

GOD

AS REVEALED BY BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

-The Glory of God-

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Reynaldo Pareja

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	xv
Introduction.....	xvii
Chapter 1	Can men know God’s Innermost Essence?..... 1
	Men converted the forces of nature into gods – some benevolent others destructive..... 7
	Man-created gods reflected men’s lives with their virtues and sins..... 9
	Gods and goddesses associated with human key life moments, emotions, feelings, and activities 10
	Myths of various peoples attributed the creation of the world and men to these man-made gods..... 12
	Man’s effort to communicate with their created gods 15
	Early recorded religious expressions of God..... 20
Chapter 2	Who can give an authoritative interpretation of God’s Attributes?26
	God’s chosen channel of communication with humanity 26
	The mysterious spiritual essence of the Spokesperson..... 29
	Bahá’u’lláh was chosen by God 37
	Bahá’u’lláh had innate knowledge of God as only a Manifestation has it..... 38
	Reactions of people that met Bahá’u’lláh..... 41
Chapter 3	Bahá’u’lláh, the most recent Manifestation of God47
	Bahá’u’lláh’s lifestyle was in accordance to his station 51
	Bahá’u’lláh affirms that He is the Promised One of all religions..... 52
	Bahá’u’lláh explains that He is the return of all previous Manifestations..... 52
	Bahá’u’lláh declares without margin of doubt that He represents God 54

Bahá'u'lláh clarifies that, even though he was a Manifestation, he was aware of his humanity.....	55
Bahá'u'lláh's presentation of God's Attributes	56

Chapter 4	Bahá'u'lláh's presentation of God as Eternal Creator....	58
	God's Unknowable Essence.....	61
	The only God.....	62
	Independent of any one	64
	God is One in Himself	64
	Self-Subsistent.....	65
	Eternal.....	66
	Unrestrained, Unconstrained and Unconditioned.....	67
	The Invisible, The Hidden One.....	69
	Inaccessible	70
	The Divine Mystery.....	70
	The Omniscient.....	71
	The Omnipotent	71
	The Creator	72
	The Source of all.....	74
	The God of all things.....	75
	The Revealer and The Source of Revelation	76

Chapter 5	God as Ruler and Ordainer.....	80
	God in Himself.....	80
	The Supreme, The Supreme Ordainer	80
	The Incomparable.....	81
	The Un-possessed	82
	The Possessor.....	82
	The Preserver	83
	The Concealer, The Withholder	83
	The Majesty of God.....	84
	The God of Majesty and Glory.....	85
	The God of Glory.....	85
	The All glorious.....	86
	The Resplendent.....	86
	Most Ancient Splendor	87
	The Exalted	87
	The Beauteous (God's Beauty)	88
	The Ancient Beauty, Thy Wondrous Beauty, The most exalted Beauty.....	89

Supreme Sinlessness	90
The One Glorified, The Glorifier	90
The All- Praised, The Ever-Blessed.....	91
The Royalty of God.....	92
The King.....	93
The Sovereignty of God.....	93
The Lord	95
The Lord of Names.....	98
The Ruler	100
The God of Power and Strength	103
God, the Strong, and God of strength.....	104
The Almighty	105
The All-Subduing, the All Possessing, the All Compelling	106
God does what He Wills.....	106
His Will is immutable.....	108
Nothing can frustrate God's purpose.....	109
The God of Knowledge	109
The God of Wisdom.....	111
God, the Ever faithful	111
The Ever-Abiding	112
God the Bountiful	113
The One whose grace is bountiful, immense.....	114
The Benevolent, The One who showers loving-kindness,	115
God, the Merciful.....	115
The God of Providence and Protection	116
The Divine Providence	116
God, the Just	117
Brief Summary	118

Chapter 6 God as our Lord and Beloved	121
Recognition of Who God is.....	122
He is the One God	122
God's Oneness and Unity	123
God's dominion.....	123
The All-Sufficing Source.....	124
Recognition of the greatness of God and His bounty	125
Who God is for us.....	126
The All-loving, the Loving Kindness.....	126
God, The Beneficent, the Provider.....	127

The Helper, in all circumstances	127
The Healer.....	129
Our Refuge.....	130
The Attractor – The Ever-Desired.....	131
The Object of our adoration	132
God is the object of all our wishes, needs and goals, (Highest Wish).....	133
The Beloved.....	134
The Exultation of the soul	135
God is a Personal God.....	136
Personal God.....	136
The Compassionate and the Merciful	139
God, the Generous, the Most Generous (the Munificent), the Great Giver.....	142
The One Whom we can always trust	143
God is always ready to answer.....	144
Our Joy is... ..	147
Benefits of our relationship with God.....	148
God exalts him who proclaims His cause	148
God is the recompense the believer will obtain.....	149
God is the One who enlightens the heart	150
God’s Mercy that rains upon all	151
God can deliver us from all	152
God can change all negative situations into positive ones.....	152
God is capable of lifting us to his Heaven	153
Our Response to Him.....	153
Chapter 7 God’s invitation to have a relationship with Him	154
Our Response to God’s invitation.....	154
We praise God	154
We glorify God	156
We thank God	156
We are devoted to God	157
We are patient in God.....	158
God’s Will is our will	159
Requesting God’s Will for oneself	161
Request to be rid of all attachment to everything except God and His Will.....	162
We bear witness to His Cause as His Will	164
Reward for doing God’s bidding	165

The desire of each one is to be with God	165
Separation from God is suffering	168
Suffering in the name of God.....	169
Our most ardent desire is that God will grant us the grace of being steadfast in His love	171

Conclusion	175
References	207
Appendix A: God as Eternal Creator	211
Appendix B: God's as Ruler and Ordainer	217
Appendix C: God as Our Lord and Beloved.....	227

**To all God-seekers who are restless,
who are not sure,
who wish they had a trustworthy source,
who yearn to contact their Creator but sometimes
find themselves without the appropriate words,
images and familiar names and titles to address
Him properly.**

**To all who ardently wish to have an intimate
connection, in a familiar manner with God knowing
that he/she is heard and answered.**

**To all who yearn to experience God as the ultimate
reality of one's existence because He is the fulfillment
of all human spiritual yearnings.**

**To all that intuitively know that their Creator is the
true source of fulfilling extasy.**

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This one is no different. The main inspirator of it was the Prophet Founder of the Bahá'í Faith - Bahá'u'lláh - through his book, *Prayers and Meditations of Baha'u'llah*. There was a timeless moment while saying one of his multiple prayers that I received the understanding that Bahá'u'lláh was continuously referring to God using multiple words, phrases, and descriptions that gave precise images of how to conceive that Unknowable Essence of God, which we will never be able to apprehend or comprehend in its intimacy given the limitation of our mind to grasp such an Infinite Reality.

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INTRODUCTION

Most humans have an idea, and image, even a profound understanding of Who God is. There are some who deny such knowledge because they do not believe in the existence of such a Being. Not existent for him/her exempts them for having to formulate a hypothetical answer to the question.

For those that have ideas, images and understanding of some sort of Who God might be, they have probably received them from their culture, at home, at a bible Sunday school, at some higher religion class, from wise elders, religious leaders and opinion spokespersons. Such images may have been formed by children's religious books, family discussions, films or documentaries on the subject, and even from some form of spiritual experience in a church, in a religious ritual, in the intimacy of a silent and lonely prayer or even in a devastating event, such as the sudden death of a son, a father, a sweetheart, a wife or a husband.

There is a constant rule that states that the more intense is the spiritual development of the individual, the more expansive might be his description of this Being he calls God. The presence, the energy, the conviction, the feeling, and experience of nearness to the Creator somehow enhances that comprehension and glimmers of understanding of Who God might be.

But is it possible for human beings to know God in His intimacy, in His Essence to the point that they can affirm that such knowledge is correct, authentic, and authoritative?

No. For the simple reason that man is a created being, and thus simply incapable of knowing his Creator in such a way and depth that he can affirm that he knows with certainty Who God is. In fact, the contrary is true. For any created being, the Innermost Essence of his creator is simply unknowable. No human being can fully, entirely or sufficiently know its Creator. His condition of created being has inherently given each one of us a limited understanding of all reality. Reality is too vast, too deep to even come close to having a full grasp of it.

If man's knowledge of physical reality is so limited, how much more difficult will be the acquisition of knowledge of a transcendental reality that he cannot see, touch or experience directly through the senses and to which he has limited access while he lives his temporal condition. Being so limited man's knowledge of physical reality, how much more difficult it will be to acquire any knowledge of God, the foundation of all created reality, Who resides in a transcendental level of Being. This realm is simply inaccessible for any human being to even get a satisfactory glimpse and affirm that God is Who He is.

So, if this is the human condition in relation to his Creator, how can we then be assured that we have an authoritative source that can tell us something about God's Attributes in a way that we can be confident that it is the best and most accurate description?

At this moment is when we humans must rely on a Revelation given to us by a Messenger of God, who is so close to Him that he actually has an experience of God that no other human being has. This experience is translated into the limitations that each language has so that we may understand something about God in a manner that is possible for us to assimilate and have a minimum frame of reference in which the

magnificence of the Creator is expressed in such a way that we can relate to it, and actually feed spiritually from it.

This is the objective and intention of this book. It is an exploration in what the most recent Messenger of God, Bahá'u'lláh, has given us as a description of God's Attributes, in terms that we can make sense and comprehend a glimpse of the depth and excellence of our Creator. We will carry out the exploration relying upon a book, *Prayers and Meditations of Bahá'u'lláh*, that presents, in a condensed format, Bahá'u'lláh's set of affirmations, descriptions and insights into God's Attributes.

CHAPTER 1

CAN MEN KNOW GOD'S INNERMOST ESSENCE?

Who is God? What is His essence? Is it possible for humans to comprehend or know it?

These are valid questions that humanity's deep thinkers have asked throughout recorded human history. They have been philosophers, shamans, gurus, enlightened mystics, lifelong dedicated scholars of Holy Writings, religious leaders, enthusiastic preachers claiming a special illumination from God, and even common folks with inquisitive minds. They have sincerely pondered these questions and have come up with answers corresponding to their level of education, traditions, upbringing, and the accepted beliefs of the culture and religion transmitted to them by their elders.

Regardless of who poses the question, the inquirers all have one common reality: the limited capacity inherent in all humans to be able to understand fully their origins as created beings. When we say, "created beings", we are affirming that there is a Creator of humans, as well as everything else in the physical world, and we call Him "God". Thus, all of us are created beings. No one decided one day, not being born yet, to give himself existence and, in that moment he/she became

an embryo that nine months afterward was born to a mother as a completely developed physical infant with little or practically with no consciousness of his very existence. This stage had to wait until his mind developed to the moment that his intuitive experience of being alive appeared in his consciousness and was able to formulate the most existential question that any human can pose, “Who created me, Who gave me Existence?”

From this question, it is natural to ask several others that spring forth effortlessly: What power does God have to be able to create a human being? Where did He get it from? Did someone give it Him? If so, who is that someone? Is he more powerful than God? What is the nature of the creative power of God? How does it work?

As the reader can intuit, the questions just keep popping up with few or no satisfying answers because we touch the realm of Transcendence when we ask them. However, we have very little or no real experience that allows us to conceptualize and express it in a comprehensive manner.

An analogy will help clarify the challenge posed by the chasm that exists between a created being and its Creator. Let us take a finished masterpiece painting by a famous, recognized artist such as Rembrandt, Rubens or Picasso. They all created masterpieces recognized and valued today as such. Suffice it to remember Rembrandt’s “Storm on the Sea of Galilee”, Rubens’s “Assumption of the Virgin Mary” or Picasso’s “Guernica”. Each of those paintings has been the subject of in-depth analysis by famous art critics who have struggled to get into the mind, heart, and feelings of each one of these artists to try to discover the ultimate motives, reasons, impulses that stimulated the artist to produce such a masterpiece. Some will effectively figure out the deep emotions or motives for the artist’s creation, especially if they had the opportunity to meet and talk intimately with the artist. Some will fail miserably to gain the understanding that they seek because of the lack of the most

basic information regarding the artist, while relying on the perspicacity of their scrutiny of the work of art.

As it is virtually impossible to know for certain what were the ideas and motivations of the artist were by simply analyzing the work of art, even with the best frame of reference, it is even less possible for the work of art to “say” or “know” anything relevant regarding his creator while he was painting the picture, or after it was finished. The chasm that exists between the finished artwork and the knowledge of the intimacy of thoughts and ideas of his creator is parallel to the chasm that exists between us and our Creator.

Even though we have incredible inquisitive minds with boundless capability for discovery and knowledge, we are basically mute and speechless when we try, in vain, to express, explain, describe, affirm authoritatively or truthfully any aspect of what the innermost Essence of God is, simply because our limited comprehension can never and will never be able to know anything of God's Unknowable Essence.

Imagine for a moment that we could enjoy a complete and exhaustive knowledge of who we are intimately, what traumas defined our personality, what are the ultimate reasons why we respond and act in a certain manner when confronted, criticized, or challenged. This level of introspection is not even achieved by those who have dedicated their whole life to a continuous exercise of self-knowledge, meditating, carrying on a life of silence and continuous self-awareness of the present. Even these mystics will confess that they still cannot affirm having achieved that complete, clear knowledge of who they are, what their purpose in life is, how they fit into the total schemes of the cosmos, how they can realistically and effectively contribute to the advancement of humanity, what can they do to stimulate people to change their horrible habits of hurting other people, how they can contribute to impeding evil-doers from carrying on their abhorrent behaviors that harm people so deeply.

If we cannot know ourselves inexhaustibly, how can we even pretend to know anything of God's Essence to any degree of certainty, clarity or completeness? It is just impossible given our condition of created beings, that although with an outstanding capacity for understanding, we are still limited by our temporal condition. If we could know God's Essence, we would no longer be created beings; we would be equal, or equivalent in knowledge to the level that God has of His own Essence. This would be a pure contradiction in terms, for the created can never be equal to the Creator.

If there is anything typical of us humans, it is that we are born with a virtual mind and a memory bank empty of any conscious knowledge. This does not exclude whatever genetic information we inherited from our parents or even grandparents, or the impressions received during the months that we were in the womb of our mothers that got recorded as tensions, traumas even fears. In terms of concepts, ideas and practical knowledge that we need to survive, we are born without any of them. It is through a very long process of accumulating visual cues, hearing sounds, touching all types of surfaces, tasting a variety of foods, to crawling and then taking first baby steps that we begin to develop our sense of taste, space, mobility, and the classification of sounds until we finally articulate our first words and slowly develop language skills.

So, it is safe to say that we are born as a "blank slate" on which thousands of impressions, bits of information, and sounds are imprinted until we finally become articulate infants that can walk and run, carry on a conversation, eat by ourselves, dress without help, understand rules, initiate contacts with other children, play with them and even have first confrontations. Later on, it is time to go to primary school and start the long, very long process of developing memory skills, logical reasoning, handling of concepts and opening our minds to the universe of ideas, artistic expressions, arguments, understanding the difference between mathematics, natural science, language studies, artistic expressions, social behaviors and basic ethical concepts, and for many of us some form of religious conception of a divinity such as the Christian God.

This long process allows us to affirm that we are not born with any innate knowledge of Who God is. Thus, it is not possible to articulate any affirmation about Who God is with any certainty that we know what we are talking about.

The reality, then, is that we do not have any knowledge of who God is when we are born. This imperfect and incomplete knowledge is received through multiple sources as we grow up; our parents probably being the first ones to tell us that God created us, without being able to tell us of how He could have done it, because their level of knowledge was constrained to their condition of created beings that cannot have insight knowledge of God. If they were Christians, they probably appealed to the Biblical story of creation of Adam and Eve. Depending on the religious belief of our parents, we were exposed to some form of formal religious study imparted by a pastor, a priest, a mullah, a rabbi, or an educated religious expert.

The specific knowledge of what they claimed to be God depended very much on the belief system that each tradition expressed through their representatives. These traditions depended, in turn, on the historical interpretation process they went through before becoming what they are at present. In most cases, the content of these interpretations was man-made either by superficial opportunists or very serious scholars who dedicated most of their lives to the serious study of Holy Texts, trying to distill that what they were saying about God made any sense.

God and man-conceived gods as described by two distinctive sources

When looking at which are the major sources that describe how to conceive the man-made gods or how God can be perceived in human terms as presented by a Manifestation of God, there is a clear distinction between these two categories. The man-made gods are the product of humans making an effort to describe God in human terms, while the religious description made by a representative, an authentic Spokesperson, a Messenger that has spoken in the name of God – who has given ample proofs of his Mission by the impeccable lifestyle lived in

complete accordance with the content of his Revelation - is a knowledge of God's Attributes as received from God.

The further back in time, both sources have relied heavily on an oral tradition passed from generation to generation rather than on written documentation. Because of this reason the oral tradition took a very long time before it was finally written down. Furthermore, the accuracy of the written tradition evolved as time passed by and how long it took to be codified.

We will present both sources as they were finally written down or were kept alive through the oral tradition making the distinction between the man-made gods and the religious presentation of God.

A crucial observation must be made that is not frequently expressed explicitly by the religious sources and that is that from the beginning of human appearance on the planet, mankind has been given a religious Revelation. This was affirmed unequivocally by The Bahá'í Faith, through the grandson of 'Abdu'l-Bahá (the son of the founder of the Faith, Baha'u'llah), Shoghi Effendi, who clarified that God had sent His Messengers to humanity ever since it appeared on Earth to guide its spiritual evolution. When comparing the original religious documentation with the recorded god-myths, the god-myths give the imprecise impression that they were more extensively recorded, even before the religious Revelations. This has probably been the reason why a generalized belief developed giving ground to the judgment that God had not dialogued with humanity before the recordings of the Teachings of the major ancient religions were made.

In Shoghi Effendi's words, this is how he expressed this ancient unrecognized religious reality,

Regarding your questions: the only reason there is not more mention of the Asiatic Prophets is because Their names seem to be lost in the mists of ancient history.

Buddha is mentioned, and Zoroaster, in our Scriptures -- both non- Jewish Prophets or non-Semitic Prophets. We are taught there always have been Manifestations of God, but we do not have any record of Their names. (1)

The Writings of the Bahá'í Faith explicitly affirm that God has always guided humanity through His Manifestations and always will. Many indigenous people who become Bahá'ís see in the Bahá'í Revelation the fulfillment of their own religious teachings, which are so ancient that only fragments remain. Unless a Manifestation is named in the Bahá'í Writings or the Qur'án we cannot state with certainty that a particular figure was or was not a "Manifestation." There were others and thus it should not be assumed that prior to Krishna there were none.

The implication of this Bahá'í understanding is that ancient religious traditions which are only known in fragmentary form today, if at all, could well have had some basis in the teachings of an ancient Prophet. Thus, from a Bahá'í perspective, we cannot know the true origins of many ancient beliefs, whether they are called "myths" or "religion" or anything else.

We will first address the description of the most well-known and documented man-made gods' myths as they were transmitted orally until a written version was made to which we have access today. The reader will notice the richness of the imagination of those that conceived them.

Men converted the forces of nature into gods – some benevolent others destructive

In the ancient history of humanity this process, although similar everywhere, had a different source of explanation of who God was in each place. In fact, the man-made explanations of who they believed god to be were relegated to what we have received as historical records that we call myths. They started when humans faced the destructive forces of nature that they could not understand, explain, or control

because they lacked the proper scientific concepts and instruments to do so, but perceived their undeniable power. They found some answers by rationalizing those forces and making them into “gods” who exhibited such capriciously uncontrollable and destructive power on humans. Thus, the appearance of the god-of-thunder (Chuquiilla in the Inca mythology), the god-of-the storm (Baal in Mesopotamia and Semitic pantheons), the god-of-the-depths of the earth where dead people go (Hades in Greek mythology) or Poseidon the god of the sea, earthquakes and storms. (2)

The Greek and Roman Pantheons offered one of the best compilations of this type of gods, who either manipulated the element they controlled for the benefit of their personal goal and sometimes, or, in the case of a relative few, for the benefit of humans.

Following this pattern, each meteorological and earthly element was broken down into subsets assigned to specific gods that were ruled over by a king god. Aeolus was the god of wind, but the winds were then broken down into Boreas, the name for the north wind who controlled the cold winds of winter; Notos, the south wind, the bringer of summer storms; Zephyros was the west wind who brought spring breezes and Euros was the east wind. There were even names for northwest wind (Skeiron), the southwest wind (Livros), the northeast wind (Kaikias), and the southeast wind (Apeliotus) as well.

All occurrences of favorable or poor weather were thought to be the direct result of godly intervention, a constant theme in Greek mythology, art, theater and literature. In Homer’s *Odyssey*, Odysseus incurred the wrath of the king sea god, Poseidon, who then set out to sabotage his return voyage home with storms and violent waters. For the sake of spiting Poseidon, Aeolus trapped all the winds but Zephyros in a bag so that the westerly wind could blow the ship back to Ithaca.

Beyond just gods of wind, the Greeks had Poseidon, the king of all the sea gods and goddesses, as well as the god of earthquakes. Helios was

god of the sun; Selene, the goddess of the moon; Hephaestus, god of volcanoes; Chione, the goddess of snow, and Zeus, the king of all gods and god of the sky, thunder, lightning and rain. There were a seemingly endless number of deities to account for every aspect of nature. (3)

Man-created gods reflected men's lives with their virtues and sins

Later on, another explanation was added. These gods resided in the heavens living a life of comfort while dominating humanity. Yet, what is common to most of those myths is the description of those gods living in the kingdom of heaven and having a lifestyle of their own that resembled the lifestyle of humans living on Earth. A brief overview of some of those gods and their personalities will also show how much they resembled humans in most of our behaviors, including those that show our worst and darkest side, the difference being that they had superpowers and used them for their benefit while extracting from humans blind obedience.

Ol-Orun (Olorun) is worshipped in parts of Africa. He is literally the ruler of (or in) the Heavens, and is the name given to one of the three manifestations of the Supreme God in the Yoruba pantheon. Olorun is the owner of the heavens and, in this manifestation, the vital energy of Olorun is present in humans as Ashé, which is the life force that runs through all living things. His son, Olodumare, carries the responsibility of coordinating the Universe, while Olofi brings existence to earth on orders from Olodumare. (4)

There were also benevolent gods that gave humans some benefit like Plutus the Greek god of wealth, Hypnos the god of sleep, Heracles the protector of mankind; Apollo who inspired music, poetry, art, and knowledge; Dionysus the god of grape harvest, wine making, religious ecstasy and theater. Tara in Tibet (the Goddess of Compassion) is also known in Thailand and Myanmar. In China, the bodhisattva Kuan Yin (Guānshìyīn, literally meaning

“he who perceives the world’s lamentations”), is invoked as the one who has Compassion for the lament of humans. She belongs to the Mahayana version of Buddhism and, according to both ancient and current lore, she has magical powers and thus the ability to make things happen if one asks with enough faith and reverence. (5)

These man-created gods replicated the family structure of humans manifesting parenthood, brotherhood and subsequent family ties such as:

- Zeus (Jupiter to Romans) was the supreme god.
- Poseidon (Neptune to Romans) was the god of the sea and brother of Zeus.
- Hades (Pluto to the Romans) was god of the Underworld and brother of Zeus.
- Hestia was the goddess of hearth and home and sister of Zeus.
- Hephaestus (Vulcan to Romans) was the god of fire and blacksmiths. He was the son of Hera.
- Apollo (Apollo to Romans) was the god of the Sun, light and music and the son of Zeus. (6)

Gods and goddesses associated with human key life moments, emotions, feelings, and activities

The similarity of the human world projected into the realm of the gods could not be exempted from showing that they too were associated with the most important and key moments of the lives of humans that they, in turn, played out in their heavenly abode.

In this frame of reference, we find Juno as the Roman goddess most associated with marriage and fertility. In fact, the Romans had dozens of minor deities associated with aspects of fertility and childbirth, like Mena who ruled menstrual flow. Juno Lucina, meaning light, ruled childbirth — bringing children “into the light.”

Aphrodite was the Greek goddess who ruled over love, procreation, and pleasure. She was associated with the Roman goddess, Venus.

Parvati is the Mother Goddess of the Hindus. She is the consort of Shiva, and considered a fertility goddess, earth sustainer, or goddess of motherhood. She was sometimes depicted as a huntress.

Venus was the Roman goddess, mother of the Roman people. She represented not only fertility and love, but also prosperity and victory. She was born of sea foam.

Inanna was the Sumerian goddess of war and fertility. She was the most recognized female deity in her culture.

Ishtar was the goddess of love, fertility, and sex in Mesopotamia. She was also goddess of war, politics, and combat. She was represented by the lion and an eight-pointed star.

Anjea is the Australian Aboriginal goddess of fertility, as well as protector of human souls between incarnations.

Freyja was the Norse goddess of fertility, love, sex, and beauty; she was also goddess of war, death, and gold. She receives half of those who die in battle, those who do not go to Valhalla, the hall of Odin.

Gefjon was the Norse goddess of ploughing and thus of one aspect of fertility.

Lajja Gauri is a Shakti goddess originating in the Indus Valley who is connected with fertility and abundance. She is sometimes seen as a form of the Hindu Mother Goddess Devi.

Sarakka was the Sami goddess of fertility, also associated with pregnancy and childbirth.

Ala is a deity of fertility, morality, and the earth, worshipped by Nigeria's Igbo people.

Rosmerta was a fertility goddess also associated with abundance. She was found in Gallic-Roman culture.

Anahita was a Persian or Iranian goddess of fertility, associated with "the Waters," healing, and wisdom.

Taweret was the Egyptian fertility goddess, represented as a combination of hippopotamus and feline walking on two feet. She was also a water goddess and goddess of childbirth.

Guan Yin, a Taoist deity was associated with fertility.

Kapo is a Hawaiian fertility goddess, sister of volcanic goddess Pele. (7)

It is thus fair to conclude that the man-made gods were a replica of what humans aspired to acquire such as immortality and everlasting happiness in a heavenly home, liberated from the contingencies of mortal life. They, thus, projected on these gods their most intimate desires and aspirations that could not be obtained in their mortal span.

Myths of various peoples attributed the creation of the world and men to these man-made gods

Some of the ancient creation stories had their origins in teachings of previous Manifestations of God as they are reflected in traditional beliefs of various indigenous peoples but over time many of them were modified and we receive them in such a version that anthropologists and scholars have categorized them as man-made myths. In these myths, the gods were attributed to have been the creators of the universe, the earth, animals, plants, and people. A shared characteristic was that they also behaved with the same human traits of jealousy, envy, vengeance and even compassion that humans exhibited.

Scandinavia offered a creation myth that starts by affirming that before time existed, there was a place of fog and ice called Niflheim. Across a great void was Muspelheim, where fire demons and fire giants dwelled. Fire from Muspelheim eventually melted Niflheim's ice, which dripped and formed a giant cow named Audhumla and a frost giant named Ymir. These giants mated and gave birth to the god Odin and his brothers. A quarrel erupts and Odin and his brothers killed Ymir. The earth was made from his flesh, the heavens from his skull, the sea from his blood, the clouds from his brains, mountains from his bones, and trees from his hair. Odin built Asgard as a dwelling place for the gods and linked it to Midgard (Earth) by a rainbow bridge called Bifrost. The Gods found two tree trunks on Midgard and breathed life into them, creating Ask and Embla, the first man and woman. Odin represents the *destructive force* that initiates the creation of earth and its elements. This is a good example of how human projected unto their gods the passions they exhibited in their mortal lives.

The Comanche creation myth: This tribe of North American Indians offered the following myth involving the intervention of the gods who confront the rage of a demon: "One day the Great Spirit collected swirls of dust from the four directions in order to create the Comanche people. These people formed from the earth had the strength of mighty storms. Unfortunately, a shape-shifting *demon* was also created and began to torment the people. The Great Spirit cast the demon into a bottomless pit (similar to Christianity's explanation of the Devil). To seek revenge the demon took refuge in the fangs and stingers of poisonous creatures and continues to harm people every chance it gets".

The Navajo Indians have two creation myths. The second one is highly illustrative of the human traits exhibited by the gods. The First man and First woman physically appear by being formed from ears of white and yellow corn. There is a separation of male and female humans because each did not appreciate the contributions of the other, and this lay the ground-work for the appearance of the Monsters that would start to kill off the people in the next world. Coyote, the trickster, also appears and

steals the baby of the water monster. Enraged, he brings a great flood upon the third world, which forces humans and the Holy People to journey to the surface of the fifth world through a hollow reed. Some things are left behind and some things are brought to help the people re-create the world each time they entered a new level. Death and the Monsters are born into this world as Changing Woman is giving birth to the Hero Twins, called “Monster Slayer” and “Child of the Waters” who had many adventures in which they helped to rid the world of much evil. (8)

Pandora: is the Greek myth whose name means the “all-giving”. Before humans, there were the immortals (the gods and titans). The brothers, Prometheus and Epimetheus, were Titans who had fought on the Gods’ side in a war. Zeus, king of the gods asked Prometheus to create man out of clay and water. Epimetheus had to create the animals and give them their gifts of courage, swiftness, etc. He gave out all the gifts and had none left for Man. So, Prometheus decides to make man stand upright, like the gods, and out of pity he gives man the fire and teaches him how to use it to survive. Zeus did not want men to have the use of fire. So, Prometheus stole the fire – some say from Zeus’ lightning rod, others from the sun, and gave it to man. In this myth the jealousy expressed by Zeus is typical of humans with power. He does not want to share his decision-making powers with anyone, including a god-brother like Prometheus.

Most agree that Zeus asked his son, Hephaestus, and daughter Athena, to make Pandora, the first woman on earth, who was also made out of earth and water. Each god and goddess gave Pandora a gift (talent) such as beauty, charm, music, strong curiosity and persuasion – gifts that could be used for good or ill. According to the myth, Pandora was instructed by Zeus to not open a jar (mistranslated as ‘box’) because it would bring harm to humans. Zeus knew that her curiosity was stronger than his prohibition and when she opened the jar it released *all the ills* on mankind, except for hope that remained in the jar when she closed it. (9)

Man's effort to communicate with their created gods

Humans at that time needed to communicate with the transcendent world where these gods seemed to reside. In a slow process that became more and more elaborate, they incorporated rites and rituals that evolved and became the official channels of communication with whatever version they had of their created gods. The rituals took many shapes, such as beating of drums, dancing while chanting, presenting offerings to the entities, such as fruits of the land, an animal sacrificed, or in the most extreme interpretations, the sacrifice of a human to appease the fury of the gods, to give thanks or to praise them. This was the ultimate show of reverence and submission. Death for Life became one of the main archetypal behaviors reenacted in the myth ritual. (10)

It is not surprising that men would have developed this concept since they had daily experience in valuing the worth of a human life, be it in the form of a family relative dying of natural causes, or most likely killed in the many and constant battles they had with neighboring tribes, towns or modest kingdoms. Life was thus considered to be the utmost treasure which the myths tried to preserve even after death. He who died for the tribe, the king, or the clan was revered as a hero, and his memory was praised.

So, to offer any living creature in sacrifice to honor and praise the gods was a natural development of humans who believed in the existence of these gods, even though they had never seen them, but with whom they felt their lives were intrinsically woven and needed to express their reverence to these powerful deities. These ancient traditions could be dismissed as entirely man-made and therefore invalid. Yet, in the perspective offered above, they can be viewed as early religious stirrings of humanity, our early collective childhood.

The God proposed by philosophers (11)

Parallel to the effort made by humans to describe God through various mythological approaches as the ones we have presented, we must acknowledge that there was an effort made to arrive at some formulation of God through the medium of abstract-theoretical reasoning. This was best expressed by the Greek founders of philosophical reasoning. The following were the most outstanding ones that arrived at an approximation of God not constrained or explained in mythological terms, but probably with Christian influence.

Plato (428- 348 BC) considered God as the transcendent-the highest and most perfect being-and one who uses eternal forms, or archetypes, to fashion a universe that is eternal and uncreated. The order and purpose He gives the universe is limited by the imperfections inherent in the material. Flaws are therefore real and exist in the universe; they are not merely higher divine purposes misunderstood by humans. God is not the author of everything because some things are evil. We can infer that God is the author of the punishments of the wicked because those punishments benefit the wicked. God, being Good, is also unchangeable since any change would be for the worse. For Plato, this does not mean (as some later Christian thought held) that God is the ground of moral goodness; rather, whatever is good is good in and of itself. God must be a first cause and a self-moved mover otherwise there will be an infinite regress to causes of causes. Plato is not committed to monotheism but suggests for example that since planetary motion is uniform and circular, and since such motion is the motion of reason, then a planet must be driven by a rational soul. These souls that drive the planets could be called gods.

Aristotle (384 -322 BC) made God passively responsible for change in the world in the sense that all things seek divine perfection. God imbues all things with order and purpose, both of which can be discovered and point to his (or its) divine existence. From those contingent things we come to know universals, whereas God knows universals *prior* to

their existence in things. God, the highest being (though not a loving being), engages in perfect contemplation of the worthiest object, which is himself. He is thus unaware of the world and cares nothing for it, being an unmoved mover. God as pure form is wholly immaterial, and as perfect he is unchanging since he cannot become more perfect. This perfect and immutable God is therefore the apex of being and knowledge. God must be eternal. That is because time is eternal, and since there can be no time without change, change must be eternal. And for change to be eternal the cause of change—the unmoved mover—must also be eternal. To be eternal God must also be immaterial since only immaterial things are immune from change. Additionally, as an immaterial being, God is not extended in space.

The Neo-Platonic God of Plotinus (204 - 270) is the source of the universe, which is the inevitable overflow of divinity. In that overflow, the universe comes out of God (*ex deo*) in a timeless process. It does not come by creation because that would entail consciousness and will, which Plotinus claimed would limit God. The first emanation out of God (*nous*) is the highest, successive emanations being less and less real. Finally, evil is matter with no form at all, and as such has no positive existence. God is an impersonal It who can be described only in terms of what he is not. This negative way of describing God (the *via negativa*) survived well into the middle ages. Though God is beyond description, Plotinus (perhaps paradoxically) asserted a number of things, such as that virtue and truth are inherent in God. Because for Plotinus God cannot be reached intellectually, union with the divine is ecstatic and mystical. His thought influenced a number of Christian mystics, such as Meister Eckhart (1260-1327).

These three philosophers were pioneers and giants in approaching a conception of God through rational thinking rather than through mythical archetypes. They laid the foundations for posterior philosophers, that although born into one of the major religions of the time, they struggled to portrayed God in philosophical terms that were

not totally divorced from the original ideas of the above Greek giants. We will mention two Islamic philosophers that had great influence.

Islamic Neoplatonist al-Farabi (875-950) held that universals are in things and have no existence apart from particulars. Objects are contingent in that they may or may not exist; they do not have to exist. Therefore, there must be something that *has* to exist-that exists necessarily- to ground the existence of all other (contingent) things. This being is God. The world evolves by emanation, and matter is a phase of that process. The potential in matter is made actual, and over time God brings out its form. Thought is one emanation from God, and through it, knowledge arises in humans. The actualized human intellect becomes an immortal substance.

Avicenna (Ibn Sina; 980-1037), a Muslim, also distinguished between God as the one necessary being and all other things, which are contingent. The world is an emanation from God as the outworking of his self-knowledge. As such it is eternal and necessary. God must thus be eternal and simple, existing without multiplicity. In their essence, things do not contain anything that accounts for their existence. They are hierarchically arranged such that the existence of each thing is accounted for by something ontologically higher. At the top is the one Being whose existence is necessary. From contingent things we come to know universals, whereas God knows universals *prior* to their existence in things.

Anselm (1033-1109), archbishop of Canterbury, raised the perfect being concept to a new level by making it the foundation of his celebrated ontological argument. He accepted that God is the highest level of Being under which there are, by degrees, lesser and lesser beings. Similar to Plato, Anselm assumes the realist view that entities which share an attribution, such as “good,” also share in being. And somewhere there must be a perfection of that being (e.g., perfect goodness). That perfection is God.

Though a Muslim and an Aristotelian, Averroes (Ibn Rushd; 1126-1198) added to the growing concept of emanation by claiming that the universal mind is an emanation from God. Humans participate in this universal mind and only it, not the soul, is immortal. The mind of the common person understands religious symbols in a literal way, whereas the philosopher interprets them allegorically. Consequently, something understood as true philosophically may be untrue theologically, and vice versa.

Working from Judaism, Maimonides (1135-1204) accepted creation rather than an eternal universe. He drew from philosophic traditions to formulate three proofs based on the nature of God, and these were developed further by Aquinas. Following Aristotle, Maimonides demonstrated the existence of a Prime Mover, and with some inspiration from Avicenna, the existence of a necessary Being. He also showed God to be a primary cause. Though he considered God's existence demonstrable, he held that nothing positive could be said about God.

The net conclusion presented by this chapter's frame of reference is that whatever the ancient philosophers said about God were an honest effort to understand, to affirm something of His Unknowable Essence. It is hard to attribute to them the source of their inspiration as based on any specific Revelation because most of the ancient Revelations were not written down until many years, sometimes centuries after the death of the Manifestation that revealed it. Regardless of such well-intentioned efforts of these philosophers, they cannot be considered to be an authoritative source, much less that they described accurately God's Attributes as were done by the Manifestations whose teachings founded the religions of the past. The modern philosophers were far more clearly influenced by the Judeo-Christian and Islamic religions. Each one of them had a Manifestation, as the Spokesperson for God, who Revealed to us an intelligible description of God's Attributes, which in various interpretations, were included in their philosophical reflections on God.

Early recorded religious expressions of God

Historical records show that the major world religions claim that they have some knowledge of Who God is because it was transmitted by their Prophet founders, who claimed to have been Spokespersons on behalf of God. The documented worldwide religions, which claim to have unequivocal, although very limited, knowledge of Who God is, are: Hinduism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and the Bahá'í Faith.

The Bahá'í Faith, through the grandson of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, (the son of the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, Bahá'u'lláh), Shoghi Effendi, clarified that God had sent His Messengers to humanity ever since it appeared on Earth to guide its spiritual evolution. The problem is that their teachings were not recorded as well as the myths we have presented and thus we tend to make the judgment that God had not dialogued with humanity before the recordings of the Teachings of the major ancient religions were made, which in the most ancient ones did not take place until several centuries after the passing of the Prophet founders when their teachings were finally put into their Holy Texts.

In Shoghi Effendi's words, this is how he expressed this ancient unrecognized religious reality,

Regarding your questions: the only reason there is not more mention of the Asiatic Prophets is because Their names seem to be lost in the mists of ancient history. Buddha is mentioned, and Zoroaster, in our Scriptures -- both non- Jewish Prophets or non-Semitic Prophets. We are taught there always have been Manifestations of God, but we do not have any record of Their names. (12)

Per the quote from Shoghi Effendi, it is clear that the records of Their teachings have been lost "in the mists of ancient history," so it is impossible to know the extent to which some of the ancient beliefs

recounted had an origin in Revelation, however much now obscured and supplanted by man-made traditions and beliefs. Rather than dismissing ancient traditions as entirely the product of human imagination and therefore invalid, they can be viewed as reflecting the early religious stirrings of humanity, of our early collective childhood.

Having clarified that important historical issue, we can now briefly look at what the major religions of the world have stated who God is and how we should perceive Him. Let us start with one of the oldest recorded religions, Hinduism.

Hinduism

Before presenting what Hinduism told us who God is, a general statement must be made, that is, that I am describing some Hindu beliefs (and there are many variations) which do not necessarily reflect the original teachings of Krishna.

In brief, Hinduism states that Brahma sprang from the cosmic golden egg (mythical symbolism) and then created good and evil, and light and darkness from his own person. The images of God as a creator are difficult to accept in a western mentality accustomed to the biblical creation story that has less mythical elements. Yet, the essence of the religious message is saved in as much as God (Brahma), the Creator, is One, the author of all creation. He also symbolizes the mind and intellect since He is the source of all knowledge necessary for the universe to be.

Additional interpretations asserted that for anything to exist and be, it had to have a divine presence within it, without which, the object would simply cease to exist. This firm belief served as the basis for the creation of a plethora of gods that were either personifications of natural forces of nature or archetypes of human qualities. Among those created by these interpreters were: Shiva who is considered to be the Destroyer god that brings rebirth and new life. He is also the protector of his followers from greed, lust and anger, as well as the illusion and ignorance that stand

in the way of divine enlightenment. One of the most prevalent and best-known deities is Ganesh, easily recognized by his elephant head. Ganesh is said to bestow wisdom and good fortune, remove obstacles, and is associated with the arts and sciences.

