

Baha'u'llah proclaims the unity of religion, for all religions “have proceeded from one Source, and are the rays of one Light”. He also proclaims progressive revelation, explaining that the differences of these religions are “to be attributed to the varying requirements of the ages in which they were promulgated.”

Gird up the loins of your endeavor, O people of Bahá, that haply the tumult of religious dissension and strife that agitateth the peoples of the earth may be stilled, that every trace of it may be completely obliterated. For the love of God, and them that serve Him, arise to aid this most sublime and momentous Revelation. Religious fanaticism and hatred are a world-devouring fire, whose violence none can quench. The Hand of Divine power can, alone, deliver mankind from this desolating affliction....

Baha'u'llah calls upon His followers to “aid this most sublime and momentous Revelation” so that “the tumult of religious dissension and strife” and “religious fanaticism and hatred” may be overcome.

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

This is perhaps the most important passage of Baha'u'llah's Writings, inasmuch as it refers to the behavior that He calls “the light of unity” and indicates that it is able to “illuminate the whole earth.”

Exert yourselves that ye may attain this transcendent and most sublime station, the station that can ensure the protection and security of all mankind. This goal excelleth every other goal, and this aspiration is the monarch of all aspirations. So long, however, as the thick clouds of oppression, which obscure the daystar of justice, remain undispersed, it would be difficult for the glory of this station to be unveiled to men's eyes....

This “transcendent and most sublime station” is not a recognition or avowal of a truth, no matter how exalted, but achieved in deeds...as cited in the previous passage, “deal ye one with another with the utmost love and harmony, with friendliness and fellowship.”

Consort with all men, O people of Bahá, in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship. If ye be aware of a certain truth, if ye possess a jewel, of which others are deprived, share it with them in a language of utmost kindliness and goodwill. If it be accepted, if it fulfill its purpose, your object is attained. If anyone should refuse it, leave him unto himself, and beseech God to guide him. Beware lest ye deal unkindly with him. A kindly tongue is the lodestone of the hearts of men. It is the bread of the spirit, it clotheth the words with meaning, it is the fountain of the light of wisdom and understanding....

As with the previous citations from this passage, this one speaks of actions, of speaking “in a language of utmost kindliness and goodwill”, to speak with “a kindly tongue”, calling this kindliness of speech “the bread of the spirit” and indicating that “it clotheth the words with meaning”. The importance of deeds of kindness cannot be overemphasized.

– CXXXIII –

The ordinances of God have been sent down from the heaven of His most august Revelation. All must diligently observe them. Man’s supreme distinction, his real advancement, his final victory, have always depended, and will continue to depend, upon them. Whoso keepeth the commandments of God shall attain everlasting felicity.

In some of His Writings, Baha’u’llah begins with an affirmation that the first duty of mankind is to recognize the Manifestation, and thereafter to observe the commandments He has revealed. In this passage He indicates that these commandments are for all of humanity, not just those who believe in the Manifestation.

A twofold obligation resteth upon him who hath recognized the Dayspring of the Unity of God, and acknowledged the truth of Him Who is the Manifestation of His oneness. The first is steadfastness in His love, such steadfastness that neither the clamor of the enemy nor the claims of the idle pretender can deter him from cleaving unto Him Who is the Eternal Truth, a steadfastness that taketh no account of them whatever. The second is strict observance of the laws He hath prescribed—laws which He hath always

ordained, and will continue to ordain, unto men, and through which the truth may be distinguished and separated from falsehood.

This passage affirms that every one “who hath recognized the Dayspring of the Unity of God” must be steadfast “in His love” and must observe “strict observance of the laws He hath prescribed”. In the Kitab-i-Aqdas, Baha’u’llah asserted the same truths, referring to the first as “observe My commandments for the love of My Beauty” and the latter “to observe every ordinance of Him Who is the Desire of the world”. Since these words have followed those of the previous verse, which call upon all of humanity to observe the divine commandments, this appears to be an instruction to believers in particular, reminding them that having recognized the Manifestation of God, they are called to follow His commandments. This may be addressed to those believers who, like certain mystics of all religions, may have supposed that because they had attained to special knowledge they were not bound by laws.

