

The Kitáb-i-Íqán (The Book of Certitude)

Revolutionizing the Concepts of Religion, Eschatology and Theology

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Abstract

The Kitáb-i-Íqán (The Book of Certitude), which was designated by Bahá'u'lláh as the Lord of Books that had been revealed by the Most Exalted Pen and called by 'Abdu'l-Bahá the fountainhead of the water of eternal life,¹ is unique in the history of religions and holy scriptures. This book is not only the key for opening the mysteries of the past Holy Scriptures, but it revolutionizes the concepts of Religion, Eschatology and Theology, by resolving and removing Eschatological barriers and establishing the fundamentals of a Universal Religion and a Universal Theology, that integrates and harmonizes the contending religious ideologies.

Study of The Kitáb-i-Íqán was recommended by Bahá'u'lláh, He said, blessed is the one who had reviewed it and witnessed to its testimony and had studied and pondered its contents², and by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who stated "*O thou who art seeking after the knowledge of God! Immerse thyself in the ocean of the explanation of the Beauty of the Merciful, so that thou mayest gather from its depths the pearls of the wisdom of God.*"³ And by Shoghi Effendi,

who stated “The Íqán is the most important book written on the spiritual significance of the Cause. I do not believe any person can consider himself well versed in the teachings unless he has studied it thoroughly” [LDG1 37].

The Scriptural Significance of The Kitáb-i-Íqán

Bahá'u'lláh in His last major Writing, the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, states:

Briefly, there hath been revealed in the Kitáb-i-Íqán (Book of Certitude) concerning the Presence and Revelation of God that which will suffice the fair-minded. [ESW 118]

In the Kitáb-i-Íqán, He states:

All the Scriptures and the mysteries thereof are condensed into this brief account. So much so that were a person to ponder it a while in his heart, he would discover from all that hath been said the mysteries of the Words of God, and would apprehend the meaning of whatever hath been manifested by that ideal King. [KI 237]

In the introduction to the first English translation of the Kitáb-i-Íqán in 1904, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote:

O Thou who are athirst for the water of life this manifest book is the fountainhead of the water of eternal life. Drink so much as thou art able from the fountain of the living water. O thou who art seeking after the knowledge of God! Immerse thyself in the ocean of the explanation of the Beauty of the Merciful, so that thou mayest gather from its depths the pearls of the wisdom of God. [The Book of Assurance, Front page]

The place of The Kitáb-i-Íqán in the Bahá'í Literature

Shoghi Effendi in describing the place, the significance, the style and a summary of the themes of The Kitáb-i-Íqán in *God Passes By* states:

Foremost among the priceless treasures cast forth from the billowing ocean of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation ranks the Kitáb-i-Íqán (Book of Certitude), revealed in the space of two days and two nights . . . it was written in fulfillment of the prophecy of the Báb, Who had specifically stated that the Promised One would complete the text of the unfinished Persian Bayán⁴. . . [T]his Book, setting forth the Grand Redemptive scheme of God, occupies a position unequalled by any work in the entire range of Bahá'í literature, except the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, Bahá'u'lláh's Most Holy Book. . . Revealed on the eve of the declaration of His Mission, it proffered to mankind the 'Choice Sealed Wine whose seal is of musk,'⁵ and broke the 'seals' of the 'Book' referred to by Daniel.⁶ [GPB 138]

The Style of The Kitáb-i-Íqán

Bahá'u'lláh's writings are characterized by different forms and styles, each suitable for the content and purpose of its revelation. If a Tablet or treatise was addressed to a particular person or a special cultural group, cultural particularities and language of that person or group were taken in consideration.

In this respect Bahá'u'lláh states:

At one time We spoke in the language of the lawgiver; at another in that of the truth-seeker and the mystic, and yet Our supreme purpose and highest wish hath always been to disclose the glory and sublimity of this station. [ESW 15]

We know that:

- The Kitáb-i-Aqdas is Revealed in the language of the lawgiver,

- The Kitáb-i-Íqán is Revealed in the language of the truth-seeker,
- The Seven Valleys is Revealed in the language of the mystic.

Regarding the style of The Kitáb-i-Íqán, Shoghi Effendi States:

A model of Persian prose, of a style at once original, chaste and vigorous, and remarkably lucid, both cogent in argument and matchless in irresistible eloquence.