Zoroastrianism

Zoroaster, the Prophet founder (also spelled Zarathustra), was born around 628 BCE, possibly in Rhages, Iran—and died in 551 BCE. He revealed in his Teaching that there was only one God, whom he referred to as Ahura Mazda, or the “Wise Lord”. His teachings were set forth in the Avesta. It is believed to have been composed in Eastern Persia no later than 550 BCE.

He reiterated the first and foremost principle, as with Hinduism, that there is only One God named Ahura Mazda who was the Creator of heaven and earth—i.e., of the material and the spiritual world. He is the source of the alternation of light and darkness, the sovereign lawgiver, and the very center of nature. (13)

Judaism

Even though this was a progressive belief that gets clearer as the Old Testaments books are written, one statement is present from the very beginning of the story of the Hebrew people. That is, that God in only one, to whom all worship is given.

God presents Himself as the Lord, the one and only God of the people of Israel,

For I *am* the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for **I *am*** holy. (Levi. 11:44) - (emphasis by author)

And that there is no other God beside him. He has no equal.

I am the LORD, and *there is none* else, *there is no God beside me*: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me. (Isaiah 45:5) - (emphasis by author)

If there is one teaching given to humanity by Judaism that has withstood millennia of persecution, it was the staunch belief and affirmation that there is only One God that has no rival and stands autonomous from all man-made gods.

Additionally, the first book, Genesis, from its very beginning states unequivocally that God is the Creator of the whole Universe and all that is in it, including male and female in His “own image”.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry *land* appear: God said, Let the earth bring forth grass... *he made* the stars also. So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them (Gene. 1:1,3,4,9,11,16, 27)

Christianity

Christianity was born out from Jesus (a Jew) whose Teachings became the New Testament of the Bible. Christianity reiterates the previous religious teachings in as much as it asserts that,

- there is only one God (Mk 12:29; Eph 4:6; Jas 2:19)
- God is pure spirit (Jn 4:24; 1 Jn 4:12)
- God is the creator of the world (1 Ti 4:4; Heb 3:4)

- God is holy and good (Ro 3:4; Eph 4:24; Rev 4:8)
- God is all-powerful (Mt 19:26; Mk 2:7, 10:18)
- God is worthy of mankind's worship and love (Mt 6:24; Mk 11:22; Lk 2:14)
- God expects ethical behavior (Jn 6:29; Ac 8:21, 24:16; 2 Co 9:7; 1 Th 4:9; Jas 1:27; 1 Jn 3:9)
- God will judge wrongdoers (Ro 2:16, 3:19)

Where the New Testament differs from the Old Testament in its teachings about God is in its proclamation that God has chosen to reveal himself to mankind through Jesus Christ. Especially in the Gospel of John, it is emphasized that Jesus alone knows the Father completely and he came to help humans know God ("the Father") better.

- "The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands." (John 3:35)
- My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me." (John 7:16)

Islam

God is described and referred to in the Qur'an and hadith by 99 names that reflect His attributes. Islam's most fundamental concept is a strict monotheism called *tawhid*, affirming that God is one and incomparable (*wāḥid*).

- "He is the First and the Last, the Evident and the Immanent: and He has full knowledge of all things." Qur'an 57:3
- God is the Creator: "Praise be to Allah, the Creator of the heavens and the earth" Qur'an 35:1
- God is the most Merciful and Compassionate : "and My Mercy embraces all things." [Quran 7:156]

God is fully aware of everything that can be known. This includes private thoughts and feelings.

And indeed We have created man, and We know what his own self whispers to him. And We are nearer to him than his jugular vein. *Quran, Surah Oaf (50), Ayah 16*

Bahá'í Faith

The Prophet founder of the Bahá'í is known by his title of Baha'u'llah (the “Glory of God” in Arabic). Since we will be presenting in detail what he has Revealed are God's Attributes, I will present him and some of his life details in the next chapters.

CHAPTER 2

WHO CAN GIVE AN AUTHORITATIVE INTERPRETATION OF GOD'S ATTRIBUTES?

God's chosen channel of communication with humanity

The previous chapter left us with a dilemma. If we are incapable of knowing intimately and comprehensibly God's essence given our limitation as a created beings that cannot comprehend the Essence of their Creator, because we cannot even know ourselves completely, and with total clarity. Then how is it possible to know anything about God, and affirm with certainty that what we say about His Attributes is, in fact, a correct, truthful and authoritative statement?

For us to understand God's Attributes, without falling prey to subjectivism, fooling ourselves, making mistakes, supposing, inventing His reality based on our imagination, as those civilizations we mentioned previously did, it is necessary to have another alternative; that is, that God talks to us, and tells us what He wants us to know about Himself. In revealing to man that knowledge in a way that is

comprehensible, God has always used the simplest and foremost tool of human communication: the spoken word.

For God to become audible, the most natural way for this to happen is to manifest Himself through a human form whom we can see, touch, and listen because he behaves like one of us. Using a human form, the Divine dimension, radically removed from us, becomes visible, tangible, and minimally understandable. The spoken language is thus the most natural channel God has used when speaking to humanity. A spoken language is produced by a person. So, if God wants to communicate something about Himself to humans, it is logical to say that He would naturally do it through a tangible, visible individual that has been born into a specific culture, at a specific time and location, speaking the language of those hearing His Messenger, using the common images of the time to refer to transcendent and spiritual ideas.

This approach is the inverse of the process we have laid out in the previous chapter. If man created gods in his own “image and likeness”, in this new scenario it is God who presents himself to man, in the “image and likenesses of man”. In the first case, divinity is defined by man; in the second, God, through His Spokesperson, communicates with humankind using the same language spoken by those who will receive it, communicating to them that which He wishes them to learn about His Divinity, in human terms. By taking the initiative, God eliminates the subjectivism of individuals who imagine God, using their limited mental capacity.

This individual cannot be anyone who, spontaneously one day takes the initiative to proclaim that he is speaking on behalf of God. When he presents himself as God-chosen, he would be emphatic in making clear that he is not carrying out this role by personal choice. He is doing it because God has chosen him to carry out this mission. To be believable, he would be able to show signs and evidence that this election was God's not his, as was so well exemplified when Moses was summoned by God to be the liberator of the Hebrews (Exo. 3:7-10)

Another requirement that we would demand of God's Messenger is an unblemished, moral and ethical life. He must display the embodiment of human virtues that are identified, praised, and exalted by the group to whom He is preaching. Only one that lives according to what he preaches acquires the right to be accepted, to be credible. The validity of what God wants to communicate is more easily supported by a spotless life, a path lit by the admirable and in great perfection of the human qualities of authentic prophets, and messengers of Divinity.

If there are contradictions, hidden or obvious, between what he preaches and the way he lives; he loses credibility because it is not acceptable that a representative of Divinity transgresses the divine law that he is supposedly revealing. The private life of a true Messenger of God must be spotless, coherent, unblemished, without contradiction to what he is revealing. He should be able to maintain the message intact, defend it, and communicate it clearly, vehemently, and sincerely, independent of the adverse circumstances He may face in affirming such Revelation. These circumstances often include persecution, defamation, incarceration, torture, mockery and public ridicule, exile, even martyrdom.

Another requirement that we would expect of God's Spokesperson is that he has knowledge of God's Attributes in a way than no other mortal has. For this to happen, the Spokesperson of God lives in an intimate and permanent communion with God, allowing him to have a penetrating knowledge of God's Attributes that no other human being could ever achieve. He is born with this knowledge, although he does not manifest it until the appointed time when he proclaims to be the Messenger of God. This communion is so intense, profound, and intimate that when he affirms anything about God, it is objective, real and authoritative. The presence of the Spirit of God within this individual is so strong and intense that we can unequivocally affirm that "God resides within him", making it possible to proclaim, "God is present among us".

At the appropriate moment of his maturity, he will proclaim his role and present himself as the Spokesperson, the Messenger sent by God,

announcing that he brings an explicit Revelation that God wants to share through him with all those willing to listen. But once again, it is necessary to emphasize that, for the proclamation to have credibility and be acceptable, the unblemished lifestyle of the Messenger must coincide with the message he delivers. He must maintain integrity in his lifestyle throughout the rest of his life, regardless of the penalties, persecutions, and condemnations he may suffer for delivering such a Revelation.

The mysterious spiritual essence of the Spokesperson

There is more to the internal spiritual reality of the individual chosen by God than being a righteous person. To be able to speak about God, he must have a level of understanding of God's Attributes that no other human has. Knowledge that normal human beings do not have because they have not been chosen to carry out this mission of proclamation and revelation.

To start getting a glimpse of such a spiritual nature of the Messenger of God, let us affirm that all humans have a double nature, one being the lower nature and the other being the spiritual nature. The first one is the one that he shares with all sentient beings, making him capable of desiring that which he perceives to be good for him, to be pleasurable, to be satisfying to his senses, and to give him a sense of satisfaction of his basic biological needs, such as having daily food, sleeping, drinking, exercising, being able to dress, having a roof over his head, fulfilling basic emotional needs by showing affection through hugs and kisses, and expressing his sexuality.

The second nature is spiritual. This level of his being is capable of intuiting that he is not his body, that there is an internal reality within the encasement of his body that has multiple expressions: emotions, thoughts, imagination, creativity, self-awareness of an internal "I" that is constant regardless of the multiple diverse daily experiences; of which he is the silent witness of his own thoughts, emotions and behaviors.

The awareness that I am conscious of the “I” that is the core of who I am also gives me the awareness that this consciousness does not have a specific place within my mind and brain, that it is not constrained by space or time to manifest itself, that its reality transcends the constraints of the physical body, although it manifests itself using the body as the vehicle to show externally its inner reality in a manner that others can perceive it. This spiritual dimension that we have as humans is what previous religions meant when their teachings expressed that we were created in the “image and likeness” of our Creator. This spiritual reality is the one that allows us to perceive the good in others, the good we should do, and the bad actions that we should avoid because they hurt others. It is the moral compass that we all have and are born with, but which needs nourishment to develop fully so as to become the guiding light and motor of our free will decisions that are expressed in concrete behaviors.

This spiritual dimension of our human composition is the one that illuminates the profound reality and reason for our existence. In order to develop and grow we have to stimulate the dimensions of our personality such as determination, discipline, careful planning, and acquisition of multiple skills and concepts that allow us to become professionals for the benefit of our relatives, our sons and daughters and ultimately society. In as much as this personality dimension grows; to that measure our inner most important dimension, the spiritual, is given the chance and opportunity to express its ultimate reality: that we are spiritual beings having a human experience.

This preamble is necessary to comprehend how the individual chosen by God to be his Spokesperson must have a level of spiritual reality that is far beyond the level of the average person just described. Such an individual has to have an experience of God that surpasses all the experiences that have been manifested by average humans. His closeness to God gives him a privileged knowledge of God’s Attributes in a depth that no one else can or aspire to have knowing Him to a degree that no other human being can.

That divine presence in him is so strong and evident that he is transformed into a genuine Spokesperson of God. Thus, when this Messenger speaks, He does it in the name of God because, in fact, he is a perfect mirror of God's Attributes, as one who speaks the eternal Word of God.

Has this occurred anytime during mankind's history? Has anyone appeared meeting the above-mentioned requirements? If yes, do we have documents, historical records or an oral tradition that validates His appearance?

The answer is "Yes". Historically, there have been multiple Messengers who have given humans a Revelation in the name of God. Their initial followers presented the Revelation to those willing to hear it, who, in turn, have excited thousands of others to become followers, and gradually, His teachings spread widely as a religion. This has happened because the followers have been fully convinced that the Revelation received was surely divine and, therefore, its tenets should be followed. What is remarkable is how all of the known worldwide Revelations have answered the big spiritual questions humanity has posed since its appearance of Earth in progressive manner adapted to audience's intellectual and spiritual development they had at the moment the Revelation was given.

Who are the Messengers who founded major world religions? They include:

Krishna, who appeared in India around 3000 BC according to some historians and 1700 BC according to others. His teachings gave birth to the religion known as Hinduism, found mostly in India and some places in Asia. It has become popular in the West through the practice of Yoga, created by Hinduism as a meditative discipline to achieve "union with the divine". Today it has approximately 1.2 billion followers. (1)

Moses, who lived in Egypt around 1,300-1500 BC, whose teachings served as the basis for modern Judaism. Moses brought the Torah, known as the Law, cherished by Jews as a source of joy and blessing, but it has become a moral “*magna carta*” for humanity. Judaism today has about 14.6 million followers. (2)

Zoroaster appeared around 628 BC in Persia. His vision of God as the Creator of all that is good and Who alone is worthy of worship became the basis of Zoroastrianism. Today it has at most around 110,000–120,000 followers. (3)

Buddha appeared around 563 BC and His teachings on suffering on suffering and how to end it through inner and outer detachment became the basis of Buddhism. He did not elaborate on God’s innermost reality in as much he concentrated in teaching his followers how to go beyond suffering through the discipline of detachment, Today, depending on the source of information, it has somewhere around 244 million followers. (4)

Jesus started his Mission around the year 30 of the Common Era and proclaimed to be the expected Messiah, but not a political one, but rather a spiritual Messiah. His followers established Christianity, which today has approximately 2.3 billion followers. (5)

The prophet Muhammad, born in the Arabian Peninsula, revealed himself around 622 CE, proclaiming the Word of God as revealed to him which was afterwards recorded in the Qur’an. His followers created a complete empire based on Islamic law. It now claims to have 1.314 billion followers worldwide. (6)

The most recent of these divine Manifestations took place in Persia in 1844. A divine messenger, known as The Báb (title meaning “the Gate” in Arabic), tirelessly announced the imminent arrival of another Messenger greater than He. This Messenger, later known as Bahá'u'lláh (title meaning “the Glory of God” in Arabic), declared to be a Messenger of God in 1863. His personal writings are the basis of the Bahá'í Faith, which today has between 5 - 6 million followers worldwide. (7)

The Bahá'í Faith, through the grandson of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi, clarified that God had sent His Messengers to humanity ever since it appeared on Earth to guide its spiritual evolution. The problem is that their teachings were not recorded as well as the myths we have presented and thus we tend to make the judgment that God had not dialogued with humanity before the recordings of the Teachings of the major ancient religions were made.

In Shoghi Effendi's words, this is how he expressed this ancient unrecognized religious reality,

Regarding your questions: the only reason there is not more mention of the Asiatic Prophets is because Their names seem to be lost in the mists of ancient history. Buddha is mentioned, and Zoroaster, in our Scriptures -- both non- Jewish Prophets or non-Semitic Prophets. We are taught there always have been Manifestations of God, but we do not have any record of Their names. (8)

The Writings are replete with statements that God has always guided humanity through His Manifestations and always will. Many indigenous people who become Bahá'ís see in the Bahá'í Revelation the fulfillment of their own religious teachings, which are so ancient that only fragments remain. Unless a Manifestation is named in the Bahá'í

Writings or the Qur'án we cannot state with certainty that a particular figure was or was not a "Manifestation." There were others and thus it should not be assumed that prior to Krishna there were none.

Bahá'u'lláh, is thus the most recent of such Spokespeople (or Manifestation of God). He explained this spiritual dimension of the Messengers of God in his book, *The Kitáb-I Iqán (The Book of Certitude)*. Bahá'u'lláh explains that each of these God's Spokespersons has a twofold station. In his own words:

These Manifestations of God have each a twofold station. One is the station of pure abstraction and essential unity. In this respect, if thou callest them all by one name, and dost ascribe to them the same attributes, thou hast not erred from the truth. Even as He hath revealed: "No distinction do We make between any of His Messengers." For they, one and all, summon the people of the earth to acknowledge the unity of God, and herald unto them the Kawthar of an infinite grace and bounty. They are all invested with the robe of prophethood, and are honored with the mantle of glory. (9)

According to Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation, these Manifestations have a unity such that they can proclaim to be the return of all the Prophets proclaiming the same speech and Faith that is affirmed to be so by the subsequent Revelation:

It is clear and evident to thee that all the Prophets are the Temples of the Cause of God, Who have appeared clothed in divers attire. If thou wilt observe with discriminating eyes, thou wilt behold Them all abiding in the same tabernacle, soaring in the same heaven, seated upon the same throne, uttering the same speech, and proclaiming the same Faith. Such is the unity of

those Essences of Being, those Luminaries of infinite and immeasurable splendor! Wherefore, should one of these Manifestations of Holiness proclaim saying: "I am the return of all the Prophets," He, verily, speaketh the truth. In like manner, in every subsequent Revelation, the return of the former Revelation is a fact, the truth of which is firmly established. (10)

Then Bahá'u'lláh explains the second station as being:

The other station is the station of distinction, and pertaineth to the world of creation, and o the limitations thereof. In this respect, each Manifestation of God hath a distinct individuality, a definitely prescribed mission, a predestined revelation, and specially designated limitations. Each one of them is known by a different name, is characterized by a special attribute, fulfills a definite mission, and is entrusted with a particular Revelation. (11)

This explanation accounts for the differences in personality, individuality and prescribed mission that many times were misinterpreted, especially by the religious leaders, as being in contradiction from what the previous Manifestations had expounded.

In Bahá'u'lláh's own words, these Beings reside in a realm of spiritual existence that is completely separate from all humans, and in a proximity to God that is not shared by any one of us:

Thereupon, they will behold the countenance of the promised One, the adored Beauty, descending from heaven and riding upon the clouds. By this is meant that the divine Beauty will be made manifest from the heaven of the will of God, and will appear in the form of the human temple. The term "heaven" denoteth loftiness

and exaltation, inasmuch as it is the seat of the revelation of those Manifestations of Holiness, the Day-springs of ancient glory. These ancient Beings, though delivered from the womb of their mother, have in reality descended from the heaven of the will of God. Though they be dwelling on this earth, yet their true habitations are the retreats of glory in the realms above. Whilst walking amongst mortals, they soar in the heaven of the divine presence. Without feet they tread the path of the spirit, and without wings they rise unto the exalted heights of divine unity. With every fleeting breath they cover the immensity of space, and at every moment traverse the kingdoms of the visible and the invisible. (12)

This proximity, this “soaring in the divine presence” allows these Manifestations to have the closeness to the Creator that no else can have. It also gives these Luminaries a knowledge of Who God is, that surpasses any human knowledge, no matter how refined and profound it might be.

Their closeness and proximity to God has one purpose: to proclaim to humans that Revelation which they have been given as their life’s Mission. Again, Bahá’u’lláh declares this purpose of his being when he stated that he was “The Promised One”:

Say, God is my witness! The Promised One Himself hath come down from heaven, seated upon the crimson cloud with the hosts of revelation on His right, and the angels of inspiration on His left, and the Decree hath been fulfilled at the behest of God, the Omnipotent, the Almighty. (13)

We can conclude that, for us to learn something comprehensible of God’s reality, in the most authoritative manner, it is necessary that

He reveals it unto us, because our limited understanding is unable to comprehend such a reality as Bahá'u'lláh declared:

“Every man of insight hath confessed his powerlessness to scale the heights of Thy knowledge, and every man of learning hath acknowledged his failure to fathom the nature of Thine Essence”. (14)

This knowledge of God's intimacy has been revealed to us in the past when God has taken the initiative to speak to mankind, through His Messengers, using the language of the group they spoke to, so that they could understand His Revelation.

This manner of learning about God's Attributes is far more accurate and less bound by subjective, historical, and temporal interpretations of people imagining Who He might be. Anything that God reveals to us about Himself when done through one of His Messengers is guaranteed that whatever is revealed is closer to the truth of His Attributes than any statement created by our imagination or the elevated capacity of those giant thinkers ever present in our history. When a Messenger of God describes Him in an understandable manner, it arises from the innate knowledge that the Messenger has of God's Attributes. Such a declaration is not the result of our personal efforts or collective attempts to define God; instead, it is the Revelation that God Himself has given us through His spokesperson, the Manifestation.

Bahá'u'lláh was chosen by God

Bahá'u'lláh was quite clear in affirming that his Mission was not a self-made election. He was summoned by God to carry out this Mission. He expressed it clearly when he narrates how a Maiden from heaven appeared to him while he was imprisoned in Teheran in a dungeon known as the Black Pit, and announced to him that He was the Promised One. In his own words:

While engulfed in tribulations I heard a most wondrous, a most sweet voice, calling above My head. Turning My face, I beheld a Maiden -- the embodiment of the remembrance of the name of My Lord -- suspended in the air before Me... Pointing with her finger unto My head, she addressed all who are in heaven and all who are on earth, saying: By God! This is the Best-Beloved of the worlds, and yet ye comprehend not. This is the Beauty of God amongst you, and the power of His sovereignty within you, could ye but understand. This is the Mystery of God and His Treasure, the Cause of God and His glory unto all who are in the kingdoms of Revelation and of creation, if ye be of them that perceive. (15)

Bahá'u'lláh had innate knowledge of God as only a Manifestation has it

Bahá'u'lláh exhibited throughout his life the premises presented that showed he was a Messenger of God. He never went to a school or university, yet he was able to converse fluently regarding difficult passages of the Qur'an and the Bible shedding, new light on, and meaning to them because he had innate knowledge.

A true Manifestation of God has an innate knowledge of the Creator that no other human being has. In the book, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, He expounds on how the “luminous Gems of Holiness” (the Manifestations) “appear out of the realm of the spirit”, (meaning that they reside on a level of being beyond that of other human beings) in the noble form of the human temple” (when they appear at a precise historical moment) to speak to humanity about “the subtleties of His imperishable Essence” of which we humans have no direct knowledge like the Manifestation has:

The door of the knowledge of the Ancient of Days being thus closed in the face of all beings, the Source of infinite grace, according to His saying, “His grace hath transcended all things; My grace hath encompassed them all,” hath caused those luminous Gems of Holiness to appear out of the realm of the spirit, in the noble form of the human temple, and be made manifest unto all men, that they may impart unto the world the mysteries of the unchangeable Being, and tell of the subtleties of His imperishable Essence. (16)

This new explanation of the excellence of being of the Manifestation authorized to explain to us the “mysteries of the unchangeable Being, and tell of the subtleties of His imperishable Essence” is still further expanded by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the son of Bahá’u’lláh, who – having been authorized by his father to be the Sole Interpreter of his teachings - amplifies Bahá’u’lláh’s thoughts with several additional nuances that complete the picture of the Manifestation’s divine nature without being God, the Unknowable Essence incarnated. In a collection compiled mostly of His talks which appear in the book, *Divine Philosophy*, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is reported to have explained further this unique characteristic of God’s Spokespersons:

The sun emanates from itself and does not draw its light from other sources. The divine teachers have *the innate light; they have knowledge and understanding of all things in the universe*; the rest of the world receives its light from them and through them the arts and sciences are revived in each age.

Abraham and Moses went to no school; Jesus had neither school nor master; Mohammed never had a lesson; the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh had no professors. Read the books written by Bahá’u’lláh - the philosophers and savants in the Orient will bear witness to his eloquence

and learning. In the Orient this is considered a proof of his divinity. There they say, “If someone can write a letter like Bahá’u’lláh, Baha’u’llah’s divinity can be denied.” *No one has yet competed*. (17) (emphasis by author)

Thus, the Manifestation has a knowledge of God that is not learned in human schools; it is already present in his inner self when he is born, because it is a knowledge received from God directly while the spirit of the Manifestation of God dwells in the spiritual dimension, from whence his Spirit comes.

This knowledge, received directly from the Divine source, can be confirmed as being authoritative and certain because God would not want to deceive humans by offering them knowledge about Himself that is anything less than truthful, correct, or authoritative. The Manifestation, like a polished mirror reflects God’s Attributes in their entire splendor for us humans to be able to perceive. Even then, we are not equipped to see its full potency. According to the Old Testament Book of Exodus, the Children of Israel requested that Moses cover his face because it shone forth with such brightness when he came down the Mount Sinai with the tablets of the Ten Commandments, that they could not bear to look at his face (Exo. 34:35). Such is the power of God’s presence in a Manifestation.

Bahá’u’lláh’s gave his son, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the delegated authority to interpret his Writings. He elaborates on this new manner of understanding the divine nature of the Manifestation by making the analogy of them to a perfect polished mirror that reflect God’s Attributes in an unblemished manner:

“As to the Holy Manifestations of God, They are the focal points where the signs, tokens and perfections of that sacred, pre-existent Reality appear in all their splendour. They are an eternal grace, a heavenly glory, and on

Them dependeth the everlasting life of humankind. To illustrate: the Sun of Truth dwelleth in a sky to which no soul hath any access, and which no mind can reach, and He is far beyond the comprehension of all creatures. Yet the Holy Manifestations of God are even as a looking-glass, burnished and without stain, which gathereth streams of light out of that Sun, and then scattereth the glory over the rest of creation. In that polished surface, the Sun with all Its majesty standeth clearly revealed. Thus, should the mirrored Sun proclaim, 'I am the Sun!' this is but truth; and should It cry, 'I am not the Sun!' this is the truth as well. And although the Day-Star, with all Its glory, Its beauty, Its perfections, be clearly visible in that mirror without stain, still It hath not come down from Its own lofty station in the realms above, It hath not made Its way into the mirror; rather doth It continue to abide, as It will forever, in the supernal heights of Its own holiness. (18)

We now have a comprehensive picture of what are the extraordinary qualities that a human must possess to be a Spokesperson of God and an authentic Messenger speaking on His behalf.

Reactions of people that met Bahá'u'lláh

All those that came into the presence of Bahá'u'lláh and gave an account of how they perceived him as a Master, a Messenger, or a Divine Prophet is an excellent way of confirming what we have said constitutes the divine qualities of a Manifestation.

We have the written testimony of Edward Browne, a scholar of Eastern religions from Cambridge, England, who was considered to be one of the top experts on oriental studies of his time. He heard about the Babi Revelation and was very interested in learning more about it. He went to Iran and met with people who had known The Bab and heard of

Bahá'u'lláh. Even though he was neither a Baha'i nor an Easterner; he felt he had to meet Bahá'u'lláh, whom he did in 1890. Given that he was a historian, an intellectual, and not a particularly religious man, we might reasonably expect that he would not ordinarily have confessed to spiritual stirrings unless they had been too great to be excluded from his account of the meeting with Bahá'u'lláh. As an academic, he would have known that such sentiments would be scorned by many of his peers.

When he did arrive at Bahá'u'lláh's residence, he recounted that he was not even certain if or when the interview was to take place. Yet, the account of how he was impacted when it did happen, only shows the impressive spiritual energy that emanated from Bahá'u'lláh. Indeed, a true testimony of the authenticity of Bahá'u'lláh as a Manifestation:

. . . my conductor paused for a moment while I removed my shoes. Then, with a quick movement of the hand, he withdrew, and, as I passed, replaced the curtain; and I found myself in a large apartment, along the upper end of which ran a low divan, while on the side opposite to the door were placed two or three chairs. Though I dimly suspected whither I was going and whom I was to behold (for no distinct intimation had been given to me), a second or two elapsed ere, with a throb of wonder and awe, I became definitely conscious that the room was not untenanted. In the corner where the divan met the wall sat a wondrous and venerable figure. . . . The face of him on whom I gazed I can never forget, though I cannot describe it. Those piercing eyes seemed to read one's very soul; power and authority sat on that ample brow; while the deep lines on the forehead and face implied an age which the jet-black hair and beard flowing down in indistinguishable luxuriance almost to the waist seemed to belie. No need to ask in whose presence I stood, as I bowed myself before one who is

the object of a devotion and love which kings might
envy and emperors sigh for in vain! (19)

'Abdu'l-Bahá, the son of Bahá'u'lláh, gives the following description of what happened to a fervent follower of Bahá'u'lláh when he finally was able to be in His presence in the prison in Akka (present day Akko, Israel). The impression of being in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh was so great that he fell unconscious, showing the spiritual force that the Manifestation radiated:

He came in such ecstasy as cannot be described and was admitted to the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. When he entered there and lifted his eyes to the Blessed Beauty he shook and trembled and fell unconscious to the floor. Bahá'u'lláh spoke words of loving-kindness to him and he rose again. (20)

'Abdu'l-Bahá also wrote of Haji Abdu'llah, who was a man confident, steadfast and firm, and wanted to be near Bahá'u'lláh. He left his native Persia, hastened to the Holy Land, where Bahá'u'lláh was imprisoned by the Turkish government, and finally came into His presence, finding himself in a state of grace and peace of heart. This is how 'Abdu'l-Bahá described the encounter:

Later he returned from Ghawr, settled near Bahá'u'lláh in Junayna, and came often into His presence. His eyes were fixed on the Abhá Kingdom; sometimes he would shed tears and moan, again he would rejoice, glad because he had achieved his supreme desire. He was completely detached from all but God, happy in God's grace. He would keep a vigil most of the night, remaining in a state of prayer. (21)

Another example of unflinching desire to be near and serve Bahá'u'lláh was given by Jinab-i-Mirza Musa, the true brother of Bahá'u'lláh. From

earliest childhood he was reared in the sheltering embrace of the Most Great Name (another way people referred to Bahá'u'lláh). He showed an extraordinary attachment to Him. After their father died, Mirza Musa was brought up by Bahá'u'lláh, growing to maturity under His care. Day by day, the youth's servitude and devotion increased. In all things, he lived according to the commandments of Bahá'u'lláh, and he was entirely severed from any thoughts of this world. 'Abdu'l-Bahá described Mirza Musa's fidelity in these terms, showing the spiritual force that Bahá'u'lláh had on his relatives:

Like a bright lamp, he shone out in that Household. He wished neither rank nor office, and had no worldly aims at all. His one supreme desire was to serve Bahá'u'lláh, and for this reason he was never separated from his Brother's presence. No matter what torments the others inflicted, his loyalty equaled the cruelty of the rest, for he had drunk the wine of unadulterated love. (22)

Still, another formidable example of the power of attraction exerted by Bahá'u'lláh was the case of Ali-Akbar, who showed posterity how strong he desired to be near Bahá'u'lláh after he had the privilege of being in His presence in Iraq, where Bahá'u'lláh had being forced to go prior to the next exile in Adrianople, Turkey (modern day Edirne), then Akka. Haifa. He had to go back to Persia, but there, his longing to look upon Bahá'u'lláh once more made him decide to sever all connections and leave behind all his possessions. Then, with his wife, he set out over deserts and mountains, sometimes riding, sometimes on foot, measuring off the miles, passing from one shore to the other, enduring all those hardships, until he finally reached the Holy Place at last to find the peace and fulfillment of being in the shade of the Divine Lote-Tree (another way by which people referred to Bahá'u'lláh), finding safety and peace. (23)

The unshaken devotion and desire to serve Bahá'u'lláh, once he met Him, was well exemplified by Jamshid-i-Gurji, who came from the

country of Georgia. 'Abdu'l-Bahá gives the following testimony of his total obedience to Bahá'u'lláh's desire for him to give testimony of His Revelation in Constantinople, even though the possibility of imprisonment was very high. This did not deter Jamshid at all:

He remained in Persia for a time, then left for Rumelia, which was Ottoman territory, and in the Land of Mystery, Adrianople, won the honor of entering the presence of Bahá'u'lláh; it was there that his meeting took place. His joy and fervor were boundless. Later, at Bahá'u'lláh's command he made a journey to Constantinople, with Aqa Muhammad-Baqir and Aqa Abdu'l-Ghaffar. In that city, the tyrannous imprisoned him and put him in chains.... These two respected men were first imprisoned and caged; then they were sent out of Turkish territory, under guard to the Persian frontier... Once they were thrown into a pit, a kind of well, and suffered agonies all through the night. (24)

Those that came to be in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh felt the desire to stay and serve Him in whatever capacity they were allowed. This was the case of Jinab-i-'Azim, who, after being in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh when He was in Adrianople, kept on serving with love and loyalty, purely for the sake of God. His desire to continue serving Bahá'u'lláh motivated him to join Bahá'u'lláh's convoy departing for 'Akká. Azim received the distinction of accompanying Bahá'u'lláh, and did not hesitate to enter the Most Great Prison (the name given by Bahá'u'lláh to His prison in Akka), as long as he was able to serve Bahá'u'lláh. (25)

There are many, many more examples of individuals who showed complete devotion and a burning desire to serve Bahá'u'lláh once they were given the opportunity to be in His presence. The royalty of His demeanor and the spiritual force that emanated from Him were magnets that were impossible either to deny or reject. The spiritual fulfillment of

being in the presence of the Manifestation of God was such that these people did not desire anything else other than to serve Bahá'u'lláh.

This is one of the best proofs of Bahá'u'lláh's authenticity as a Manifestation of God. He had the same power of spiritual attraction as Jesus had when he chose his disciples, who left everything upon His invitation, as Mohammad had when he received those that acknowledged him for what He was, a representative of God speaking in His name.

We can now describe in the next chapter how Bahá'u'lláh fulfilled his purpose as a Manifestation.

CHAPTER 3

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, THE MOST RECENT MANIFESTATION OF GOD

Since the goal of this book is to present how we can understand Who God is as revealed by his most recent Spokesperson, the Manifestation of God known as Bahá'u'lláh (the “Glory of God” in Arabic), it is imperative that we give a very short summary of his life to verify how he fulfilled the requisites expressed in the previous chapter of a true Spokesperson of God.

He was born in Tehran, Persia (modern-day Iran), in 1817, and was given the birth name of Mirzá Husayn-'Ali. His father, one of the chief counselors of the King of Persia, was highly regarded by the King and his court and the family enjoyed a comfortable economic status. Nineteen years before Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed himself as a Manifestation of God, a 25-year-old young man, known by His followers as The Báb, declared on May 22, 1844, that He was the promised Qá'im (“He who has arisen”) of Islam, the return of the Twelfth Imam awaited by Shiite Muslims for 1,000 years. The 12th Imam lived around 260. So, the time between his disappearance and his reappearance in the person of the

Báb would have been approximately 1,000 lunar years. In the Muslim calendar date, it was 1260 B.E.

The Báb means “the Door” or “the Gate” in Arabic. The Báb explained that He was the Gate by which God’s long-awaited Revelation would come forth into the world. A central theme of his best-known book, *The Bayan*, revolves around the appearance of a new Messenger of God, more eminent than The Báb himself, whose Mission would be to bring about the peace and justice proclaimed by Islam, Judaism, Christianity and all the other major religions. Bahá’u’lláh had already become one of the Bab’s active followers although he had not met him in person but declared that the Bab was whom He said he was after reading a tablet written to his followers. Since early on Bahá’u’lláh showed signs of His potential lofty future station.

After The Báb’s execution on July 9, 1850, instigated by the Muslim religious leaders of Iran, Bahá’u’lláh’s extraordinary personality, intelligence, leadership, deep spirituality, lofty virtues of compassion, detachment, and generosity attracted many of the Báb’s followers, who turned to Him for guidance. This unexpected turn of events angered the religious leaders and government officials of Iran, who redoubled their efforts to extinguish the flame of the new religion as soon as possible.

In 1852, they arrested Bahá’u’lláh and incarcerated him in a dungeon prison made from deep storage wells used to feed Teheran’s public baths. It was known as the “Black Pit” because it was so dark that no light reached the prisoners, because it was three stories underground. The prisoners were shackled to the walls and to each other without access to any hygienic facilities, forcing them to share the dark enclosure with vermin and their own body wastes.

It was in this prison that Bahá’u’lláh received God’s Revelation from the Celestial Maiden. In his own words, “Turning My face, I beheld a Maiden -- the embodiment of the remembrance of the name of My

Lord -- suspended in the air before Me”, (1) who announced to Him that He was the Promised One of all religions. Bahá'u'lláh did not mention this Revelation to any of his prison mates or anyone else, until it was the right moment, ten years later at the end of his exile in Baghdad, before He was forced to go as a prisoner to Constantinople.

After four months in the Black Pit, the Persian authorities decided it would be best to expel Bahá'u'lláh from the country under the conviction that it would halt the growth of the Bábí movement. They believed that if they removed Bahá'u'lláh, the followers of The Báb would soon disperse. Therefore, He was exiled to Baghdad, Iraq, forcing Him and His family to traverse the Zagros Mountains, on foot and on horseback, in the middle of winter in 1853 with the intention that He would perish under such perilous conditions. Despite the hardships, Bahá'u'lláh, his relatives and friends accompanying Him did not die. The trip lasted from January through April before they arrived at Baghdad. Bahá'u'lláh lived in Iraq for the next ten years, during which time His reputation as leader of the Bábís grew. New followers increased in numbers. They came to visit and consult Him, coming from many regions of Iran.

The Prime Minister of Iran, not pleased that the new Faith was growing in Baghdad, managed to convince the Ottoman government that ruled Iraq to exile Bahá'u'lláh once more. This time, He was sent to Constantinople (Istanbul today). Before leaving Baghdad, in May 1863, Bahá'u'lláh had a 12-day farewell meeting with his followers on an island on the Tigris River, during which He revealed that He was the Manifestation of God proclaimed by The Báb. His exile in Constantinople lasted only four months. From there, He and His family were again forced to continue the exile to Adrianople (today known as Edirne), located at the intersection of the Turkish, Greek and Bulgarian borders in Northwest Turkey, where He resided for four years and four months. During this time, He sent personal letters to the kings and rulers of the world announcing that He was God's next Manifestation requesting them to acknowledge Him as such.

After Adrianople, Bahá'u'lláh was banished even further, to the prison-town of Akka, on the Bay of Haifa (located in present day Israel), the furthest point of the Ottoman Empire on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. He was sent there under the assumption that He would die due to the terrible jail conditions, such as the lack of basic sanitation, very poor nourishment, the presence of mortal diseases, such as cholera and no protection in the cells from the cold or rain since there were only barred, open holes serving as windows with no protective glass. The enormous distance and formidable obstacles did not prevent many of Bahá'u'lláh's followers from making the trip from Iran and Iraq to Akka to be in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, even if it was standing in front of his cell from the outside of the prison wall, only able to see His waving hand. Later, other visitors were able to be in His presence when He came out of the prison and was placed under house arrest.

It was during the latter part of His life (about 1873) that Bahá'u'lláh wrote the most important book of His Revelation, the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, known as the *Most Holy Book*. It contains the laws of life given by Bahá'u'lláh to His followers as the most effective means of reaching their ultimate goal, being in the Presence of God. Additionally, He created the outline of what would become the foundation of the Bahá'í Administration and the new world order to come, the arrival of God's Kingdom on Earth. His Writings also included a multitude of letters addressing many diverse topics from spiritual advice to clarifications of the meaning of specific difficult verses of the Qur'an and the Bible, the revelation of multiple prayers for various needs; the exposition of spiritual truths such as life after death, the nature of the soul, the equality of man and woman from the moment of their creation, and the relationship of the soul with God.

Thus, Bahá'u'lláh lived according to the premises presented as signs of a Messenger of God. He never went to a school or university, yet he was able to converse fluently regarding difficult passages of the Qur'an and the Bible that were at that time discussed by the learned scholars shedding new light and meaning to them because He had

innate knowledge. On one occasion Bahá'u'lláh was confronted by the religious leaders trying to discredit his knowledge before a congregation of scholars and instigated rubble who was willing to execute him. This is the narration of his son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, of how Bahá'u'lláh showed the power of his knowledge:

Inside the Mosque were assembled the Doctors of Religion. Bahá'u'lláh stood before them, and answered all their questions with great wisdom. The chief sage in particular, was completely silenced by Bahá'u'lláh, who refuted all his arguments... These priests were entirely humiliated, for Bahá'u'lláh proved before the whole assembly that the Báb was absolutely right, and that the accusation was made in ignorance. (2)

Bahá'u'lláh's lifestyle was in accordance to his station

He renounced the invitation by the Shah to fill the position of his father in the Court of the Shah when he died. Instead, He shared the wealth he inherited with the poor of the city; and acknowledged the previous Messenger, the Bab, becoming a follower. For this reason, He suffered imprisonment in two of the worst jails of both empires, four exiles with his family who had to suffer the rigors of traveling during the winter with no provisions or adequate clothing, an intent to poison him that left him with a shaking hand, the betrayal of his half-brother who wanted to become the leader of the Bábís in exile, the death of his own son in his arms when he had an accident in the prison of Akka, the constant harassment of the authorities in all the places he was exiled, the insults of those instigated by the religious authorities, the mistreatment and malnourishment of the prisons, as well as the public demeaning of His person by the local authorities. He accepted and suffered all of this because he was steadfast in his mission of speaking in the name of God and offering a new Revelation from God. He could have avoided this forty-year suffering by simply renouncing God's call and refusing to speak in His name. He did not. He was faithful to His calling regardless

of the countless trials and burdens that He was subjected to during all those years.