- CXXXIV -

The first and foremost duty prescribed unto men, next to the recognition of Him Who is the Eternal Truth, is the duty of steadfastness in His Cause. Cleave thou unto it, and be of them whose minds are firmly fixed and grounded in God. No act, however meritorious, did or can ever compare unto it. It is the king of all acts, and to this thy Lord, the All-Highest, the Most Powerful, will testify....

When Baha’u’llah refers to “the duty of steadfastness in His Cause”, inasmuch as He has already stated “next to the recognition of Him Who is the Eternal Truth”, He is referring to observance of His commandments, for “no act, however meritorious, did or can ever compare unto it.”

The virtues and attributes pertaining unto God are all evident and manifest, and have been mentioned and described in all the heavenly Books. Among them are trustworthiness, truthfulness, purity of heart while communing with God, forbearance, resignation to whatever the Almighty hath decreed, contentment with the things His Will hath provided, patience, nay, thankfulness in the midst of tribulation, and complete reliance, in all circumstances, upon Him. These rank, according to the estimate of God, among the highest and most laudable of all acts. All other acts are, and will ever remain, secondary and subordinate unto them....

As Baha'u'llah stated in Kitab-i-Iqan, the “virtues and attributes pertaining unto God are all evident and manifest” as the signs of God are reflected in all created things. This passage, however, refers to the manifestation of these attributes of God in His followers, and He ranks them as “among the highest and most laudable of all acts.”

The spirit that animateth the human heart is the knowledge of God, and its truest adorning is the recognition of the truth that “He doeth whatsoever He willeth, and ordaineth that which He pleaseth.” Its raiment is the fear of God, and its perfection steadfastness in His Faith. Thus God instructeth whosoever seeketh Him. He, verily, loveth the one that turneth towards Him. There is none other God but Him, the Forgiving, the Most Bountiful. All praise be to God, the Lord of all worlds.

In this passage Baha'u'llah reiterates “steadfastness in His Faith”, which is obedience to His commandment. The Gospels proclaim “Many are called but few are chosen” and Baha'u'llah states that “God instructeth whosoever seeketh Him”. Likewise the Hidden Words state “Love Me that I may love thee” and here He states that He “loveth the one that turneth towards Him.”

- CXXXV -

O Letter of the Living! The ear of God hath heard thy cry, and His eyes have beheld thy written supplication. He is calling thee from His seat of glory, and is revealing unto thee the verses that have been sent down by Him Who is the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.

In this passage Baha'u'llah assures this Letter of the Living, appointed by the Bab as one of His original eighteen disciples, that God has heard his supplication and is answering him from “His seat of glory.”

Blessed art thou for having utterly abolished the idol of self and of vain imagination, and for having rent asunder the veil of idle fancy, through the power of the might of thy Lord, the Supreme Protector, the Almighty, the one Beloved. Thou art indeed to be numbered with those Letters that have excelled every other Letter. Wherefore thou hast been singled out by God through the tongue of thy Lord, the Báb, the brightness of Whose countenance hath enveloped, and will continue to envelop, the whole of creation. Render thanks unto the Almighty, and magnify His name, inasmuch as He hath aided

thee to recognize a Cause that hath made the hearts of the inhabitants of the heavens and of the earth to tremble, that hath caused the denizens of the Kingdoms of creation and of Revelation to cry out, and through which the hidden secrets of men's breasts have been searched out and tested.

This Letter of the Living who recognized Baha'u'llah is informed that “Thou art indeed to be numbered with those Letters that have excelled every other Letter” and “thou hast been singled out by God through the tongue of thy Lord, the Bab...” But this Letter is most blessed because “He hath aided thee to recognize a Cause that hath made the hearts of the inhabitants of the heavens and of the earth to tremble...”

Thy Lord, the Most High (the Báb), addresseth thee, from His Realm of glory, these words: Great is the blessedness that awaiteth thee, O Letter of the Living, for thou hast truly believed in Me, hast refused to shame Me before the Concourse on high, hast fulfilled thy pledge, hast cast away the veil of vain imaginings, and hast fixed thy gaze upon the Lord, thy God, the Lord of the unseen and the seen, the Lord of the Frequented Fane. I am well pleased with thee, inasmuch as I have found thy face beaming with light on the Day when faces have been made dismal and turned black.

This Letter of the Living is blessed and Baha'u'llah is “well pleased with” him.