Historical Background of its Revelation

The Kitáb-i-Íqán was revealed in Baghdád, the capital of Iraq, which was a part of the Ottoman Empire in late 1861 or early 1862, approximately one year before Bahá'u'lláh's public declaration in the Garden of Riḍván. It is assumed that the Kitáb-i-Íqán fulfilled the dual purpose of proving the truth of the Báb's claim and also of preparing the ground for Bahá'u'lláh's own public declaration. The book was revealed in response to questions asked by one of the Báb's uncles when he visited Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdád.

His Holiness the Báb had three maternal uncles. His second uncle, Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí, also known as Khál-i-A'zam (the Greatest Uncle), who was the uncle who raised him after the passing of his father, was the only one of His uncles to have embraced His Cause at the time of His Martyrdom. Aware of the special qualities that the Báb possessed since earliest childhood, Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí was the first to embrace the Cause of the Báb in Shíráz after the Letters of the Living and was himself martyred shortly before the Blessed Báb as one of the Seven Martyrs of Tíhrán.⁷

The Báb's eldest uncle, Hájí Mírzá Siyyid Muḥammad, had great respect for his Nephew's integrity and spirituality. He wrote a letter to the Báb's mother after the Báb visited him upon returning from pilgrimage, and attested to the following:

His eminence Jináb-i-Hájí⁸ has safely arrived and I am pleased to spend my time in His presence. . . . Truly, His bountiful soul is the source of felicity for the people of this world, and the next. He brings honor to us all . . .⁹

Yet, despite His admiration for the Báb, Ḥájí Mírzá Siyyid Muḥammad did not recognize the station of the Báb for many years. He was heartbroken when his brother was martyred and did not understand the reason why he did not accept the intercession of the influential merchants who were trying so hard to save his life.

Although he was a devoted and practicing Muslim, and their family was known for their piety and charity, after they were identified with the Cause of the Báb and his brother was killed for following and supporting the Báb, the whole family experienced hardship and he and his youngest brother were subject to discriminatory treatment by their business associates and other merchants. For several years he did not want to discuss this subject with anyone. However, once when engaged in a series of discussions with Áqá Mírzá Núru'd-Dín,¹⁰ a close relative of the Báb, Ḥájí Mírzá Siyyid Muḥammad was forced to reconsider his position. During the discussion, Ḥájí Mírzá Siyyid Muḥammad intimated that he could simply not believe that His own Nephew was the promised one of Islam. In reply, Áqá Mírzá Núru'd-Dín compared Ḥájí Mírzá Siyyid Muḥammad to Abú'l-La'hab,¹¹ the uncle of Muḥammad. Ḥájí Mírzá Siyyid Muḥammad was understandably shaken by the comparison and asked Áqá Mírzá Núru'd-Dín what he should do to convince himself of the validity of the Báb's claim. Áqá Mírzá Núru'd-Dín suggested that he go on pilgrimage to Iraq and while there, visit his sister, the mother of the Báb, who had been living there since the martyrdom of her Son, and then go to Baghdád in order to attain the presence of Bahá'u'lláh and ask his questions of Him.

Inspired by this encounter, Ḥájí Mírzá Siyyid Muḥammad, who lived in Shíráz, wrote to his youngest brother, Ḥájí Mírzá Ḥasan-'Alí, who lived in Yazd, and asked him to accompany him on pilgrimage. He agreed to join him. It was not until they reached Baghdád that Ḥájí Mírzá Siyyid Muḥammad revealed to his brother the real purpose of the visit. The younger brother became angry, and although younger in age, he spoke harshly to him and said he did not want to hear about the Faith and left.

Mírzá Áqá Ján¹² described the events that followed in a Tablet addressed to Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Majíd-i-Shírází.¹³ According to the Tablet, Ḥájí Siyyid Javá'd-i-Karbilá'í¹⁴ went to Bahá'u'lláh and informed Him that the Báb's two uncles were in Baghdád. Bahá'u'lláh

instructed him to bring them to His presence. The next day, Hájí Siyyid Javád, arrived with Hájí Mírzá Siyyid Muḥammad.