Bahá'u'lláh affirms that He is the Promised One of all religions

Bahá'u'lláh refers to his appearance as being the fulfillment of the prophecies of the past as they appeared in so many Sacred Texts. He clearly states that the Promised One was expected by many before His coming. Yet, when He did appear many refused to acknowledge him:

VI. Behold, how the divers peoples and kindreds of the earth have been waiting for the coming of the Promised One. No sooner had He, Who is the Sun of Truth, been made manifest, than, lo, all turned away from Him, except them whom God was pleased to guide. (3)

VII. Verily I say, this is the Day in which mankind can behold the Face, and hear the Voice, of the Promised One. The Call of God hath been raised, and the light of His countenance hath been lifted up upon men. (4)

Those that did recognize him rejoiced in having witness that moment:

Thus, counselleth you He Who is the Dayspring of Names, as bidden by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. The Promised One hath appeared in this glorified Station, where at all beings, both seen and unseen, have rejoiced. (5)

Bahá'u'lláh explains that He is the return of all previous Manifestations

Bahá'u'lláh also affirmed to his followers that he was the return of all the previous Manifestations thereby expressing his link to all of them in a manner that left no doubt as to the internal unity that exists among all Manifestations to proclaim one continuous Revelation, the one that

God had given each Manifestation to present to those to whom they spoke at their specific time and place. In his own words:

It is clear and evident to thee that all the Prophets are the Temples of the Cause of God, Who have appeared clothed in divers' attire. If thou wilt observe with discriminating eyes, thou wilt behold them all abiding in the same tabernacle, soaring in the same heaven, seated upon the same throne, uttering the same speech, and proclaiming the same Faith. Such is the unity of those Essences of being, those Luminaries of infinite and immeasurable splendour. Wherefore, should one of these Manifestations of Holiness proclaim saying: "I am the return of all the Prophets," He verily speaketh the truth. (6)

This internal unity of the Manifestations does not deny the specific individuality of each of them and that each one had a particular Revelation to give, thus allowing for differences and nuances in the content, that nevertheless do not contradict that which was revealed about God's Attributes by the previous Messenger:

In this respect, each Manifestation of God hath a distinct individuality, a definitely prescribed mission, a predestined revelation, and specially designated limitations. Each one of them is known by a different name, is characterized by a special attribute, fulfills a definite mission, and is entrusted with a particular Revelation. (7)

The differences that may appear in their assigned Revelation is due to the level and capacity of those listening to understand and comprehend, not due to any shortcomings from the Manifestations:

For every age requireth a fresh measure of the light of God. Every Divine Revelation hath been sent down in a manner that befitted the circumstances of the age in which it hath appeared. (8)

Bahá'u'lláh declares without margin of doubt that He represents God

Bahá'u'lláh repeatedly states that He has come as a representative of God with a Mission to speak in His Name. Two quotations from His Writings clearly and assertively affirm this:

“When I contemplate, O my God, the relationship that bindeth me to Thee, I am moved to proclaim to all created things ‘verily I am God’; and when I consider my own self, lo, I find it coarser than clay!”. (9)

“Glory be to Thee, O my God! My face hath been set towards Thy face, and my face is, verily, Thy face, and my call is Thy call, and my Revelation Thy Revelation, and my self is Thy Self, and my Cause Thy Cause, and my behest Thy behest, and my Being Thy Being, and my sovereignty Thy sovereignty, and my glory Thy glory, and my power Thy power.” (10)

This assertion implies a deeper meaning that should be explained. By declaring that he represents God to those hearing his Revelation, Bahá'u'lláh does not only has the authority and mission to give us the most comprehensive description of God's Attributes as the best representation that we could ever aspire to have of Him. Bahá'u'lláh is not only the Creative Word expressing that reality about God that we can understand; he is the embodiment of them all. We have a description of this mysterious reality through his son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who explained:

When we examine the world and the souls of men, the perspicuous signs of the perfections of the Divinity appear clear and manifest, for the realities of all things attest to the existence of a universal Reality. The reality of the Divinity is even as the sun, which from the heights of its sanctity shines upon every land, and of whose radiance every land and every soul receives a share. Were it not for this light and this radiance, nothing could exist. Now, all created things tell of this light, partake of its rays, and receive their portion thereof, but the full splendour of the perfections, bounties, and attributes of the Divinity shines forth from the reality of the Perfect Man, that is, that unique Individual Who is the universal Manifestation of God. For the other beings have each received only a portion of that light, but the universal Manifestation of God is the mirror held before this Sun, and the latter manifests itself therein with all its perfections, attributes, signs, and effects. (11)

Thus, through this explanation we can perceive how those having the privilege to have been in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh were not only blessed by his exposure of how to understand something meaningful about God's Attributes, he was at the same time the embodiment of all those Attributes, which could be experienced in his presence. We learn what these attributes mean or look like in practice through Bahá'u'lláh's life and the life of his son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who was considered to be the Ideal Exemplar of a man living such attributes at an excelled level of perfection.

Bahá'u'lláh clarifies that, even though he was a Manifestation, he was aware of his humanity

The conviction with which Bahá'u'lláh knows Himself to be speaking in God's name is proclaimed with no hesitation, at no time annuls his

awareness of his human condition within whom the Divine Reality inhabits as can be understood by the following statements of Bahá'u'lláh:

“Say: “Naught is seen in my temple but the Temple of God, and in my beauty but His Beauty, and in my being but His Being, and in myself but Himself, and in my movement but His Movement, and in my acquiescence but His Acquiescence, and in my pen but His Pen, the Precious, the Extolled.” (12)

“When I contemplate, O my God, the relationship that bindeth me to Thee, I am moved to proclaim to all created things “verily I am God”; and when I consider my own self, lo, I find it coarser than clay!” (13)

This is a clear statement that the Manifestation is not God Himself, the Infinite, the Eternal that has “incarnated” in the humanity of the Messenger. Rather, it is the recognition that his humanity has been made divine by the purity and perfection of the Divine Attributes present in him, in such a degree and purity, that those in His presence can verily exclaim, “God dwells amongst us”.

Bahá'u'lláh's presentation of God's Attributes

The names and Attributes of God are present in multiple Sacred Writings of Bahá'u'lláh. But in the book known to the Baha'is as *Prayers and Meditations of Bahá'u'lláh*, they are repeated more times than in the other Writings, filling an impressive list of the different aspects of God's intimate Attributes. I will rely on this book heavily but encourage the reader to pay close attention to the many repetitions that Bahá'u'lláh makes in His other Writings when they engage in their investigative reading.

The book, *Prayers and Meditations of Bahá'u'lláh*, is particularly interesting because it is the organized extracts from Baha'u'llah's

countless prayers and passages that Shoghi Effendi translated and compiled into this book in 1938. (14) The prayers offer an array of God's Attributes in a spontaneous manner because Bahá'u'lláh is not writing a thesis or an explanation of Who God is. The prayers are rather fresh praises and acknowledgements of God's Supreme Reality that are born from Bahá'u'lláh's intimate connection with his Creator.

The Attributes of God recited by Bahá'u'lláh with such fervor and unrestricted spontaneity are an indication of how closely He was in God's presence that He could not restrain himself from acknowledging God's greatness in a continuous flow of praises and names. We will make an effort to organize those Attributes repeated by Bahá'u'lláh in a way that helps us to obtain a coherent image of God as affirmed by a Manifestation that has innate knowledge of God's Attributes and participates in a proximity and closeness to God than no other human being can ever have.

The Attributes that God possesses according to Bahá'u'lláh that appear in the book, *Prayers and Meditations of Bahá'u'lláh*, are extremely varied and do not follow an organized description. The following chapters are my effort to find appropriate categories that seem to fit best and give a comprehensive and ample picture of God's Attributes as much as we can apprehend them. I first present the Attributes that seem to refer to God as the "Eternal Creator, then "God as Ruler and Ordainer", the way of establishing a relationship with us and the benefits we receive and lastly, "God as our Lord and Beloved", the expected response that we should have to God's invitation to have such a relationship with Him. The next chapter will tackle the first broad category of the Attributes that I include "God, as the Eternal Creator".

CHAPTER 4

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH'S PRESENTATION OF GOD AS ETERNAL CREATOR

I have organized the Attributes found in the book of *Prayers and Meditations of Bahá'u'lláh* by studying the expressions used by Bahá'u'lláh to refer to God, which suggested to me the category within which such Attributes seemed to naturally fall. This, by no means, implies that it is the only and best category that allows us to better grasp the vast meaning that each of the Attributes displays.

It is important to repeat that this is not the only book that presents God's Attributes. They are found throughout Bahá'u'lláh's Writings in a constant manner, but they are particularly concentrated in this book, which seems to summarize the Attributes dispersedly mentioned by Bahá'u'lláh in His other Writings. This is the reason for using *Prayers and Meditations of Bahá'u'lláh* to write this essay on Bahá'u'lláh's interpretation of God's Attributes in a way that allows us to understand and grasp an image of God that is comprehensible to our limited capacity.

Some of God's Attributes are mentioned multiple times in *Prayers and Meditations of Bahá'u'lláh*; others less frequently. Some are mentioned only once. Even if this is so, it suffices that a Manifestation mentions

any Attribute only once for it to be considered an intrinsic Attribute of God that helps us obtain a more complete understanding of His reality in a manner that we can comprehend.

Other Attributes are mentioned so many times that it gives the impression that Bahá'u'lláh had the urge to spontaneously repeat them as a way of praising God in a constant manner. A table of the Attributes and the number of times they appear in *Prayers and Meditations of Bahá'u'lláh* can be found in Appendix A, as well as the roman numeral number that identifies each of the prayers in the book where each can be found.

I have organized the Attributes by the categories that the content of the Attribute seems to suggest. This does not mean that they could not be placed under a different category; one that the reader may interpret a better way to describe the Attribute. The categories I have chosen serve to show the rainbow of aspects of those Attributes that Bahá'u'lláh shares with us so that we can a minimum understanding of God adapted to our limited knowledge of Who He is.

Bahá'u'lláh explained how all creation reflects an Attribute of God. But when it came to create the human soul, God did it in such a magnificent way that He impressed in its essence *all* His Attributes. This is how He explained it:

Upon the inmost reality of each and every created thing He hath shed the light of one of His names, and made it a recipient of the glory of one of His attributes. Upon the reality of man, however, He hath focused the radiance of all of His names and attributes, and made it a mirror of His own Self. Alone of all created things man hath been singled out for so great a favor, so enduring a bounty. (1)

This explanation allows us to use human categories to understand something of God because the above explanation of Bahá'u'lláh is

the frame of reference that helps us to comprehend our personal and individual inner spiritual essence. Whatever a Manifestation affirms as being an Attribute of God; this in turn, can be found potentially in a man's soul as its innermost reality, yet in a limited expression because he is a created being. So, whatever word or concept we use to express human attributes, these, in turn, reflect God's Attributes in a human limited and imperfect scale. If Bahá'u'lláh uses words and concepts referring to God that we can understand, it is because we are made in the "image and likeness of God", which allows us to reflect, in a limited manner, on God's infinite Attributes.

The above explanation equips us with words and concepts to comprehend something about God in a manner by which we can minimally grasp the implications of such Attributes. This comprehension, in turn, gives us a glimpse of God's greatness.

It is important to note that Bahá'u'lláh's son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, followed his father's example and wrote numerous prayers. They repeatedly express most of the same Attributes of God that Bahá'u'lláh presents in His prayers showing us how much he firmly believed in them as the optimal way of describing God is a way that we can understand Him. I will not make reference to them because the goal of this book is to present Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation on how to grasp God in a meaningful way.

I am inviting the reader to visit Appendix A so that he can grasp, by seeing the table, the richness of Bahá'u'lláh's description of God's Attributes. They are organized by the categories that each of the Attributes spontaneously suggested to me as being the best way to capture what the Attribute was expressing. I invite the readers to analyze both the category and the Attribute, and if they feel they would choose a different category, each reader can develop their own table. That exercise will give them a more personal appreciation of God's Attributes.

The Attributes are sometimes too rich to be limited to one category. They are therefore repeated occasionally in another category because one does not suffice to encompass its full meaning.

Appendix B compiles the Attributes that seem to describe God as “Ruler and Ordainer,” and Appendix C offers the Attributes that best express “God as our Lord and Beloved”, which includes the aspect of God’s relationship with us humans.

Additionally, the reader can appreciate the number of times some of the Attributes appear in the book in the online program *Ocean*, which can be downloaded free from the Internet by going to the webpage: <http://www.bahaieducation.org>. This number gives additional weight to how close and dear the Attribute was to Bahá'u'lláh that He is constantly repeating. Thus, we, too, can get a sense of, and a limited glimpse/ experience of God in some comprehensible human way.

God’s Unknowable Essence

Bahá'u'lláh, as have previous Messengers of God, affirmed categorically that we cannot know God in His Innermost Essence because our limited capacity of knowledge is not able to achieve that level of understanding of God’s Unknowable Essence. The following quotes are clear and categorical affirmations of such limitation that we humans have:

- All have confessed their powerlessness to attain unto the comprehension of Thine essence. – LXXIX ¹
- The quintessence of knowledge, O my Lord, proclaimeth its powerlessness to know Thee. – CIII
- For the attempt of the evanescent to conceive the signs of the Uncreated is as the stirring of the drop before the tumult of Thy billowing oceans.- CXIV

¹ The roman numerals indicate the prayers or meditations’ ID number from which the quote was taken in the book *Prayers and Meditations of Bahá'u'lláh*.

- (man is) powerless to soar into the atmosphere of the knowledge of Thine own Being. – CXIV
- No description by any created thing can ever reveal Thee, and no praise which any being is able to utter can express Thee. – CLIII
- I find myself completely unable to unravel the mystery of the least of Thy signs, how much more to apprehend Thine own Self. – CLXXIX

With such clarity and assertion, there is not much to add other than to simply accept what Bahá'u'lláh is affirming categorically that no human, regardless of his level of intelligence or understanding of spiritual realities, is able to grasp any aspect of the Essence of his Creator. It is too vast, too profound for a human mind to be able to understand and express adequately to others. The most an inspired person can achieve is to give a speculative, personal comprehension that will never express the full “picture-reality” of God’s Essence.

Bahá'u'lláh’s delegated his son, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, as the sole interpreter of his Writings. He reiterates the same assertion with a slightly different mode of expression, but making it clear that human knowledge of God’s Unknowable Essence is impossible:

“Knowing God, therefore, means the comprehension and knowledge of His attributes and not of His Reality. . . . The power of human understanding does not encompass the reality of the divine Essence: All that man can hope to achieve is to comprehend the attributes of the Divinity, the light of which is manifest and resplendent in the world and within the souls of men.” (2)

The only God

If there is one universal tenet of all major worldwide religions, it is the affirmation made by their Messengers that there is only One God, and

that there is no other god above, besides or below Him, the One God and Only God. He is Supreme; the One God has no rival, no competing god for His position or essence. He is Unique and is the only God of the Universe and of Creation.

Here are the best expressions that Bahá'u'lláh gives us of this supreme reality of God:

- (God) the One - CLXXV
- The One God – XXXI, CXIV
- There is no God but Thee – VII, X, XXX, XXXI, LIX
- There is no God beside Thee – XIV, XXI, XXVI, LVI
- There is none other God but Thee – XIX, XXV, XXVIII, XXXIII, LIX, LXIV
- there is none other God besides Thee – XXXIV
- No God is there but Thee – XXXVII, LXVI, XLVIII, LXIX
- No God is there beside Thee – LVI, LVI
- There is no God save Thee – XLIII, LXII, LXX
- Thou art God alone, - XXVII
- the Incomparable – XXIV, XXVII, XXXI, CXIV
- From everlasting Thou wert alone, with none to describe Thee, and wilt abide forever the same with no one else to equal or rival Thee. - CXIV
- All the atoms of the earth proclaim Thee to be God, and testify that there is none other God besides Thee. - CL

The number of times Bahá'u'lláh repeats “There is none other God but Thee” or similar expressions is His way of making this point clear and emphatic. God is only One. There is no other god with whom He ² has to share His Unique reality.

² If the pronoun “He” is used to refer to God is not based on any gender connotation. One should not refer to God in the neutral “It” because it is basically “it” is used to refer to an object, not to an individual.

Independent of any one

The above affirmation allows for an immediate conclusion. If “there is none other God besides Thee”, He is therefore completely independent of any one because He needs no one or cause to Be. He is the Absolute Independent.

- Thou hast, in Thyself, been independent of any one besides Thee and rich enough, in Thine own essence, to dispense with anyone except Thy Self - CIII,

God is One in Himself

God, being the One and only God, has a Unity within Himself that is absolute, total, and unique. There is no other being that can have such perfect and glorious internal unity. Bahá'u'lláh uses several expressions to present this innermost reality in such a way that one gets to feel the “image” that God is One in Himself in a degree of Unity that no other Being could ever aspire to have:

- The One Being, - XXIV, LXXV
- Thou hast, in Thyself, been independent of any one besides Thee and rich enough, in Thine own essence, to dispense with anyone except Thy Self, - CIII
- Thy transcendent unity – CI, CXIV
- Thy transcendent oneness – LXXIX, CI
- The light of Thy oneness – CXIV
- Thy transcendent oneness, and every created thing confesseth, by its very nature, its nothingness when compared with the sacred splendors of the light of Thy unity – CIII
- Thou art One in Thine own Self, one in Thy Cause, and one in Thy Revelation. - CLXXVI
- The effulgent light of Thy unity, - CLXXVI
- The ocean of Thy oneness and the heaven of Thine all-glorious unity. - CLXXIX

- From eternity Thou didst Thyself describe Thine own Self unto Thy Self, and extol, in Thine own Essence, Thine Essence unto Thine Essence. - CLXXXIV
- No one besides Thee hath ever been found worthy to be mentioned before the Tabernacle of Thy unity, - CLXXXIV
- None except Thyself hath proved himself capable of being praised within the hallowed court of Thy oneness. - CLXXXIV

That unity is qualified by Bahá'u'lláh in several ways: it is a “transcendent unity” meaning that it is beyond any man-known reality. That Oneness has its own splendor Bahá'u'lláh calls it “the light of Thy oneness”, which shines forth as an “effulgent light”. Oneness that has been His since Eternity extolling “Thine Essence unto Thine Essence”. This very Oneness is praised by all those aware of it and no one should praise his own unity because it is not only a limited unity, but also incomparable to God's Unity.

Self-Subsistent

For God to be the One God, the only God, as Bahá'u'lláh so emphatically expressed it, “There is none other God but Thee”, means that God's very existence depends on no one, or on any source to Be, to Exist. He is the source of his own Being. He derives His permanence and His Presence from within Himself. This is what the concept of Self-Subsistent implies. Thus, Bahá'u'lláh repeatedly affirms that God is:

- The Self-Subsisting - XI, XVII, XVIII, XX, XVI, XXXII, LIII, LVI, XCII, LXXX
- The Uncreated – LXXXVIII
- The Self-Sufficing - CXX

Being Self-Subsisting also implies that God is the “Uncreated” because a self-subsisting being depends on no external source to be created, He is the “Uncreated”. Being the Self-Subsisting also implies that God is

Self-Sufficing because he has no need of anything from any source. He is “Self-Sufficing” unto Himself.

Eternal

A being that is Self-Subsistent is one that depends on no one, or any source to maintain its Existence. Not constrained by time or space, by any external force, or by any determining factor, makes the Essence of this Being autonomous, self-perpetuating in a never-ending state of being. A Being that has this very Essence is thus, Eternal, because there is nothing that can influence, change, or modify its very Existence in as much as it is Self-Sufficient and Self-Subsistent and, thus, cannot be constrained by time or space, the two most powerful limitations we endure as created beings.

Temporality is the very condition and essence of any created being. Temporality is equal to mortality because one day, even if takes several million years, that being (mostly rock) finally crumbles, disaggregates into its very basic elements, and ceases to be a rock. This happens daily to humans when their bodies stop functioning; they disintegrate into its component elements and cease to exist as temporal humans.

On the other hand, a Being that derives its Existence from within Himself will not disintegrate or decompose because He is the very source of His own Existence. Thus, God being Self-Subsistent will never perish. He will be Eternal. Again, Bahá'u'lláh's expressions of the Attribute of Eternity of God's Essence is quite straightforward and leaves no doubt as to be an essential Attribute of God's Essence. It is thus, no surprise that Bahá'u'lláh mentions God's Eternity from so many angles:

- O King of eternity – XXXVII
- Thine eternity, - LVIII
- O Thou Who art the King of eternity - XXXVIII
- The Ever-Abiding (Everlasting) – XXVII, XXXI

- The heaven of Thine eternity - XCIV
- The ocean of Thine eternity – LX
- From eternity Thou hast been alone, with none to share the majesty of Thy singleness, and hast remained far above the changes and chances to which all Thy creatures are subjected. - XIX
- From everlasting Thou hast been alone with no one else besides Thee – LXXIX
- Everlasting Thou wilt continue to be one and the same – LXXIX
- The eternity of Thy majesty, and of Thy sovereignty, and of Thy sublimity, and of Thy power. - CLXXVI
- From eternity Thou hast been exalted above the praise of all created things, and wilt to eternity remain far above the glorification of any one of Thy creatures. - CIII
- From eternity Thou hast inhabited the loftiest heights of Thy dominion and of Thine unfettered sovereignty, and wilt unto eternity continue to abide in the inaccessible retreats of Thy majesty and glory. - CXXXIX

This reassurance by Bahá'u'lláh that God is Eternal is very crucial to how we relate to Him. A god that is not eternal, is not the God that one is inclined to offer his/her heart in praise, recognition, or adoration. If we are made in His image and likeness, immortality is definitely one of the most profound aspirations that we are born with. Man's journey through his mortality is a never-ending desire to not die, to be able to continue existing after this temporal existence vanishes. To know, by Revelation of God's Messenger, that God is Eternal, is the fulfillment that in some manner we, as His most precious creatures, will in some way share and obtain a version of His Eternity as Bahá'u'lláh revealed it.

Unrestrained, Unconstrained and Unconditioned

A being that is Eternal has no restraints whatsoever. Time and space are the most powerful restraints that we humans experience daily. Either because we have to overcome diverse spatial dimensions to move, to

perceive, to make judgments or because we have no control over the inexorable passage of time that seems to imprison us in a dimension that is intangible, yet real because it governs our very own existence; such as having to organize our daily activities according to a schedule, keep appointments, calculate the time to finish a task, the time to arrive at a specific place, choosing the time to rest, the time to work, the time to eat, the time to think. We are basically time-determined creatures. God, being out of the constraints of time and space is thus, “Unrestrained and Unconditioned” in his very Essence. Bahá’u’lláh affirms it with no need to repeat it too many times:

- The Unrestrained – XXIV, LIX, LXII
- Thy transcendent and unrestrained dominion - XXXIV
- Thy Self, the Unrestrained - LXXXIII
- The Unconditioned - LI, LVII, XCV, CLXXI

If God is the Absolute, the Infinite, the Incomparable, He is also the Unconstrained. Bahá’u’lláh uses both words as each other’s complement when he affirms that God is:

- The Unconstrained – (LXIV, XCVII, CXXIX)

Again, the Oxford dictionary definition of both words is illuminating. The synonyms of “unrestrained” give a more complete picture of the extent of the word than the definition itself. These are: “unrestricted, unchecked, unbridled, unlimited, unshackled, unconfined, and unimpeded”.

As far as “unconstrained” the definition is best expressed by the synonyms offered by the dictionary that besides expressing the above ones, it also gives the following definitions: “uncontrolled, unconstrained, unfettered, uninhibited, unconfined”. All of them offer the same nuance of no-limitation on all aspects.

It could not be otherwise. Bahá'u'lláh has clearly established that God's unlimited nature is essential to his Being. Expressing is as "Unrestrained" and "Unconstrained" and "Unconditioned" is only enriching its original affirmation.

The Invisible, The Hidden One

This is a difficult aspect to grasp fully, yet it is a logical Attribute of God. If God is not a concrete individual, with a physical body as ours, He is thus, not a physical, visible reality. God is thus, the supreme "Invisible, the Hidden One"; at least to us as individuals that perceive concrete, physical realities within a time-space constraint. Bahá'u'lláh alluded to this Attribute of God in these terms:

- Thine Invisible –Self – LXXVIII
- The Unseen Essence – LVI
- O Thou Whom no eyes can see - LXXXIII
- O Thou Who art hidden from all things - XX
- O Thou Who art the most manifest of the manifest and the most hidden of the hidden! - CLV

So, it is no surprise that Bahá'u'lláh affirms that "no eyes can see" because our sight is constructed to perceive and see concrete physical realities. God is therefore, "O Thou Who art hidden from all things".

As a paradox, Bahá'u'lláh makes this affirmation, "O Thou Who art the most manifest of the manifest and the most hidden of the hidden!". This paradox is so, because God, being the Creator of all that exists, is thus "the most manifest of the manifest" because we can see and perceive His animating presence everywhere. But being the All-Transcendent, God is at the same time "the most hidden of the hidden!" because, as hard as we try, we simply cannot "see" Him the way we see the multiple physical things that populate our physical dimension, including all other humans.

Inaccessible

If God is “the Invisible and the Hidden One”; then, it is not surprising at all that Bahá’u’lláh affirms that He is also:

- The Inaccessible, - VIII, XXIII, LI, LXV, LXVI, LXIX, XCVII, C

Inaccessible has the clear connotation of been “unobtainable, unreachable, untouchable”. As a pure Transcendent Spirit, God is essentially inaccessible to the limited individuals that we are from our very creation. God is thus Inaccessible in terms of our knowledge of His Essence; inaccessible in our desire to be near Him while we are still encapsulated in this physical reality; Inaccessible in as much as we live with underdeveloped consciousness and spiritual immaturity that impedes us from achieving effective closeness to God. Inaccessible because, during our limited physical existence, our spiritual immaturity is such that we need to transcend to a higher state of being that will happen when we make our physical death-transition.

The Divine Mystery

The above assertions allow Bahá’u’lláh to affirm, with undoubted assurance, that we can consider God as truly:

- the Divine Mystery – LVI

because God’s Essence and innermost reality is so distant from our knowledge and direct experience that He resides in an unknowable state of permanent Mystery. Additionally, God’s reality resides in the realm of the Divine, which, as the dictionary defines it as “relating to, or proceeding directly from God”. Bahá’u’lláh’s affirmation that God is “the Divine Mystery” is, according to such a definition, not only a valid, but also an accurate description of this Attribute. It is Divine because it proceeds from God, and a Mystery because, being an Unknowable Essence, He is a total mystery to our limited understanding.

The Omniscient

Bahá'u'lláh has also declared that God is the Creator of all that is. Before going into detail of what this Attribute implies, it is imperative that we let Bahá'u'lláh give us two necessary Attributes that God must have to be the Creator. The first one, according to Bahá'u'lláh, is that God is Omniscient.

- the Omniscient – IV, LXVIII, XC, XCIV, CIII, CIX, CXI
- All-Knowin,- VII, IX, XXIV, XXXIX, XL, XLIII, XLV, XLVI
- Whose knowledge nothing whatsoever escapeth – XLI
- The All-Informed – XLV, LXVIII

Omniscient, the dictionary, tells us means “having infinite awareness, understanding, and insight”. It also means one who “possesses universal or complete knowledge”.

Why must God be Omniscient to be the Creator?

In human terms, we can affirm that knowledge is a prerequisite of creation and the trigger of creative power. In divine terms, God must “possess universal and complete knowledge” to create whatever He desires. Without the intrinsic knowledge of the innermost composition of anything, it is not possible to bring it into existence. Existence of all that is presupposes a “Mind” that is all knowable about everything that could possibly be. Thus, God is Omniscient with respect to everything that was, is or will be, and of every behavior that any of His creatures displays.

The Omnipotent

A Creator that has brought everything that exists into the realm of existence must possess an infinite power of creation. He can thus be called “Omnipotent” because He has “unlimited power or authority”

as the Oxford dictionary defines the word. Bahá'u'lláh uses the word to clearly affirm what it means when he repeatedly stated that God is:

- The Omnipotent - CII
- Thine omnipotence – LXXIV, CXII, CXXIX
- To Whose majesty and omnipotence the whole creation hath borne witness.- CLII
- The tongues of all created things testify to Thy sovereignty and Thine omnipotence – CLXXIX

God's Omnipotence is absolute and sovereign. It could not be otherwise if He were to be the source of all that is created. To the perspicacious man, these two Attributes are clearly inherent in God's Essence to be called "the Creator".

The Creator

Another identifying Attribute of God is that He is the source of all that is, that He is the Creator of all that is. The Universe with its billions of galaxies and its trillions of stars, the complexity of our Earth with its kingdoms so well balanced and complementary – the mineral kingdom, the vegetable kingdom, the animal kingdom and the human kingdom – are each so incredibly complex at its organic, molecular, and atomic level that is impossible to affirm that such complexity and design has no intelligent designer. Creation is there for us to contemplate, analyze, understand, and marvel at. But it is also there for us to conclude that it did not happen by chance. Its Creator must have absolute Omniscience and Omnipotence, to be able to produce the Universe that we are now beginning to scratch its grandeur and complexity.

Bahá'u'lláh reassures us that God is the Creator of all that is. Here are some of his best expressions of God being the Creator:

- The Creator – IV
- Thy name, the Creator- CLXIX

- The Lord of all creation – XXXIII, XCVIII
- The Creator of the heavens! - CVIII, CXIV, CLXXVI, CLXXXIII
- O Thou Who art the Creator of earth and heaven - LI, LXI, CLI, CLXXVI
- The Fashioner and Creator - XC, XCV
- O Thou Maker of the heavens - V, XXXII, CLIV, CLXXVI, CXXXVIII
- One Who is their Creator - CLXXVI
- The Maker of earth and heaven - XIII
- The Fashioner of earth and heaven - XXXVIII
- The Fashioner of every moldering bone – XXXVII
- O Thou Who art the Fashioner of the universe - CXVIII
- Him Who is their Fashioner and Creator - XC
- Thou art that King by Whose commanding word the whole creation hath been called into being. - CLVIII
- The Quickener of every moldering bone – XXXVIII, CXVIII
- The Quickener of the entire creation - LXV
- The Mover of all things – XLII
- The Divine Ordainer – VI
- The Ordainer, both in the beginning and in the end. - CLXXXIII
- The Supreme Ordainer. - XXXVIII
- in Whose hand is the kingdom of the entire creation. - XCVI
- The wondrous evidences of Thine everlasting handiwork, - CLXXXIV
- The One Who is their Creator, their Origin, their Begetter. – CLXXVI
- By Thy behest, and fashioned the entire creation through the power of Thy sovereignty and might. – LXXXII
- Through Thy name, O my God, all created things were stirred up, and the heavens were spread, and the earth was established, and the clouds were raised and made to rain upon the earth. This, verily, is a token of Thy grace unto all Thy creatures. - CXLVII

The last quote leaves no doubt that God was and is the Creator of all “things that were stirred up”. This includes the earth, the heavens, and the clouds. Man is included by the phrase that God is the “Fashioner of every moldering bone”, as well as “the Fashioner of the Universe”. A Fashioner is one that has a plan and a design for what it is going to fashion; thus, Bahá’u’lláh gives God the title of “Divine Ordainer”, and being Who He is, God is not just the Ordainer. He is the “Supreme Ordainer” who, in turn, is the One that activates, animates all creation. Bahá’u’lláh also gives God the title of the “Quickener”, which means the one that “animates, that gives impulse and life”. This facet is reinforced by the title of “the Mover of all things”. And because God is the “Supreme Ordainer”, He becomes “the Lord of all creation”.

The Source of all

If God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, all the living things on earth and the Universe itself, He must then be the Source of all things. Bahá’u’lláh affirms this with no hesitation when he proclaims that “God is the Source of All” in these terms:

- The Source of all things - LI
- The Source of all Sources - XLIII
- The Well-Spring of all Lights - XLIII
- He Fountain of all life – LXV
- The Enlightener of all things visible and invisible - XLIV
- Thee Who art the Source of all glory and majesty - LIX
- Source of sovereignty and dominion - LIX
- Source of loftiness and grace - LIX
- Source of awe and power - LIX

The “Source of all things” is equivalent to saying that He is the “Fountain of Life” because Life is included among all things for which God is the “Source”. As a logical outcome God is also the “Source of sovereignty and dominion”, the “Source of loftiness and grace”, and the “Source of

awe and power”. These Attributes are an additional expression of the richness that is inherent to being the “Source of all things”.

The God of all things

Another way to express the same reality is to call the Creator “the God of all things”, which basically affirms that there is no reality that we know that is independent in its existence from God as its source. These are the terms that Bahá'u'lláh used to amplify that reality, by stating that God is

- The God of all things – XLII, CLXXVI
- The All-Possessing – LVI
- The Possessor of all things – XLII
- The Aim of all things – XLII
- The Mover of all things! – XLII
- The Aim of all things- XLII
- The God of all that are in heaven and all that are on earth - LII

A different form of stating that God is the “God of All things” is the way that Bahá'u'lláh affirms that He is “the All-Possessing, the Possessor of all things”. This can be understood in the sense that One who creates all things and is the “Source of all things” automatically can be called “the Possessor” of all that He has created.

In human terms, he who creates something new out of unrelated items, such as rods, dented wheels, springs, and fixed metal pieces and organizes them into a delicate watch can be called “the possessor” of such an article. He possesses the watch in as much as he is the inventor who conceived the article in his mind and then expressed it as a reality by organizing the different material pieces he chose to use. Thus, the new product belongs to him because he has created it.

In this analogy, God, is the “Owner”, the “Possessor” of His Creation because He brought it forth with His Creative power, willing it out of nothing into existence. Thus, God is “The God of all things”.

The Revealer and The Source of Revelation

Being “God of All Things” implies that God is also the author-revealer and the source of all Revelation given to humanity as the utmost token of his permanent dialogue with the peak of His Creation, us. Bahá’u’lláh, is keenly aware of the importance of clarifying that any, and all Revelation comes from God. There is no other source of authoritative or truthful Revelation than the one coming from God, its Author. Thus, Bahá’u’lláh did not fall short in expressing this Attribute of God in the following manner:

- The Author of all Manifestations – XLIII
- The Source of all Sources – XLIII
- The Fountain-Head of all Revelations - XLIII
- The Well-Spring of all Lights - XLIII
- The Author of all Manifestations - XLIII
- The infinite wonders of Thy Revelation – LXXX
- The sweet smell of the Robe of Thy Revelation. - CXIII
- Thy Revelation which is identical with Thy Concealment - CXL
- Thou art He, by Whose name the Hidden Secret was divulged, and the Well-Guarded Name was revealed – CL
- The Revealer of whatsoever may be manifested by Thee. – CLXXVIII

It is sufficient to emphasize Bahá’u’lláh’s various allusions to this Divine Attribute when he calls God “the Fountain-Head of all Revelations, the Well-Spring of all Lights, the Author of all Manifestations”. These titles offer no doubt as to Who is the source and fountain of any God-given Revelation, God Himself.

The Word

A revelation for humans to understand, must be expressed by words in as much as words express human perception of reality, whatever the level of reality is perceived. Without words, there is no communication. The

word, written or verbal, is our normal vehicle that transmits knowledge, guidance, and wisdom.

Bahá'u'lláh associates Divine Revelation with Divine Word. This connection is quite evident by the expressions Bahá'u'lláh uses to make the association:

- Thy most exalted Word – XXIV, XXXVIII, LXX
- Thy Word established – LVI
- Thy most holy and exalted tongue, and Thy most august and precious speech – CLXXVI
- Whatsoever hath been adorned with the robe of words is but Thy creation – CLXXVI
- I testify that no sooner had the First Word proceeded, through the potency of Thy will and purpose, out of His mouth, and the First Call gone forth from His lips than the whole creation was revolutionized, and all that are in the heavens and all that are on earth were stirred to the depths. Through that Word the realities of all created things were shaken, - CLXXVIII

The “First Word” and “the First Call” expresses God’s will and purpose. Thus, it is not surprising that Bahá'u'lláh tells us that “Through that Word the realities of all created things were shaken” because such a Word has divine power. Creation comes into existence when the First Word revolutionizes all Creation by making it appear. Additionally, Creation is renewed every time the Divine Word is manifested to humanity with each successive Revelation. This is so, because each Revelation offered by a Manifestation, Messenger or Prophet Founder of a religion is God’s Word manifesting His Will to each generation that receives it.

Summary

This Chapter compiles the Attributes expressed by Bahá'u'lláh that seem to best express God as the Eternal Creator with all the implications

that such overall category implies. A brief summary of these should give the reader the reason for such an affirmation. Let us start with the broadest category.

Glimpses of God as Unknowable Creator

This very broad category is made up of the following Attributes that Bahá'u'lláh affirms God possesses. God is: the Hidden One, the Divine Mystery.

The only God

The Only God, independent of anyone; God is One in Himself

Self-subsistent - Unconditioned

The Self-Subsistent; God is Eternal, Unrestrained, Unconditioned; the Inaccessible.

God is Eternal

God is Eternal

Unconditioned

Unrestrained, Unconditioned; the Inaccessible.

The Invisible, the Hidden one

The Inaccessible

The Divine Mystery

Being Invisible, Hidden and Inaccessible, makes God a Divine Mystery

The Omniscient

The All Knowing from eternity

The Omnipotent

The All-Powerful

God, the Creator

The Creator of all that was, is and will be

The Source of All - the God of all things

The Source of all; God of all things

The Revealer

The Revealer and the Source of Revelation, the Word.

As stated above, God has these Attributes that are the source, the origin of all that is, that will be; depending on no one or anything to subsist, not restrained by space or time, being the source of Himself at the same time being the Hidden One, and the Inaccessible.

We will explore in the next chapter an additional set of Attributes of God that seem to fit well in the overall category of “God as the Ruler and Ordainer”.

CHAPTER 5

GOD AS RULER AND ORDAINER

The Attributes presented in the previous chapter do not exhaust or claim to be the only ones that help us comprehend how we can conceive God as “The Eternal Creator”.

In this chapter the Attributes proclaimed by Bahá’u’lláh seem to fit well in the title of “God as Ruler and Ordainer”. They offer a perception of the richness of His Being that we can barely scratch and yet still feel the luminous resplendent beauty of His Unknowable Essence.

God in Himself

Upon reflecting on the long list of Attributes identified that are different from the ones in the previous chapter, I was able to find an overarching category: **God in Himself**, within which the following 16 Attributes seem to fall naturally. Let us start with God “the Supreme”. (See Appendix B)

The Supreme, The Supreme Ordainer

Bahá’u’lláh repeatedly stated that “there is no God besides Thee” (more than 80 times in his book *Prayers and Meditations*). Being the Only

God, it thus follows that God is the Supreme One because there is no other god above Him, beside Him, underneath Him, or anything that can be greater or equal to Him. Thus, it is no surprise that Bahá'u'lláh proclaims God as also being the Supreme One,

Supreme art Thou over all things - CXIX

Again, being God the Creator of all that is, as affirmed by Bahá'u'lláh, He is not only the Supreme, but also the Supreme Ordainer of all that is,

the Supreme Ordainer - CLXIII

Because God's Attributes are present in Him in their most perfect and greatest dimension.

The Incomparable

When Bahá'u'lláh affirms that God is One, that there is no other god beside Him, then it is logical for him to affirm that God is additionally the Incomparable, since there is no other god to which He can be compared. The following are some of the phrases that Bahá'u'lláh uses to express this reality of God:

- Thine incomparable Self - LXXX
- Incomparable art Thou - LXXXI
- the Incomparable - CLXXV
- Thee as One Who is incomparable - CLXXVIII

Incomparable also has an additional definition in the dictionary that leaves no doubt as to the extent of this Attribute. The Oxford Dictionary states that incomparable is “unable to be compared; totally different in nature or extent”. This means that something or someone who is incomparable cannot be compared to anything because he is totally different in nature and/or extent. This is what Bahá'u'lláh implies when he affirms that God's status of incomparability is a given because He is God who does not have any other god besides Him. This

incomparability is total and absolute, as God's Unknowable Essence is Total and Absolute in itself without dependence on anything, or anyone. He is thus, Incomparable.

The Un-possessed

Another nuance of God's Unrestrained - Unconstrained Essence is the fact that nothing (no force or separate being) can possess Him in any manner whatsoever. God is thus, the un-possessed as Bahá'u'lláh affirms that God has:

[A] nature none can possess - CLXXVIII

At the same time, being the Un-possessed makes God, the Possessor.

The Possessor

The Collins Dictionary comes to our aid to clarify that the possessor is: the person who owns something. One thing is to own something. Another is to own everything in the measure that God and only God can. Bahá'u'lláh gives us the unequivocal dimension of God's ownership as an Attribute to the degree that God is:

The Possessor of all things visible and invisible! - CLXXVI

It could not be otherwise. God would not be limited in any way or form to be the Possessor of just some things, when He is the Creator of everything that there is. Creator of all that exists automatically confirms God as the "Possessor of all things".