Say: O people of the Bayán! Did We not admonish you, in all Our Tablets and in all Our hidden Scriptures, not to follow your evil passions and corrupt inclinations, but to keep your eyes directed towards the Scene of transcendent glory, on the Day when the Most Mighty Balance shall be set, the Day when the sweet melodies of the Spirit of God shall be poured out from the right hand of the throne of your Lord, the omnipotent Protector, the All-Powerful, the Holy of Holies? Did We not forbid you to cleave to the things that would shut you out from the Manifestation of our Beauty, in its subsequent Revelation, be they the embodiments of the names of God and all their glory, or the revealers of His attributes and their dominion? Behold, how, as soon as I revealed Myself, ye have rejected My truth and turned away from Me, and been of them that have regarded the signs of God as a play and pastime!

Baha'u'llah chastises the Babis who did not turn to Him as Him Whom God shall make manifest.

By My Beauty! Nothing whatsoever shall, in this Day, be accepted from you, though ye continue to worship and prostrate yourselves before God throughout the eternity of His dominion. For all things are dependent upon His Will, and the worth of all acts is conditioned upon His acceptance and pleasure. The whole universe is but a handful of clay in His grasp. Unless one recognize God and love Him, his cry shall not be heard by God in this Day. This is of the essence of His Faith, did ye but know it.

The Babis who did not recognize and follow Baha'u'llah are not accepted as believers in Him because of their behavior.

Will ye be content with that which is like the vapor in a plain, and be willing to forgo the Ocean Whose waters refresh, by virtue of the Will of God, the souls of men? Woe unto you, for having repaid the bounty of God with so vain and contemptible a thing! Ye are, indeed, of them that have rejected Me in My previous Revelation. Would that your hearts could comprehend!

Those who reject Baha'u'llah in His Revelation “rejected” Him in His “previous Revelation”, that is, they did not recognize the Bab, for Baha'u'llah and the Bab are one.

Arise, and, under the eyes of God, atone for your failures in duty towards Him. This is My commandment unto you, were ye to incline your ears unto My commandment. By Mine own Self! Neither the people of the Qur'án, nor the followers of either the Torah or the Evangel, nor those of any other Book, have committed that which your hands have wrought. I, Myself, have dedicated My whole life to the vindication of the truth of this Faith. I, Myself, have announced, in all My Tablets, the advent of His Revelation. And yet, no sooner did He manifest Himself, in His subsequent Revelation, clothed in the glory of Bahá and arrayed in the robe of His grandeur, than ye rebelled against Him Who is the supreme Protector, the Self-Subsisting. Beware, O people! Be ye ashamed of that which hath befallen Me at your hands in the path of God. Take heed that ye be not of them that have rejected that which hath been sent down unto them from the Heaven of God's transcendent glory.

Baha'u'llah calls upon the Babis to “atone for your failures in duty towards Him”. The disobedience of the Muslims, of the Jews, of the Christians, “nor those of any other Book, have

committed that which your hands have wrought.” Baha’u’llah made the faith of His followers contingent upon them affirming Him Whom God shall make manifest.

Such, O Letter of the Living, are the words which thy Lord hath spoken, and addressed unto thee from the realms above. Proclaim the words of thy Lord unto His servants, that perchance they may shake off their slumber, and ask pardon of God, Who hath formed and fashioned them, and sent down unto them this most effulgent, this most holy, and manifest Revelation of His Beauty.

Baha’u’llah speaks of the “words of thy Lord unto His servants” and that God “formed and fashioned them, and sent them down unto them” in “this most effulgent, this most holy, and manifest Revelation of His Beauty.”

- CXXXVI -

Say: Deliver your souls, O people, from the bondage of self, and purify them from all attachment to anything besides Me. Remembrance of Me cleanseth all things from defilement, could ye but perceive it. Say: Were all created things to be entirely divested of the veil of worldly vanity and desire, the Hand of God would in this Day clothe them, one and all, with the robe “He doeth whatsoever He willeth in the kingdom of creation,” that thereby the sign of His sovereignty might be manifested in all things. Exalted then be He, the Sovereign Lord of all, the Almighty, the Supreme Protector, the All-Glorious, the Most Powerful.

Even as Jesus revealed that the Sabbath was revealed for the Son of man, and that no outward thing can cause the corruption of the human soul, Baha’u’llah affirms that “remembrance of Me cleanseth all things from defilement...”