While in Bahá'u'lláh's presence, the Báb's eldest uncle was overwhelmed by His utterances and in the end beseeched Bahá'u'lláh to help him to see the truth of the Báb's Message, bearing in mind that certain Islamic traditions¹⁵ were not, in his view, fulfilled by his Nephew.¹⁶ Bahá'u'lláh readily consented to help him and bade him to return with a list of the questions which puzzled him. The Báb's uncle then returned with four categories of questions all dealing with the coming of the Qá'im.¹⁷ The questions have been preserved in the papers of the Afnán family.¹⁸

The questions he asked were the following:¹⁹

- *The Day of Resurrection:*²⁰ Is there to be a corporeal resurrection? The world is utterly filled with injustice.²¹ How are the just to be requited and the unjust punished?"
- *The Twelfth Imám was born at a certain time and lives on.*²² There are traditions all supporting this belief. How can this be explained?"
- *Interpretation of the Holy Texts.*²³ This Cause does not seem to conform to the beliefs held throughout the years. One cannot ignore the literal meaning of the Holy Texts and Scriptures. How can this be explained?"
- *Certain events, according to the traditions that have come down from the Imáms, must occur before the advent of the Qá'im.*²⁴ Some of these are mentioned. But none of these has happened. How can this be explained?"

In answer to these questions, Bahá'u'lláh, within the span of two days and two nights, revealed what is known today as the *Kitáb-i-Íqán*²⁵ but was in the early days referred to as *Risáliy-i-Khál* ("Epistle to the Uncle"). The original copy/manuscript of the Book was written in the hand of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who was eighteen years of age at that time. A few corrections and the following paragraph near the end of the book were written by Bahá'u'lláh Himself:

Amidst them all, We stand, life in hand, wholly resigned to His will; That perchance through God's loving kindness and

His grace, this revealed and manifest Letter may lay down His life as a sacrifice in the path of the Primal Point,²⁶ the most exalted Word. By Him at Whose bidding the Spirit hath spoken, but for this yearning of Our soul, We would not, for one moment have tarried any longer in this city. “Sufficient Witness is God unto Us.” [KI ¶279]

In this book, Bahá'u'lláh addresses the issues and expectations common among the believers of all religions that become obstacles and veils that prevent them from recognizing the promised one of their religion (the new Manifestation of God), whom they await and for whose advent they pray. Bahá'u'lláh does not validate the Shí'ah stories regarding the birth of the Twelfth Imám and the occultation stories about him by discussing the particulars of those tales.

The Kitáb-i-Íqán dispelled every doubt that Hájí Mírzá Siyyid Muḥammad had harbored. He became a devout believer, and at the end of his life he acknowledged his belief in the twin Manifestations of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh in his will and testament. The remainder of the Báb's family, as was prophesied by the Báb Himself, including his youngest uncle, Hájí Mírzá Siyyid Ḥasan-'Alí, eventually embraced the Faith.²⁷

The original manuscript of the Kitáb-i-Íqán was presented to Shoghi Effendi in 1948 by Fátimih-Khánúm-i-Afnán, the great-granddaughter of Hájí Mírzá Siyyid Muḥammad. It was placed in the International Archives Building²⁸ at Bahá'í World Center on Mount Carmel in Haifa, Israel.

Publication and Translation of The Kitáb-i-Íqán

The Kitáb-i-Íqán was revealed by Bahá'u'lláh in Persian (Fársi). It was first published in Persian in Bombay, India in the early 1880s and was again published among a group of the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh in 1890.²⁹ It was first translated into English by 'Alí-Kuli Khán, Nabilu'd-Dawlih, assisted by Howard MacNutt, and published under the title *The Book of Assurance* in New York by George V. Blackburn, Co., in 1904. It was later retranslated into English by Shoghi Effendi as *The Kitáb-i-Íqán: The Book of Certitude* and first

published in 1931 by The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States of America.