Bahá'u'lláh gives us a clear clue that God's dominion of possession is not restricted to just the physical dimension when he affirms that God is the "Possessor of all things visible..." because he immediately affirms then that God is also the "Possessor of all things visible and invisible". This means that all the spiritual realms, the invisible reality that we cannot readily perceive, is also possessed by God just by the fact that He created

such dimensions, the one that eludes our immediate comprehension because we are constantly immersed in the “visible reality” convinced erroneously that this is the most important or the only reality.

The fact that there are invisible realities does not mean that they are not real because they are not physical. If such is the case, and God is the “Possessor of all things visible and invisible”, then God is certainly the Possessor of every reality, every dimension of Being and Existence, just because God is the Creator of all that is and exists, regardless if it is physically visible, or invisible.

The Preserver

God, being the Possessor of all things, is at the same time, the Preserver of all things for them to continue to exist. This seems to be implied by Bahá'u'lláh when he affirms that God, by His very name, is the Preserver,

Thy Name, the Preserver, - LXXIII

The Random House College Dictionary gives us the dimension of one that is the preserver when it defines the word “preserve” as “to keep alive or in existence”. If this action is done by an individual, then it is valid to call that person, a preserver. When Bahá'u'lláh affirms that God is the Preserver, then God is the Preserver that keeps everything alive and in the realm of existence. In his own words,

Thou art, verily, the Preserver, - CXLVI, CLXXII

The Concealer, The Withholder

Bahá'u'lláh presents two additional Attributes that seem confusing at first glance. He expresses them in this manner,

- O Thou Who art the Concealer - XLIV, CLIII
- By Thy Name, the Withholder - LXXIII

What does Bahá'u'lláh seem to refer to when he uses these titles as being integral Attributes of God? We cannot affirm that our understanding is what Bahá'u'lláh meant when he expressed them. We are deducing their meaning in the context of the above Attribute of “the Preserver”. This does not mean that our limited interpretation is the most accurate or the most valid. It is simply my intent to find their meaning.

God being “The Preserver” keeps all that is in existence. This is His power as the Creator of everything that is and will be. Yet, as much as God manifests itself in all that is created, there are aspects of the created reality that seems to be hidden, to be withheld from our understanding because of our limited capacity to comprehend fully that which God has done. In this sense, God is thus The Concealer, The Withholder of aspects of His created reality that escapes our immediate understanding. It is the dimension of the mysterious aspect of reality that seems to continuously evade our apprehension of its innermost intimacy.

The fact that we cannot capture the essence of all existing realities speaks loudly of the concealed, the withheld dimensions of all reality that propels us to a never-ending quest of inquiry. From God’s perspective, we could argue in human terms, He has placed a dimension of time for us to struggle nobly to discover the hidden dimensions of the physical and spiritual dimension in which we are immersed. Hidden dimensions that seem to have been created explicitly by God to stimulate our never-ending journey of discovery.

The Majesty of God

In the previous chapter we elaborated on these Attributes of God: “God is the Only God, the Self-Subsistent, the Omniscient, the Omnipotent, the Source of all, the God of all things”. These Attributes speak loudly of the level of utter Majesty that God possesses.

In human terms, we immediately sense and capture the image of a King, a Ruler, or a Mighty Being whose very essence projects a majesty that is

impossible to hide; on the contrary, there is a need that we acknowledge it. The Majesty of God is further enhanced by the following Attributes as expressed by Bahá'u'lláh in *Prayers and Meditations of Bahá'u'lláh*.

The God of Majesty and Glory

Bahá'u'lláh proclaims the majesty and glory of God. Here is a small sample of the different ways in which he refers to the lofty state of His innermost Majesty,

- The God of majesty and glory - LXXXIII
- Thy highness and Thy loftiness, and Thine incomparable glory and greatness - CLXXVI
- Thy majesty, and of the potency of Thy might, and Thy grandeur. - CLXXVI

The confessed majesty that Bahá'u'lláh makes of God is complemented by the Attribute of Glory.

The God of Glory

Bahá'u'lláh declares many times as God being the One of Glory. In the cited book, the Attribute appears 83 times showing how relevant he considers it,

The God of glory, XXV, XXVIII, LXXII, LXXVII,
LXXIX, LXXXVI, XCIII ...

The God of Glory is intimately related to his Creation in as much as the Attribute is applicable to everything God has created. This is how Bahá'u'lláh explicitly states it, God is

The Glory of all things- XLII

If God is the source of all things, and the one who has Created everything that is, His Glory is certainly the Glory of all things, given that He is the foundation of all that is.

The All glorious

To affirm in superlative that God is the “All Glorious” is nothing more than to exalt the Attribute of Glory to its maximum expression, the “All”. Bahá’u’lláh is explicit in making such proclamation,

Thee Who art the Source of all glory and majesty - LIX

The All-Glorious, - III, IV, VI, VIII, XIII, XIV, XVI, XXII, XXIV, XXVII, XXXI, XXXVIII, XLIV, XLIV, XLVII, XLVIII, LI...

Bahá’u’lláh is thus making it clear that this Attribute merits the highest praise and recognition. God that is the “God of Glory” cannot be less than the “All Glorious” and that our recognition lies in proclaiming loud and clear this Gloriousness.

The Resplendent

Glory of any type cannot be hidden. It is, by its very nature, Resplendent. The Merriam Webster’s definition is excellent in portraying this very aspect. Resplendent is defined as: **shining brilliantly: characterized by a glowing splendor.**

This definition obviously applies to physical things that are resplendent. When referring to God as having this Attribute, Bahá’u’lláh uses it to refer to the spiritual, supernatural quality of God’s Glory. In his own words, God is:

- O Resplendent One, - CLXV
- Resplendent art Thou above all things – LXIII,

God is the Resplendent One to the degree that only God can be, in the superlative stage. Thus, Bahá'u'lláh affirms the same level that he did for God's Glory, that is, that God is "Resplendent above all things". It could not be otherwise since God is the Supreme of all beings. He is thus "Resplendent above all things".

Most Ancient Splendor

Since we have presented in the previous chapter how Bahá'u'lláh affirms that God is Eternal, any Attribute that is stated as belonging to God enjoys that permanence of Eternity. Thus Bahá'u'lláh can qualify poetically the Attribute of God being "the Resplendent" as also being

Thy Most Ancient Splendor - LXXVIII

From all Eternity, this Splendor of His Majesty has been ever present, will always be present. God is simply described as, "the Most Ancient Splendor" that will shine forever as it has shone ever since.

The Exalted

When referring to a royal person, that person is frequently associated with some rank or status that portrays some form of exaltation. The Oxford Dictionary once more presents a clear definition of the word: "a person at a high or powerful level. Of a noble, elevated, or lofty nature".

Bahá'u'lláh uses the word "exalted" to refer to God's lofty nature when he declares that God is

The Exalted – LVI, CLXII, CLXII

But again, Bahá'u'lláh is careful to qualify that Attribute because in God no Attribute is plain. Thus, again, Bahá'u'lláh asserts that such an Attribute is present in God in a superlative fashion when he declares that God is

[Thy] Most Exalted – VIII, XXIII, XVI, XXII, XXIV,
XXXII, CXVIII XXXIV, XLIV, XLVIII, XLIX, LIX,
LXVI, LXVII, LXXIV, CXVIII, CL

and his presence cannot be other than

Thy most exalted presence - LXXX

And because God is Self-subsistent, the exaltation of His Essence arises from the “depths” of His own self. God is thus,

The Self-Exalting - CXX

Bahá'u'lláh qualifies this Most-Exalted way of being of God with several superlative adjectives: Most High, the All Highest, the Most Great:

Thou art the Most High- VIII, XXIV, XXXIV, XL,
LVI, LXVI, CL, CLXII, CLXIII

The All-Highest – LVIII, XCV, CLXV

The Most Great. – XXIII, XXIV, XXXIV, XLIV,
LXIX, CLXI

It cannot be otherwise. No Attribute of God is present in Him in a minimalist manner. If God is “Exalted, High and Great”, He is the “Most High, the All-Highest, and the Most Great”. It could not be otherwise. God, being the Supreme, will exhibit these Attributes in the superlative dimension and be extolled for them.

The Beauteous (God's Beauty)

In human terms, beauty is a characteristic that is celebrated regardless of the socio-economic status of a person. But if that beautiful person additionally belongs to the Royalty of the nation, his/her beauty is celebrated with great fanfare because such beauty enhances the status

of a royal person. His/her royalty will thus shine brighter before their subjects.

Bahá'u'lláh compares this human characteristic to God as an Attribute. The difference is the level and intensity with which he does it. In one instance he calls God,

The Beauteous – LVII

which, as stated in the dictionary, is a synonym for beauty.

The Ancient Beauty, Thy Wondrous Beauty, The most exalted Beauty

Once Bahá'u'lláh confirms “Beauty” as an Attribute of God, then the previous adjective used for Splendor also applies to Beauty since God’s Eternity makes Him,

[Thine] Ancient Beauty – XXXIV

Any reality which exists in the timeless dimension of Eternity can be called “the Ancient” for it goes into time so far back that the best adjective we have is “ancient”, which projects that image of an impossible moment in time to be defined.

All Attributes of God are clothed in the category of “wondrous” and “most exalted”. Bahá'u'lláh expresses it in this manner,

Thy wondrous Beauty – LX, LX

Thou didst manifest Thy most exalted
Beauty. - CLXXXIV

God’s permanent Attributes are constantly and forever manifesting. That He manifests His internal, non-physical Beauty is thus no surprise; much less that Bahá'u'lláh expresses it as “the most exalted Beauty”

because, as we stated above, any and all Attributes of God are present in Him in the “most exalted” possible manner.

Supreme Sinlessness

The level of “most wondrous and exalted Beauty” must, by definition, be a spotless beauty. “The Supreme God, the Most High, Most Great and Most Precious” cannot show any impurity. Thus, God must be free of any defect that is human or reflects human’ limitations. One of the most evident of those limitations is the way humans make bad free will decisions that convert them into evil-doers. When a person behaves in this manner, he immediately falls into the moral category of a sinner, especially when that behavior has transgressed one of the moral directives given by God and has ended up impacting another human being in such a way that it diminishes him/her, degrades the person, humiliates the individual, and makes their life miserable.

This stage of misbehavior via wrong free-will choices cannot be a trait of a perfect God. So when Bahá’u’lláh declares that God is the

[Thy] Supreme Sinlessness – LXII

We have no doubt as to what he means by such affirmation. The Most Glorious could never make a wrong free will decision that would be paramount to a sin, thus Bahá’u’lláh affirms that God is the “Supreme Sinlessness”.

The One Glorified, The Glorifier

One sure way that we recognize the majesty of any king or earthly ruler is by how much he is glorified by his subjects. Bahá’u’lláh gives us the same context when he clearly affirms this to be the state of God’s majesty,

Glorified, immeasurably glorified art Thou, O my
Master! – CLXXXIV

Not only does Bahá'u'lláh recognize God as “the One Glorified”; he also recognizes that God is “[O my] Master”, acknowledging that he is subject to God’s Majesty.

Bahá'u'lláh offers an additional perspective to God’s Majesty in as much as he declares that God in Himself is the Glorifier of “[Thine] own Self”.

Thou didst from eternity glorify Thine own
Self, - CLXXXIV

God, is thus and simultaneously, the One that Glorifies Himself, as well as being the

...the Glorifier - CLXXVI

of all His Creation. God is the Only One that pours Glory on all of His Creation as well as in His own Self. This is possible because God’s Self-Subsistence is also the source of permanent abundance that is shared non-stop with His Creation.

The All- Praised, The Ever-Blessed

After grouping the above Attributes that extoll so eloquently the Majesty of God, it is not surprising that Bahá'u'lláh presents two more that seem to crown such Majesty. One is an almost natural expression of such dignity in terms of the recognition that is due to the Majesty of God, that He is

The All-Praised. CXXVII

In human terms, praise is given to one that deserves it for who he is, what he stands for, how lofty his statue is, the qualities he has in the service of others. God possesses all the Attributes that make us spontaneously praise Him in such a way and manner that He can be called “the All-Praised”.

The Oxford Dictionary again serves us to fine tune why Bahá'u'lláh refers to God as the “All-Praised”. According to the definition given, “blessed” means: “made holy; consecrated; endowed with divine favor and protection”. All these adjectives refer to a person who has received these favors. How, then, are they to be understood when considering them as an Attribute of God? It helps to clarify the content of the dictionary when we look at a couple of synonyms for that word, and find out that “blessed” can be considered as: “venerated, revered”.

To consider God as that Being that deserves all veneration and reverence next to be given “All-Praise” is nothing more than a logical addition that serves to extoll His Majesty. I think in this way we can appreciate why Bahá'u'lláh blazons this Attribute when he proclaims that God is

The Ever-Blessed - CLXXVI

The Royalty of God

Next to God's Majesty, Bahá'u'lláh gives us another set of Attributes of God that seem to fall naturally under the category of “The Royalty of God”. Again we have to make reference to our cultural heritage. We are so accustomed to associating “Majesty with Royalty”. In human history, these two categories became synonymous for what distinguished the kings, queens and tribal chiefs from the rest of the common folk. To them, both categories were applied to distinguish and emphasize the distance that separated them from the rest of their subjects.

So, to find both categories applied to the One, Supreme God of the Universe is not a surprise. The difference lies in the level of application of both categories to God. Bahá'u'lláh applies them in a way and manner that the meaning and content becomes attributable only to God. So, any one of the following Attributes identified by Bahá'u'lláh immediately shows up as God being the Only one that has them at a superlative level.

The King

King, in human terms, is one that has dominion over the territory he governs, all his subjects and their possessions. Bahá'u'lláh clearly recognizes a parallel divine Attribute of God and expresses it in this manner:

- O Thou Who art the King of all Kings - XXVI, LXV, LXXX, XC
- Thou, truly, art the King of all men - CLXV
- ...the Supreme King - XXII
- O the King of all things – XLII
- King of all created things, - CLXXVI
- Thou art the King of all bounty – CLIII

What is immediately evident is the rank of this kingship. God is above all kings because Bahá'u'lláh has made it clear that “there is no other God beside Me”, which makes God, “the King of all Kings”. Not only the King of all kings, but also “the King of all men” since God is the Creator of all men and women.

Bahá'u'lláh adds to such level of God's kingship the title of “King of all things (created)” as well as the “Supreme King” because there is no other king above Him that could be Supreme. Bahá'u'lláh recognizes that the kingship of God is not bound by human limitations. He, therefore, underscores that this kingship erupts from the depths of “His bounty”. A Bounty that flows-out without restriction, and pours itself on the whole of creation, including mankind.

The Sovereignty of God

Kings are recognized as such because they exercise sovereign power, and in too many historical moments, too many kings have exercised absolute sovereignty over all those conquered or ruled. Suffice it to remember the time periods when the Roman emperors or Egyptian pharaohs claimed that they were descendants of the gods themselves and thus were given

such sovereignty. They imposed it on all those whom they decided should feel their wrath and power.

Once more, Bahá'u'lláh uses the term to refer to God as one of His exalted Attributes because we can capture immediately the subtleties the term has and can understand the loftiness of the title when applied to God.

Let us start by letting Bahá'u'lláh state without ambiguity that God is

The Sovereign - LXXIX

but not just “the Sovereign”, God is the “most holy, transcendent and everlasting sovereignty”. So, we should acknowledge His sovereignty to be understood as being,

- Thy most holy sovereignty - CI
- Thy transcendent sovereignty - LXXX
- Thine everlasting sovereignty, - CLXIX
- The Sovereign of the kingdom of eternity - CLXXIII

It could not be otherwise since in God all Attributes are found in their supreme expression. And since God is always “the Transcendent One” so will be his sovereignty, which cannot be other than “Holy” as God is “Holy”. As Bahá'u'lláh has already clarified, God is Eternal, so will be His “everlasting sovereignty” that will ever be present “in the kingdom of eternity”.

As stated above, humans conceive sovereignty as being completely wielded by the reigning king of the moment. To him, all power was given as the expression of his absolute sovereignty. When Bahá'u'lláh puts emphasis on the Attribute of Sovereignty in God, he does so in the absolute terms that are only of God. He continuously makes it clear that “all sovereignty” belongs to God; and that it is “everlasting, omnipotent and has a purpose”:

- All sovereignty belongeth to Thee, - CLX
- Thine everlasting sovereignty, - CLXIX
- Thine omnipotent sovereignty and purpose. - CLXXXIV

The purpose of such sovereignty springs from the fact that it is “all-encompassing and omnipotent”. The qualities of such sovereignty spring forth from the Attributes of God that was presented in the previous chapter. God is the only one that has Attributes in absolute degree by the mere fact that God is the Creator, the Self-subsistent, the Eternal. No earthly king could make such a claim and be able to back it up. Having this frame of reference we can grasp the immensity and depths of Bahá'u'lláh's affirmation when he proclaims that everything that has been given to humanity is through God's inherent “all-encompassing sovereignty” and “omnipotent supremacy”,

Thou set down through Thine all-encompassing sovereignty, and apprehended through Thine omnipotent supremacy. - CLXXXIV

And to have no doubt that this is so, Bahá'u'lláh rounds off the sovereignty of God as being “supreme” because,

Thou art supreme over all who are in heaven and on earth - CLIII

The Lord

If there is title that is universal in all religions to address God is the word “Lord”. Bahá'u'lláh is no exception. In the book we are using, *Prayers and Meditations of Bahá'u'lláh*, the title appears in 332 pages, and sometimes used more than once in some of those pages. If there were a title that encompassed all the royalty and sovereignty of kings and noble men, it is “Lord”. Countless films make use of this title to refer to the exalted station of the one that is addressed by it, from kings, to princes, to noblemen.

Bahá'u'lláh incorporates the human developed title of “Lord” to refer to God’s royalty because he is aware how easily we can relate to the lofty level that God possesses. We shall try to group into meaningful categories the diverse uses of the title that Bahá'u'lláh uses to exult God’s Royalty.

The foundation of the lordship of God is the declaration that Bahá'u'lláh makes on which the cornerstone of his royalty is based. God is the “Lord of Lords” given on what Bahá'u'lláh has repeatedly stated before, “There is no other God besides thee”. God is thus:

The Lord of Lords! - XLIV

Once this foundation is reiterated then all the multitude of nuances of the Lordship of God naturally fall into place. The first major category with which I perceive that Bahá'u'lláh associates the Lordship is with God’s Attribute of Creator. Being the Creator of all that is and exists and will ever exist, then, God is:

- The Lord of all creation! – XXXVIII, LXI, CI
- O Thou Who art the Lord of all being - XLIV, CXLI, CLXXVI

This Lordship is immediately extensive to all possible worlds created by God as Bahá'u'lláh clearly affirms it. God is:

- The Lord of all worlds – VII, XII, LXVII, CIX
- The Lord of the worlds! – XXI, XXXVIII, LII, LVI, LXIX, CI, CXXIV, CLXXII

These worlds include all created things that may be found in anyone of them. God, as their Creator is therefore, the Lord and Ordainer of such created things, having complete “lordship of all things”. In Bahá'u'lláh’s words:

- The Lord of the Kingdom of all created things – LVIII
- The Lord of all created things and their Ordainer. - CLXIX
- In Whose hand is the lordship of all things! – CXIV, CXIV

The Lordship of God of the physical worlds also includes the heavenly realm to which so much allusion Bahá'u'lláh makes throughout the entire book. He thus proclaims that God is the Lord of both earth and heaven and all that may be found in them. Upon each God has placed His throne. In Bahá'u'lláh's words:

- O God, the Lord of heaven! – XVII
- The Lord of earth and heaven. - C -
- The Lord of all that are in heaven and on earth, - CIX
- The Lord of the throne on high and of earth below - LXXXI, CLXXVI

This Lordship is not restricted to all possible physical worlds that we could find in the universe; it is applicable to both the realm of the visible and invisible, the latter being as real as the former, even though it is not that evident to our short sightedness. Nevertheless, Bahá'u'lláh clearly presents it as real and under the Lordship of God,

- O Thou the Lord of the visible and the invisible - XLVII
- The Lord of this world and of the next – LVI, CLXXVIII

God's Lordship has a special relationship with humanity, given that women and men are the most precious creatures that God has created. The foundation of this special relationship is the recognition of the Lordship of God that all individuals should proclaim. The example to follow is Bahá'u'lláh's repeated hymn of recognition that God is his Lord,

O Lord my God! – XIX, XXI, XXV, XXVIII

Yet, not satisfied with his personal recognition, Bahá'u'lláh makes it extensive to all humanity when he announces unequivocally that God is the Lord and King of all men, and by default of "all nations":

- O Thou Lord of all mankind - LII, CXXXVII
- O Thou Who art the Lord of all men! - CLXIII

- Thou art, truly, the Lord and King of all men, - CXLIV the Lord of the nations, - CLXXVI
- O Thou Lord of all nations - CLXXXIII

This relationship with humanity is extensive to being the Lord of all those that He “favors” and to whom God bestows “bounty” abundantly upon all men and women,

- The Lord of all favors, - CLIII
- The Lord of bounty - CLXXIII

Bahá'u'lláh does not leave out the fact that everyone has his or her own personal, as well as collective day of reckoning, when each one has to answer for his harmful deeds done against neighbors, friends, and unrelated people. This will be the “day” in which the Lordship of God will be expressed as “Judgment Day”. So, God is:

The Lord of the Judgment Day – LV

The Lord of Names

Bahá'u'lláh takes the title of “Lord” and gives it to God, associating this Attribute to God as being the “Lord of Names”. So, no matter what other Names Bahá'u'lláh gives God, He is the “Lord and King” of all of them. This can be inferred by the various ways in which Bahá'u'lláh states it:

- Thou Who art the King of names - XLV, CXXXI, CLXXVI, CLI
- God, Lord of all names – CXIV, CXXXVIII
- The brightness of Thy Name - LXXXIV
- O Thou the Lord of all names! – V, XXXII, CLIV

Bahá'u'lláh not only proclaims that God is the “Lord of all names”. He exalts this name with the following adjectives that offer a glimpse of the regality of such names:

- Thy Most Great Name, - XI, XIX, XXXIV, XLVI, LXV, CXIII, CLIII, CLXXXIII
- Thy Most Effulgent Name – LXII
- Thy name, the Most Exalted, the Most High, the seat of Thine effulgent glory. - CXXX
- Thy Name, the Most Holy, the Most Luminous, the Most Mighty, the Most Great, the Most Exalted, the Most Glorious, - CLXXVII

Bahá'u'lláh proclaims God's Names with unrestrained laudatory adjectives: "Effulgent", "Most Holy", "Most Mighty", "Most Luminous", "Most Exalted", "Most Glorious". After reading how such a Name is praised in such lofty terms, we acquire a firm glimpse of the royalty that Bahá'u'lláh gives to the Names of God.

To make sure that it is clear that God is the Possessor of all of those names, Bahá'u'lláh repeats several times such proprietary rights. God is not only the Possessor of those names; He is also the Author since He is the Self-Subsistent from which emerges any Attribute present in God:

- Thou Who art the Possessor of all names – XXXVIII, LI, CLXXVI
- O Thou Who art the Possessor of all names and attributes! - CLXIII, CXXVIII
- The Possessor of all names, - XIII
- O Thou Who art the Author of all names - XVIII

Since Bahá'u'lláh has already stated that one of God's Attributes, in human terms, is that of being King, he then reveals such kingship in terms of "the empire of all names" and the "kingdom of names".

- O Thou in Whose hand is the empire of all names! - XVI
- O Thou in Whose hands are the kingdoms of all names and attributes! - CLXXXIV

With these clarifications, there is no doubt as to the regality of such Names.

Bahá'u'lláh offers an additional quality of the Name of God: that of being the one with the power to “subdue the whole creation”, and through which all things are “changed, brought into account, rewarded, preserved and sustained”. That is certainly a dimension of power of the Name, as Bahá'u'lláh expresses it in these terms:

- Thy Name through which Thou hast subdued the whole creation,
- By Thy name through which Thou hast subdued all created things, - CXLIX
- Thy Name through which Thou changest all things, and gatherest together all things, and callest to account all things, and rewardest all things, and preservest all things, and sustainest all things - CXLVI

The Ruler

Another distinguishing factor of royalty is that whoever has this title is identified with the temporal role of ruler. Royalty was invented by men to validate their power to be rulers. Bahá'u'lláh uses this term to associate God's Royalty as one having the power to rule. The difference is obvious between men ruling and God being the Ruler, because, as Bahá'u'lláh establishes it, God's ruling Attribute is Absolute. Thus, God is first and foremost the “Supreme Ruler” who rules “all things”,

- The Supreme Ruler – IV, LXXV, CIII
- O Thou Who rulest all things - XCVI

This Lordship of God is not confined to any physical reality. It covers “the entire creation” and its “kingdoms”, which includes the “the kingdom of all things”, and the “kingdoms of creation”,

- Thou art He in Whose grasp are the reins of the entire creation. CXLII
- Thou art He Who holdeth in His grasp the kingdom of all things – LXII
- O Thou Who art the Ruler of the kingdoms of creation - XVIII

Above all physical realities, God's rule is indisputable when it comes to the spiritual reality that engulfs humans. One of them is "the city of mercy" which has no physical, exterior, no visible reality other than the one expressed by acts of mercy, by works of mercy. In this spiritual city, God is the one that guides, inspires, and reigns. He is

- The Ruler of the cities of mercy! - LXXXI,

To leave no doubt that God's rule is not confined to this world, Bahá'u'lláh explicitly affirms that God is

- The Ruler of this world and of the world to come. - LXXXI

If God's reign is of the "cities of mercy" that reside in human hearts, then God rules over all men as Bahá'u'lláh proclaims that,

- O Thou Who rulest over all men! –CLXXXIII

But God's ruling is not done in human limited dimensions. His rule hovers in the "realms of loftiness and grandeur"

- Him Who ruleth the realms of loftiness and grandeur - LVIII

This would not be otherwise, because God's rule is not only in "the heavens of grace and bounty" but also over the "kingdoms of glory and majesty", which are far beyond the realms of physical reality where the rulers of the world pretend to know how to rule.

- O Thou in Whose hands are the heavens of grace and of bounty, and the kingdoms of glory and of majesty - CLXXXIV

Bahá'u'lláh uses the human term of “conqueror” to apply it to God being the Ruler. Bahá'u'lláh does not use it with the human nuances that men have given this title, but rather with the divine nuance that God is the Conqueror of human hearts, where He wishes to reside, as Bahá'u'lláh so beautifully expressed in His spiritual testament, the Hidden Words,

59. O SON OF BEING!

Thy heart is My home; sanctify it for My descent.
Thy spirit is My place of revelation; cleanse it for My
manifestation.³

A lesser level of power of being a ruler is one of being a governor. A governor has administrative powers over his jurisdiction that covers many areas such as public works and utilities, regional development contracts, legislative and policy decrees, overseeing security measures and many other public functions. When Bahá'u'lláh uses the title and applies it to God, he goes beyond the provincial boundaries, even beyond the national boundaries because he affirms that God is,

- Thou, verily, art the Governor - CLXXVI
- O Thou Who art the Governor of nations! – CXL

Bahá'u'lláh does not circumscribes such governorship to the ruling role; he proclaims with emphasis that God is “the maker and shaper of nations”. One immediately remembers this role of Yahweh as expressed in the Old Testament when He was behind the construction of the Israelite nation. In Bahá'u'lláh's words, God is

- The Maker of nations – XXXVII
- O Thou the Shaper of all the nations – CXVIII

By been the “Maker of nations”, Bahá'u'lláh presents God as being also “the desire of all things and of nations”,

³ Baha'u'llah, The Arabic Hidden Words

- The Desire of all things - XLII
- The Desire of the nations, - CLXXVI

The God of Power and Strength

If God enjoys a sublime Majesty, a Royalty that flows out of His Majesty, and is the Ruler of men's hearts, God has an inherent Power and strength that is unsurpassed by any created being, and God has that Power without measure or restriction to do "all things".

This is how Bahá'u'lláh enumerates all these nuances of God's Power and Strength. First, he makes the base affirmation, that God is "God of strength and power".

- The God of power - XXV, LXXVII, LXXIX, LXXXIII, LXXXVI, XCIII, (16 times)
- The God of strength and power - XLIII

As to the degree in which God expresses that power, Bahá'u'lláh explicitly states that God is "the All- and Most Powerful",

- The All-Powerful, XIV, XXXV, XXXIX, LIII, LVI, LVII, LIX, LVI - (16 times)
- The Most Powerful – III, XXIV, XXVIII, XXX, XXXI, XL, XLIV, XLVII, LVI, LVII, LXX, LXXIV, CXLVII, CXLIX - (33 times)

Bahá'u'lláh presents the dimension of such power in various degrees, such as "power that is immense", with which God is capable of doing "all things"; power that is over "all that are in the heavens and all that are on earth". In Bahá'u'lláh's own words:

- The One Whose power is immense – LXXIII
- Thou art, truly, potent over all things. – CXLIV
- Powerful art Thou to do all things - LXIII, CLXXVIII

- O Thou Who hast power over all that are in the heavens and all that are on earth - LXXX

Bahá'u'lláh brings out the divine dimension of such power when he presents it in the context of eternity,

- Thou art He Whose power is from everlasting to everlasting. - CXXIV
- Thou hast from everlasting been potent, - CLXXXIV

Bahá'u'lláh presents God's Attribute of power in terms of a divine dimension expressed as the power "to set ablaze a whole world" with just "a spark of His Love",

- A spark of the fire of Thy love is enough to set ablaze a whole world. - CLIII

God, the Strong, and God of strength

Bahá'u'lláh gives us additional connotations to God's Attribute of Powerfulness when he proclaims that we should consider God as "the Strong, the God of Strength", and not of only some things, but of "all things". In his own words, God is

- The Strong, - CLVI - The God of strength – XXVIII, LXXVII, LXXXVI
- The Strength of all things – XLII

Not only does Bahá'u'lláh testify that God has this strength; he also amplifies it to include that "all things have testified" to this Attribute,

Thou art He to Whose strength and power all things have testified – LXXII

According to Bahá'u'lláh, God's strength reveals a level of majesty and might that must be recognized for its sheer majesty and strength,

Thy majesty, and Thy strength, and Thy sovereign
might. - CXXIX

Bahá'u'lláh has a harsh expression when he affirms that God can be “the Destroyer and Abaser” of those that deserve it when they have created ‘evilness’ that hurts and destroys others. When this happens, God behaves, in Bahá'u'lláh's words as:

- Their Destroyer and their Abaser, - CLXXVI

The Almighty

The strength of a ruler is judged by men in the measure of how mighty such strength is and can be manifested. When Bahá'u'lláh applies this nuance to God's power he does it proclaiming that God is the “Mighty. The Most Might, and the Almighty” meaning that there is no one mightier than Him. It becomes evident in the number of times Bahá'u'lláh mentions this aspect of the Attribute of God's strength,

- The Mighty - X, XVI, CLXXXIII
- The Almighty – IV, V, XIV, XVI, XIX, XX, XXI, XXIII, XXIV, XXVII, XXVIII, XXX, XXXV, XXXVII, XLI, XLIV, XLV, XLIX, LXVI (19 times)
- Most Mighty – CLXXVII, CLXXVIII

As to the origin of this Might, Bahá'u'lláh, once more, reiterates that it springs from God's own Self, His very Essence:

Thy most august and most mighty Self – LXXI

And as all Attributes of God, this Might can only be manifested with the “wondrous potency” with which it imbued,

The wondrous potency of Thy might. - CXII

The All-Subduing, the All Possessing, the All Compelling

A characteristic that we humans can identify easily with any type of power, strength or show of might is that the wilder versions of such power have the potentiality of being subduing, possessing and compelling when exercised on those subjected to him. In God's case, Bahá'u'lláh underscores, as with the other attributes, that this one is also expressed in absolute terms. Bahá'u'lláh applies the terms that make it evident how absolute God's power and strength are:

- The All-Subduing – LVIII, LIX, CLVII
- No God is there but Thee, the All-Subduing - CLXXI
- The All-Possessing – LVIII, LXXIV, LXXIX, CXVI, CXX, CL, CLXIII
- The All-Compelling – LXXIV, LXXVIII, XCV, CV

This absolute “All-” leaves no doubt that the Attributes belong to the spiritual King, Creator and Self-Subsistent God that has no “other gods besides Him” and that is “the All-Possessing and Compelling”.

“The All-Compelling” requires a definition to capture all the nuances that the word implies because they clarify very well why Bahá'u'lláh chose the word to refer to an Attribute of God. The Oxford Dictionary says that compelling should be understood as: “Evoking admiration in a powerfully irresistible way. Not able to be refuted, inspiring conviction. Not able to be resisted; overwhelming”. All these different descriptions of the word apply very well to God's way of being with us. If His power is All-Compelling, we can agree that it must “evoke admiration, inspire conviction and cannot be resisted” because it is “overwhelming” as is the measure of God been Who He is.

God does what He Wills

A well-known characteristic of past kings was the unquestionable authority that they had making it clear what their will was, and that

it should be carried out by his subjects without any question. Selected groups of staunch obedient were in charge of making sure that the king's will was systematically fulfilled.

In the Absolute Freedom that God has, He “does what He Wills”. It is the prerogative of God, the Creator of all that is and will ever be, to do “what He Wills”.

This is how Bahá'u'lláh expressed such prerogative of God,

- Thou, verily, doest what Thou choosest – XLIV, CLXII
- Thou doest what Thou willest – LXII, XCIX

Such Attribute springs forth from God because, as the Creator of all that is, He has the authority to command what He Wills,

- Thine is the authority to command whatsoever Thou willest. – CLXXXIII

Such authority is based on God's power to Will whatever He pleases because God's kinship is over all Creation. This kingship gives God the authority and power to do what “Thou willest”. Bahá'u'lláh is clear in letting us know that God has the power to do what He Wills:

- Powerful art Thou to do what Thou willest - XXVI, XXVIII, XCIV, XCVII, CXIII,
- Powerful art Thou to do what Thou pleasest and to ordain what Thou willest - LXXIX, LXXXII,
- Potent art Thou to do Thy pleasure - CII, CXXIII, CXXIX
- Potent art Thou to do what Thou willest – CXX, XXX, XXXVIII, CXXI, CLI
- Powerful art Thou to do as Thou pleases - XLVIII, LXXXVIII, CIII
- Potent art Thou to do what pleaseth Thee - L, LVI, LXXXI, CXV, CXXVIII, CLI, CLXV

- Thou art, verily, powerful to do Thy pleasure.- CXL,
- Powerful art Thou to do what pleaseth Thee - LX, C, CXXVI, CXXXVIII, CLXXIX
- Thou art He, Who ordaineth what He pleaseth - XCIX,
- Thou art, verily, He Who, through the power of His might, doeth whatsoever He desireth - CLXII
- Thy choosest, through the power of Thy might, whatsoever Thou desirest - LXII

Again, in God's perspective, this Attribute is not just manifested momentarily. To the contrary, God has exercised this power "from everlasting" and "from eternity". In Bahá'u'lláh's own words:

- Thou art He Who from everlasting hath ordained what hath pleased Thee and will unto everlasting abide the same. - CLXIII
- Thou hast from eternity been powerful to do what Thou hast willed, and to ordain what Thou hast pleased. - CL

It could not be otherwise since Bahá'u'lláh was quite emphatic in setting the base when he addressed God's Attributes and made it clear that being Eternal was one of God's absolute defining Attributes.

Once that has been established, Bahá'u'lláh adds the logical corollary of "Ordainer of whatever [it] pleases [Thee]". As the Creator, organization of His Creation is a given. No creation can exist without internal and external organization. That such an Attribute has the power to organize is evident as expressed by Bahá'u'lláh:

- The Ordainer of all that may please Thee – LXI, CXXXVI

His Will is immutable

Men are constantly making willful decisions that they will live to regret or change because they had committed an error when exercising their free will. This is so common that the phrase, "To err is human," is

constantly used by us to excuse our limited capacity of judgment that deters us from doing the correct thing.

This cannot happen with God. His fathomless level of knowledge and understanding make it impossible for God to err. His clarity and understanding of all possible repercussions of His decisions are free from error that needs to be corrected or retracted as a mistake. In view of such perfection of the Attribute of the Will of God, Bahá'u'lláh does not hesitate to declare that His Will is immutable, unchangeable. Therefore Bahá'u'lláh can declare that God's Will is immutable.

- The immutability of Thy will, the endlessness of Thy purpose. - CLXI
- The heaven of Thine irrevocable Purpose. - CLXXIX

Nothing can frustrate God's purpose

Circumstances, unforeseen consequences, negative impacts, misunderstandings; all contribute to frustrate our will, even when we use it with the utmost care. We are not capable of such future clarity in our intentions and will; to the point of affirming that nothing can frustrate our decisions. Not so with God. His immutable Will cannot be frustrated by anything created. The perfection of His Creation and the immutable knowledge of what He creates has no such frustration as Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed it in this affirmation,

Whose Purpose nothing whatsoever of all that hath been created in Thy heaven and on Thy earth hath been able to frustrate. - LXII

The God of Knowledge

The above affirmation leads us naturally to another Attribute of God as expressed by Bahá'u'lláh; we are referring of the perfection of God's Knowledge. To be the Creator in the dimension in which Bahá'u'lláh

revealed God to be in the previous chapter as the Creator of all that is, and will ever be, requires a perfect level of knowledge of all that is, has been, or will be created. Thus, the categorical affirmation made by Bahá'u'lláh that God is:

- The God of knowledge, - XCIII, CV, CXXX

It is not just that He is “the God of Knowledge”. Bahá'u'lláh describes this Attribute of God, as He, who is “All-Knowing”,

- By Thy Name, the All-Knowing - LXXIII, LXXIX
- O Thou Who art the All-Knowing! – CLIII

God's knowledge is not restricted to what we normally consider reality; that is, the physical entourage in which we find ourselves constantly immersed to the point that we frequently make our judgments based on the belief that this is what constitutes **all** reality. Bahá'u'lláh reminds us, as he did before, that this Attribute of God is not restricted to such immediate reality, the one that we see constantly and firmly act upon with the conviction that this is the totality of reality. Bahá'u'lláh jolts us back to the realms of the invisible where God also resides and where He also exerts His dominion. In Bahá'u'lláh's words, God is:

- The Knower of things unseen - CX
- O Thou Who art the Knower of the seen and unseen – CXXI

God's Knowledge to “doest what Thou wilt” resides in an abundance not restrained by anyone or anything – physical or invisible. God, thus, becomes an ever-flowing fountain of knowledge that feeds all creation. In a poetic nuance Bahá'u'lláh proclaims it as

- The soft-flowing stream of Thy knowledge – CVIII

From where all things emanate through his Creative power, power illumined and sustained simultaneously by the power of His never-ending Knowledge.

The God of Wisdom

Knowledge, in the profundity of the sages, is acknowledged and called “wisdom” by us. The Oxford dictionary defines “wisdom” as: “the quality of having experience, knowledge, and good judgment”. Wisdom is seldom acquired at an early age. An individual has to go through many experiences, reflect deeply on them, and extract from them the perennial lessons of life before he can actually offer any wisdom to anyone. This path of inner growth requires time, patience, and a lot of reflection before one arrives at the level of “good judgment”.

God’s knowledge is not bound by time for He is Eternal nor does He require the processing of experience as humans need to acquire wisdom because God’s knowledge is complete, total, ever present. He is Divine Wisdom. So, when Bahá’u’lláh expresses this Attribute of God, he gives it an all-encompassing meaning by affirming that God is:

- The God of wisdom – XXVIII, LXXII, LXXIX, LXXXVI, XCIII, CXXX
- The Wise – XIX

Bahá’u’lláh reminds us God’s dimension of Being when he emphasizes that God is the “All-Wise” above whom there is no one that can be the “all-wise”. God is

The All-Wise – VII, IX, XXXI, XXXVI, XXXVII, XXXVIII, XXXIX, XL, XLVI, XLVIII, LIX, LXXIX, CXX

God, the Ever faithful

According to the Oxford dictionary, faithfulness is: “the quality of being faithful; fidelity”. Faithful, on the other hand, is: “remaining loyal and steadfast”. As fidelity was included in the first definition, we looked

it up and the dictionary describes it as: “faithfulness to a person, cause, or belief, demonstrated by continuing loyalty and support”.

All of these descriptions of what it is to be faithful are lofty goals that we wish to find in those we trust, in the friend, in the spouse, in the brother or sister, in the relative. Very frequently the experience is that these dear ones, so close to us, failed us for whatever reason, and the expected faithfulness of the relationship has fallen short or worse, has completely broken up.