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

influence upon his soul. Thus have the mysteries of the Revelation of God been decreed by virtue of the Will of Him Who is the Source of power and wisdom.

The tremendous influence of prayer is expressed here in terms that would, if known more widely among the Baha'is and other people of Faith, bring about transformation of human behavior. In Kitab-i-Aqdas, Baha'u'llah called upon His followers to intone the Word of God every morning and every evening, and promised that "though he may, at first, remain unaware of its effect, yet the virtue of the grace vouchsafed unto him must needs sooner or later exercise its influence upon his soul."

O Khalíl! God beareth Me witness. Though My Pen be still moving on My Tablet, yet, in its very heart, it weepeth and is sore distressed. The lamp burning before the Throne, likewise, weepeth and groaneth by reason of the things which the Ancient Beauty hath suffered at the hands of them who are but a creation of His Will. God, Himself, knoweth and testifieth to the truth of My words. No man that hath purged his ear from the loud clamor of the infidels, and inclined it to all created things, can fail to hear the voice of their lamentation and weeping over the trouble that hath befallen Us at the hands of those of Our servants that have disbelieved in, and rebelled against, Us. Thus have We disclosed to thee a glimmer of the woes that have come upon us, that thou mayest be made aware of Our sufferings, and patiently endure thy sorrows.

The purpose of Baha'u'llah revealing "the woe that have come upon us" is not only "that thou mayest be made aware of Our sufferings" but also so that the believer will "patiently endure" his own "sorrows."

Arise to aid thy Lord at all times and in all circumstances, and be thou one of His helpers. Admonish, then, the people to lend a hearing ear to the words which the Spirit of God hath uttered in this radiant and resplendent Tablet. Say: Sow not, O people, the seeds of dissension amongst men, and contend not with your neighbor. Be patient under all conditions, and place your whole trust and confidence in God. Aid ye your Lord with the sword of wisdom and of utterance. This indeed well becometh the station of man. To depart from it would be unworthy of God, the Sovereign Lord of all, the Glorified. The people, however, have been led astray, and are truly of the heedless.

The believers can “aid thy Lord at all times, and in all circumstances, and be...one of His helpers” by living according to His commandments and teaching His Faith.

Unlock, O people, the gates of the hearts of men with the keys of the remembrance of Him Who is the Remembrance of God and the Source of wisdom amongst you. He hath chosen out of the whole world the hearts of His servants, and made them each a seat for the revelation of His glory. Wherefore, sanctify them from every defilement, that the things for which they were created may be engraven upon them. This indeed is a token of God’s bountiful favor.

The reason why we must “sanctify” our hearts “from every defilement” is so that we have attain to “the things for which” we “were created”.

Beautify your tongues, O people, with truthfulness, and adorn your souls with the ornament of honesty. Beware, O people, that ye deal not treacherously with anyone. Be ye the trustees of God amongst His creatures, and the emblems of His generosity amidst His people. They that follow their lusts and corrupt inclinations have erred and dissipated their efforts. They, indeed, are of the lost. Strive, O people, that your eyes may be directed towards the mercy of God, that your hearts may be attuned to His wondrous remembrance, that your souls may rest confidently upon His grace and bounty, that your feet may tread the path of His good-pleasure. Such are the counsels which I bequeath unto you. Would that ye might follow My counsels!

In Tablets revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas, Baha’u’llah states that the members of the House of Justice are “the trustees of God amongst His creatures”...here He states that all of the believers are, potentially, “trustees of God amongst His creatures.” Their actions must be in conformity with the claims to be His followers.

- CXXXVII -

Some have regarded it as lawful to infringe on the integrity of the substance of their neighbor, and have made light of the injunction of God as prescribed in His Book. Evil fall upon them, and the chastisement of God, the All-Powerful, the Almighty, afflict them! By Him Who shineth above the Dayspring of sanctity! If the whole earth were to be converted into silver and gold, no man who can be said to have truly ascended into

the heaven of faith and certitude would deign to regard it, much less to seize and keep it. We have formerly referred to this subject in passages revealed in the Arabic tongue, in a language of exquisite beauty. God is Our witness! Whoever hath tasted the sweetness of those words will never consent to transgress the bounds which God hath fixed, neither will he turn his gaze towards anyone except his Well-Beloved. Such a man will, with his inner eye, readily recognize how altogether vain and fleeting are the things of this world, and will set his affections on things above.