The following letter, written by Shoghi Effendi to the National Assembly through his secretary, refers to this translation:

As the *Íqán* is the most important book wherein Bahá'u'lláh explains the basic beliefs of the faith, he thought a proper rendering of it would infinitely enhance the teaching work in the West. He hopes that this new rendering will be an improvement on the previous one, but he fully admits that it is far from perfect, far from the original itself. Shoghi Effendi has given the proper transliteration of the Eastern terms and wants you to abide by them, keeping every dash, point, accent or inverted comma. To help you in this, he has also on a separate sheet written these in their proper form. He wishes you further not to include the introduction that exists in the last edition, for he does not think it worthwhile and enlightening. Drop also the glossary that exists at the end of the last edition and form a glossary using the definitions that he has sent to be put in the forthcoming Bahá'í World. As Shoghi Effendi has been emphasizing the need of submitting all publications to the Reviewing Committee, he wants to be the first to abide by that rule, though he hopes that they will not make unnecessary delay. In Germany they have translated the *'Íqán* from the last translation and they are waiting for Shoghi Effendi's rendering to make the necessary alterations and publish their own. The proceeds of the sale of the book Shoghi Effendi wishes to go to the American National Assembly in an unlabeled form. This is a gift of his own personal labors that he wishes to present that body and he wishes it to be considered as a token of appreciation for the help they have rendered him in carrying on his arduous task.

(Signed) RUHI AFNAN.

Unable to find a good typist, I have had to do the work myself, and I trust that the proofreaders will find it easy to go over and will not mind the type errors which I have tried

to correct. I would especially urge you to adhere to the transliteration which I have adopted. The correct title is, I feel, ‘The Kitáb-i-Íqán,’ the sub-title ‘The Book of Certitude.’ May it help the friends to approach a step further, and obtain a clearer idea of the fundamental teachings set forth by Bahá’u’lláh.

(Signed) SHOGHI.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Extracts from the USBN*)

The English translation is divided into two parts:

- Part 1 contains explanations of the symbolic and figurative language of the sacred books and proof of all previous Manifestations
- Part 2 contains proofs of the Báb’s mission and foundation of the Bahá’í theology.

A second edition of “The Kitáb-i-Íqán: The Book of Certitude” with an introduction and index was published in 1950. The book has been subsequently printed more than fifteen times.

The Major Themes of The Kitáb-i-Íqán

Shoghi Effendi in *God Passes By* listed the major themes of the Kitáb-i-Íqán:

- Proclaims unequivocally the existence of a personal God, unknowable, inaccessible, the source of all Revelation, eternal, omniscient, omnipresent and almighty;
- Asserts the relativity of religious truth and the continuity of Divine Revelation;
- Affirms the unity of the Prophets, the universality of their Message, the identity of their fundamental teachings, the sanctity of their scriptures, and the twofold character of their stations;
- Denounces the blindness and the perversity of the divines and the doctors of religions in every age;

- Cites and elucidates the allegorical passages of the New-Testament, the abstruse verses of the Qur'án, and the cryptic Muḥammadan traditions which have bred those age-long misunderstandings, doubts and animosities that have sundered and kept apart the followers of the world's leading religious systems;”
- Enumerates the essential prerequisites for the attainment by every true seeker of the object of his quest;”
- Demonstrates the validity, sublimity and significance of the Báb's Revelation;
- Acclaims the heroism and detachment of His disciples;”
- Foreshadows, and prophesies the world-wide triumph of the Revelation promised to the people of the Bayán.”

The Unprecedented Concepts in the Kitáb-i-Íqán

Many of the concepts presented in The Kitáb-i-Íqán are unprecedented in the sacred scriptures of past religions. Some of the concepts that have been mentioned in the religious literature, have been given new definitions and meanings by Bahá'u'lláh.

Bahá'u'lláh states:

Through the movement of Our Pen of glory We have, at the bidding of the omnipotent Ordainer, breathed a new life into every human frame, and instilled into every word a fresh potency. [GWB 92]

The following are some of the unprecedented concepts in The Kitáb-i-Íqán:

- Revelation of the universal religion
- Presentation of the universal Manifestation of God
- Redefining the eschatology and the eschaton.
- Foundation of the Bahá'í theology
- Redefining the concept of Divine Unity

- Revealing and expounding the mysteries of all Scriptures
- Attainment unto the Divine Presence
- The Essential infallibility of the Manifestations of God
- Confirming the ability of the Manifestations of God to perform miracles and allowing people to ask for one.