When Bahá'u'lláh expresses that God possesses this Attribute of Faithfulness, he does it succinctly by stating that God is

The Faithful. – CLVI

As with previous Attributes, Bahá'u'lláh affirms that God possesses this Attribute in a measure that humans cannot promise, or manifest given our limitation as created beings. God's Faithfulness is total, complete and everlasting because He is,

The Ever-Faithful – XVI

The Ever-Abiding

Bahá'u'lláh presents another Attribute of God that reinforces the previous one when he affirms that God is

The Ever-Abiding – X, LXXIV

The dictionary tells us that abiding means: “lasting a long time; enduring”. Again, this definition applies to us humans in our limited condition. When it comes to God, Bahá'u'lláh makes it clear that He possesses this Attribute of Faithfulness in His absolute mode of Being, that is Eternal. Thus, God is “the Ever-Abiding”.

God the Bountiful

Since God is the Creator of all that exists, that has existed and will exist in the future both in the visible and invisible realms of being, and that creation as we know it is nothing short of an incredible, awesome ocean of plenitude, of richness and diversity, we can easily conclude that the author of such marvelous physical reality has to be One that is bountiful by any and every measure we may use to make such an assertion.

Using the Oxford dictionary, we find that bountiful is defined as: “large in quantity; abundant; giving generously”. We call a person “bountiful” when we find he exhibits these facets. When he does, he becomes a person whom we wish to befriend, enjoy his company, to share the good moments and whatever material wealth we have. When Bahá'u'lláh applies this human attribute to God's Attributes, he does it in the dimension that only God can have. So, we find the affirmation that God is “the God of Bounty”,

- O God of bounty - CLXXVI
- Thou art the God of Bounty - LXXXI, CI

Bahá'u'lláh repeats it over 15 times in the book we are using, *Prayers and Meditations of Bahá'u'lláh*, by including the “All-” making it a distinctive Attribute to the highest degree possible.

- Thou, truly, art the All-Bountiful - XXI, XXXIX, XLI, XLIV, XLIV, XLVII, LXXIX, CLIII, CLX, CLX, CLXXX
- Thou art that All-Bountiful One - CLVIII

Bahá'u'lláh uses multiple expressions to underscore the level of majesty to which such bountifulness is found in God using superlatives such as “the Most, the Great”. In his own words, God is:

- The Most Bountiful, - XXIII, XLI, LVI, LXII, LXXIV, LXXV, LXXXVII, LXXXIX

- The All-Bounteous - X, XCVIII
- The One Who is of great bounteousness – LXXXI

God's great bounteousness springs from His Generosity, which is, as His Bounty:

- The Most Generous. - CLXVI

But, as we presented in the previous chapter, God's Essence is Unknowable to us. Thus, Bahá'u'lláh expounds that all of God's bounties "are wondrous bounties"; but they are "hidden" from us as is His Essence. As Bahá'u'lláh expresses it:

- Thy wondrous and hidden bounties - CVI

The One whose grace is bountiful, immense

God's bounty is given to us as grace. It is necessary to clarify what is meant by "grace" so that we can understand the nuance that Bahá'u'lláh uses when he refers to the bounty of God's grace. According to the Oxford Dictionary, grace is: "a divinely given talent or blessing. In Christian belief, grace is understood as the free and unmerited favor of God, as manifested in the salvation given to humanity".

In religious and spiritual terms, grace can be understood as divine blessings showered upon humans by God's Attribute of bountifulness. This is how Bahá'u'lláh expresses it:

- Thy bountiful grace – L
- Whose grace is immense - LXXXI, XCIII, XCVIII, CI

As was the case with the previous Attributes, Bahá'u'lláh underscores the true divine dimension of such grace when he qualifies it as "infinite":

- Thou, truly, art He Whose grace is infinite. - CLXXX

The Benevolent, The One who showers loving-kindness,

God's bountifulness is expressed in many ways. First, in His physical creation as an endless variety of all types of animal species, plants, minerals, and rocks. Then with humans, as a Benevolent Creator that showers us with a never-ending loving kindness expressed in the richness of our amazing body with its multiple organ systems giving us the living organism that shelters our incredible creative mind and intelligence, as well as our formidable capacity of self-awareness.

Thus, Bahá'u'lláh affirms that God is,

The Benevolent - XLIV

Benevolent according to the Oxford dictionary is one that is "well-meaning and kindly". Such a definition is certainly fulfilled by God because the whole of Creation was carried out with the desire that it be for the wellbeing of all that is created by Him, including us humans. No one is excluded from such benevolence as Bahá'u'lláh clearly states when he affirms that God's "loving-kindness is all encompassing":

Thy loving-kindness encompassed all that are in heaven
and all that are on earth. - CLXXXIV

God, the Merciful

Bahá'u'lláh's description of God's Attributes includes Mercy, understood as "compassion or forgiveness shown towards someone meriting punishment". If there is something that God will never stop dispensing humans is a cascade of Mercy of all forms and types. Bahá'u'lláh gives us a complete picture of that Mercy when he proclaims that God is the God of Mercy,

- O Thou Who art the God of mercy - CXIV
- O thou art the Most Merciful. - CXLI, CXLVI, CLXIII

Bahá'u'lláh always includes out the degree to which any Attribute can be found in God. He is thus not just merciful; God is “the Most Merciful”. Additionally, Bahá'u'lláh associates such an Attribute to the transcendent level in which any quality in God is found. In his own words, God is:

- Thy transcendent mercy - CLXXXIV

Such Mercy was present before the creation of the earth and heaven, which implies that it is not limited by time or space, since the Self-Subsistent reality of God lies beyond any such limitation. As Bahá'u'lláh's expresses it, such Mercy was “before creation and surpasses all created things”,

- Thy transcendent mercy that was before the foundation of earth and heaven. - CLXVII
- Thy mercy hath surpassed all created things, - CLXXXIV

Similarly, such transcendent mercy is not limited to our world. To the contrary, it surpasses all “the worlds”:

Thy mercy, which hath surpassed the worlds. - CXLIII

The God of Providence and Protection

The Divine Providence

A God of Bounty and Mercy, as Bahá'u'lláh tells us that He is, oversees, guides, and provides for the positive evolution of humanity, offering it the assistance it needs to fulfill its divine purpose of being. For God to exercise this function with humanity, He sustains a Providential relationship with it. Bahá'u'lláh declares thus that God is the:

O Divine Providence! - CLX

Providence is defined by the Oxford dictionary as: “the protective care of God”. If Bahá'u'lláh declares that God is the Provident One, then God must also be the Protector who gives protective care to humans, as well as to the rest of His physical creation. Within the framework of how Bahá'u'lláh usually expresses any attribute of God, the Protector role is in the sublime scale of the Divine. Thus, God is:

- The Sovereign Protector – CLXXVI
- The Guardian - XVII

God, the Just

Bahá'u'lláh, in his golden spiritual testament - *The Hidden Words* - makes the following statement as if it had been uttered by God,

2. O SON OF SPIRIT The best beloved of all things in my sight is Justice: turn not away there from if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee... Verily Justice is My gift to thee and the sign of My loving-kindness. Set it then before thine eyes⁴.

This is certainly a very powerful declaration made by God to us, through Bahá'u'lláh. To place justice as “the best beloved of all things” must mean that God places a great deal of importance on it. From the human experience, if there is one experience that hurts the most and does not require much intellectual preparation to recognize, is knowing when someone has wronged us.

That Bahá'u'lláh declares God as being the Just is not difficult for us to grasp. If God is the God of Knowledge and Power, then certainly, He is simultaneously the God of Justice, which informs all that God does as Bahá'u'lláh asserts that:

- Everything Thou doest is pure justice, - CLX

⁴ Bahá'u'lláh, the Hidden Words

Bahá'u'lláh, not only considers that everything God “does is pure justice”, he also affirms that God becomes manifest in His Justice,

- Thou art manifest in Thy justice, - CLXIX

And as in previous affirmations, this Attribute of God is exercised at the level of the Kingship within which God reigns.

- O Thou Who art the King of the realms of justice – LXXXI

Bahá'u'lláh also contemplates God's protection towards those that suffer injustice by declaring that God exercises the power of being the Withholder Who can protect the victim of such injustices. In Bahá'u'lláh's words:

Keep them safe, by Thy Name, the Withholder, from the tyranny of the oppressor and the wickedness of the evil-doers and the malice of the stirrers of mischief. - LXXXIII

Brief Summary

Chapter 4 compiled the Attributes that Bahá'u'lláh expressed of God that seem to fall into the category of “God as eternal Creator”.

This chapter has tried to organize God's Attributes presented by Bahá'u'lláh that seem to naturally fall into the category that we have identified as “**God as Ruler and Ordainer**”. These attributes suggest they should fall into the following categories:

God in Himself

In this broad category, we assert that God is the Supreme, Supreme Ordainer, the Incomparable, the Unpossessed, the Possessor, the Preserver, the Concealer, and the Withholder.

The Majesty of God

In this general category, the following Attributes seem to express such Majesty: the God of Majesty and Glory, the God of Glory, the All-glorious, the Resplendent, the Most Ancient Splendor; the Exalted, the most exalted presence, the Most High, the All-Highest, the Most Great, the Most Precious, the Beauteous, the Ancient Beauty, the Wondrous Beauty, the most exalted Beauty; the Supreme Sinlessness; the Glorifier, the One Glorified; the All- Praised, the Ever-Blessed.

The Royalty of God

In this category, the attributes that express Royalty were the King, the Sovereign, the Lord, the Lord of Names, the Most Great Name; the Ruler, the Conqueror, the God of all men; the Governor of nations, the Maker and Shaper of nations, the Desire of the nations, and the Desire of all things.

The God of Power and Strength

As King and Ruler, the following Attributes of God appear to show power and strength: the Powerful, The Strong, God of strength; the Almighty, the All-Subduing, the All-Possessing; the All Compelling; God does what He Wills, His Will is immutable, and nothing can frustrate God's purpose.

The God of Knowledge

In this broad category the following Attributes of God seem to fall naturally: the God of Knowledge, the All-Knowing, and the God of Wisdom,

God, the Ever Faithful

Again, the following Attributes, we felt, should be under this category: the Faithful, the Ever-Faithful, and the Ever-Abiding.

God, the Bountiful

Within this category the following Attributes found their niche: the Bountiful, the one whose grace is bountiful and immense; the Benevolent, the One who showers loving-kindness.

The God of Mercy

The following Attributes fit in nicely into this category: the God of Mercy, and the God Most Merciful.

The God of Providence and Protection

Under this heading, the following Attributes of God were identified: the Divine Providence, the Protector, and the Guardian.

God, the Just

The Attributes that should be placed under this category were: the All Just, the Equitable, and the Withholder

Yet Bahá'u'lláh presents another set of Attributes that seem to suggest that God has a special close and intimate relationship with humanity. These will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

GOD AS OUR LORD AND BELOVED

In Chapter 4, we grouped together a series of God's Attributes as presented by Bahá'u'lláh that seem to suggest that they belong to the category of God as **"Eternal Creator"**. Another series of God's Attributes presented by Bahá'u'lláh allowed us to identify another broad category, which we will call **"God as Ruler and Ordainer"** and became the content of Chapter 5.

Bahá'u'lláh liberally expressed many more Attributes of God that we included in still another broad category that we called, **"God as our Lord and Beloved"** (in a very close and powerful relationship). This will be the core content of this Chapter.

It could not be otherwise. God, the Creator of All that is, including ourselves, would not be a Loving Creator if He did not have an intimate relationship with the crown of His Creation, us humans, made in His "image and likeness". If we humans, limited as we are, yet still capable of incredible expressions of affection and care towards our children, loved ones and even strangers, how can our Creator not have an intimate relationship with us when He imbedded in the essence of our souls a spark of His spiritual reality?

So, it stands to reason that Bahá'u'lláh would have addressed this relationship by presenting many references to how that relationship is established. Of the multiple quotes found in the same book we are using, *Prayers and Meditations of Bahá'u'lláh*, at least five major categories seemed to emerge as the ones that would best express the richness of such a relationship of God with us. The first major category that became evident is that we must recognize Who God is.

Recognition of Who God is

Our relationship with God starts by recognizing Who God is. We do this, not by the sheer power of our deduction, but by the certainty offered by His Spokesperson for this day and age, Bahá'u'lláh. It is through his Revealed texts that we can affirm, without fear of inventing erroneous conceptions of God.

He is the One God

The first and foremost affirmation is that God is the One God, as we have stated back in Chapter 4.

I testify that Thou art God, and that there is none other
God besides Thee - CXXXV

This Absolute Supremacy of God not having “other gods besides Thee” is a prerequisite for understanding God’s relationship with us and our relationship to Him. If we cannot grasp or fail to accept that God is Who He is, as the only God there is, all the other Attributes cease to have the very foundation of why they are such Attributes. Our recognition of the Absoluteness of God as the One God declares the boundary between the Uncreated and the creation that depends absolutely on Him Being the One God.

Bahá'u'lláh probably insisted so many times on this affirmation knowingly that some religious interpretations made by its religious

scholars and leaders present God as having multiple individualities within its Essence. Such declaration would clash with Bahá'u'lláh's clear affirmation that "I testify that Thou art God, and that there is none other God besides Thee" repeated too many times to have any doubt of its absoluteness.

God's Oneness and Unity

Thus, the next point of recognition we have to make is His Oneness as Absolute Unity so that we can join the chorus of all created things bearing witness to His Unity and Oneness. In Bahá'u'lláh's words:

- All created things have borne witness to Thy unity, and every dweller in Thy kingdom hath confessed Thy oneness - CXXXV
- I bear witness unto Thy unity and Thy oneness, - CLVII

The Unity and Oneness of God are not accidental. It is essential for establishing that all created things depend on God to exist. The whole creation is thus impelled to proclaim this Oneness and Unity. We are included in that creation, as Bahá'u'lláh, in the name of all humanity, states "I bear witness unto Thy unity and Thy oneness".

God's dominion

In human terms, we find it natural, almost imperative, to give recognition to whoever invents, or creates something new or extraordinary. It is the recognition that such an inventor has a tacit dominion over his creation. The most evident confirmation of this recognition lies in what we call a patent, which gives the author of an article, piece of art, literary production, practical gadget, mechanical or electrical artifact, laboratory medicine, applied theory, discovery of an unknown thing or substance the exclusive right to control who replicates it, and determines the extent to which that authorization implies paying him or her a royalty.

If we find this procedure natural and acceptable in human terms, why would we behave differently in divine terms? Becoming aware that whatever God creates, spontaneously invites us to recognize that all fall under His dominion. Bahá'u'lláh expresses it admirably making that recognition specifically extensive to all humans,

Thou art He to Whose power and to Whose dominion
every tongue hath testified, - CLIV

This is so because Bahá'u'lláh explains that this is what “every understanding heart” feels compel to do. When becoming conscious of the “majesty and sovereignty” of the Creator, every “understanding heart” cannot help but express such understanding,

Whose majesty and Whose sovereignty every
understanding heart hath acknowledged - CLIV

This understanding includes God's grace that is transcendent as it represents is His favor towards us. This how Bahá'u'lláh affirms it,

Thy transcendent grace and favor, - CLXXXIV

Moreover, he expands the affirmation to equate grace with Paradise, the longed-for arrival goal of every soul attuned to its divine origin. Therefore Bahá'u'lláh feels compelled to exclaim that God's grace is such Paradise and that it is transcendent,

Thy grace, Thy Paradise of transcendent
holiness, - CLXXXIV

The All-Sufficing Source

To recognize that one is created by God implies that one can make several deductions as to the implications that are associated with such recognition. The first one is self-evident, and that is that God is the very source of one's being,

O Source of my being, - CLV

The waters of Thy love have preserved me in the
kingdom of Thy creation - CXI

But, if God is the very source of my existence, He must also be
the All-Sufficing - CXLVI

God, been the All-Sufficing “unto us”, would, in spiritual terms, be sufficient to satisfy all those spiritual needs, to the point that we can “dispense with the world and all that is therein”. In Bahá'u'lláh's words, this is how we should make this recognition:

Thou art sufficient unto us so that we can dispense with
the world and all that is therein – LXIII

Recognition of the greatness of God and His bounty

Becoming conscious of our condition as created beings easily allows us to recognize the greatness of God and His bounty since the mere fact that we enjoy existing is because the creative power of God is ever-present so that such existence remains in the realm of being. Becoming aware that we do not give ourselves our own existence implies that we can affirm that we exist because God's life-giving power is the one that sustains such existence. We do not possess such power. We are impotent to manifest such power. We depend on God's creative power constantly to just “be”. Recognizing this is the basis for establishing a relationship with God that acknowledges that He is the Source of Being, including our very existence. These two affirmations of Bahá'u'lláh state clearly this relationship:

- Thou art the All-Bountiful – CLVII
- Every created thing hath recognized its own impotence, and the power of Thy might, and hath confessed its own abasement and Thy great glory. - CXL

Once we recognize Who God is, we are prepared to understand Bahá'u'lláh's description of Who God is for us.

Who God is for us

God manifests His relationship to us in several ways. Bahá'u'lláh has given us a solid description of how God maintains that relationship.

The All-loving, the Loving Kindness

The foundation of all relationships is grounded on the solid base of love. Without it there is no possibility for establishing an intimate relationship. Thus, it is no surprise that Bahá'u'lláh is so expressive in proclaiming that God is “All-Loving and Loving Kindness”,

- the All-Loving - XLVII - Thy loving-kindness – LXXI,
- the Day-Spring of Thy loving-kindness – LXXII

That Loving kindness translates into permanent nourishment for the soul that yearns for it as “pure milk”,

Out of the pure milk, drawn from the breasts of Thy
loving-kindness, give me to drink, for my thirst hath
utterly consumed me. - CXLV

This tender image refreshes in our mind and soul that intimate relationship that a child develops as it is nourished with his mother's milk, which is the life sustainer of those crucial first year of his infancy. In like manner, God's “loving kindness” is our spiritual nourishment that is needed as much as physical nourishment is needed for our bodies to be alive and develop in a healthy way.

God, The Beneficent, the Provider

Loving kindness is associated with one who becomes the constant provider, the beneficent provider of all those basic needs that we so depend on to survive. Bahá'u'lláh affirms that God is precisely this for us; He is:

- The Beneficent – V, LVI, CXXVIII, CXXXI
- O my Provider! - CLXV
- Their Provider - CLXXVI

So, knowing that God is our Provider, we should be clear that He is certainly the Provider of our spiritual needs, which are so many times far more essential for our inner progress than just the material things we need for our continuous physical existence. These spiritual needs are also the ones that we so many times overlook or forget to ask God for them when we are overwhelmed by the physical necessities of life.

This does not mean that God is disconnected from our physical needs. As the Creator of all that is, that has been and will be, God gives us most what we need for our physical survival in as much as He created the sun, the atmosphere, the oxygen, the water, the fruits, the grains, the medicinal flowers and plants and the animals that we can eat. There are enough of these physical elements to satisfy the needs of all humans if access to them is not blocked by man-made obstacles, which are not God Willed.

The Helper, in all circumstances

A provider is one that helps in whatever one needs. God, being the Provider, is also naturally the Helper, as Bahá'u'lláh affirms He is. These are some of the most salient expressions of this complementary Attribute,

- Thou art, verily, the Helper - CXLVIII

- ...the Supreme Helper - VI

As in many other Attributes, Bahá'u'lláh reiterates that God is not only “the Helper”, He is the “Supreme Helper”; thus, extolling the highest possible degree of manifestation of such an Attribute. It could not be otherwise since in God, all His Attributes are present at the level of perfection.

The affirmation of God as the Helper is not an abstract statement. Bahá'u'lláh concentrates that Attribute in the most needed of all situations, that is, when we are in peril, physically or spiritually. And this is possible because it happens through the “power of Thy sovereignty”. This is how Bahá'u'lláh expresses it,

- The Help in peril, - XI, XVIII, XX, XXII, XVI, XLVII, LIII, LVI, LXIV, LXX
- Thou, truly, art the Help in Peril through the power of Thy sovereignty - CXXXVI

Another way to express the role of a helper is that of a succorer. Although the word is not commonly used, succor means “assistance and support in times of hardship and distress” (Oxford Dictionary). This applies to whoever carries out the beneficent action in favor of someone who needs it. Bahá'u'lláh uses the term precisely to indicate God's assistance to those that find themselves in a distressed condition,

- O my Succorer, - CLXV
- The Succorer of the distressed, - CXLIX

Bahá'u'lláh recognizes that we humans experience multiple conditions which require divine help. So, in several ways he points out that indeed we all have to request such help. The tone of his expressions denotes an urgency acknowledging that we truly depend on God to receive that succor,

- He Whose help is implored by all men - CII

- Thou are Whose help is implored by all men. - CXIII, CXIV, CXV
- Whose help is sought by all men - CXXVIII
- Thou truly art to whom all cry for help. - CXXIX

Bahá'u'lláh recognizes that God is the constant Helper in all circumstances, as evidenced in the following description, in which God's power helps in all situations,

- Thou art He, O my God, through Whose names the sick are healed and the ailing are restored, and the thirsty are given drink, and the sore-vexed are tranquillized, and the wayward are guided, and the abased are exalted, and the poor are enriched, and the ignorant are enlightened, and the gloomy are illumined, and the sorrowful are cheered, and the chilled are warmed, and the downtrodden are raised up. - CXLVII

At this moment it is valid to ask, how is God the Helper?

Bahá'u'lláh presents a couple of possibilities. One is that God is the one capable of giving us an understanding of what is it that one needs the most because, in Bahá'u'lláh's terms, God is "The Enlightener", meaning the One that gives us the light to understand what we are lacking. In his own words, God is

The Enlightener of all things visible and invisible –
XLIV, XLVII, CLXXVI

Who covers our immediate visible physical necessities as well as those existing in the realm of the "invisible" where most of our spiritual needs seem to reside.

The Healer

In what manner does God comes to our help?

Bahá'u'lláh presents God's help as the Healer of all ailing souls that seek His ocean of healing,

- Thou art, verily, the Healer - CXLVI, CXLVIII
- O, my God! I beg of Thee by the ocean of Thy healing, - CLXXIV
- this ailing soul who hath set his face towards the ocean of Thy healing.-CLXXVI

In these expressions, Bahá'u'lláh seems to project an abundant confidence that seeking such help cannot be denied because God is an “ocean of healing” where all can find the solace desired.

Our Refuge

Bahá'u'lláh expresses that God, being an ocean of healing, becomes the natural place where we would seek refuge and protection, as it is implied in the very definition of the word refuge: “The state of being safe or sheltered from pursuit, danger, or difficulty”. In Bahá'u'lláh's words, God is also the refuge from those adversaries, who wish to harm us,

- Beneath the shadow of the wings of Thy mercy shelter me, for all mine adversaries with one consent have fallen upon me. - CXLV

This “refuge” aspect that God offers is, as all His other Attributes, “everlasting”, meaning that it has always been present as God is Eternal. His refuge has always been present to protect the “fearful and the needy”.

- Thou art the One, O my Lord, Who from everlasting hath been the Refuge of the fearful, and the Haven of the needy. - CLXXIX

If the above statement seems too general, Bahá'u'lláh offers an individual and very personal perspective when he affirms that this refuge is “within the stronghold of Thy love”. Nothing is more intimate than love. It becomes even more intimate when Bahá'u'lláh addresses God as “Thee

as my Refuge”, making it a personal plea to be welcomed in the refuge of the Lord,

- To seek refuge within the stronghold of Thy love and of Thy Revelation, - CXLIII
- To seek Thee as my Refuge, and to flee unto Thy face. - CLXII

Bahá'u'lláh offers in these two affirmations that attaining “God’s refuge” is the safest place to be, and that it is within this “divine refuge” that one can find the safety and comfort sought so earnestly.

The Attractor – The Ever-Desired

One does not wonder, then, why Bahá'u'lláh calls God “The Attractor, the Ever-Desired”. The Attributes of Helper, Healer and Refuge elicit from the soul a sense of being attracted to the infinite source of Love and Compassion. This attraction is so powerful that the soul is compelled to acknowledge that God is the Ever-Desired. Bahá'u'lláh introduces the attraction factor when he proclaims,

O Thou my Attractor! - CLXV

And then adds multiple expressions that God is thereby, the Ever-Desired,

- The Ever-Desired - LXXV
- My Master, the Goal of my desire! - CLV, CLXXI, CLXXVI
- O Thou the Goal of my desire! - CLXIII, CLXXXIV
- Thou art the sole desire of the heart – LXX
- O my Lord, my heart longeth for Thee with a longing such as no heart hath known. - CLI
- The one Desire of the hearts which are devoted to Thee! - CIX

God is not desired by a few fervent souls, but in fact, He is desired by all humans, even if the desire is not recognized,

- Thou Who art the Desire of our hearts - LXXXI

- The Desire of all them that are nigh unto Thee - LXV
- The Desire of all them that have known Thee! - LVI

Those that have recognized God feel that this Desire had become their burning goal,

O Thou Who art the sole Desire of them that have recognized Thee – LXX, LXXXVI, CVII

When this happens, those that have recognized God feel compelled to not turn to another one because they do not seek anything else but to seek God. In Bahá'u'lláh's words,

- Whosoever hath recognized Thee will turn to none save Thee – LXX
- ...and will seek from Thee naught else except Thyself – LXX

What is striking is how Bahá'u'lláh expands this Desire. It is not restricted to us humans living in this space-time dimension, but he extends that Desire to those already existing in the heavenly realm,

- the Desire of all that are in heaven and on earth, - CIII

The Object of our adoration

Once the soul is attracted to God, he finds no other Desire than to be with God. Recognizing God as the personal Creator that has made him/her in His “image and likeness”, without the individual having accumulated any merits before birth to merit such a free gift, she/he feels compelled to proclaim God as the object of her/his adoration. This is the outward recognition of the Majesty and Lordship of God over all creation. Bahá'u'lláh gives us the following expressions of such adoration,

- O Thou Whose face is the object of my adoration, - XCVIII, CLX

- the sole Object of their adoration was Thee. - CX
- O Thou Who art the Delight of our hearts and the Object of our adoration! - LXXXI
- I implore Thee, O Beloved of my heart and the Object of my soul's adoration.-VI

This adoration takes on many forms and is expressed by Bahá'u'lláh in a wealth of images that proclaim exultantly how the soul wishes to express its adoration for its Creator. In Bahá'u'lláh's own words,

O Thou Whose face is the object of my adoration,
Whose beauty is my sanctuary, Whose court is my
goal, Whose remembrance is my wish, Whose affection
is my solace, Whose love is my begetter, Whose
praise is my companion, Whose nearness is my hope,
Whose presence is my greatest longing and supreme
aspiration! - XCVIII

Once again, Bahá'u'lláh makes us aware that such adoration is not restricted to our human recognition of God's Lordship. The whole creation participates in the recognition-adoration of God's sovereignty, God's greatness, bounty, and loving kindness,

The Object of the adoration of the entire creation! -
LXIX, LXX

This recognition is expressed by Bahá'u'lláh when he proclaims that "all worship God" and "all bow down",

- We all, verily, worship God. - CLXVII
- We all, verily, bow down before God. - CLXVII

God is the object of all our wishes, needs and goals, (Highest Wish)

Bahá'u'lláh states in multiple expressions that God is the object of our adoration. The following verses sound like a cascade of praise and

adoration full of nuances: “confidence, clinging to the shadow of His mercy, being gladdened by His Eternity, which breaths tranquility” as it becomes “the Beginning and the End”, and “their Highest Hope”,

- In Thee I have placed my whole confidence, unto Thee I have turned my face, to the cord of Thy loving providence I have clung, and towards the shadow of Thy mercy I have hastened - CXXXII
- By the breezes of Thine eternity gladden me, - CLV,
- Let Thine everlasting melodies breathe tranquility on me, O my Companion, - XIV, XV, LXXVIII, CXX, CLV, CLXVIII
- For Thou hast been their Beginning and their End, and their Highest Hope, and their Supreme Desire.- CLXXXVIII
- O Thou Who art my Highest Wish, - CLXV
- I implore Thee, O Beloved of my heart and the Object of my soul’s adoration. VI

The Beloved

From adoration of a subject that recognizes God who has created him, Bahá’u’lláh returns to the personal relationship when he uses the term “the Beloved” to refer to how one can relate to God. No one calls the other “the Beloved” unless there is total attraction to him/her. Bahá’u’lláh, once more, overflows in expressions declaring that God is the Beloved of men’s hearts who have recognized Him as Lord of all worlds, including the world to come,

- My God, my Well-Beloved! - CXVI
- O my God, my Master, my Best-Beloved! – LXII
- I swear by Thy might, O my Beloved! – LVIII
- By the glory of Thy might, O Thou my Well-Beloved! – LVIII
- Glory to Thee, O Thou Who art the Lord of all worlds, and the Beloved of all such as have recognized Thee! – CII
- O Lord the Beloved of the world and the Desire of all them that have recognized Thee! – CL

- No God is there beside Thee, Thou alone art my Beloved in this world and in the world which is to come. - CVII

Bahá'u'lláh admirably expresses what happens to the soul that feels separated from God. It experiences an “unquenchable thirst”. Such is the strength of the connection created when God becomes “the Beloved”,

Thou well knowest, O my God, my Best-Beloved, that
naught can quench the thirst I suffer in my separation
from Thee - XLI

The Exultation of the soul

Bahá'u'lláh crowns this intimate relationship of the soul with God by declaring that God is the “exultation of the soul”. To get the full impact of this declaration it is imperative to state the meaning of the word. Exultation, according to the Oxford dictionary is: “a feeling of triumphant elation or jubilation; rejoicing”. Bahá'u'lláh adheres to the nuances of this definition when he expresses that God is,

- Thou, Who art the Exultation of our souls - LXXX
- O Thou Whose remembrance is the delight of the souls of all them that yearn after Thee, Whose name is the exultation of the hearts of all who are wholly devoted to Thy will, - LXXX

The enamored soul with God experiences the “elation, rejoicing or jubilation” that He gives that soul, which is felt at the very essence of its being. True communion with the Creator generates this sense of being in whatever image we have of heaven. The soul that experiences the nearness to God that He offers gratuitously cannot help but feel that the very core of his being is elated, that he rejoices in a way that he has not experienced before because there is no creature, not even his/her life companion, who can create the intensity of the experience

of exultation that is generated in the nearness to the very source of the soul's existence, God.

God is a Personal God

The relationship that God offers us is not one of separateness, even if we, as created beings, who recognize God as the Creator, express it in adoration. A relationship of distance, lacking any form of intimacy, is not a desired love-relationship.

If we have this potential erroneous perception, Bahá'u'lláh offers expressions that propose a relationship in which one can consider God as a

Personal God.

To make this reality quite clear to us, the below are but a handful of expressions in which Bahá'u'lláh reiterates that this is the kind of relationship that we should have with God. It can be seen in his most used statement when referring to how he relates to God in a very personal manner:

- O my God – VI, VIII, XIII, XIV, XX, XXIII, XXVI, XXXI, XXXVIII
- O Thou Who art my God- XLIV, CLXV

The fact that “O my God” appears 355 times in the book we are using, *Prayers and Meditation of Bahá'u'lláh*, gives us a pretty straightforward indication of how precious he considers the relationship is between God and each of us as he refers to God in those terms of endearment, “O my God”. This is probably the most intimate expression of that relationship. So, it does not surprise us when we find the very same expression repeated in the same sentence several times:

O my God, O my God, O my God – XVII. XXVIII,
XXXI, XXXI, XXXVIII

The level of intimacy is shown in greater depth when Bahá'u'lláh goes one step deeper in declaring that he considers God to be his “Best-Beloved”. It is obvious that this expression has full sense in the spiritual realm, and has no physical connotation,

- My Best-Beloved! - LXII - My God, my Well-Beloved! – CXVI, CXX
- O my Well-Beloved! - CXXVII

because Bahá'u'lláh is stating that God is to him the most beloved of all that he could love in this earthly realm, as well as in “in the world to come”,

Thou alone art my Beloved in this world and in the world which is to come - CVII

Thus, it is no surprise to read Bahá'u'lláh expressing that God is the goal of his desire, and as a perfect example, this is how everyone can relate to God, if he so chooses,

O God, my Desire! - CLXXIII

The level of intimacy that we have found in the previous expressions do not for a moment lose the most important relationship that we must have with God and that is the recognition of his Lordship over creation. Bahá'u'lláh is expansive in expressing this dimension of the relationship that we all have to have with God. God is above all and foremost our Lord:

- O My Lord – XIII, XXX, XXXI, LVI
- O my Lord, O my Lord- XXV, XXXVI, XLIX, LVI
- Thou Who art our Lord- XXXVIII, LIII

- O Lord my God! – I, VI, VII, VIII, IX, XVI, XIX, XXI, XXV, XXXV, XXXVIII, LXXXII, CXLIV, CLXXVIII, CLXXXIV, XLVI - (it appears 85 times)

Bahá'u'lláh reiterated this relationship by proclaiming the royalty of God, which we presented in the previous chapter. The title of King is thus used by Bahá'u'lláh in an unmistakable way:

- My King and the King of all things - CLXXVI
- My Master, my Possessor, my King - LVIII, CLXXIII
- My God, my Master - CLXXVI

We had explored this category in the previous chapter and had found the reasons for God being “King of all things”. Simultaneously, kingship includes the position of being the Master of the subjects. For this reason, Bahá'u'lláh acknowledges that God is also “my Master”. This reality does not impede Bahá'u'lláh's declaration of how intimate our relationship with God can be. He does it using unequivocal intimate terms, such as “the Adored One, the Possessor, companion, sole Desire, Goal, only Hope, constant Aim, habitation and Sanctuary, Center of my Soul”. The following are some of Bahá'u'lláh's multiple expressions of this intimacy:

- My God, my Adored One - CLXXIII
- O Thou the Possessor of my soul! - CXIV
- O Thou Who art my Companion - CXX
- My Highest Hope - CLXXVI
- O God, my Desire! - CLXXIII
- The Goal of my desire! - CLXXVI
- Be Thou, O my Lord, my sole Desire, my Goal, mine only Hope, my constant Aim, my Habitation and my Sanctuary. - CVII
- Thou Who art the Object of my heart's adoration, and the Source and Center of my soul! - CXI
- The Beloved of my soul - CLXXVI
- I am poor, O my Lord, and Thou art the Rich - CXXVIII

These expressions are nothing less than the outburst of a soul enamored with his Creator recognizing that God is the supreme goal with Whom he aspires to be, to adore as the King and Creator. In these phrases, Bahá'u'lláh outpours his burning desire to be in the closest relationship possible with God giving us the measure that we all should strive. The following phrase is the confirmation of such aspiration:

- Let the object of mine ardent quest be Thy most resplendent, Thine adorable, and ever-blessed Beauty - CVII
- Praise be unto Thee, O Thou the Beloved of the world, and the Adored of the hearts of them that have recognized Thee. - CLXXVI

What is most important to extract from these confessions made by Bahá'u'lláh expressing his intimate relationship to God is that we can use his fervent expressions when talking to God. If we adopt them, our relationship with God would be as intimate as the one that Bahá'u'lláh portrays. It only demands that we become deeply conscious of our state of created beings that recognize exultantly that God is the Creator, that He has lovingly given each one of us the unsurpassed gift of our existence; that our goal is to go through this temporal journey step by step until we return to our divine origin.

The Compassionate and the Merciful

The first stage of recognition of God as our personal Creator takes us to the threshold of Adoration and recognition that God gave each of us our existence without anyone having to have accumulated any merits before birth that would have made us worthy of such a gift. The recognition of this incredible gift should be expressed as one of thanks and unbounded gratitude,

Even though this is a formidable foundation to establish a relationship with God, He is much more than our Creator, which would be sufficient reason enough to want to have a close relationship with Him.

The Attributes of Compassion and Mercy that Bahá'u'lláh underlines continuously as an integral component of God's Attributes takes the relationship to another dimension of intimacy.

When Bahá'u'lláh affirms that God is the Compassionate in his relationship to us humans, he is implying what the word means: “a sympathetic pity and concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others; feeling or showing sympathy and concern for others” - (Oxford dictionary). This is more than a relationship of a king and lord with his subjects. The earthly relationship of king-lord with his subjects is based on blind obedience to his authority by the fact that he is the king or the lord. This is not the type of relationship that the Lordship of God has over us. When Bahá'u'lláh affirms that God is:

The Compassionate - LXXXIV, CXI, XXXI

He is not just telling us that God “worries” for our sufferings, but that God also shows a sympathetic pity that is not just a simple compassion because Bahá'u'lláh emphasizes that God is not just Compassionate, He is,

- The Most Compassionate - III, XXXII, XXXVIII, XLII, L, LXXXVII, C, CX, CXVI, CLXXX
- Thou art, in truth the Most Compassionate – XV, L, CLXXX

These affirmations imply that there is no other entity (god) that could rival this level of being “the Most Compassionate”. Such dimension of compassion allows us to affirm that God never leaves unprotected from His ever-compassionate gaze, even in the most trying moments of our lives when our faith seems to fail and makes us feel that whatever compassion God has for us is not tangible, not present, not real; apparently completely absent.

God's Compassion towards us is complemented with the Attribute of Mercy, which can be understood as: “forgiveness shown towards

someone whom it is within one's power to punish or harm" (English Dictionary internet).

Compassion without Mercy will be shortchanged. God, the Merciful, exercises His Compassion to the degree at which God exercises all His Attributes. Compassion without the power to bring relief from the unpleasant things of life would be empty of "all sympathy and concern for our welfare" that God wishes to have for us. Thus, Bahá'u'lláh exalts the levels of Mercy that God has towards us, His beloved creation. In Bahá'u'lláh's terms, God is:

- O Thou Who art merciful unto me, - CLXV
- The God of Mercy - XLVI
- The All-Merciful – LXXIX
- The Most Merciful - II, III, XIX, XXXI, XXXI, XLIV, XLVII, LIII, LXVI, CLXXIX, CLXXXII
- Thou art, verily, the Most Merciful, - LXVI, LXXXVII, CXLI, CLXVIII
- O Thou Who art the God of mercy - CXIV,
- Thou art He, Who hath called Himself the God of Mercy - LXXXVII
- The fragrance of the breaths of Thy mercy - CVIII
- Thy mercy that hath surpassed the entire creation - XLII, CXLIII
- Thy mercy hath embraced the whole creation - CLIII

After reading these exalted shades of God's Mercy, one has no doubt that this is exactly how God relates to us through His most ardent desire to reign in our hearts with the power of His Compassion and Mercy. One gets the sense of been in the presence of a Loving God Creator that excels in His desire to commune with His finest creation, us. God does it so intensely that one feels compelled to open one's heart and say "Yes" to such an invitation. Because His Mercy encompasses "the whole creation", we can rest assured that God desires to connect with each heart willing to open up its doors and embrace this offering.

Mercy as the act of forgiveness by “whom someone has the power and authority to punish a transgression” is precisely what one deeply needs to know; that is, God has this Attribute to the highest possible degree. We catch ourselves so many times slipping and hurting others by our deeds, nasty remarks, unfounded criticisms, downright insults, physical abuses or even mortal wounds. Knowing with certainty that God’s Mercy has no bounds, we can rest assured that we can and will be forgiven any transgression as long as we are sincere enough to recognize it, admit it, request forgiveness, and make the best effort to not repeat the behavior that got us into that condition of spiritual death.

God, the Generous, the Most Generous (the Munificent), the Great Giver

If we were to ask why God wants to have an intimate relationship with each one of us, the additional description of God’s Attributes made by Bahá’u’lláh’s that He is the “Most Generous, the Munificent, the Great Giver” seem to suggest that an intimate relationship with God could become a reality in the measure that he offers it because He has the Attributes to make such an invitation. Our response seems to be *entirely in our hands*.

- The Most Generous – X, XLIV, XLIX, LIII, LXXIV, LXXXI, XCIV, CLXVII, CLXXIV, CLXVI
- The Munificent - CXI LXXXIV, CV, CXVIII
- The Great Giver – II, XLI, XLIV, LXXV, LXXXI
- O my God, Whose grace is infinite- XLI] – (grace the emanates from His ever-flowing Generosity)

These Attributes are self-explanatory. Once more, God is presented by Bahá’u’lláh in the absolute terms in which any of God’s Attributes are found in Him. In this instance, His generosity is expressed as being “the Most Generous”, nothing short of the totality of His Being. Bahá’u’lláh

compares this Generosity to the immensity of an ocean, to which all most cling:

- By the ocean of Thy generosity – CLIII
- Clinging to the cord of Thy generosity – CLXXIV

It gives us the rich dimension of how God invites us to establish a relationship with Him. Any human that excels in practicing any of the attributes compassion, mercifulness and generosity can be easily categorized as being a person who wishes to maintain a close, intimate relationship with whomever he meets and engages in life connections. In those moments, he is able to show intensely how much he cares for the other, how much he is willing to share and give.