Baha'u'llah, as indicated in the Hidden Words and this Tablet, does not approve of the expropriation of the property of any person by another. In obedience to this principle, His followers are enjoined to turn away from the riches of the world, from "silver and gold". This same principle was espoused by Jesus when He referred to as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew 6:20.

Say: Be ashamed, O ye that call yourselves the lovers of the Ancient Beauty! Be ye admonished by the tribulation He hath suffered, by the burden of anguish He hath carried for the sake of God. Let your eyes be opened. To what purpose hath He labored, if the manifold trials He hath endured are, in the end, to result in such contemptible professions, and such wretched conduct? Every robber, every worker of iniquity, hath, in the days prior to My Revelation, uttered these same words, and performed these same deeds.

Those who call themselves "the lovers of the Ancient Beauty" should be "ashamed" for having done so if they have displayed "contemptible professions, and such wretched conduct". He accounts them as like "every robber, every worker of iniquity".

Verily I say: Incline your ears to My sweet voice, and sanctify yourselves from the defilement of your evil passions and corrupt desires. They who dwell within the tabernacle of God, and are established upon the seats of everlasting glory, will refuse, though they be dying of hunger, to stretch their hands and seize unlawfully the property of their neighbor, however vile and worthless he may be.

Baha'u'llah reveals the behavior He expects of His followers when He writes that they "will refuse, though they be dying of hunger, to stretch their hands and seize unlawfully the property of their neighbor, however vile and worthless he may be." Not only is this an

affirmation of the sacred right of private property, but also of the commandment of Torah, “thou shalt not covet” the property of thy neighbor. The true Baha’i would rather die “of hunger” than “seize unlawfully the property of their neighbor”.

The purpose of the one true God in manifesting Himself is to summon all mankind to truthfulness and sincerity, to piety and trustworthiness, to resignation and submissiveness to the Will of God, to forbearance and kindliness, to uprightness and wisdom. His object is to array every man with the mantle of a saintly character, and to adorn him with the ornament of holy and goodly deeds.

Whereas every earlier religion seeks the intercession of their saints, and worships them as intermediaries between their unworthy selves and God, Baha’u’llah indicates that “the purpose of the one true God in manifesting Himself...is to array every man with the mantle of a saintly character, and to adorn him with the ornament of holy and goodly deeds.” This recalls the calling of all children of Israel to become a nation of priests, and the appropriation of that language in the epistles of the early disciples of Jesus.

Say: Have mercy on yourselves and on your fellowmen, and suffer not the Cause of God—a Cause which is immeasurably exalted above the inmost essence of sanctity—to be sullied with the stain of your idle fancies, your unseemly and corrupt imaginations.

The Cause of God is “immeasurably exalted above the inmost essence of sanctity”. This is the true standard of His Faith, not the compromise of the requirements of holiness in order to accommodate the weaknesses, the corruptions and addictions of its unrepentant followers. The lowering of the moral and ethical standard of the Faith will render the Cause of God incapable of bringing about the transformation of humanity that alone can insure its peace and tranquility, as He stated in a passage cited above. If the Guardian believed that this high standard was beyond the capacity of the believers of his time, then surely he would not have included these many passages in Gleanings. Surely he would not have authored The Advent of Divine Justice, which calls for the Baha’is to adopt the most rigorous differences from their fellow Americans, even as Baha’u’llah called for the same from His fellow Iranians. As he noted, the administrative order arose in North America not because of the moral excellence of its citizens but because it had (and still has) the most corrupt cultural values – its injustice, its racialism, its unchastity. The Baha’is must become exemplars of justice, with no trace of racialism and chaste to the core. It is an enormous challenge, and he had every confidence

that the Baha'is could and eventually would arise to embody these ideals in their daily behavior. Of course this applies to all Baha'is and not just to North American believers. The Guardian made that crystal clear when he reminded his readers that the Bab and Baha'u'llah were chosen to appear in Iran not because of the inherent superiority of that nation and culture, but rather because it had become so degraded as to necessity the appearance of not one but two Manifestations in order to transform their stalwart followers into living proofs of the power of divine revelation to transform the behavior of the people.