Revolutionizing the Concept of Religion

Although the Bahá'í writings indicate that the divine religions are universal, this fact is not explicitly and clearly stated in the Holy Scriptures and understood by the followers of the past religions. Some statements in the past scriptures are indicative of the limited mission of the past Manifestations and the limited scope of their religion:

Some of the statements in the Old Testament indicate that the main mission of Moses was to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt and lead them to the land of milk and honey and establishing the laws was incidental to this process.

[God said to Moses] Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt. [Exodus 3:9-10]

Some of Jesus' statements in the Gospels indicate that He considered Himself as the promised Messiah of Israel and the inclusion of the Gentiles in His Faith was a post Jesus development.

These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. [Matthew 10:5]

He [Jesus] answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. [Matthew 15: 24]

Although there are many verses in the Qur'án that address all humanity, there was an argument in the early Islamic era that Islam had come primarily for Arabs and for Mecca and its surroundings, which was based on verses such as this, God said to Muḥammad:

It is thus moreover that we have revealed to thee an Arabic Koran, that thou mayest warn the mother city [Mecca] and all around it, and that thou mayest warn them of that day of the Gathering, of which there is no doubt – when part shall be in Paradise and part in the flame. [*Qur'an* (Rodwell tr.), Sura Counsel, 42:5]

Revelation of the universal Religion

In The Kitáb-i-Íqán Bahá'u'lláh clearly explained the concepts of universal religion and universality of religion. Revelation of God is for all humanity. There is only one religion, the universal religion of God, eternal in the past and eternal in the future, It integrates and harmonizes all the contending religions of the past as the successive stages of a progressive Revelation.

The purpose of the universal Religion is:

- To establish unity,
- To Spiritualize,
- To educate and
- Transform the individual and society

In these cities [the Revelation and the holy Books of religions] spiritual sustenance is bountifully provided, and incorruptible delights have been ordained. The food they bestow is the bread of heaven, and the Spirit they impart is God's imperishable blessing. Upon detached souls they bestow the gift of Unity, enrich the destitute, and offer the cup of knowledge unto them who wander in the wilderness of ignorance. [KI ¶219]

Is not the object of every Revelation to effect a transformation in the whole character of mankind, a

transformation that shall manifest itself both outwardly and inwardly, that shall affect both its inner life and external conditions? For if the character of mankind be not changed, the futility of God's universal Manifestations would be apparent. (KI ¶270)

Revolutionizing the concept of eschatology

Redefining the Eschaton and the Eschatology: Eschaton is historically defined as: The End of the Time or Age. Eschatology is historically defined as: Doctrines or set of beliefs related to the end of the time, end of the world, Resurrection, Life and death and judgment.

The concept of Eschaton (the end of the time, the age or the world) is presented in all the past religions. However, in the Judeo-Christo-Islamic Eschatological traditions the Eschaton is also connected to the appearance of their promised ones. The signs and prophecies related to the return or coming of the promised one in symbolic and allegorical language were considered as literal events that should precede or accompany his appearance.

The Old Testament contains the signs and prophecies related to the manifestation of their promised Messiah: (1) descent of Elijah in his corporal body from heaven prior to the appearance of Messiah, and (2) the signs and prophecies in the Books of Joel and Malachi, such as:

And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the LORD come. [Joel 2:28-32]

For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven. [Malachi 4:1]

Christian Eschatology is more complicated. In addition to all signs and occurrences mentioned in Jewish Eschatology, there are uncertainties regarding the chronological aspects of the Second Advent and the commencement of the millennium. The eschatological statements in the Gospels predicated four types of Eschatology

(realized, near, far and indefinite) and two types of millennialism (pre and post).

In the Islamic eschatology, although similar to the Judeo-Christian eschatology, the imagery is more expanded and the sequence of events is related with more detail. According to Islamic traditions, at the time of the end, the heavens will be cleft asunder, the sun shall be folded up, the stars shall fall, and the mountains shall be set in motion.

After the appearance of Mahdi (promised one of Islam) and Jesus, Isráfíl, one of the four exalted archangels, sounds the trumpet on the Day of Judgment. In so doing he resurrects the dead to be judged. All will pass a bridge called Şerát that spans the expanse of Hell and connects the plane of judgment to the Heavens (Paradise). The virtuous will pass over the bridge and enter the Paradise, while the sinners fall into the Hell.