These behaviors are a natural consequence of having and expressing compassion, mercy and generosity. So, it is no surprise that God having the Attributes that Bahá'u'lláh describes as being “The Compassionate, the Merciful, the Generous, the Most Generous (the Munificent), the Great Giver” presents Himself to us as totally accessible in the relationship He offers and invites us to have. It is up to us to accept and respond in a similar way as we do with those with whom we have a close relationship.

The One Whom we can always trust

The above Attributes generate a spontaneous level of Trust that we desire to have with anyone opening their heart to us. The relationship with God could not be otherwise. The base is Trust that emerges from His Generosity given to us freely and in unlimited measure. Bahá'u'lláh makes us aware that we, in turn, can place our whole “trust and confidence” in God because He is “the Most Compassionate, the All-Merciful, the Most Generous”. All these Attributes generate in our hearts a sense of trust in Him that is unwavering and ever present.

Nevertheless, Bahá'u'lláh recommends that we request that capacity to put “my whole trust in Thee”, “at all times”,

- Cause me, then, to turn wholly unto Thee, to put my whole trust in Thee, - CLXII
- In Thee have I, at all times, placed my whole trust and confidence - XCII,

The immediate effect is that we can feel secure every day in God's loving care when we leave our home because we can trust wholly in Him. In Bahá'u'lláh's words,

I left my home trusting wholly in Thee, and committing myself to Thy care. - CLXXV

God is always ready to answer

Bahá'u'lláh tells us why we can trust in God. We can because God has the constant and permanent desire and wiliness to answer our prayers, our petitions, and our requests. The reason is a rather simple one, God responds because He is the one

Who hearest and art ready to answer - CLIV

This readiness of God to answer puts us in our comfort zone, especially when we feel that God is totally silent or mute to our sincere heartfelt prayers and may not have heard us. This confirmation that God is always ready to hear our supplications is what gives us the certainty that God is not indifferent to what we are experiencing at any moment. The crux lies in our lack of confidence that God actually pays attention to our most intimate requests for solution to our everyday problems and that He actually answers. We do not hear those answers because we have a fixed expectation to hear the answer in a certain manner, and frequently God speaks to us in many ways. Because we are too busy with

our thoughts and preconceived notions of how God should respond to our petitions, we so many times fail to grasp the answer that He offers.

Sometimes, the answer is no, because we are not ready for the answer we want, or yes, but we need to be patient because the time has not yet come for that answer to be implemented. Sometimes, the answer is no, but when we have grown spiritually, it will become yes, and only God will know when that is. That is why we must be patient and have confidence that God will provide us with what we need at the time we need His assistance.

An excellent reason why God is always ready to answer our implorations is because, according Bahá'u'lláh, He is the God of care and protection,

This, Thy servant, seeketh to sleep in the shelter of Thy mercy, and to repose beneath the canopy of Thy grace, imploring Thy care and Thy protection. - CLXXI

A person who expresses concern for another frequently does it through acts of care and protection that can take on many faces. That care and protection offered by God as expressed by Bahá'u'lláh is once more, an assurance that God will answer our petitions.

Another reason why God is ready to answer is because, as Bahá'u'lláh tells, God is the quickener of our hearts,

- O my Quickener, - CLXV
- Give them, then, to drink what will quicken their hearts in Thy days - CXLIX

How can we understand this unusual term used by Bahá'u'lláh?

According to the Oxford Dictionary, to quicken is to: “stimulate or become stimulated”. When used with object, it would mean ‘Give or restore life to’. In the realm of the spiritual, the term acquires its full meaning. God is the one that gives and restores life to the soul,

especially the souls of those that are literally dead to their relationship with God. When Bahá'u'lláh uses the term to “drink” that which God can give us to “quicken [their] hearts”, he is obviously using the term metaphorically. We do not physically receive a drink from God that will stimulate or restore our spiritual health. This “drink” can be considered to be God’s revealed Word which gives “eternal life” (John 6:68). The concept of the Revealed Word is found in all the Holy Books of all religions. These books are readily available at nominal cost to the majority of the people.

To be the Quickener of our hearts, God is ready at all times to dispense that action. According to Bahá'u'lláh, God is not only available at all times, but He is also the personal Quickener. This is the intimate nuance of Bahá'u'lláh’s expression when he addresses God as “O my Quickener”.

Because Bahá'u'lláh tells us that God is always ready to answer when we make the right requests, we are confirmed, once more, that we can trust God completely because He is always ready to answer, as Bahá'u'lláh affirms it,

Who hearest and art ready to answer. - CLIV

If God is the One “Who hearest”, this implies that He is always listening to our plights, especially those that are related to our spiritual growth. In human terms, we find individuals that simply listen to us out of courtesy or because they have no alternative at that moment other than to appear to listen to us. Bahá'u'lláh gives us the true dimension of hearing, that of answering. When he affirms that God is not only the One that hears us, but is also “ready to answer”, he gives us the assurance that we will receive responses to our supplications.

It could not be otherwise based on the picture that Bahá'u'lláh has given us of God as a personal God who is “our adored One, the Compassionate, the Merciful, the Most Generous, the Great Giver, the One Who we

can always trust, and the One that is always ready to answer". All these attributes propel us to develop a personal relationship with God because these attributes provide the assurance and certainty that we will not be let down in our spiritual expectations.

Our Joy is...

The culmination of the path of our quest to befriend God has an ultimate reward, an indescribable Joy that is born of the very Essence of God, as Bahá'u'lláh so succinctly expresses it:

Thine incorruptible Essence brings me joy, - CLV

Yet, the Joy experienced is truly of a spiritual nature. Bahá'u'lláh explains how this is so when he associates such Joy with the effort we put to "exalt God's Cause", and to "the glorification of Thy word". In Bahá'u'lláh's words,

Joy is to behold the exaltation of Thy Cause and the glorification of Thy word - CXIV

Let us reflect for a moment on why Bahá'u'lláh associates the Joy experienced with "the exaltation of God's Cause, and the glorification of Thy word". A key may be found in the short Obligatory Prayer that Bahá'u'lláh gave us to say every day. The first phrase says,

"I bear witness, O my God, that Thou hast created me to know Thee and to worship Thee".⁵

If our first and foremost spiritual endeavor is to recognize that we are created by God, and that this implies a binding agreement to "know Thee" as the most important act of our lives, for one explicit purpose, "to worship Thee", then it is easier to understand that all we do "to exalt God's Cause" and "Glorify His Word", we will be implementing the

⁵ Prayers and Meditations, Bahá'u'lláh, p. 314

very essence of the purpose of our existence. To fulfill one's destiny as a spiritual being having a human experience is to experience the greatest and most profound possible Joy. This is our un-expected reward for doing precisely that which we were born to do by divine invitation. When this is done, the consciousness of becoming who we were born to be is the fruition of a life well lived and experienced in closeness to the One that gave us gratuitously our existence.

Benefits of our relationship with God

Bahá'u'lláh's Writings copiously and abundantly detail the multiple benefits that a close, intimate relationship with God brings on almost automatically. Let us start by enumerating several of them that are closely related.

God exalts him who proclaims His cause

As mentioned above, the proclamation of God's cause has its inherent recompense: God exalts those that take up this divine invitation. The proclamation of God's cause is none other than presenting to all those that wish to hear it what are the directives given by God for this era and age. These directives are presented by Bahá'u'lláh in his ocean-like Revelation given to humanity as its new blueprint for spiritual development. Therefore, dedicating oneself to the proclamation of this Cause has its inherent reward, God's exaltation of whoever is dedicated to this most noble of all causes. Bahá'u'lláh expresses it in these terms,

Exalt them, then, O my God, through the power of Thy
might and the potency of Thy will, and raise them up
to proclaim Thy Cause. - CLXXXIV

Exalt can be understood as: "Raise to a higher rank or position. Make noble in character; dignify" (Oxford Dictionary). All these terms speak compellingly of the station to which God will raise whoever dedicates

his life to such a divine invitation to proclaim His Cause. He or she will certainly be raised to a higher spiritual rank and position in the spiritual world. God will exalt him or her, making their character noble, which by itself is one of those qualities that one wants to find in the person that one wants to befriend. Friendship bonded on the basis of this quality lasts forever, and has multiple expressions of companionship, sharing, supporting and uplifting each other when the dark moments of life appear.

God is the recompense the believer will obtain

Entering into God's presence is in itself the reward that a believer will receive. There cannot be a greater more fulfilling reward than this because accessing God's presence is actually obtaining all the spiritual joy that any soul can endure. Accessing God for having answered His invitation to quicken other souls gives the individual his greater fruition and sense of fulfillment. Bahá'u'lláh is exuberant in the description of the quality of this reward:

Cast me not out of the door of Thy grace, I beseech Thee, and write down for me the recompense destined for him who hath entered Thy presence, and hath risen to serve Thee, and hath been carried away by the drops sprinkled upon him from the Ocean of Thy favors in Thy days, and by the splendors of the Day-Star of Thy gifts that have been shed upon him at the revelation of the light of Thy countenance. - CXXXV

After reading this luminous station to which one can be elevated when one enters into God's presence by virtue of having "risen to serve [Thee]", one feels that it is a sublime reward for such a decision. No one is more generous than God. He will always respond in double or triple measure to whatever we offer Him in service.

God is the One who enlightens the heart

We cited above the first sentence of the short obligatory prayer in which we clearly affirm that the purpose of our creation is for us “to know Thee and to worship Thee”. The effort of coming close to God through our better understanding of God’s Attributes is, through the most recent Revelation, the one promulgated by Bahá’u’lláh, has in itself a recompense in-as-much as our “hearts are enlightened” just by the effort of doing the task of getting to know God better. In Bahá’u’lláh’s words,

Enlighten our hearts with the effulgence of Thy
knowledge, - CXXXIII

There is also another side benefit of having a close relationship with God, that is, His bounty and generosity (as expounded above) can dispel our grief, whatever that might be, when Bahá’u’lláh assures us that God’s abundance can:

Dispel my grief by Thy bounty and Thy generosity, - CLIV

God is also able to banish any anguish that we may be experiencing because He simply has the sovereignty and power to do so. Again, Bahá’u’lláh gives that assurance when he states,

Banish mine anguish through Thy sovereignty and Thy
might. - CLIV

To complete the picture, Bahá’u’lláh tells us that God’s glory is strong enough to “reveal the path” that we should follow because He illumines that path, the one that will direct us to be closer to God. Bahá’u’lláh is quite forward in this assertion:

By the light of Thy glory reveal unto me Thy path - CLV

We can thus summarize the above benefits that our relationship has with God as “The One who enlightens the heart, dispels grief, banishes anguish and reveals the path to follow”.

But these are not the only benefits. According to Bahá'u'lláh there are more that merit expounding them. One of the major Attributes of God that was detailed above was God's Mercy. In terms of benefits, Bahá'u'lláh sees this Mercy as

God's Mercy that rains upon all

Bahá'u'lláh's expression of God's overflowing Mercy is stated in these terms:

- The overflowing showers of Whose mercy have rained down upon high and low alike- CLVII,

V. This is the Day whereon the Ocean of God's mercy hath been manifested unto men, the Day in which the Day Star of His loving-kindness hath shed its radiance upon them, the Day in which the clouds of His bountiful favor have overshadowed the whole of mankind.⁶

Even though the second quote is not from the book *Prayers and Meditations*, but rather from the book that presents some of the most salient ideas of the new Revelation, *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah*, it portrays so well this over-abundance of Mercy of God that “overshadowed the whole of mankind” that I could not leave it out. Bahá'u'lláh presents it in all its power and luminescence, which includes all mankind. So, everyone, at any time of history is a subject susceptible of receiving this Mercy.

⁶ Baha'u'llah, *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah*, p. 7

God can deliver us from all

Bahá'u'lláh relies on God's power to declare that He can deliver us from all.

Let the riches of Thine ancient countenance deliver me
from all except Thee, O my Master - CLV

This reassurance amplifies our confidence that God can come to our personal aid when we are in dire need of it. When Bahá'u'lláh includes the deliverance "from all" this seems to suggest that it can be from persons engaged in trying to harm us, as well as from natural events that can have devastating impact on our lives. In either case, knowing that God can come to our spiritual rescue and sometimes to our physical needs gives us that feeling of confidence that our supplications will not go unheard.

God can change all negative situations into positive ones

According to Bahá'u'lláh, God can change a negative situation into a positive one. This is how he expresses it,

Thou art He Who changeth abasement into glory, and
weakness into strength, and powerlessness into might,
and fear into calm, and doubt into certainty. - CLVI

It is worth while taking note that Bahá'u'lláh's description of the change is mostly internal, dealing with spiritual dimension of our lives that inseparably have a psychological component: "weakness into strength, powerlessness into might, fear into calm, and doubt into certainty". Each of these changes is grounded in human attributes that reflect God's Attributes, such as "strength, might, calm, certainty". But we keep them dormant so many times, for too long a time, that we, therefore, need God's help to increase them to the level of making a difference in our personal life as well as in the relationship to others.

God is capable of lifting us to his Heaven

The final aspiration of any soul is to be re-united with God, the source of our very existence. This ultimate aspiration cannot be left to chance. There is too much at stake to make it happen in this manner. We need the assurance that we will be able to reach this lofty goal. Bahá'u'lláh makes sure that we are not left with the doubt that this would not happen. On the contrary, he remembers us of the “power of Thy transcendent might” to accomplish this longing that we so intensely experience in our darkest moments of doubt and despair. Bahá'u'lláh's words give us the needed assurance. God can lift us into “the heaven of [Thy] holiness” where we would certainly not experience any more doubt or despair. Instead, we would experience the Joy that we received above.

Through the power of Thy transcendent might lift me
up unto the heaven of Thy holiness, - CLV

Our Response to Him

A relationship is a two-lane road. If God is constantly offering us the benefits discussed above of having such a personal relationship, there must be some type of response on our part to His benevolence and outright bounty that He showers upon us constantly.

Bahá'u'lláh comes to our aid laying out several responses to God, our Creator, that are expected of us. They will be the content of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

GOD'S INVITATION TO HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM

Our Response to God's invitation

Bahá'u'lláh comes to our aid by laying out several responses that are expected of us, as created beings, made by God. We can start with one that was noted in a different category, but it takes on a greater relevance at this moment; namely that we should praise God for several reasons.

We praise God

The fact that Bahá'u'lláh expresses this response around 80 times in the book *Prayers and Meditations* is an indication of how important he considers this response from us. This praise flows out of Bahá'u'lláh's pen as a spontaneous cascade, as the natural response to God's invitation to have a relationship with Him. Two fundamental reasons seem to be the trigger for such exuberant declarations of praise: God is the Lord as well as our personal God. Bahá'u'lláh's expressions are self-explanatory:

- All praise be to Thee, O Lord, my God! - CXXXVII
- Unto Thee be praise, O Lord my God! – II, XLVIII

- Praise be to Thee, O Lord my God! – VII, CLXXIX
- Praised be Thou, O my God! –XVIII
- Praised be Thou, O Lord my God! – XIX (16 times)
- I give praise to Thee, O Lord my God! – XXXV

God's Lordship is detailed by Bahá'u'lláh when he alludes to God being his "Master, Possessor and King". All of these titles of royalty are sufficient to give praise to whoever possesses them. In the case of God such titles acquire the supremacy inherent to God been the Creator. This supreme Attribute immediately postulates a relationship with us created beings of acknowledgement and recognition that God is the Creator; and any and all praise is due to Him for this very reason. In Bahá'u'lláh's words:

- Praise be to Thee, O Lord, my God, my Master, my Possessor, my King LVIII

The praise due to God as the Creator is not only for creation in general,

Praised be God, the Lord of all creation! – CI

but specifically because God is "the God of all men":

Praise be unto Thee, Who art my God and the God of all men, - CLXXVI

Because of this most intimate relationship, all men are bound to God in one unified chorus of praise:

We all, verily, give praise unto God. – CLXVIII

Yet, God's reign is not limited to our earthly reality. Bahá'u'lláh reminds us again that this relationship is valid for all humans living in other unknown worlds, when he states,

Praised be God, the Lord of the worlds! - XXII

We glorify God

One excellent way to praise God is to glorify Him. What does it mean to glorify God? Returning to our friend, the Oxford Dictionary, it tells us that “to glorify” means: to “praise and worship (God). Acknowledge and reveal the majesty and splendor of (God) by one’s actions”. Armed with this definition, we can appreciate better the nuances that Bahá’u’lláh offers in expressing how God can be glorified. One nuance is that the glorification we give God is a form of worship:

Glorified, immeasurably glorified art Thou! Thou art adored in Thy truth, and Thee do we all, verily, worship - CLXIX

The glorification recognized by us is based simply on the intimate relationship that we can develop with God, addressing Him as “O my Beloved”:

- Glorified, immeasurably glorified art Thou, O my Beloved! - CLXXXIV
- Exalted, immeasurably exalted art Thou, O my Beloved - CLXXXIV

One can be as enamored of his or her companion to the extent of expressing feelings of “human adoration” for that other person. But we seldom come to the point of glorifying them. This would be too much to bestow on another human being. But, when facing the Creator, it is a reality that supersedes all other realities. We are facing the source of our existence and of all creation. The majesty of such a Being attracts from each one of us the reverent glorification of his Majesty.

We thank God

Giving thanks to anyone for any favor received is the most natural reaction among humans. It is the way we give recognition to the friend,

the beloved, even the stranger for whatever action he/she took in our favor.

If this is true among us limited, imperfect humans, how could it not be the most natural reaction of the created being towards his Creator?

The fact that we have been given our existence without having completed any deeds or met any goals before we were born that would have made us deserving of any such present is, in itself, sufficient reason to give thanks to the Creator for such a glorious gift.

A moment of reflection on God as our Creator immediately elicits from us a response of gratitude, of the utmost gratitude for a gift that has no comparison to any gift given to us by any friend or relative. This is the super gift, that of our individual and personal existence. Expressing gratitude for it to our Creator is no less than the purest form of praise, of adoration.

Bahá'u'lláh makes us aware of such a response to the invitation of God to have a personal relationship with Him when He declares that we all should give thanks to God:

We all, verily, yield thanks unto God. - CLXVII

We are devoted to God

Devotion as a response to God will not be fully appreciated if we refer to it without finding out what meanings are given by at least three different respected dictionaries. The three different meanings will give us a spectrum of its meaning.

The Oxford Dictionary defines devoted as: “Very loving or loyal”. The Cambridge Dictionary offers: “Extremely loving and loyal”. Finally, the Collins Dictionary presents a devoted person as: “Someone who loves that person very much”.

Three characteristics are offered by the dictionaries: loyalty, the quality of loving, and being someone loving someone else very much. All three refer to the manner in which one relates to another person, and all three emphasize the strength in which such a relationship is exhibited: either as being loyal or as loving extremely.

When Bahá'u'lláh uses the term “devoted unto God”, He is stating the quality of our response to God’s invitation to be in close relationship with Him:

We all, verily, are devoted unto God. - CLXVII,

The devotion must be driven by very great loyalty or very great love. It could not be otherwise since God’s expression of His love towards us is infinite in measure. Our limited response should at least have the characteristic of “loyalty” and “great love”.

We are patient in God

Patience is a rare quality that is not found readily among humans. We get irritated very easily. We do not wish to wait for the slow one to catch up. We give up easily when the going gets tough, or we become restless when circumstances do not change, and the workload keeps piling up. We respond bitterly when certain words are used in addressing us, or we do not let someone finish their sentence when we butt in with our “brilliant” idea. We get angry when the kids do not obey our orders instantly. We jump to conclusions without having enough information to make a decision, or we make judgments of people even before we get to know them. In short, we are not cautious about showing impatience towards others, even sometimes toward ourselves.

Relationships that do not incorporate the virtue of patience will soon dissolve into the area of intolerance and out-right aggression. So, Bahá'u'lláh proposes that we be patient:

We all, verily, are patient in God. - CLXVII

How can that affirmation be understood, and in the best of cases, practiced?

Our understanding is that patience is developed, strengthened, accepted and put into practice in the measure to which we assimilate it when we confront our impatience with God's never-ending patience with each one of us. If God were to react with impatience when He sees our behavior and petty acts of impatience, He would certainly be an irate God. That much we can imagine by just adding up the billions of impatient reactions of the individuals that populate the Earth at this moment. We would try God's patience by the sheer number of impatient behaviors that we exhibit every day, many times a day.

Contemplating God's infinite patience and knowing that only He can sustain our spiritual growth by having the intimate relationship that He offers us through unwavering patience is how we can even come close to controlling our impatient behaviors. Living a relationship at the level of intimacy that God invites us to have with Him is how we can actually become "patient in God".

God's Will is our will

To carry out the will of another is a desirable and logical response, especially when the one manifesting it is one whom we trust, love, and to whom we wish to show our appreciation. This is even more true when we inherently feel the expression of that will as having been revealed to us for our benefit and growth.

If we do this wholeheartedly for another human being, limited like us, whom we sincerely wish to please, how can we even think that we should not do the same for the One that always wishes our continuous spiritual growth as the greatest benefit that we can receive in this world?

In one of his prayers, this is how Bahá'u'lláh expresses his desire to do God's Will,

I wish only what Thou wishes, and cherish only what
Thou cherishes - CXIV

It is necessary to point out that Bahá'u'lláh uses another term to express God's Will. It is "bidding", which the dictionary tells us means: "The ordering or requesting of someone to do something".

God's Will is explicitly stated in the Revelation given to us through the Spokesperson of God when he speaks in His name or in our case, Bahá'u'lláh. This is how he expresses it:

Make known this Thy station, O my God, unto
Thy servants, that they may be made aware that
the excellence of all things is dependent upon Thy
bidding and Thy word, and the virtue of every act is
conditioned by Thy leave and the good-pleasure of
Thy will, and may recognize that the reins of men's
doings are within the grasp of Thine acceptance and
Thy commandment. – XLVI

In this quote several important aspects should be noted. The excellence of all things is dependent on God's bidding and His Word. Everything that exists "is dependent upon "Thy bidding and Thy Word", which is another way of stating that God's Will is the foundation of all that exists.

The quote goes on to link "the reins of men's doings" with the acceptance "of Thy commandment". This is a clear statement that God is directing our welfare through our acceptance to carry out His bidding, which is the best laid-out plan for our spiritual growth, the ultimate purpose of our existence. What better plan could we follow than the one provided

by our Creator, whose only desire is to guide us to achieving the purpose for what He created us?

So, to respond to God in doing His Will or bidding should be our dearest desire as it is expressed by Bahá'u'lláh,

In the observance of whatever Thou hast prescribed in
Thy Tablets I have not delayed to do Thy bidding. – XC

We too, should not delay asking God for His support in carrying out His bidding.

Requesting God's Will for oneself

Since following the will of someone is so difficult in our everyday life, given the powerful innate impulse to doing our own will rather than another's person's will, it is imperative that we request God to assist us in carrying out His Will rather than ours. Bahá'u'lláh expresses very well how we could request this favor from God,

- That my movement and my stillness may be wholly directed by Thee - CL
- Here am I with my body between Thy hands, and my spirit before Thy face. Do with them as it may please Thee, - CLI

God's Will for us is not restricted to our earthly span of life. Bahá'u'lláh tells us that we should request the favor of following His Will for "the good of this world and of the next to come". Bahá'u'lláh additionally tells us that such a Will is ordained through His Revelation,

- Do Thou ordain for me through Thy most exalted Pen, O my Lord, the good of this world and of the next. – CLVI
- Ordain Thou for me, O my God, the good of this world and the world to come, - CLXIII

We constantly give in to the illusion that this earthly life is the only one we will ever have. For this very reason, so many of our behaviors and responses are shortsighted. Because they lack the perspective of an afterlife; they become extremely limited in how we perceive God's Will as being for us. So, the best reason for asking God to show us His Will for us is because God knows what is best for us, that which "will profit me in every world of Thy worlds". This is Bahá'u'lláh's way of telling us that God's Will shall follow us in the future journeys of our souls, and that following His Will now is the best preparation for the next stage of our existence,

Do Thou ordain for me, O my Lord, what will profit
me in every world of Thy worlds - CXXXVI

Request to be rid of all attachment to everything except God and His Will

The optimal request that we can make to God is to help us rid ourselves of all attachments that are not His Will. This request is necessary because we are limited creatures that tend to believe that there is not sufficient wealth to go around for all the people of the world and that therefore, we must cling to what we have under the belief that in this way, we will not be lacking what we perceive to be essential for our existence. This radical experience of "lack" translates into a constant attachment to all that we can acquire. When it is not possible to acquire them, the desire to have that which we cannot acquire becomes a mental attachment that is so many times as powerful as the actual attachment to what we do have.

Asking God to free us from that radical desire of attachment to so many things that are transient, short-lived, unnecessary to have a decorous lifestyle becomes one of the most powerful, liberating prayers. Bahá'u'lláh offers the following potent request for being rid of these attachments:

To grant that I may, at all times and under all conditions, lay hold on Thy cord, and be rid of all attachment to anyone except Thee, and may keep mine eyes directed towards the horizon of Thy Revelation, and may carry out what Thou hast prescribed unto me in Thy Tablets. - CXXXVII

The condition of non-attachment, or detachment is not a negative renunciation per se. It has a higher motive and goal, which is to acquire the inner freedom to important endeavor that one could take up in life, and that is to “serve Thy Cause”. In this effort, one would not be alone or helpless. On the contrary, it is through “the power of Thy sovereignty” that one will be able to triumph and end up doing that which “is the good pleasure of Thy will”. In Bahá'u'lláh's words,

I entreat Thee to enable me to rid myself of all attachment to anyone but Thee, and to serve Thy Cause, and to wish what Thou didst wish through the power of Thy sovereignty, and to perform what is the good pleasure of Thy will. - CXXXVIII

Doing God's Will is not an empty endeavor. To the contrary, getting rid “of all attachment to aught except Thyself” becomes the actual recompense of the effort. It is stating a deeper reality, that is, that God suffices above anything because God suffices. He becomes the recompense of the effort of becoming detached. When all things are set aside it “will enable us to dispense with anyone but Thee”. God, the all Sufficing, then will become the goal and core of our existence. This is why this supplication has so much power. It is worthwhile to memorize and repeat every time there is a doubt as to why we should strive to get rid of all enslaving attachments.

Send down, then, upon us, O my Lord, what will enable us to dispense with anyone but Thee, and will rid us of all attachment to aught except Thyself. – CXLIV, CXLIV

We bear witness to His Cause as His Will

There is a powerful reason why we should seek to be detached from all else except God. The ultimate goal of every soul is to share with as many people as possible the heavenly treasure of being in intimate communication with God, in thriving spiritually with the Word of God expressed in His Revelation that is in itself the Cause, the Plan of God for humanity for this age and day. So, proclaiming His Cause for the love of God becomes our way of witnessing His Will in as much as Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation is the Cause that promulgates God's Will for humanity today.

O my God! Thou knowest that in my love for Thee I
have not sought any rest, that in proclaiming Thy Cause
I have denied myself every manner of tranquility. - XC

There is a spiritual goal in doing God's Will when revealing His Cause, and that is that His word may be glorified. This is Bahá'u'lláh's way of expressing it.

That I may reveal Thy Cause and glorify Thy
word. - CXLI

The ultimate reason for heeding God's Will lies in His sovereign authority that comes from being the One God and Creator of all that is. Bahá'u'lláh is quite direct in stating that God has "the authority to command whatsoever Thou wilt" as sufficient reason "to be obeyed in Thy behests". Ultimately, obeying God's Will becomes the optimal medium for our spiritual growth.

Thine is the authority to command whatsoever Thou
wilt. I bear witness that Thou art to be praised in Thy
doings, and to be obeyed in Thy behests, and to remain
unconstrained in Thy bidding. - CLXXXIII

Reward for doing God's bidding

There is an inherent reward when doing God's Will. It is expressed in various ways that deal with our internal conditions, emotions and feelings when we place them at God's disposal. Bahá'u'lláh expresses succinctly the rewards with such richness that shows how well he understands God's mode of operating and is thus enabled to communicate it to us,

Thou art He Who changeth through His bidding
abasement into glory, and weakness into strength, and
powerlessness into might, and fear into calm, and doubt
into certainty. - CLVI

God's grace is required all the time to be able to achieve extraordinary internal changes, such as "weakness into strength, and powerlessness into might, and fear into calm, and doubt into certainty". But each of these changes demand a lot of effort on our part to deal with them, such as "weakness, powerlessness, fear, and doubt". They all require an intense process of introspection to find out the root causes of each. We then have to make the necessary analysis in order to be able to acquire the sought out "strength, might, calm, and certainty". God's grace will assist us throughout the process, but it requires, though, that we communicate intensely with Him so that our petitions are answered in the way that Bahá'u'lláh affirms will happen. This process does not deny that God can give us His grace in an instant and the change will occur so.

The desire of each one is to be with God

The ultimate desire of the soul enamored with God is to be with Him in a never-ending moment of sublime joy because it has finally reached the true goal of his/her existence. Bahá'u'lláh comes to our aid and gives us several clues, images and descriptions of what this unparalleled moment will be like. We will refer to several points that he has offered us as guidelines of the great excellence and beauty of this encounter.

Let us start by presenting Bahá'u'lláh's recognition of the yearning of the soul to be in the presence of God. This is how he expressed it in two occasions,

- Beneath the shadow of Thine everlasting providence let me abide, O my Light! – CLXV
- I yield thee such thanks as can assist the hearts of Thine ardent lovers to soar into the atmosphere of nearness to Thee, - CLXXXIV

This is a general yearning of the soul to be near God. Bahá'u'lláh presents in another prayer a detailed description of the multiple aspects and realities that God represents to the yearning soul. Here is a rich description of this longing:

O Thou Whose face is the object of my adoration,
 Whose beauty is my sanctuary, Whose habitation is
 my goal, Whose praise is my hope, Whose providence
 is my companion, Whose love is the cause of my being,
 Whose mention is my solace, Whose nearness is my
 desire, Whose presence is my dearest wish and highest
 aspiration, - CLXVI

As if this description is not vivid enough to sense the wholeness of what God is for the soul, Bahá'u'lláh presents us with yet another complementary description of how God's presence fulfills the utmost yearnings of the enamored soul.

O my Lord! Make Thy beauty to be my food, and Thy
 presence my drink, and Thy pleasure my hope, and
 praise of Thee my action, and remembrance of Thee
 my companion, and the power of Thy sovereignty my
 succorer, and Thy habitation my home, - CLXVIII

Such closeness to God can only result in a state of Exultation,

O Thou Who art the Exultation of the hearts that pant
after Thee! - CLXXVI

As this was not a sufficient description of the desire of the soul to be with God, Bahá'u'lláh pushes the image into completion when he sees the soul being admitted into God's presence as a result of its supplication for this to happen. Bahá'u'lláh places His petition on behalf of the poor so that they can experience landing on the shores of all sufficient riches when in the presence of God:

Attire them in the robes of Thine eternity and Thy
glory, and lead the poor unto the shores of Thy holiness
and all sufficient riches. - CLXXXIV

Bahá'u'lláh seems to suggest that each one of us is able to ask God to share His eternity:

From the sweet-scented streams of Thine eternity give
me to drink, -CLXV

Bahá'u'lláh offers several supplications that suggest that we can make our own request to being admitted into the splendor paradise of God's realm:

Into the heights of the paradise of Thy reality let me
gain admission, O my Adored One! - CLXV

To the right hand of the throne of Thy mercy, seat me,
O my Desire! - CLXV

And in similar fashion, we can request it using Bahá'u'lláh's words to be "established upon the seat of God's glory":

Upon the seat of Thy glory establish me, O Thou Who
art my Possessor! -CLXV,

All these images give us a rich portrait of what it means to be near God. The soul that hears these images is transformed into a yearning soul that longs to be in the presence of God to be able to enjoy all of these wonderful aspects that Bahá'u'lláh so majestically has given us. This is a perfect reminder of the magnificence of our ultimate goal: that of enjoying the presence of God in an everlasting bliss that will eliminate the sad earthly experience of having being conditioned by culture and misinterpretations that we are separated from Him. The ultimate peace of our yearning souls will be achieved when we experience being with God, in His presence in an everlasting communion with Him.

Separation from God is suffering

In this context, we can understand why that separation from God is actual suffering:

- I am sore afflicted by the grief of my separation from Thee, - CL
- Suffer me, O my God, to draw nigh unto Thee, and to abide within the precincts of Thy court, for remoteness from Thee hath well-nigh consumed me. - XXVI
- Thou well knowest, O my God, my Best-Beloved, that naught can quench the thirst I suffer in my separation from Thee except the waters of Thy presence, and that the tumult of my heart can never be stilled save through the living fountain of my reunion with Thee. - XLI

This declaration is no surprise once we have understood the magnificence of being in the presence of God and sensing our nearness to Him. Nothing can compare to that bliss. Our human experience is that if we are deprived of a profound happy moment or exhilarating experience, we do not want it to be taken away from us, we do not want it to end. We yearn for it to be permanent.

So, having a brief, but intense glimpse of the magnificence of being in the presence of God and feeling near to Him as Bahá'u'lláh so graciously

has given us, it is not surprising that we can make his exclamation our own and present it to God. We can do it having the certainty that He will respond, letting us know that we do not have to fear becoming separated from Him because such separation has never existed, even though we seem to experience so frequently when the dark clouds of our spiritual dark night engulf us, taking away the firm belief that God never forsakes us.

Suffering in the name of God

If separation from God produces suffering, it is not surprising that Bahá'u'lláh also affirms that there is suffering in the name of God. This occurs frequently with religious persecution and on a lesser scale just by the local sarcastic criticism made by those that cannot stand being reminded of the relationship that they should be having with God as compared to the lifestyle they are living at the present.

General suffering occurs because of the multiple assaults made by those that do not want to hear the good news of a Revelation, and by those incited by the power of the authorities to harass the person making such a proclamation. The next quote made by Bahá'u'lláh seems to allude to the harassment he suffered; nevertheless, any follower or proclaimer of God's Revelation can easily make it his own because the result is the same,

I suffer in my love for Thee, and the object of the assaults launched against me in Thy path. – LXVI

This suffering includes all those wholly devoted to God:

O Thou...Who hearest the voice of the lamentation of those who are wholly devoted to Thy Self! - LXXXI

Imprisonment is a typical situation that falls to those that give testimony of God's laws and expected behavior, or just simply when presenting a

new Revelation. The reigning clerics are the fiercest persecutors of those Messengers that give testimony of a new good news announcement. The Bab and Bahá'u'lláh were no exception. The august Pen, as Bahá'u'lláh was called, wrote the following allusion that suggests it was a testimony of his imprisonment:

That Thou hast suffered me to be cast into prison
for love of Thee, and caused me to quaff the cup of
woe, - CXLI

Bahá'u'lláh was quite aware that this would happen to him as long as he kept proclaiming that he had a new Revelation to give that, from the point of view of the clerics leaders of the moment, was a menace to the power position they held in Muslim society into which Bahá'u'lláh was born. In his own words, the same fate will befall on those who maintain a similar position of fearless proclamation of the Word of God amidst those that refuse to listen and wish to silence the proclaimer:

As to me, however, I quaff continually in the path of
God the cup of His decree, and wish not that the ruling
of His will should cease to operate, or that the woes I
suffer for the sake of my Lord, the Most Exalted, the
All-Glorious, should be ended. - VIII

Exile is another way of suffering in the name of God which is frequently inflicted by those in power as a means to silence the voice of the proclaimer of the Cause of God. Bahá'u'lláh was no exception, as he confessed being subject to such treatment,

Thou beholdest, therefore, the exile which I suffer in
Thy days, and art aware of my vehement longing to look
upon Thy face. – XVIII

This can fall upon anyone sustaining a similar activity of proclamation.

The ultimate form of all suffering in the name of God is, of course, martyrdom, in which the most precious of our gifts, our life, is given up because of our own steadfastness in being faithful to the Cause of God, to the proclamation of His Revelation, and the dedication of service in the name of God.

Thou knowest full well, O my God, that there is no one on Thine earth who can claim to be related to Thee except these, some of whom have suffered martyrdom for Thy sake, while the rest have been permitted to survive. - CI

Our most ardent desire is that God will grant us the grace of being steadfast in His love

The hardest endeavor of us humans is to be steadfast in whatever we choose to do, to serve, or how to express our creativity. The effort of maintaining our enthusiasm, our commitment is so frail that we often give up and sacrifice the loftiest of our goals and desires. We start new projects with passion and before we know it, we have given them up because the effort to be steadfast just dwindles away.

There are similar moments in our spiritual life development. We become attracted to a spiritual idea, a service project, a deepening course of the Sacred Texts, in interfaith engagements, or teaching initiatives. In these types of activities, we start with a very strong commitment and energetic engagement. As time passes, fulfilling the necessary steps to accomplish the task at hand seems to become a heavy burden for our enthusiasm to carry, so we gradually find the excuses and slowly the impulse diminishes until one day we become aware that we are no longer engaged.

It is at these moments when we have to turn to God and request steadfastness in His love so that we will not give up our commitment to be active in the proclamation of His Love for us. Bahá'u'lláh was well aware of these trying instances. Thus, he left the following supplications that we can use to request God for that much needed steadfastness to regain our lost impulse:

- To grant that I may, at all times, be wholly dissolved in Thee, and fix my gaze upon the horizon of Thy will and be steadfast in Thy love. - CXXXV
- I entreat Thee to enable me to cleave steadfastly to Thy Love and Thy remembrance. – III
- Again I thank Thee for having empowered me to be steadfast in Thy love, and to speak forth Thy praise and to extol Thy virtues - LXVII
- I have laid hold, O my Lord, on the handle of Thy bounty, and clung steadfastly to the hem of the robe of Thy favor. - XXXVII
- Thou seest me then, O my God, with my face turned towards Thee, cleaving steadfastly to the cord of Thy gracious providence and generosity, and clinging to the hem of Thy tender mercies and bountiful favors - LVI

What is striking about these short supplications is how Bahá'u'lláh teaches us to confide totally in God's Love in obtaining the much-needed steadfastness.

In other prayers, Bahá'u'lláh directs his invocations to God asking that we be steadfast in our love for God. These are a few of the many times Bahá'u'lláh made such pleas:

- Lauded be Thy name, O my God! Aid Thou by Thy strengthening grace Thy servants and Thy handmaidens to recount Thy virtues and to be steadfast in their love towards Thee. – LIV

- Cause us, then, to be so steadfast in our love towards Thee that we will turn to none except Thee. – XXXI

In other prayers, Bahá'u'lláh invokes steadfastness in the promulgation of God's Cause and in the content of His Revelation,

- Do Thou ordain, moreover, for everyone who hath turned towards Thee what will make him steadfast in Thy Cause, - XLVII
- Keep safe, therefore, Thy loved ones from their mischief, and enable them to cling steadfastly to whatsoever hath been manifested by Thee in this Revelation, which no other Revelation within Thy knowledge hath excelled. – XXXIII

Bahá'u'lláh also requests protection from the mischief of those that deny God,

Enable us, then, to cleave steadfastly to Thy love and Thy good-pleasure, and preserve us from the mischief of such as have denied Thee and repudiated Thy most resplendent signs. - LVI

Bahá'u'lláh summarizes what is contained when doing God's Will in one paragraph that gives us the sensation of having received a compact invitation and enough reasons to carry out God's Will, which is our spiritual nourishment and our spiritual growth. These are Bahá'u'lláh's words that we can make them our own:

Behold me standing ready to do Thy will and Thy desire, and wishing naught else except Thy good pleasure. I implore Thee by the Ocean of Thy mercy and the Day-Star of Thy grace to do with Thy servant as Thou willest and pleasest. By Thy might which is far above all mention and praise! Whatsoever is revealed by Thee is the desire of my heart and the beloved of my soul. O God, my God! Look not upon my hopes and

my doings, nay rather look upon Thy will that hath encompassed the heavens and the earth. By Thy Most Great Name, O Thou Lord of all nations! I have desired only what Thou didst desire, and love only what Thou dost love. - CLXXXIII

CONCLUSION

As stated at the beginning of this book, we were attempting to identify how we could conceive, imagine, or articulate something meaningful about God that gives us an image, and understanding that is manageable and allows us to relate to Him. We started out asking the question as to whether it is possible for average individuals to comprehend God's innermost Essence without falling into the trap of describing and creating God in "their own image and likeness" given everybody's limited, mental capacity to know God's intimacy, without taking into consideration that so many have a dormant spiritual life.

Anthropology and studies of the origins of religion have shown that ancient men went through a slow process of developing an image, a description of god that was not separated from their life experiences. During the first long phase, men converted the forces of nature into gods – some benevolent others destructive. These forces were given names and description of their qualities such as the destructive wind-god when it ripped houses, plants, animals; but benevolent when it blew the sails to navigate; the sun-god, which gave warmth after a cold night or scorched the earth drying up water sources that consequently led to the death of animals and people; the moon-god controlling the sea tides or obscuring the sun rays during an eclipse creating terrifying fright; the sea-god that provided fish of all types but also drowned men and vessels; or the god of thunder ripping the skies and imparting terror. A

seemingly endless numbers of deities were named to account for every aspect of nature.

Man-made gods imitated men's lives, both their virtues and sins

From conceiving nature-gods, far back in history, humans evolved to perceiving them as individuals residing in the heavens, living a life of comfort, and dominating humanity. In their heavenly abode, those gods were depicted as having a lifestyle of their own that resembled the lifestyle of humans living on Earth. The gods lived a heavenly life that was a mirror of the key moments of humans' lives – they experience birth, marriage, death - and of their earthly passions such as jealousy, envy, vengeance, disobedience, lying, and anger.

This phase also included the role these gods had played in the creation of the universe, of earth and of humans. These man-made gods were common to most civilizations of antiquity.

Man's effort to communicate with their created gods

It is not surprising to find humans inventing a way to communicate with these gods that they believed resided in their heavenly world. In a slow process that became more and more elaborate, they invented rites and rituals whose goal was to establish contact with the gods who lived their detached existence far away from the fate of humans. The ritual took the shape of many expressions such as beating of drums, dancing while chanting, and presenting offerings to the heavenly entities. These were fruits of the land, animals, or in the most extreme expressions, the sacrifice of a human to appease the interpreted fury of the gods, to give thanks or to praise them. Death for Life became one of the main archetypal behaviors reenacted in the myth ritual. The use of those instruments and ritual expressions of reciting qualities of God and chanting songs of adoration and praise are also found in modern religious rituals.

Were there true Messengers of God in the distant past?

They certainly were. The Bahá'í Faith, through the grandson of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi, clarified that God had sent His Messengers to humanity ever since it appeared on Earth to guide its spiritual evolution. The problem is that their teachings were not recorded as well as the myths we have presented and thus we tend to make the judgment that God had not dialogued with humanity before the recordings of the Teachings of the major ancient religions were made.

Who can know God?

What was affirmed by humans in the distant past when they no longer had access to an original Revelation, but rather had the interpretations made by the subsequent followers of that Revelation - regardless of their level of intelligence, intuition, or spiritual experience, their interpretation became a well-intentioned desire of men to express to themselves and others what they believed was the right way to conceive their Creator whom they thought they knew, regardless of what the original Revelation had stated how God should be perceived through His Attributes.

It is well known and documented fact that we cannot know ourselves inexhaustibly. How can we then pretend to know anything of God's Essence? It is impossible given our condition of created beings, that although we have an outstanding capacity for understanding, we are still limited in our temporal and created condition. We are basically mute and speechless when we try, in vain, to express, explain, describe or affirm authoritatively or truthfully anything of the Unknowable Essence of God because such Unknowable Essence is impossible for any human being to grasp, comprehend, much less express.

If we could know anything of God's Unknowable Essence, we would no longer be created beings. We would have a knowledge at the level that God has of his own Essence. A simple contradiction in terms for

the created can never be equal to the Creator nor know anything of his Unknowable Essence. If we are incapable to know anything of God's Unknowable Essence given our limitations as created beings, then who can tell us in an authoritative, accurate and truthful manner anything of God's Attributes?

For us to understand something about God without falling prey to subjectivism, fooling ourselves, making mistakes, without supposing, without inventing His reality based on our imagination, as those ancient civilizations did and left us their documented beliefs known today as myths, it is necessary to find another alternative; that is, that God talks to us, and tells us what He wants us to know about Himself as expressed in the Attributes expressed by His Messengers verbally and through their radiant life-style, which were perfect mirrors of such Attributes. In revealing to man something comprehensible about God they have done it in a way that is humanly comprehensible using the foremost tool of human communication: the spoken word.

For it to become audible, the "most natural way" is for God to speak to us through an individual similar to us, who we can see, touch, ascertain that he behaves like us and that we can listen to. Using a human form, the Divine dimension, radically removed from us, becomes visible, tangible, and to a certain degree, humanly understandable.

This would be the inverse of the process from the previous one. If, in the past, man created gods in his own "image and likeness". In this new scenario, it is God who presents himself to man, in the "image and likenesses of man". In the first case, divinity is defined by man; in the second, God, through His Spokesperson, communicates with humankind using the same language spoken by those who will receive it, communicating to them that which He wishes them to learn about His Divine Attributes. By taking the initiative, God has eliminated the subjectivism of individuals who imagine God using their limited mental capacity.

This individual is not anyone who spontaneously proclaims that he is speaking on behalf of God. Baha'u'llah's explanation of who they are is not only illuminating but at the same time remarkably different from previous Revelations whose hearers were not prepared to understand and assimilate. Bahá'u'lláh explains that these Manifestations come from a spiritual realm of their own from whence they are sent down by God to carry out a specific mission:

XXII. The Bearers of the Trust of God are made manifest unto the peoples of the earth as the Exponents of a new Cause and the Revealers of a new Message. Inasmuch as these Birds of the celestial Throne are all sent down from the heaven of the Will of God, and as they all arise to proclaim His irresistible Faith, they, therefore, are regarded as one soul and the same person. For they all drink from the one Cup of the love of God, and all partake of the fruit of the same Tree of Oneness. (1)

Bahá'u'lláh - the most recent Manifestation

Have there been such Spokespersons in the past?

Yes, they have been the Prophet founders of the major world religions such as Moses for Judaism, Zoroaster for Zoroastrianism, Buddha for Buddhism, Jesus for Christianity, Mohammed for Islam, and the most recent Manifestation of God has happened in the person of Bahá'u'lláh (the "Glory of God" in Arabic), as the founder of the Baha'i Faith.

Bahá'u'lláh was quite clear in affirming that his Mission was not a self-made election. He was summoned by God to carry out this Mission. He expressed it clearly when He narrates how a Maiden from heaven appeared to Him during this imprisonment in Teheran and told Him that He was the Promised one of all religions. Yet, when he proclaimed

it, many refused to acknowledge him and for that he was persecuted relentlessly for the rest of his life.

Bahá'u'lláh affirmed that He is the return of all previous Manifestations

Bahá'u'lláh also affirmed that he was the return of all the previous Manifestations thereby expressing his link to all of them in a manner that left no doubt as to the internal unity that exists among all Manifestations to proclaim one continuous Revelation, the one that God had assigned each Manifestation to present to those with whom they spoke at their specific time and place.

Manner in which Bahá'u'lláh presents God

Bahá'u'lláh presents God's Attributes in a way that helps us obtain a coherent image of God that is profoundly rich in nuances. These, in many instances, confirm and expand what other Revelations have expounded on how to perceive God. The result is a rich tapestry of how to apprehend an accurate and authoritative interpretation of God's Attributes, given to us in the measure of our human capacity to understand and assimilate what is comprehensible of God's Attributes as described by Bahá'u'lláh.

The Attributes of God presented by Bahá'u'lláh with such fervor and unrestricted spontaneity are also an indication of how closely He was to God as no other human being can ever be.

Bahá'u'lláh's presentation of God's Attributes

To simply repeat the Attributes of God presented by Bahá'u'lláh in Chapter 4 would be a duplication of their organization as they were presented to the reader. What seems more appropriate now is a commentary of those Attributes to obtain an additional human perception of God as presented by Bahá'u'lláh.

It is important to repeat that Bahá'u'lláh, as was the case for previous Messengers of God, has affirmed categorically that we cannot know God in His Innermost Essence because our limited capacity for knowledge is simply not able to achieve that level of understanding of God's Unknowable Essence. We are, therefore, dependent on the revelation proclaimed by His Messengers because they have a level of knowledge of God that no other human being possesses. Bahá'u'lláh reiterates for us that God, being the Unknowable Essence, is simultaneously the Hidden One, the Divine Mystery that we cannot comprehend or grasp in its intimacy.

God is the Only God

If there is one universal tenet of all major worldwide religions, it is the affirmation made by their Messengers, including Bahá'u'lláh, that there is only One God, and that there is no other god above, beside, or below Him. He is the One God. He is Supreme; the One God that has not rival, no competing god for His position and essence. He is Unique and is the only God of the Universe and of Creation.

God is One in Himself

God, being the One and only God, shows forth unity within Himself that is absolute, total, unique. By His Unity, God has no parts, no internal divisions or entities residing in His Essence. This unity, per Bahá'u'lláh, is a “transcendent unity”, meaning that it is beyond any reality known to man. That Oneness has its own splendor that Bahá'u'lláh calls “the light of Thy oneness”, which shines forth as an “effulgent light”. God's Oneness has been His for Eternity, without beginning or end.

God is Self-subsistent – Unconditioned – Eternal

For God to be the One God, the only God, as Bahá'u'lláh so emphatically expressed it, “There is none other God but Thee”, means that God's

very existence depends on no one, or on any source to Be, to Exist. He is the source of his own Being. He derives His permanence and His Presence from within Himself. This is what the concept of Self-Subsistent implies. Being Self-Subsisting also implies that God is the “Uncreated” because a self-subsisting being depends on no external source to be created.

Eternal

Temporality is the very condition and essence of any created being. Temporality is equal to mortality because one day, even if it takes several million years, like rocks, they will finally crumble, disaggregate into their very basic elements and cease to be. This happens daily to humans when their bodies stop functioning; they disintegrate into their component elements and cease to exist as mortal humans.

On the other hand, a Being that derives its Existence from within Himself will not disintegrate or decompose because He is the very source of His own Existence and has no parts to disaggregate. Thus, God being Self-Subsistent will never perish. He is Eternal. Again, Bahá'u'lláh's expressions of the Attribute of God's Eternity are quite straightforward and leave no doubt as to its reality.

A god that is not eternal, is not the God to whom one is inclined to give his/her heart in praise, recognition, or adoration. Bahá'u'lláh's proclamation that God is Eternal allows us to affirm that we, “created in His image and likeness” will, in some way, share and obtain immortality as a version of His Eternity.

Unrestrained, Unconstrained and Unconditioned

A Being that is Eternal has no restrains whatsoever. Time and space are the most powerful restraints that we humans experience daily. Either because we have to overcome diverse spatial dimensions to move, to perceive, to make judgments or because we have no control over the

inexorable passage of time that seems to imprison us in a dimension that is intangible, yet real because it governs our very existence. God, being exempt from the constraints of time and space is thus, “Unrestrained and Unconditioned” in His very Essence, as Bahá’u’lláh categorically affirms it.

The Invisible, The Hidden One

This is a difficult aspect to grasp fully, yet it is a logical Attribute of God that we can infer. If God is not a concrete individual, with a physical body like ours, He is thus, not a physical, visible, concrete being. God is therefore, the supreme “Invisible, the Hidden One”; at least to us that we comprehend reality by perceiving concrete, physical things within our temporal time-space dimension.

Bahá’u’lláh makes a paradoxical affirmation, “O Thou Who art the most manifest of the manifest and the most hidden of the hidden!”. This paradox is so, because God, being the Creator of all that exists, is thus “the most manifest of the manifest” because we can see and perceive His sustaining and animating presence everywhere and in everything that exists. But being the All-Transcendent, God is at the same time “the most hidden of the hidden!” because, hard as we try, we simply cannot “see” Him the way we see the physical things that populate our physical dimension.

Inaccessible

If God is “the Invisible and the Hidden One”, then it is not surprising at all that Bahá’u’lláh affirms that He is also the Inaccessible.

Inaccessible has the clear connotation of being “unobtainable, unreachable, untouchable”. As a pure Transcendent Spirit, God is essentially inaccessible to the limited individuals that we are from the very origin of our created being. God is thus, Inaccessible in terms of our knowledge of His Essence. Also Inaccessible in as much as we

live with underdeveloped consciousness and spiritual immaturity that impedes us to achieve effective closeness to God.

This is the right place to make the following reflection. It has become popular, especially through the New Age Spirituality, to emphasize that we are not separate from God, that we partake of His Being in such a dimension that we can consider ourselves as being in some manner “like God” to the point that some schools of this spiritual movement assertively affirm that everyone can exclaim “I am God” because God is in us in such an intense way that we are not separate from Him; therefore, “we are God”.

According to Bahá'u'lláh's presentation this closeness and identity, even though much desired, is simply not possible. First, there is a Unity in God that has no parts, so God is not made up of the billions and billions of souls that He has created. Each and every one of these souls, are existent because the Divine “spark, quantum of energy, or animating vital presence” or any other term we want to use to express that every soul requires that divine spark to exist. Without that “divine imprint” in each soul, the soul simply does not exist. This, in no way, means that God is then composed of all those individual souls that make His majestic reality of the Creator. All souls depend on God to exist. God does not depend on any of them to Be.

There is a definite “distance” between the Creator and the created. Very much like the distance that exists between the painter and his captivating painting, the sculptor and his breathtaking statue, the musician and his subliminal musical masterpiece. No matter how much the object of creation is perfect in its own reality, it is never even close to being the same as the author who created the masterpiece.

Much the same way is the abysmal distance between us and our Creator. We may be incredible spiritual beings, inspiring individuals, unpolished mirrors of divine attributes, but we will never even come close to affirm that “we are God”. The most that we can be is to inspire others to see

in us that we behave and are “God-like” in some way that attracts the hearts and minds of those that know us. But that is as far as we can aspire “to be like God”, regardless of how much divine presence is in our soul with the Attributes impressed by God from the moment He beckoned us to be.

The Divine Mystery

Bahá'u'lláh assures us that we can consider God the Divine Mystery because God's Essence and innermost reality is so distant from our knowledge and direct experience that He resides in an unknowable state of permanent Divine Mystery.

As Creator, God is Omniscient and Omnipotent

God is Omniscient. This means “having infinite awareness, understanding, and insight”. To be Omniscient means to be one who “possesses universal or complete knowledge”.

In human terms, knowledge precedes creativity. In divine terms, God must “possess universal and complete knowledge” if He is to create whatever He desires. Without the intrinsic knowledge of the innermost composition of anything, it is not possible to bring it to existence. Existence of all that IS points to a “Mind” that is all knowing about everything that could possibly be. Thus, God is Omniscient over everything that is, or will be, and of every behavior that any of His creatures displays.

A Creator that has brought everything that is into the realm of existence possesses an infinite power of creation. He can thus be called “Omnipotent” because He has “unlimited power or authority”. God's Omnipotence is absolute and sovereign because He is the source of all that is created.

God, The Creator

Another way of stating that God is the Creator is how Bahá'u'lláh affirms that God is the “Fashioner of every moldering bone” as well as “the Fashioner of the Universe”. A Fashioner is one that has a plan and a design for what it is going to be fashioned; thus, Bahá'u'lláh gives God the title of “Divine Ordainer”, and being Who He is, God is not just the Ordainer, He is the “Supreme Ordainer” who gives life to all creation out of His Will and design.

Bahá'u'lláh also gives God the title of the “Quickener”, which means the one that animates, that gives impulse and life. This facet is reinforced by the title of “the Mover of all things”. And because God is the “Supreme Ordainer”, He becomes “the Lord of all creation”, “The Source of all of all things” the “Fountain of Life” because Life is included among all things for which God is its “Source”. As a logical outcome, God is also the “Source of sovereignty and dominion”, the “Source of loftiness and grace”, and the “Source of awe and power”. These Attributes are an additional expression of the richness that is inherent to being the “Source of all things”.

A different form of stating that God is the “God of All things” is the way that Bahá'u'lláh affirms that He is “the All-Possessing, the Possessor of all things”. The One who creates all things and is the “Source of all things” is automatically “the Possessor” of all that He has created.

In this analogy, God, is the “Owner”, the “Possessor” of His Creation because He brought it forth with His Creative power, willing it out of nothing into existence. Thus, God is also, from this perspective, “The God of all things”.

The Revealer and The Source of Revelation

Being “God of All Things” implies that God is also the author-revealer and the source of all Revelation given to humanity as the utmost token

of his permanent dialogue with the peak of His Creation, us. There is no other source of authoritative and truthful Revelation than the one coming from God, its author.

It is sufficient to highlight Bahá'u'lláh's various allusions to this Divine Attribute when he calls God "the Fountain-Head of all Revelations, the Well-Spring of all Lights, the Author of all Manifestations". These titles offer no doubt as to Who is the source and fountain of any God-given Revelation; that is, God Himself.

God as Ruler and Ordainer

In this category Baha'u'llah gives us an additional image of God's Attributes that is comprehensible to us.

God in Himself

In this broad category, the following Attributes seem to fall naturally. "God is the Supreme, the Supreme Ordainer, the Incomparable, the Un-possessed, the Possessor, the Preserver, the Concealer, the Withholder".

The Majesty of God

In this general category, the following Attributes seem to express such Majesty: "the God of majesty and glory, the God of Glory, the All-glorious, the Resplendent, the Most Ancient Splendor; the Exalted, the most exalted presence, the Most High, the All-Highest, the Most Great, the Most Precious; the Beauteous, the Ancient Beauty, the Wondrous beauty, the most exalted Beauty; the Supreme Sinlessness; the Glorifier, the One Glorified; the All- Praised, the Ever-Blessed".

The Royalty of God

In this category, the Attributes that express Royalty were: “the King, the Sovereign, the Lord, the Lord of Names, the Most Great Name; the Ruler, the Conqueror, the God of all men; the Governor of nations, the Maker and Shaper of nations, the Desire of the nations, the Desire of all things”.

The God of Power and Strength

As King and Ruler, the following Attributes of God appear to express this power and strength well: “the Powerful, The Strong, God of strength; the Almighty, the All-Subduing, the All-Possessing; the All Compelling; God does what He Wills, His Will is immutable, Nothing can frustrate God’s purpose”.

The God of Knowledge

In this broad category the following Attributes of God seem to fall naturally: ‘the God of Knowledge, the All-Knowing, the God of Wisdom’,

God, the Ever Faithful

Again, the following Attributes seem to fit well under this category: “God the Faithful, the Ever Faithful, the Ever-Abiding”.

God, the Bountiful

Within this category the following Attributes found their niche: “the Bountiful, the one whose grace is

bountiful and immense; the Benevolent, the One who showers loving-kindness”.

The God of Mercy

The following Attributes fit in nicely into this category: “the God of Mercy, the God Most Merciful”.

The God of Providence and Protection

Under this heading, the following Attributes of God were identified: “the Divine Providence, the Protector, the Guardian”.

God, the Just

Finally, the Just God category covered well the Attributes of God that refer to it. They are: “The All Just, the Equitable, the Withholder”.

God’s Attributes and His relationship to humanity

Bahá’u’lláh expressed profusely many more Attributes of God that fit well in another broad category called, “God’s Attributes that create His relationship with us humans”. At least five sub-categories seemed to emerge as the best expressions of the richness of such a relationship of God with us.

Our relationship with God starts by recognizing Who God is. We do this not by the sheer power of our deduction, but by the certainty offered by His Spokesperson for this day and age, Bahá’u’lláh. It is through his Revealed texts that we can affirm, without fear of inventing erroneous conceptions of God’s Attributes.

God is the One God

The first major subcategory that became evident is the Absolute supremacy of God not having “any other god besides Thee” is primordial to understand the peculiarity of our relationship to Him, and God’s relationship to us. If we cannot grasp or fail to accept that God is the only God, all the other Attributes cease to have the very foundation of why they are what they are. Our recognition of this Absoluteness as the One God is the foundation of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation. It also declares the boundary between the Uncreated and the creation which depends absolutely on Him Being the One True God.

God’s Oneness, Unity

We need to acknowledge God’s Oneness of Absolute Unity to be able to grasp the establishment of the concept that all created things depend on God to exist. We are included in that creation. Bahá’u’lláh, in the name of all humanity, states “I bear witness unto Thy unity and Thy oneness”.

God’s dominion

In human terms, we find it natural, almost imperative, to give recognition to whoever invents or creates something new or extraordinary. Such recognition gives the inventor a tacit dominion over his creation. Becoming aware of being created by God spontaneously invites us to recognize that such power of creation is God’s dominion.

When becoming conscious of the “majesty and sovereignty” of the Creator, every “understanding heart” cannot help but express such an understanding. This understanding includes God’s grace that is Paradise and is transcendent as is His Being.

The All-Sufficing Source

To recognize that one is created by God implies that God is the very source of one's being, and thus He must also be the All-Sufficing. All-Sufficing "unto us", would, in spiritual terms, be sufficient to satisfy all our spiritual needs.

Recognition of the greatness of God and His bounty

Been conscious of our condition of created beings easily allows us to recognize the greatness of God and His bounty because we can become aware that we did not give ourselves such a state of existence. We do not possess such power. We are impotent to manifest such power. We depend on God's creative power constantly to just be.

Once we recognize God's Greatness and His Bounty we are prepared to understand Bahá'u'lláh's description of the relationship that God has with us.

The All-loving, the Loving Kindness

The foundation of all relationships is grounded on the solid base of love. Without it there is no possibility of establishing an intimate relationship. Thus, Bahá'u'lláh is expressive in proclaiming that God is "All-Loving and Loving Kindness". That Loving kindness translates into permanent nourishment for the soul that yearns for it as "pure milk".

The Beneficent, the Provider

Loving kindness is synonymous with one who becomes the constant provider, the beneficent of all those basic needs we so depend on to survive. In Bahá'u'lláh's presentation of God, the spiritual aspect is always foremost. So, knowing that God is our Provider, we should be clear that He is certainly the Provider of our spiritual needs, which are far more essential for our inner progress than just the material things

we need for our continuous physical existence. These spiritual needs are also the ones that we so many times overlook or forget when we are overwhelmed by the physical necessities of life.

The Helper, Helper in all circumstances

A provider is one that responds with whatever one needs. God, being the Provider, is also naturally the Helper. But not only “the Helper”, God is the “Supreme Helper”. It could not be otherwise since in God all His Attributes are present in the level of perfection. Another way to express the role of a helper is that of a “succorer”.

How is God the Helper? One way is that God is the One capable of giving us an understanding of what we need most because, in Bahá’u’lláh’s terms, God is “The Enlightener”, meaning the One that gives us the light to understand what we are lacking, mostly in our spiritual development.

The Healer

According to Bahá’u’lláh, God’s help is present as the Healer of our ailing souls that seek His ocean of healing. God, seen as an ocean of healing, offers the solace that every soul longs for.

Our Refuge

Bahá’u’lláh stating that God is an ocean of healing allows him to propose that God is also the refuge from those adversaries who wish to harm us. This “refuge” aspect of God has been present in Him from “everlasting”. It has always been present to protect the “fearful and the needy”.

Bahá’u’lláh offers in these two affirmations the image that attaining God’s refuge is the safest place to be, and that it is within this divine refuge that one can find the safety, comfort, and internal strength to

withstand the onslaught of those wishing harm on us or the onslaught of natural disasters.

The Attractor – The Ever-Desired

One does not wonder, then, why Bahá'u'lláh calls God “The Attractor, the Ever-Desired”. The Attributes of Helper, Healer and Refuge elicit from the soul a sense of being attracted to the infinite source of Love and Compassion. This attraction is so powerful that the soul is compelled to acknowledge that God is the Ever-Desired, not by just a few fervent souls, but in fact desired by all humans, even if the desire is not recognized. Those that have recognized God feel that this Desire has become their burning goal and thus feel compelled to not turn against the other because they do not seek anything else but God.

The Object of our adoration

Once the soul is attracted to God, it finds no other desire than to be with God. Bahá'u'lláh makes us aware that such praise is not restricted to our human recognition of God's Lordship. The whole creation participates in the recognition-praise of God's sovereignty, God's greatness, bounty, and loving kindness. Therefore, Bahá'u'lláh proclaims that “all worship God” and “all bow down” as a way of expressing this recognition,

God is the object of all our wishes, needs and goals

Bahá'u'lláh does not hesitate in finding multiple ways of expressing that God is the object of our praise expressed in multiple nuances of “confidence, clinging to the shadow of His mercy, being gladdened by His Eternity, which breaths tranquility” as it becomes “the Beginning and the End”, and “their Highest Hope”.

The Beloved

From praise of a subject that recognizes God Who has created him, Bahá'u'lláh returns to the personal relationship when he uses the term “the Beloved” to refer how one can relate to God. No one calls the other “the Beloved” unless there is total love with him/her.

Bahá'u'lláh expresses what happens to the soul that feels separated from God. It experiences an “unquenchable thirst”. Such is the strength of the connection created when God becomes “the Beloved”.

The Exultation of the soul

Bahá'u'lláh crowns this intimate relationship of the soul with God by declaring that God is the exultation of the soul. The enamored soul with God experiences the elation, rejoicing or jubilation that He gives the soul, which is felt at the very essence of its being. True communion with the Creator generates this sense of being in whatever image we have of heaven.

God is a Personal God

The relationship that God offers us is a love-relationship that is constantly expressed in the ever presence of our Creator's power in us to just “exist”. This is a relationship of unsurpassed intimacy that allows us to relate to Him as our “Personal God”.

The fact that “O my God” appears 355 times in *Prayers and Meditation of Bahá'u'lláh* gives us a straightforward indication of how precious Bahá'u'lláh feels about the relationship as to refer to God in that endearing term. He also does it using unequivocal intimate terms such as “the Adored One, the Possessor, Companion, Sole Desire, Goal, only Hope, Constant Aim, Habitation and Sanctuary, Center of my Soul”.

The level of intimacy is shown in greater depth when Bahá'u'lláh goes one step deeper in declaring that he considers God to be his “Best-Beloved”. It is obvious that this expression achieves its full realization in the spiritual realm and has no physical connotation.

All these expressions are nothing less than the outburst of a soul enamored with his Creator recognizing that God is the supreme goal with Whom he aspires to be, and to adore as the King and Creator.

The Compassionate and the Merciful

God's compassion towards us is complemented by the Attribute of Mercy. Compassion without Mercy will be leaving each shortchanged. Compassion without the power to bring relief from the unpleasant things of life would be empty of “all sympathy and concern for our welfare” that God wishes to have for us.

Knowing with certainty that God's Mercy has no bounds, we can rest assured that we can and will be forgiven any transgression as long as we are sincere enough to recognize it, admit it, request forgiveness, and make the best effort to not repeat the behavior that got us into that condition of spiritual death.

God, the Generous, the Most Generous (the Munificent), the Great Giver

The Attributes of God that that Bahá'u'lláh has presented to us of “The Compassionate, the Merciful, the Generous, the Most Generous (the Munificent), the Great Giver” gives us another perspective on how God invites us to establish a relationship with Him.

The One Who we can always trust

The above Attributes generate a spontaneous level of Trust in God that we long to have with “the Beloved”. The relationship with God could

not be otherwise. Trust then emerges from His Generosity given to us freely and in unlimited measure. Bahá'u'lláh makes us aware that we, in turn, can place our whole “trust and confidence” in God because He is “the Most Compassionate, the All-Merciful, the Most Generous”. All these Attributes generate in our hearts a sense of trust in Him that is unwavering and ever present.

God is always ready to answer

Bahá'u'lláh explains why we can trust in God's desire and willingness to answer our prayers, our petitions, and our requests. The reason is a rather simple one, God responds because He is the one “Who hearest and art ready to answer”.

This confirmation that God is always ready to hear our supplications is what gives us the certainty that God is not indifferent to what we are experiencing at any moment. The crux lies in our lack of confidence that God actually pays attention to our most intimate requests for solution to our everyday problems and that He actually answers. We do not hear those answers because we have a fixed expectation that we will hear the answer in a certain manner, and frequently God speaks to us in many different ways. Because we are too busy with our thoughts and preconceived notions of how God should respond to our petitions, we fail many times to grasp the answer offered.

A reason why God is ready to answer is because, as Bahá'u'lláh tells us, God is the quickener of our hearts. To be the Quickener of our hearts, God must always be ready to dispense that action. According to Bahá'u'lláh, God is always not only available, but He is also the personal Quickener.

Our Joy is...

The culmination of this path of our quest to befriend God has an ultimate reward: an indescribable joy that we will experience just by

being in the presence of God partaking of His companionship in fulfillment of the very goal of why we were created. The joy experienced will be of a spiritual nature. Bahá'u'lláh explains how this is so when He associates such Joy with the effort we put to “exalt God’s Cause”, and to “the glorification of Thy word”.

Whatever we do “to exalt God’s Cause” and to “Glorify His Word”, are equal to implementing the very essence of the purpose of our existence. To fulfill one’s destiny as a spiritual being having a human experience is to experience the greatest and most profound possible joy.

Benefits of our relationship with God

Bahá'u'lláh takes every opportunity to reveal the multiple benefits that a close, intimate relationship with God brings on almost automatically.

God exalts he who proclaims His cause

Dedicating oneself to the proclamation of God’s Cause, has its inherent reward - God’s exaltation of him or her making noble their character. This is one of those qualities that one wants to find in the person that one wants to befriend. Friendship bonded on this quality lasts forever and has multiple expressions of companionship, sharing, supporting and uplifting each other when the dark moments of life appear.

God is the recompense the believer will obtain

Entering into God’s presence is, in itself, the recompense that a believer will obtain. A believer is one that accepts the new Revelation brought by Bahá'u'lláh and becomes one of its promulgators. There is no greater or more fulfilling reward than this because coming closer to God’s presence means actually obtaining the spiritual joy that every soul longs for.

God is the One who enlightens the heart

God's bounty and generosity are the only capable of dispelling our grief, whatever that might be. Bahá'u'lláh assures us that God's abundance is capable of uplifting spirits when they are afflicted with such grief. God is also able to banish any anguish that we may be experiencing because He simply has the sovereignty and power to do so.

To complete the picture of assistance as a benefit of God's friendship with us, Bahá'u'lláh tells us that God's glory is strong enough to "reveal the path" that we should follow because He illumines that path that will direct us to be closer to God.

God can deliver us from all, and can change all negative situations into positive ones

Bahá'u'lláh relies on God's power to declare that He can deliver us from all evil. This reassurance amplifies our confidence that God can come to our personal aid when we are in dire need of it. When Bahá'u'lláh includes the deliverance "from all" this seems to suggest that it can be from persons engaged in trying to harm us, as well as mitigating the impact that natural events can have on our lives.

God can change all negative situations into positive ones

According to Bahá'u'lláh, God can verily change a negative situation into a positive one. It is worth while taking note that Bahá'u'lláh's description of the change is mostly internal, dealing with spiritual dimension of our lives that inseparably have a psychological component. We need God's help to increase the expression of our attributes to the level of making a difference in our personal life as well as in the relationship to others.

Our Response to Him

A relationship entails a two-way lane of reciprocity. If God is constantly offering us the noted benefits from having such a personal relationship, there must be some type of response from our part to His benevolence and outright bounty.

We praise God

Bahá'u'lláh comes to our aid laying out several responses that are expected of us. The foremost is that we should praise God. This praise flows out of Bahá'u'lláh's pen as a spontaneous cascade, as the natural response to God's invitation to have a relationship with Him. Two fundamental reasons seem to be the trigger for such exuberant declarations of praise: God is the Lord and our personal God.

God's Lordship is articulated in detail by Bahá'u'lláh when he refers to God as being his "Master, Possessor and King". All these titles of royalty are enough to give praise to whoever possesses them. In the case of God, such titles describe the supremacy inherent in God's being the Creator. This supreme attribute immediately postulates a relationship with the created beings: the acknowledgement and recognition that God is the Creator, and for this very reason, all praise is due to Him.

In this most intimate relationship, all men are bound to God in a response of praise. Yet, God's reign is not limited to our earthly reality. Bahá'u'lláh reminds us again that this relationship is valid for all humans living in other unknown worlds.

We glorify God

One excellent way to praise God is to glorify Him. We glorify God when we worship Him. An intimate expression of glorification occurs when we take our relationship to God to the level of calling Him, "O my Beloved". When we are facing the source of our existence and all

of creation, the majesty of such Being elicits from each one of us the reverend glorification of His Majesty.

We thank God

Giving thanks to anyone for any favor received is the most natural reaction among humans. It is the way we give recognition to the friend, the beloved, even the stranger for whatever action he took in our favor. If this is true among limited, imperfect humans, how could it not be the most natural reaction of the created being towards his Creator? Expressing gratitude to our Creator for the ineffable gift of our existence is no less than the purest form of adoration, of worship.

Being devoted to God

When Bahá'u'lláh uses the term “devoted unto God”, he is definitely stating the quality of our response to God’s invitation to be in close relationship with Him. The devotion must be very loyal and very loving. It could not be otherwise since God’s expression of His love towards us is infinite in measure. Our limited response should at least have the characteristic of loyalty and lovingness.

Being patient in God

Patience is a rare quality that is not found readily among humans. Relationships that do not incorporate the virtue of patience will soon dissolve into the area of intolerance and worse, in outright aggression. Contemplating God’s infinite patience, we know that only He can sustain our spiritual growth by having the intimate relationship that He offers us through His unwavering patience. That is how we can even come close to controlling our impatient behaviors. Living that relationship at the level of intimacy that God invites us to have is how we can become “patient in God”.

God's Will is our will

To carry out the will of another is a desirable and logical response especially when the one manifesting the will is one that we trust, love, and appreciate. If we do this wholeheartedly for a limited human being whom we sincerely wish to please, how can we even think that we should not do the same for the One that always wishes our greatest benefit and continuous spiritual growth?

God is directing our welfare through our acceptance to carry out His bidding, which is the best laid-out plan for our spiritual growth, the ultimate purpose of our existence. What best plan could we follow than the one provided by our Creator whose only desire is to guide us to achieving the purpose for which He created us?

Requesting God's Will for oneself

Since following the will of someone is so difficult in our everyday life given the powerful innate impulse to doing our will rather than another's, it is imperative that we request that God assist us in carrying out His Will rather than ours.

We constantly fall to the illusion that this earthly life is the only one we have. For this very reason, so many of our behaviors and responses are so short-sighted, lacking the perspective of an afterlife, to the point that that we become extremely limited in how we conceive of God's Will for us. So, the best reason for asking God to show us His Will is because God knows what is best that "will profit me in every world of Thy worlds". His Will is best expressed in the Manifestation's Teachings.

Request to be rid of all attachment except God and His Will

The optimal request that we can make to God is to help us rid ourselves of all attachments that are not reflected in His Will. This request is necessary because we are limited creatures that tend to think that there

is not sufficient wealth to go around for all the people in the world, and that therefore, we must cling to what we have under the fear that without those material things, we cannot live.

The condition of non-attachment is not a negative renunciation per se. It has a higher motive and goal, and that is to acquire the inner freedom to dedicate one to the most important endeavor that one could take up in life, and that is to “serve Thy Cause”. Doing God’s Will is not an empty endeavor. On the contrary, getting rid “of all attachment to aught except Thyself” becomes the actual recompense for the effort because God suffices above anything. He becomes the recompense for the effort of becoming detached.

We bear witness to His Cause as His Will

So, proclaiming Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation, for love of God, becomes our way of witnessing the Cause that promulgates God’s Will for humanity today.

Reward when doing God’s bidding

God’s grace is required all the time to be able to achieve extraordinary internal changes, such as “weakness into strength, and powerlessness into might, and fear into calm, and doubt into certainty”. God’s grace will assist us throughout the process, but it requires, though, that we request Him intensely for His grace. It does not impede God giving the grace to make the changes happen at once.

Separation from God is suffering

In this context it is easy to understand why Bahá’u’lláh affirms that separation from God is suffering. This declaration is no surprise once we have understood the magnificence of being in the presence of God and experiencing nearness to God. Nothing can compare to that bliss. Our human experience is that if we are deprived of a profound happy

moment or exhilarating experience, we do not want it to be taken away from us, we do not want it to finish, we yearn for it to be permanent.

Suffering in the name of God

If separation from God produces suffering, it is not surprising that Bahá'u'lláh also affirms that there is suffering present when proclaiming the name of God. This occurs frequently with religious persecution, and on a lesser scale just by local sarcastic criticism by those that cannot stand being reminded of the relationship that they should be having with God as compared to the lifestyle they are living at the present.

Imprisonment is a typical situation that falls to those that proclaim God's laws and expected behavior as set forth in these laws, or just simply when presenting a new Revelation. Exile is another way of suffering in the name of God. It is frequently imposed by those in power as a means of silencing the voice of the proclaimer of the Cause of God.

The ultimate manifestation of all suffering in the name of God is, of course, martyrdom, in which the most precious of our gifts, our life, is given up when being faithful to the Cause of God, to the proclamation of His Revelation and the dedication of service in the name of God.

Our most ardent desire is that God will grant us the grace of being steadfast in His love

The hardest endeavor of us humans is to be steadfast in whatever we choose to do, to serve, and/or to express our creativity. The effort of maintaining our enthusiasm, our commitment is so frail that we often give up and sacrifice the loftiest of our goals and desires. We start new projects with a passion, and before we know it, we have given them up because the effort to be steadfast just dwindles away.

It is at these moments when we have to turn to God and request Him to make us steadfast in His love so that we will not give up our commitment to be active in the proclamation of His Love for us.

The desire of each one is to be with God

The ultimate desire of the soul enamored with God is to be with Him in a never-ending moment of sublime joy because it has finally reached the true goal of her/his existence. Bahá'u'lláh comes to our aid and gives us several clues, images and descriptions of what this unparalleled moment will be like such as: “to be seated at His right hand, and be established upon the seat of God’s glory”. The result will be a state of Exultation.

The soul that hears these images is transformed into a yearning soul that longs to be in the presence of God to be able to enjoy any and all of these wonderful future realities. This prayer of Bahá'u'lláh majestically expresses this burning desire of a soul enamored of God,

O Thou Whose face is the object of my adoration,
Whose beauty is my sanctuary, Whose court is my
goal, Whose remembrance is my wish, Whose affection
is my solace, Whose love is my begetter, Whose praise
is my companion, Whose nearness is my hope, Whose
presence is my greatest longing and supreme aspiration!
Disappoint me not, I entreat Thee, by withholding from
me the things Thou didst ordain for the chosen ones
and supply me with the good of this world and of the
world to come.

Thou art, verily, the Lord of creation. No God is
there beside Thee, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most
Bountiful. - XCVIII

My effort in finding a holistic picture of God as given by Bahá'u'lláh through the enunciation of His Attributes in the book, *Prayers and*

Meditations of Bahá'u'lláh, is by no means the most complete description of those Attributes. The reader is invited to make his/her own inventory of God's Attributes found in this book, in the other writings of Bahá'u'lláh or in the multiple prayers that 'Abdu'l-Bahá left us. The latter are an additional spiritual treasure that is worthwhile studying. After all, the personal relationship one develops with God is through one's effort "to know and worship Him". This is the most important human endeavor that one can pursue, and to obtain it, enough time and effort must be put into the journey. This book is just one step in that journey. May it nourish your restless and seeker-soul.