In The Kitáb-i-Íqán Bahá'u'lláh explains the mysteries of the eschatological statements of the sacred scriptures of the past religions:

- When is the Eschaton, the end of the time.
- What is the heaven that is cleft asunder.
- What are the Sun and the Moon that will not give light.
- What are the stars that will fall from heaven

In The Kitáb-i-Íqán Bahá'u'lláh explains:

- What is the resurrection and the sound of trumpet.
- Who are the dead that will come to life.
- What is the Rapture
- What is the Judgment and the Şerát.
- What is the Heaven and what is the Hell.

Revolutionizing the concept of Theology

In The Kitáb-i-Íqán, Bahá'u'lláh:

- Establishes the foundation of the Universal (Bahá'í) Theology
- Presented the concept of the Universal Manifestation of God
- Redefined the Concepts of Divine Unity and
- Attainment unto the Divine Presence
- Presented the absolute transcendence of God, inaccessible to and exalted above the comprehension of all created things, even the Manifestations of God.
- Demonstrated that Recognition of the Manifestation of God is the ultimate goal of knowledge and spiritual quest, and that,
- The Manifestation of God is the Godhead in the human world and the world of creation.
- The Manifestation of God must be recognized by His own self.
- The unity of the essence of all Manifestations of God, which are the appearances of the Primal Will in the world at different times and under different names.
- The relativity of the stations of firstness and lastness of all Manifestations of God.

Other unprecedented concepts in The Kitáb-i-Íqán

- The continuity and progressive process of Divine revelation and the relativity of the religious truth.
- Revealing and expounding the mysteries of all Scriptures.
- Essential Infallibility of the Manifestations of God
- The ability of the Manifestations of God to perform miracles and allowing only one.
- The proper method and attitude of a seeker in the spiritual quest for truth.

- Bahá'u'lláh's allusions to His own divine station.

It seems that the essential objective of The Kitáb-i-Íqán is to provide guidance and initiate the process of cleansing, purifying, and preparing the soul of man to be able to receive and recognize the Word of God and enter to the presence of the Universal Manifestation of God in the City of His Revelation (The Universal Religion of God), thus achieving the object of the Bahá'í Revelation, i.e. to effect a fundamental transformation in the individual and social character of mankind.

Study of The Kitáb-i-Íqán

Study of The Kitáb-i-Íqán was recommended by Bahá'u'lláh, He said, blessed is the one who had reviewed it and witnessed to its testimony and had studied and pondered its contents, and by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who stated "*O thou who art seeking after the knowledge of God! Immerse thyself in the ocean of the explanation of the Beauty of the Merciful, so that thou mayest gather from its depths the pearls of the wisdom of God.*"³⁰

The study of the Kitáb-i-Íqán can take place on several levels. On one level a person can read the Book and benefit greatly without referring to any other books or materials. However, regarding the Kitáb-i-Íqán, Bahá'u'lláh in the same Book states:

All the Scriptures and the mysteries thereof are condensed into this brief account. So much so that were a person to ponder it a while in his heart, he would discover from all that hath been said the mysteries of the Words of God, and would apprehend the meaning of whatever hath been manifested by that ideal King. [K1 ¶266]

This servant will now share with thee a dewdrop out of the fathomless ocean of the truths treasured in these holy words, that haply discerning hearts may comprehend all the allusions and the implications of the utterances of the Manifestations of Holiness, so that the overpowering majesty of the Word of God may not prevent them from attaining unto the ocean of His names and attributes, nor deprive them of recognizing

the Lamp of God which is the seat of the revelation of His glorified Essence. [K1 ¶27]

Considering the fact that in the course of exposition and interpretation of the theological and religious concepts, Bahá'u'lláh employs many theological, philosophical, and religious terms, and makes reference to other sacred scriptures as well as historical events, and in light of Shoghi Effendi's statements regarding the importance of The Kitáb-i-Íqán, "The Íqán is the most important book written on the spiritual significance of the Cause. I do not believe any person can consider himself well versed in the teachings unless he has studied it thoroughly,"³¹ and "The book is so important that the most minute detail is worthy of consideration,"³² study of the Kitáb-i-Íqán at deeper levels becomes imperative.

NOTES

¹ Paraphrase of Bahá'u'lláh's statement in Persian, in "Má'idih-yi-Asmani," Vol. 7, p. 157.