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APPENDIX A

GOD AS ETERNAL CREATOR

ATTRIBUTES AND NAMES OF GOD	Quotes	No. of times
The Unknowable Essence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - all have confessed their powerlessness to attain unto the comprehension of Thine essence – LXXIX - The quintessence of knowledge, O my Lord, proclaimeth its powerlessness to know Thee – CIII - For the attempt of the evanescent to conceive the signs of the Uncreated is as the stirring of the drop before the tumult of Thy billowing oceans.- CXIV - (man is) powerless to soar into the atmosphere of the knowledge of Thine own Being - CXIV - no description by any created thing can ever reveal Thee, and no praise which any being is able to utter can express Thee.- CLIII - ...find myself completely unable to unravel the mystery of the least of Thy signs, how much more to apprehend Thine own Self. – CLXXIX 	<p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p>
The only God	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (God) the One – CLXXV - The One God- XXXI, CXIV - There is no God but Thee – VII, X, XXX, XXXI, LIX - There is no God beside Thee – XIV, XXI, XXVI, LVI - There is none other God but Thee – XIX, XXV, XXVIII, XXXIII, LIX, LXIV, CXXXVI - there is none other God besides Thee – XXXIV - No God is there but Thee – XXXVII, LXVI, XLVIII, LXIX 	<p>43</p> <p>25</p> <p>13</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No God is there beside Thee – LVI, LVI - There is no God save Thee – XLIII, LXII, LXX - Thou art God alone, XXVII - Thy transcendent oneness – LXXIX, CI - the Incomparable – XXIV, XXVII, XXXI, CXIV - From everlasting Thou wert alone, with none to describe Thee and wilt abide forever the same with no one else to equal or rival Thee – CXIV - All the atoms of the earth proclaim Thee to be God, and testify that there is none other God besides Thee. 	80
Independent of any one	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thou hast, in Thyself, been independent of any one besides -Thee and rich enough, in Thine own essence, to dispense with anyone except Thy Self - 	
God is One in Himself		
Self-Subsistent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Self-Subsisting - XI, XVII, XVIII, XX, XVI, XXXII, LIII, LVI, XCII, LXXX, CII, CXVII, CXXI, CXXV, CXXXV, CXL - the Uncreated – LXXXVIII - the Self-Sufficing - CXX 	29
Eternal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - O King of eternity – XXXVII - Thine eternity- LVIII - the ocean of Thine eternity – LX - O Thou Who art the King of eternity – XXXVIII - the Ever-Abiding (Everlasting) – XXVII, XXXI - the heaven of Thine eternity – XCIV - From eternity Thou hast been alone, with none to share the majesty of Thy singleness, and hast remained far above the changes and chances to which all Thy creatures are subjected.- LXI - From everlasting Thou hast been alone with no one else beside Thee – LXXIX - everlasting Thou wilt continue to be one and the same – LXXIX - the eternity of Thy majesty, and of Thy sovereignty, and of Thy sublimity, and of Thy power. - CLXXVI - From eternity Thou hast been exalted above the praise of all created things, and wilt to eternity remain far above the glorification of any one of Thy creatures – CIII 	

	- From eternity Thou hast inhabited the loftiest heights of Thy dominion and of Thine unfettered sovereignty, and wilt unto eternity continue to abide in the inaccessible retreats of Thy majesty and glory.- CXXXIX	
Unrestrained	- the Unrestrained – XXIV, LIX, LXII - Thy transcendent and unrestrained dominion - XXXIV - Thy Self, the Unrestrained – LXXXIII - the Unconditioned - LI, LVII, XCV ,CLXXI	
Unconditioned		
Inaccessible	- the Inaccessible, - VIII, XXIII, LI, LXV, LXVI, LXIX, XCVII, C	8
The Invisible, The Hidden One	- Thine Invisible – Self – LXXVIII - the Unseen Essence – LVI - O Thou Whom no eyes can see – LXXXIII - O Thou Who art hidden from all things – XX - O Thou Who art the most manifest of the manifest and the most hidden of the hidden! - CLV	
The Divine Mystery	- the Divine Mystery - LVI	
The Creator	- The Creator – IV - Thy name, the Creator – CLXIX - the Lord of all creation – XXXIII, XCVIII - the Creator of the heavens! - CVIII, CXIV, CLXXXVI, CLXXXIII - O Thou Who art the Creator of earth and heaven-LI, LXI, CLI, CLXXVI - the Fashioner and Creator - XC, XCV - O Thou Maker of the heavens - V, XXXII, CLIV, CLXXVI, CXXXVIII - One Who is their Creator – CLXXVI - the Maker of earth and heaven – XIII - the Fashioner of earth and heaven – XXXVIII - the Fashioner of every moldering bone – XXXVII - O Thou Who art the Fashioner of the universe – CXVIII - Him Who is their Fashioner and Creator – XC - Thou art that King by Whose commanding word the whole creation hath been called into being.- CLVIII - the Quickener of every moldering bone – XXXVIII, CXVIII - the Quickener of the entire creation – LXV - the Mover of all things – XLII	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Divine Ordainer – VI - the Ordainer, both in the beginning and in the end.- CLXXXIII - the Supreme Ordainer,- XXXVIII - in Whose hand is the kingdom of the entire creation – XCVI - the wondrous evidences of Thine everlasting handiwork, CLXXXIV - Through Thy name, O my God, all created things were stirred up, and the heavens were spread, and the earth was established, and the clouds were raised and made to rain upon the earth. This, verily, is a token of Thy grace unto all Thy creatures. – CXLVII - the One Who is their Creator, their Origin, their Begetter –CLXXVI - by Thy behest, and fashioned the entire creation through the power of Thy sovereignty and might - LXXXII 	
The God of all things	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the God of all things – XLII, CLXXVI - the All-Possessing – LVI - the Possessor of all things – XLII - the Aim of all things, - XLII - the Mover of all things! – XLII - the Aim of all things – XLII - the God of all that are in heaven and all that are on earth – LII 	
The Source of all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Source of all things – LI - the Source of all Sources- XLIII - the Well-Spring of all Lights- XLIII - the Fountain of all life – LXV - Enlightener of all things visible and invisible – XLI - Thee Who art the Source of all glory and majesty – LIX - Source of sovereignty and dominion – LIX - Source of loftiness and grace – LIX - Source of awe and power - LIX 	
The Omniscient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Omniscient – IV, LXVIII, XC, XCIV, CIII, CIX, CXI - All-Knowing, - VII, IX, XXIV, XXXIX, XL, XLIII, XLV, XLVI - Whose knowledge nothing whatsoever escapeth – XLI - the All-Informed - XLV, LXVIII 	<p>7</p> <p>25</p>

The Omnipotent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Omnipotent – CII - Thine omnipotence – LXXIV, CXII, CXXIX - to Whose majesty and omnipotence the whole creation hath borne witness.- CLII - The tongues of all created things testify to Thy sovereignty and Thine omnipotence - CLXXIX 	
The Revealer and The Source of Revelation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Author of all Manifestations – XLIII - the Source of all Sources – XLIII - the Fountain-Head of all Revelations – XLIII - the Well-Spring of all Lights – XLIII - the Author of all Manifestations- XLIII - the infinite wonders of Thy Revelation – LXXX, - the sweet smell of the Robe of Thy Revelation. – CXIII - Thy Revelation which is identical with Thy Concealment – CXL - Thou art He, by Whose name the Hidden Secret was divulged, and the Well-Guarded Name was revealed – CL - the Revealer of whatsoever may be manifested by Thee.- CLXXVIII 	
The Word	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thy most exalted Word – XXIV, XXXVIII, LXX - Thy Word established – LVI - Thy most holy and exalted tongue, and Thy most august and precious speech – CLXXVI - Whatsoever hath been adorned with the robe of words is but Thy creation – CLXXVI - I testify that no sooner had the First Word proceeded, through the potency of Thy will and purpose, out of His mouth, and the First Call gone forth from His lips than the whole creation was revolutionized, and all that are in the heavens and all that are on earth were stirred to the depths. Through that Word the realities of all created things were shaken, - CLXXVIII 	8

APPENDIX B

GOD'S AS RULER AND ORDAINER

	<i>God's Attributes that we can grasp as presented by Babá'u'lláh</i>	
<i>God in Himself</i>		Times in book
The Supreme	- Supreme art Thou over all things - CXIX	
the Supreme Ordainer	- the Supreme Ordainer - CLXIII	
The Incomparable	- Thine incomparable Self - LXXX - Incomparable art Thou – LXXXI - the Incomparable – CLXXV - Thee as One Who is incomparable - CLXXVIII	
The Un-possessed	- Whose nature none can possess - CLXXVIII	
the Possessor	- the Possessor of all things visible and invisible! - CLXXVI	
the Preserver	- Thy Name, the Preserver, - LXXIII - Thou art, verily, the Preserver, - CXLVI,CLXXII	
the Concealer	- O Thou Who art the Concealer - XLIV, CLIII	
the Withholder	- by Thy Name, the Withholder, - LXXIII	
<i>The Majesty of God</i>		
the God of majesty and glory	- the God of majesty and glory – LXXXIII - Thy highness and Thy loftiness, and Thine incomparable glory and greatness; - CLXXVI - Thy majesty, and of the potency of Thy might, and Thy grandeur. - CLXXVI	

The God of Glory	- the God of glory, - XXV, XXVIII, LXXII, LXXVII, LXXIX, LXXXVI, XCIII	83
the All glorious	- the Glory of all things – XLII	
The Resplendent	- Thee Who art the Source of all glory and majesty – LIX - The All-Glorious, - III, IV, VI,VIII, XIII, XIV, XVI, XXII, XXIV, XXVII, XXXI , XXXVIII, XLIV, XLIV, XLVII, XLVIII, LI - O Resplendent One, - CLXV - Resplendent art Thou above all things – LXIII	
Most Ancient Splendor	- Thy Most Ancient Splendor - LXXVIII	
The Exalted,	- the Exalted – LVI, CLXII, CLXII	48
Most exalted presence	- the Most Exalted – VIII, XXIII, XVI, XXII, XXIV, XXXII, CXVIII XXXIV, XLIV, XLVIII, XLIX, LIX, LXVI, LXVII, LXXIV, CXVIII, CL	
Most High,	- Thy most exalted presence - LXXX,	14
the All Highest	- Thou art the Most High- VIII, XXIV, XXXIV, XL, LVI, LXVI, CL, CLXII, CLXIII	
the Most Great	- the All-Highest – LVIII, XCV, CLXV - the Most Great.– XXIII, XXIV, XXXIV, XLIV, LXIX, CLXI	
the Most Precious	- the Most Precious - XXXII	15
the Beauteous	- the Beauteous – LVII	
The Ancient Beauty	- Thine Ancient Beauty – XXXIV	
Thy Wondrous Beauty	- Thy wondrous Beauty – LX, LX	
The most exalted Beauty	- Thou didst manifest Thy most exalted Beauty. - CLXXXIV	
The Supreme Sinlessness	- Thy Supreme Sinlessness – LXII	
The Glorifier	- the Glorifier – CLXXVI	
	- Thou didst from eternity glorify Thine own Self, - CLXXXIV	
The One Glorified	- Glorified, immeasurably glorified art Thou, O my Master! – CLXXXIV	
The All-Praised	- the All-Praised. CXXVII	
The Ever-Blessed	- the Ever-Blessed CLXXVI	

<i>The Royalty of God</i>		
The King	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - O Thou Who art the King of all Kings - XXVI, LXV, LXXX, XC - Thou, truly, art the King of all men – CLXVI - the Supreme King - XXII - O the King of all things – XLII - King of all created things, CLXXVI - O Thou Who art the King of the realms of justice, Thou art the King of all bounty – CLIII 	
The Sovereign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Sovereign – LXXIX - Thy most holy sovereignty – CI - Thy transcendent sovereignty – LXXX - Thine everlasting sovereignty, - CLXIX - the heaven of Thy sovereignty – CXIII - the Sovereign of the kingdom of eternity – CLXXXIII - all sovereignty belongeth to Thee – CLX - the power of Thy sovereign might.- CX - Thou art He to the power of Whose might and sovereignty all things testify – CXXVIII - Thine omnipotent sovereignty and purpose.- CLXXXIV - Thou set down through Thine all-encompassing sovereignty, and apprehended through Thine omnipotent supremacy.- CLXXXIV - Thou art supreme over all who are in heaven and on earth- CLIII 	
The Lord	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Lord of Lords! – XLIV - O Lord my God! – XIX, XXI, XXV, XXVIII - the Lord of all creation! – XXXVIII, LXI, CI - O Thou Who art the Lord of all being- XLIV, CXLI, CLXXVI - the Lord of all worlds – VII, XII, LXVII, CIX - the Lord of the worlds! – XXI, XXXVIII, LII, LVI, LXIX, CI, CXXIV, CLXXII - O God, the Lord of heaven! – XVII - the Lord of earth and heaven.- C - the Lord of this world and of the next – LVI, CLXXVIII - the Lord of the throne on high and of earth below - LXXXI, CLXXVI - the Lord of the Kingdom of all created things – LVIII - the Lord of all created things and their Ordainer. – CLXIX - O Thou the Lord of the visible and the invisible – XLVII - O Thou Lord of all mankind - LII, CXXXVII 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - O Thou Who art the Lord of all men! –CLXIII - Thou art, truly, the Lord and King of all men, - CXLIV - in Whose hand is the lordship of all things! – CXIV, CXIV - the Lord of all that are in heaven and on earth,- CIX - the Lord of the nations, - CLXXVI - O Thou Lord of all nations – CLXXXIII - the Lord of the Judgment Day – LV - the Lord of all favors, - CLIII - the Lord of bounty - CLXXIII 	
The Lord of Names	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thou Who art the King of names- XLV, CXXXI, CLXXVI, CLI - God, Lord of all names – CXIV, CXXXVIII - the brightness of Thy Name – LXXXIV - O Thou the Lord of all names! – V, XXXII, CLIV - Thou Who art the Possessor of all names – XXXVIII, LI, CLXXVI - O Thou Who art the Possessor of all names and attributes! - CLXIII, CXXVIII - the Possessor of all names, - XIII - O Thou Who art the Author of all names - XVIII - Thy Most Great Name, XI, XIX, XXXIV, XLVI, LXV, CXIII, CLIII, CLXXXIII - Thy Most Effulgent Name – LXII - Thy name, the Most Exalted, the Most High, the seat of Thine effulgent glory. – CXXX - Thy Name, the Most Holy, the Most Luminous, the Most Mighty, the Most Great, the Most Exalted, the Most Glorious,- CLXXVII - O Thou in Whose hand is the empire of all names! - XVI - O Thou in Whose hands are the kingdoms of all names and attributes! – CLXXXIV - Thy Name through which Thou hast subdued the whole creation, - CLXXXIII - Thy Name through which Thou changest all things, and gatherest together all things, and callest to account all things, and rewardest all things, and preservest all things, and sustainest all things - CXLVI 	13
The Ruler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - O Thou Who rulest all things – XCVI - Thou art He in Whose grasp are the reins of the entire creation. – CXLII 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thou art He Who holdeth in His grasp the kingdom of all things – LXII - the Ruler of the cities of mercy! – LXXXI - O Thou Who art the Ruler of the kingdoms of creation –XVIII - the Ruler of this world and of the world to come. – LXXXI - The Supreme Ruler – IV, LXXV,CIII - Him Who ruleth the realms of loftiness and grandeur- LVIII - O Thou Who rulest over all men! – CLXXXIII - O Thou in Whose hands are the heavens of grace and of bounty, and the kingdoms of glory and of majesty –LXXXIV 	
the Conqueror	- by Thy Name, the Conqueror - LXXXIII	
The God of all men	- the God of all men, - CLXXVI	
the Governor of nations!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thou, verily, art the Governor – CLXXVI - O Thou Who art the Governor of nations! – CXL 	
The Maker and Shaper of nations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Maker of nations – XXXVII - O Thou the Shaper of all the nations – CXVIII 	
the Desire of the nations	- and the Desire of the nations, - CLXXVI	
the Desire of all things	- the Desire of all things -- XLII	
<i>The God of Power and Strength</i>		
The Powerful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the God of power- XXV, LXXVII, LXXIX, LXXXIII, LXXXVI, XCIII - the God of strength and power – XLIII - the Most Powerful – III, XXIV, XXVIII, XXX, XXXI, XL, XLIV, XLVII, LVI, LVII, LXX, LXXIV, CXLVII, CXLIX - the All-Powerful, XIV, XXXV, XXXIX, LIII, LVI, LVII,LIX, LVI - the One Whose power is immense – LXXIII, - Thou art, truly, potent over all things. – CXLIV - Powerful art Thou to do all things - LXIII, CLXXVIII - O Thou Who hast power over all that are in the heavens and all that are on earth – LXXX - Thou art He Whose power is from everlasting to everlasting.- CXXIV - Thou hast from everlasting been potent, - CLXXXIV - a spark of the fire of Thy love is enough to set ablaze a whole world.- CLIII 	<p>16</p> <p>33</p> <p>16</p>

The Strong God of strength	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Strong, - CLVI - the God of strength – XXVIII, LXXVII, LXXXVI 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Strength of all things – XLII - Thou art He to Whose strength and power all things have testified – LXXII, - Thy majesty, and Thy strength, and Thy sovereign might.- CXXIX - by Thy name through which Thou hast subdued all created things, - CXLIX - their Destroyer and their Abaser,- CLXXVI 	
the Almighty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Mighty - X, XVI, CLXXXIII - the Almighty – IV, V, XIV, XVI, XIX, XX, XXI, XXIII, XXIV, XXVII, XXVIII, XXX , XXXV, XXXVII, XLI, XLIV, XLV, XLIX LXVI - Most Mighty – CLXXVII, CLXXVIII - Thy most august and most mighty Self – LXXI - the wondrous potency of Thy might.- CXII 	<p>92</p> <p>13</p>
the All-Subduing – the All Possessing the All Compelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the All-Subduing – LVIII, LIX, CLVII - No God is there but Thee, the All-Subduing – CLXXI - the All-Possessing – LVIII, LXXIV, LXXIX, CXVI, CXX, CL, CLXIII - the All-Compelling – LXXIV, LXXVIII, XCV, CV 	<p>12</p>
God does what He Wills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thou, verily, doest what Thou choolest – XLIV, CLXII - Thou doest what Thou willest – LXII, XCIX - Thine is the authority to command whatsoever Thou willest. – CLXXXIII - Powerful art Thou to do what Thou willest - XXVI, XXVIII XCIV XCVII, CXIII - Powerful art Thou to do what Thou pleasest and to ordain what Thou willest - LXXIX, LXXXII - Potent art Thou to do Thy pleasure - CII, CXXIII, CXXIX - Potent art Thou to do what Thou willest – CXX, XXX, XXXVIII, CXXI, CLI - Powerful art Thou to do as Thou pleases - XLVIII, LXXXVIII, CIII - Potent art Thou to do what pleaseth Thee - L, LVI, LXXXI CXV, CXXVIII, CLI, CLXV - Thou art, verily, powerful to do Thy pleasure.- CXL - Powerful art Thou to do what pleaseth Thee- LX,C, CXXVI, CXXXVIII, CLXXIX - Thou art He, Who ordaineth what He pleaseth – XCIX 	<p>12</p> <p>14</p> <p>11</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thou art, verily, He Who, through the power of His might, doeth whatsoever He desireth – CLXII - Thy choosest, through the power of Thy might, whatsoever Thou desirest - Thou art He Who from everlasting hath ordained what hath pleased Thee, and will unto everlasting abide the same - CLXIII - Thou hast from eternity been powerful to do what Thou hast willed, and to ordain what Thou hast pleased.- CL - LXI the Ordainer of all that may please Thee – CXXXVI 	
His Will is immutable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the immutability of Thy will, the endlessness of Thy purpose. – CLXI - the heaven of Thine irrevocable Purpose. – CLXXIX 	
Nothing can frustrate God’s purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Whose Purpose nothing whatsoever of all that hath been created in Thy heaven and on Thy earth hath been able to frustrate. - LXII 	
the Cleaver (A tool with a heavy, broad blade, used by butchers) not included]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thy Name, the Cleaver, - LXXIII 	
<i>The God of Knowledge</i>		
The God of Knowledge the All-Knowing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the God of knowledge, - XCIII,CV, CXXX - by Thy Name, the All-Knowing - LXXIII, LXXIX - O Thou Who art the All-Knowing! – CLIII - the Knower of things unseen – CX - O Thou Who art the Knower of the seen and unseen – CXLI - the soft-flowing stream of Thy knowledge – CVIII 	
The God of Wisdom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the God of wisdom – XXVIII, LXXII, LXXIX, LXXXVI, XCIII, CXXX - the Wise – XIX - the All-Wise – VII, IX, XXXI, XXXVI, XXXVII, XXXVIII, XXXIX, XL, XLVI, XLVIII,LIX, LXXIX, CXX 	14
<i>God, the Ever faithful</i>		
The Faithful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Faithful. – CLVI 	
The Ever Faithful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Ever-Faithful – XVI 	
The Ever-Abiding (enduring)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Ever-Abiding – X, LXXIV 	

The Equitable	- Thou, truly, art the Equitable - CLXXIX	
the Withholder	- Keep them safe, by Thy Name, the Withholder, from the tyranny of the oppressor and the wickedness of the evil doers and the malice of the stirrers of mischief. - LXXIII	

APPENDIX C

GOD AS OUR LORD AND BELOVED

<i>A -Recognition of Who God is as per Bahá'u'lláh</i>		Times in book
<p>We testify that : He is the One God</p> <p>His Oneness, His Unity</p> <p>His power and dominion-</p> <p>And His sovereignty -</p> <p>The One whose Grace is Transcendent</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I testify that Thou art God, and that there is none other God besides Thee - CXXXV - All created things have borne witness to Thy unity, and every dweller in Thy kingdom hath confessed Thy oneness – CXXXV - I bear witness unto Thy unity and Thy oneness, - CLVII - Thou art He to Whose power and to Whose dominion every tongue hath testified, - CLIV - Whose majesty and Whose sovereignty every understanding heart hath acknowledged - CLIV - Thy transcendent grace and favor, - CLXXXIV - Thy grace, Thy Paradise of transcendent holiness, - CLXXXIV 	
<p>God is the source of our being</p> <p>The All Sufficing</p> <p>God is sufficient to us</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - O Source of my being, - CLV - The waters of Thy love have preserved me in the kingdom of Thy creation – CXI - the All-Sufficing - CXLVI - Thou art sufficient unto us so that we can dispense with the world and all that is therein – LXIII 	

Recognition of greatness of God and of his Bounty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Every created thing hath recognized its own impotence, and the power of Thy might, and hath confessed its own abasement and Thy great glory. - CXL - Thou art the All-Bountiful - CLVII 	
<i>Who God is for us</i>		
The All-loving Loving Kindness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the All-Loving - XLVII - Thy loving-kindness – LXXI - the Day-Spring of Thy loving-kindness – LXXII - Out of the pure milk, drawn from the breasts of Thy loving-kindness, give me to drink, for my thirst hath utterly consumed me. - CXLV 	
The Beneficent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Beneficent – V, LVI, CXXVIII, CXXXI 	
The Provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - O my Provider!, - CLXV - their Provider - CLXXVI 	
The Helper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thou art, verily, the Helper – CXLVIII - the Supreme Helper – VI - the Help in peril, - XI, XVIII, XX, XXII, XVI, XLVII, LIII, LVI, LXIV, LXX - Thou, truly, art the Help in Peril through the power of Thy sovereignty – CXXXVI - O my Succorer, - CLXV - the Succorer of the distressed, - CXLIX - He Whose help is implored by all men – CII - Thou are Whose help is implored by all men. CXIII, CXIV, CXV - Whose help is sought by all men – CXXVIII - Thou truly art to whom all cry for help. – CXXIX 	34
The helper in all circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thou art He, O my God, through Whose names the sick are healed and the ailing are restored, and the thirsty are given drink, and the sore-vexed are tranquillized, and the wayward are guided, and the abased are exalted, and the poor are enriched, and the ignorant are enlightened, and the gloomy are illumined, and the sorrowful are cheered, and the chilled are warmed, and the downtrodden are raised up.- CXLVII 	

The Enlightener	- the Enlightener of all things visible and invisible – XLIV, XLVII, CLXXXVI	
The Healer	- Thou art, verily, the Healer- CXLVI, CXLVIII - O, my God! I beg of Thee by the ocean of Thy healing, -CLXXIV - this ailing soul who hath set his face towards the ocean of Thy healing.- CLXXVI	
God is our Refuge	- to seek refuge within the stronghold of Thy love and of Thy Revelation, - CXLIII - Beneath the shadow of the wings of Thy mercy shelter me, for all mine adversaries with one consent have fallen upon me. – CXLV - to seek Thee as my Refuge, and to flee unto Thy face. CLXII - Thou art the One, O my Lord, Who from everlasting hath been the Refuge of the fearful, and the Haven of the needy. - CLXXXIX	
The Attractor	- O Thou my Attractor! - CLXV	
the Ever-Desired the desire of all The desire of those that have recognized God, They will not turn to none other	- the Ever-Desired – LXXV - my Master, the Goal of my desire! - CLV, CLXXI, CLXXVI - O Thou the Goal of my desire! - CLXIII, CLXXXIV - Thou art the sole desire of the heart – LXX - O my Lord, my heart longeth for Thee with a longing such as no heart hath known. – CLI - the one Desire of the hearts which are devoted to Thee! CIX - Thou Who art the Desire of our hearts – LXXXI - Desire of all them that are nigh unto Thee – LXV - the Desire of all them that have known Thee! – LVI - O Thou Who art the sole Desire of them that have recognized Thee – LXX, LXXXVI, CVII - and will seek from Thee naught else except Thyself – LXX - the Desire of all that are in heaven and on earth, CIII, - Whosoever hath recognized Thee will turn to none save Thee – LXX	

<p>God is our Object of our adoration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - O Thou Whose face is the object of my adoration, -XCVIII, CLX - O Thou Who art the Delight of our hearts and the Object of our adoration! – LXXXI - the sole Object of their adoration was Thee. – CX - I implore Thee, O Beloved of my heart and the Object of my soul's adoration. – VI - Whose beauty is my sanctuary, Whose court is my goal, Whose remembrance is my wish, Whose affection is my solace, Whose love is my begetter, Whose praise is my companion, Whose nearness is my hope, Whose presence is my greatest longing and supreme aspiration! – XCVIII - the Object of the adoration of the entire creation! - LXIX, LXX - We all, verily, worship God. – CLXVII - We all, verily, bow down before God. - CLXVII 	
<p>God is the Object of all our wishes, needs and goals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In Thee I have placed my whole confidence, unto Thee I have turned my face, to the cord of Thy loving providence I have clung, and towards the shadow of Thy mercy I have hastened – CXXXII - by the breezes of Thine eternity gladden me, - CLV - Let Thine everlasting melodies breathe tranquility on me, O my Companion, - XIV, XV, LXXVIII, CXX,CLV, CLXVIII - For Thou hast been their Beginning and their End, and their Highest Hope, and their Supreme Desire.- CLXXVIII -the Goal of my desire. - CLX - I implore Thee, O Beloved of my heart and the Object of my soul's adoration. - VI 	
<p>God is our Highest Wish</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - O Thou Who art my Highest Wish, - CLXV 	
<p>The Beloved</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - My God, my Well-Beloved! – CXVI - O my God, my Master, my Best-Beloved! – LXII - I swear by Thy might, O my Beloved! – LVIII - By the glory of Thy might, O Thou my Well-Beloved! –LVIII - Glory to Thee, O Thou Who art the Lord of all worlds, and the Beloved of all such as have recognized Thee! – CII - O Lord the Beloved of the world and the Desire of all them that have recognized Thee! - CL 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No God is there beside Thee, Thou alone art my Beloved in this world and in the world which is to come. – CVII - Thou well knowest, O my God, my Best-Beloved, that naught can quench the thirst I suffer in my separation from Thee - XLI 	
The Exultation of the soul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thou, Who art the Exultation of our souls – LXXXI - O Thou Whose remembrance is the delight of the souls of all them that yearn after Thee, Whose name is the exultation of the hearts of all who are wholly devoted to Thy will, - LXXX 	
<i>God is also a Personal God</i>		
Personal God	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - O my God – VI, VIII, XIII, XIV, XX, XXIII, XXVI, XXXI, XXXVIII - O Thou Who art my God- XLIV, CLXV - O my God, O my God, O my God – XVII. XXVIII, XXXI, XXXI, XXXVIII - my Best-Beloved ! – LXII - My God, my Well-Beloved! – CXVI, CXX - O my Well-Beloved! – CXXVII - Thou alone art my Beloved in this world and in the world which is to come – CVII - O My Lord – XIII, XXX, XXXI, LVI - O my Lord, O my Lord - XXV, XXXVI, XLIX, LVI - Thou Who art our Lord - XXXVIII, LIII - O Lord my God! – I, VI, VII,VIII,IX,XVI, XIX, XXI, XXV, XXXV, XXXVIII, LXXXII, CXLIV, CLXXVIII, CLXXXIV, XLVI - my King and the King of all things – CLXXVI - my Master, my Possessor, my King - LVIII, CLXXXIII - My God, my Master – CLXXVI - My God, my Adored One – CLXXXIII - O Thou the Possessor of my soul! - CXIV - O Thou Who art my Companion – CXX - my Highest Hope – CLXXVI - O God, my Desire! – CLXXXIII - the Goal of my desire! – CLXXXVI - Be Thou, O my Lord, my sole Desire, my Goal, mine only Hope, my constant Aim, my Habitation and my Sanctuary. – CVII 	<p>355</p> <p>85</p>
O God, my Master		
God, my adored One		
God, my Highest Hope		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thou Who art the Object of my heart's adoration, and the Source and Center of my soul!" – CXI - the Beloved of my soul – CLXXVI - I am poor, O my Lord, and Thou art the Rich - CXXVIII - Let the object of mine ardent quest be Thy most resplendent, Thine adorable, and ever-blessed Beauty –CVII - the Adored of the hearts of them that have recognized Thee – CLXXVI 	
the Compassionate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Compassionate - LXXXIV, CXI, XXXI - the Most Compassionate - III, XXXII, XXXVIII, XLII, L, LXXXVII, C, CX, CXVI, CLXXX - Thou art, in truth the Most Compassionate – XVI, CLXXX 	
the Merciful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - O Thou Who art merciful unto me, - CLXV - the God of Merc – XLVI - the All-Merciful – LXXIX - the Most Merciful - II, III, XIX , XXXI, XXXI, XLIV, XLVII, LIII, LXVI, CLXXIX, CLXXXII - Thou art, verily, the Most Merciful, - LXVI, LXXXVII, CXLI, CLXVIII - O Thou Who art the God of mercy – CXIV - Thou art He, Who hath called Himself the God of Mercy- LXXXVII - the fragrance of the breaths of Thy mercy – CVIII - Thy mercy that hath surpassed the entire creation - XLII, CXLIII - Thy mercy hath embraced the whole creation – CLIII 	
the Generous The Most Generous the Munificent (most generous) the Great Giver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Most Generous – X, XLIV, XLIX, LIII ,LXXIV, LXXXI, XCIV, CLXVII, CLXXIV - by the ocean of Thy generosity – CLIII - clinging to the cord of Thy generosity – CLXXIV - the Most Generous. - CLXVI - O my God, Whose grace is infinite - XLI - (grace that emanates from His ever-flowing Generosity) - the Munificent - CXI LXXXIV, CV, CXVIII - Thou, truly, art the Great Giver - XLI, CXXXIX - the Great Giver – II, XLI, XLIV, LXXV, LXXXI 	

The One Who we can always trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In Thee have I, at all times, placed my whole trust and confidence – XCII - I beseech Thee by Thy Chosen Ones, and by the Bearers of Thy Trust – XXV - left my home trusting wholly in Thee, and committing myself to Thy care. – CLXXV - Cause me, then, to turn wholly unto Thee, to put my whole trust in Thee, - CLXII 	
God is always ready to answer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who hearest and art ready to answer. - CLIV 	
The God of care and protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This, Thy servant, seeketh to sleep in the shelter of Thy mercy, and to repose beneath the canopy of Thy grace, imploring Thy care and Thy protection. - CLXXI 	
God is the quickener of our hearts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - O my Quickener, - CLXV - Give them, then, to drink what will quicken their hearts in Thy days - CXLIX 	
Our Joy is...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thine incorruptible Essence bring me joy, CLV - joy is to behold the exaltation of Thy Cause and the glorification of Thy work – CXIV 	
<i>D - Benefits of the relationship with God</i>		
God exalts he who proclaims His cause	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exalt them, then, O my God, through the power of Thy might and the potency of Thy will, and raise them up to proclaim Thy Cause. - CLXXXIV 	
God is the recompense the believer will obtain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cast me not out of the door of Thy grace, I beseech Thee, and write down for me the recompense destined for him who hath entered Thy presence, and hath risen to serve Thee, and hath been carried away by the drops sprinkled upon him from the Ocean of Thy favors in Thy days, and by the splendors of the Day-Star of Thy gifts that have been shed upon him at the revelation of the light of Thy countenance. - CXXXV 	

<p>The One who enlightens the heart and dispels grief and banishes anguish and reveals the path to follow</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - enlighten our hearts with the effulgence of Thy knowledge, - CXXXIII - Dispel my grief by Thy bounty and Thy generosity, - CLIV - banish mine anguish through Thy sovereignty and Thy might.- CLIV - by the light of Thy glory reveal unto me Thy path - CLV 	
<p>God's Mercy rains upon all</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the overflowing showers of Whose mercy have rained down upon high and low alike - CLVII - V. This is the Day whereon the Ocean God's mercy hath been manifested unto men, the Day in which the Day Star of His loving-kindness hath shed its radiance upon them, the Day in which the clouds of His bountiful favor have overshadowed the whole of mankind. (Baha'u'llah, <i>Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah</i>, p. 7) 	
<p>God can deliver us from all</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - let the riches of Thine ancient countenance deliver me from all except Thee, O my Master, - CLV 	
<p>God can change all negative situations into positive ones</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thou art He Who changeth abasement into glory, and weakness into strength, and powerlessness into might, and fear into calm, and doubt into certainty. - CLVI 	
<p>God is capable of lifting one to his heaven</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Through the power of Thy transcendent might lift me up unto the heaven of Thy holiness, - CLV 	
<p><i>E -Our Response to Him</i></p>		80
<p>We praise God</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All praise be to Thee, O Lord, my God! - CXXVII - Unto Thee be praise, O Lord my God! – II, XLVIII - Praise be to Thee, O Lord my God! – VII, CLXXXIX - Praised be Thou, O my God! – XVIII - Praised be Thou, O Lord my God! – XIX - I give praise to Thee, O Lord my God! – XXXV - Praise be to Thee, O Lord, my God, my Master, my Possessor, my King – LVIII - Praise be unto Thee, Who art my God and the God of all men, - CLXXVI 	16

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We all, verily, give praise unto God. – CLXVIII - Praised be God, the Lord of all creation! – CI - Praised be God, the Lord of the worlds! - XXII - Thou art, in truth, beloved in Thy grace. - CLXIX 	
We Glorify God	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Glorified, immeasurably glorified art Thou! Thou art adored in Thy truth, and Thee do we all, verily, worship; CLXIX, - Glorified, immeasurably glorified art Thou, O my Beloved! – CLXXXIV - Exalted, immeasurably exalted art Thou, O my Beloved- CLXXXIV 	
We thank God	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We all, verily, yield thanks unto God. - CLXVII 	
We are devoted to God	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We all, verily, are devoted unto God. - CLXVII 	
We are patient in God	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We all, verily, are patient in God. - CLXVII 	
God's Will is our will	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I wish only what Thou wishest, and cherish only what Thou cherishes - CXIV - Make known this Thy station, O my God, unto Thy servants, that they may be made aware that the excellence of all things is dependent upon Thy bidding and Thy word, and the virtue of every act is conditioned by Thy leave and the good-pleasure of Thy will, and may recognize that the reins of men's doings are within the grasp of Thine acceptance and Thy commandment. - XLVI - in the observance of whatever Thou hast prescribed in Thy Tablets I have not delayed to do Thy bidding. - XC 	
Requesting God's Will for oneself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - that my movement and my stillness may be wholly directed by Thee – CL - Here am I with my body between Thy hands, and my spirit before Thy face. Do with them as it may please Thee,- CLI - Do Thou ordain for me through Thy most exalted Pen, O my Lord, the good of this world and of the next. – CLVI - Ordain Thou for me, O my God, the good of this world and the world to come, - CLXIII - Do Thou ordain for me, O my Lord, what will profit me in every world of Thy worlds – CXXXVI 	

<p>Request to be rid of all attachment except God and His Will</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to grant that I may, at all times and under all conditions, lay hold on Thy cord, and be rid of all attachment to anyone except Thee, and may keep mine eyes directed towards the horizon of Thy Revelation, and may carry out what Thou hast prescribed unto me in Thy Tablets. –CXXXVII - I entreat Thee to enable me to rid myself of all attachment to anyone but Thee, and to serve Thy Cause, and to wish what Thou didst wish through the power of Thy sovereignty, and to perform what is the good pleasure of Thy will. - CXXXVIII - Send down, then, upon us, O my Lord, what will enable us to dispense with anyone but Thee, and will rid us of all attachment to aught except Thyself. – CXLIV, CXLIV 	
<p>We bear witness to His Cause as His Will</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - that I may reveal Thy Cause and glorify Thy word. - CXLI - O my God! Thou knowest that in my love for Thee I have not sought any rest, that in proclaiming Thy Cause I have denied myself every manner of tranquility. - XC - Thine is the authority to command whatsoever Thou willest. I bear witness that Thou art to be praised in Thy doings, and to be obeyed in Thy behests, and to remain unconstrained in Thy bidding. - CLXXXIII 	
<p>Reward when doing God's bidding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thou art He Who changeth through His bidding abasement into glory, and weakness into strength, and powerlessness into might, and fear into calm, and doubt into certainty. - CLVI 	
<p>The desire of each one is to be with God</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - beneath the shadow of Thine everlasting providence let me abide, O my Light! – CLXV, - I yield thee such thanks as can assist the hearts of Thine ardent lovers to soar into the atmosphere of nearness to Thee – CLXXXIV - O Thou Whose face is the object of my adoration, Whose beauty is my sanctuary, Whose habitation is my goal, Whose praise is my hope, Whose providence is my companion, Whose love is the cause of my being, Whose mention is my solace, Whose nearness is my desire, Whose presence is my dearest wish and highest aspiration, - CLXVI 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - O my Lord! Make Thy beauty to be my food, and Thy presence my drink, and Thy pleasure my hope, and praise of Thee my action, and remembrance of Thee my companion, and the power of Thy sovereignty my succorer, and Thy habitation my home, - CLXVIII - O Thou Who art the Exultation of the hearts that pant after Thee! - CLXXXVI - attire them in the robes of Thine eternity and Thy glory, and lead the poor unto the shores of Thy holiness and all sufficient riches. – CLXXXIV - From the sweet-scented streams of Thine eternity give me to drink, - CLXV - into the heights of the paradise of Thy reality let me gain admission, O my Adored One! – CLXV - the right hand of the throne of Thy mercy, seat me, O my Desire! – CLXV - upon the seat of Thy glory establish me, O Thou Who art my Possessor! – CLXV 	
<p>Separation from God is suffering</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I am sore afflicted by the grief of my separation from Thee, - CL - Suffer me, O my God, to draw nigh unto Thee, and to abide within the precincts of Thy court, for remoteness from Thee hath well-nigh consumed me. - XXVI - Thou well knowest, O my God, my Best-Beloved, that naught can quench the thirst I suffer in my separation from Thee except the waters of Thy presence, and that the tumult of my heart can never be stilled save through the living fountain of my reunion with Thee. - XLI - Suffer me not, I implore Thee, to be kept back from the ocean of Thy tender mercies, nor to be far removed from the shores of nearness to Thee. - XLII - O my Lord, every good thing Thou didst send down in Thy Book, and suffer me not to be far removed from the shelter of Thy mercy. - LIII 	

<p>Suffering in name of God</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I suffer in my love for Thee, and the object of the assaults launched against me in Thy path. - LXVI - O Thou...Who hearest the voice of the lamentation of those who are wholly devoted to Thy Self! - LXXXI - that Thou hast suffered me to be cast into prison for love of Thee, and caused me to quaff the cup of woe,- CXXI - As to me, however, I quaff continually in the path of God the cup of His decree, and wish not that the ruling of His will should cease to operate, or that the woes I suffer for the sake of my Lord, the Most Exalted, the All-Glorious, should be ended. - VIII - Thou beholdest, therefore, the exile which I suffer in Thy days, and art aware of my vehement longing to look upon Thy face. - XVIII - Thou knowest full well, O my God, that there is no one on Thine earth who can claim to be related to Thee except these, some of whom have suffered martyrdom for Thy sake, while the rest have been permitted to survive.- CI 	
<p>Our most ardent desire is that God will grant us the grace of being steadfast in His love</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to grant that I may, at all times, be wholly dissolved in Thee, and fix my gaze upon the horizon of Thy will and be steadfast in Thy love. - CXXXV - I entreat Thee to enable me to cleave steadfastly to Thy Love and Thy remembrance. – III - Again I thank Thee for having empowered me to be steadfast in Thy love, and to speak forth Thy praise and to extol Thy virtues - LXVII - I have laid hold, O my Lord, on the handle of Thy bounty, and clung steadfastly to the hem of the robe of Thy favor. - XXXVII - Thou seest me then, O my God, with my face turned towards Thee, cleaving steadfastly to the cord of Thy gracious providence and generosity, and clinging to the hem of Thy tender mercies and bountiful favors - LVI 	

Bahá'u'lláh Praying for us to be steadfast

- Lauded be Thy name, O my God! Aid Thou by Thy strengthening grace Thy servants and Thy handmaidens to recount Thy virtues and to be steadfast in their love towards Thee. – LIV
- Cause us, then, to be so steadfast in our love towards Thee that we will turn to none except Thee. – XXXI
- Do Thou ordain, moreover, for everyone who hath turned towards Thee what will make him steadfast in Thy Cause, - XLVII
- Keep safe, therefore, Thy loved ones from their mischief, and enable them to cling steadfastly to whatsoever hath been manifested by Thee in this Revelation, which no other Revelation within Thy knowledge hath excelled. – XXXIII
- Enable us, then, to cleave steadfastly to Thy love and Thy good-pleasure, and preserve us from the mischief of such as have denied Thee and repudiated Thy most resplendent signs.