² Paraphrase of Bahá'u'lláh's statement in Persian, in "Má'idih-yi-Asmani," Vol. 7, p. 157.

³ 'Abdu'l-Bahá's statement on the face page of the first English translation of The Kitáb-i-Íqán in 1904, under the title: "The Book of Assurance."

⁴ The mother Book of the Báb's dispensation was called the Bayán. There are two Bayáns: one in Persian and the other in Arabic. The Persian Bayán was to have nineteen váhids (parts or units), each having nineteen chapters. However, it was only completed to the tenth chapter of the ninth váhid by the Báb. Regarding this Book Shoghi Effendi states:

Within the walls of that same fortress [Máh-Kú] the Bayán (Exposition) – that monumental repository of the laws and precepts of the new Dispensation and the treasury enshrining most of the Báb's references and tributes to, as well as His warning regarding, "Him Whom God will make manifest" – was revealed. Peerless among the doctrinal works of the Founder of the Bábí Dispensation; consisting of nine váhids (Unities) of nineteen chapters each, except the last váhid comprising only ten chapters; not to be confounded with the smaller and less weighty Arabic Bayán, revealed during the same period. [GPB 24]

The Báb prophesized that the Bayán would be completed by the Promised One. The Kitáb-i-Íqán serves as fulfillment of this prophecy and is considered to be the completion of the váhids of the Persian Bayán:

It was written in fulfillment of the prophecy of the Báb, Who had specifically stated that the Promised One [The one whom God will make manifest] would complete the text of the unfinished Persian Bayán. . . [GPB 138]

⁵ This is a reference to Qur'án's description of the Day of Judgment in which the righteous will be given the Choice Sealed Wine whose seal is of musk.

Verily, the righteous shall be in pleasure; upon couches shall they gaze; thou mayest recognise in their faces the brightness of pleasure; they shall be given to drink wine that is sealed, whose seal is musk; for that then let the aspirants aspire! (The Qur'an (E.H. Palmer tr), Sura 83 – Those Who Give Short Weight)

Surely, among delights shall the righteous dwell! Seated on bridal couches they will gaze around; Thou shalt mark in their faces the brightness of delight; Choice sealed wine shall be given them to quaff. (Qur'án, Rodwell tr. 83:29)

⁶ Daniel was one of the leaders of the Jewish group in the Babylonian diaspora. Although he is not considered a Prophet such as Isaiah or Elijah by Jewish priesthood, his book is a part of the Old Testament. The book of Daniel contains many prophecies regarding the advents of the future Manifestations of God. Most of the prophecies in Chapters 8 and 12 of his book were subject of extensive analysis by the Biblical scholars. Some of the prophecies were considered to have been fulfilled at the instance of the First Advent (Manifestation of Jesus Christ). Other prophecies of the book of Daniel formed the basis for the William Miller's predictions regarding the time of the Second Advent (return of the Jesus Christ) and as stated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá (in SAQ) those prophecies were fulfilled by Manifestations of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. The sealing of the Books is referring to the statements in Chapter 12 (the last chapter of Daniel's prophetic dream of the future):

12:4 But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end.

12:8 And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, 'Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end'. (King James Bible, Book of Daniel)

Some Bahá'í scholars assert, as stated by Shoghi Effendi in *God Passes By*, that the revelation of the Kitáb-i-Íqán serves as fulfillment of this

prophecy. As the followers of the past religions did not understand the symbolic and figurative language of their sacred books, these books were sealed and closed to them, by explaining the meanings of the symbolic and figurative language and revealing the secrets and mysteries enshrined in these books in the Kitáb-i-Íqán, which was revealed at the dawn of His revelation (time of the end), Bahá'u'lláh removed the seals from the books and opened the meaning of their words.

⁷ Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí, surnamed Khál-i-A'zam (Literally, “The Greatest Uncle”), the Báb’s maternal uncle, and one of the leading merchants of Shíráz. It was this same uncle into whose custody the Báb, after the death of His father, was entrusted, and who, on his Nephew’s return from His pilgrimage to Hijáz and His arrest by Husayn Khán, assumed undivided responsibility for Him by pledging his word in writing. It was he who surrounded Him, while under his care, with unflinching solicitude, who served Him with such devotion, and who acted as intermediary between Him and the hosts of His followers who flocked to Shíráz to see Him. His only child, a Siyyid Javád, died in infancy. Towards the middle of the year 1265 A.H. (1848-9 A.D.), this same Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí left Shíráz and visited the Báb in the castle of Chihríq. From thence he went to Tihrán and, though having no special occupation, remained in that city until the outbreak of the sedition which brought about eventually his martyrdom.

Though his friends appealed to him to escape the turmoil that was fast approaching, he refused to heed their counsel and faced, until his last hour, with complete resignation, the persecution to which he was subjected. A considerable number among the more affluent merchants of his acquaintance offered to pay his ransom, an offer which he rejected. Finally he was brought before the Amír-Nizám. “The Chief Magistrate of this realm,” the Grand Vazír informed him, “is loth to inflict the slightest injury upon the Prophet’s descendants. Eminent merchants of Shíráz and Tihrán are willing, nay eager, to pay your ransom. The Maliku't-Tujjār has even interceded in your behalf. A word of recantation from you is sufficient to set you free and ensure your return, with honours, to your native city. I pledge my word that, should you be willing to acquiesce, the remaining days of your life will be spent with honour and dignity under the sheltering shadow of your sovereign.” “Your Excellency,” boldly replied Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí, “if others before me, who quaffed joyously the cup of martyrdom, have chosen to reject an appeal such as the one you now make to me, know of a certainty that I am no less eager to decline such a request. My repudiation of the truths enshrined in this Revelation would be tantamount to a rejection of all the Revelations that have preceded it. To refuse to acknowledge the Mission of the Siyyid-i-Báb would be to apostatise from the Faith of my forefathers and to deny the Divine character of the Message which Muḥammad, Jesus, Moses, and

all the Prophets of the past have revealed. God knows that whatever I have heard and read concerning the sayings and doings of those Messengers, I have been privileged to witness the same from this Youth, this beloved Kinsman of mine, from His earliest boyhood to this, the thirtieth year of His life. Everything in Him reminds me of His illustrious Ancestor and of the imáms of His Faith whose lives our recorded traditions have portrayed. I only request of you that you allow me to be the first to lay down my life in the path of my beloved Kinsman.”

The Amír was stupefied by such an answer. In a frenzy of despair, and without uttering a word, he motioned that he be taken out and beheaded. As the victim was being conducted to his death, he was heard, several times, to repeat these words of Ḥáfiz: “Great is my gratitude to Thee, O my God, for having granted so bountifully all I have asked of Thee.” “Hear me, O people,” he cried to the multitude that pressed around him; “I have offered myself up as a willing sacrifice in the path of the Cause of God. The entire province of Fárs, as well as ‘Iráq, beyond the confines of Persia, will readily testify to my uprightness of conduct, to my sincere piety and noble lineage. For over a thousand years, you have prayed and prayed again that the promised Qá’im be made manifest. At the mention of His name, how often have you cried, from the depths of your hearts: ‘Hasten, O God, His coming; remove every barrier that stands in the way of His appearance!’ And now that He is come, you have driven Him to a hopeless exile in a remote and sequestered corner of Ádhirbáyján and have risen to exterminate His companions. Were I to invoke the malediction of God upon you, I am certain that His avenging wrath would grievously afflict you. Such is not, however, my prayer. With my last breath, I pray that the Almighty may wipe away the stain of your guilt and enable you to awaken from the sleep of heedlessness.”*

*“He took off his turban, and, raising his face towards heaven, exclaimed, ‘O God, Thou art witness of how they are slaying the son of Thy most honourable Prophet without fault on his part.’ Then he turned to the executioner and recited this verse: ‘How long shall grief of separation from Him slay me? Cut off my head that Love may bestow on me a head.’” (*Mathnaví*, Book 6, p. 649, 1, 2; ed. ‘Alá’u’d-Dawlih.) (TN Note B, p. 174.)

These words stirred his executioner to his very depths. Pretending that the sword he had been holding in readiness in his hands required to be resharpened, he hastily went away, determined never to return again. “When I was appointed to this service,” he was heard to complain, weeping bitterly the while, “they undertook to deliver into my hands only those who had been convicted of murder and highway robbery. I am now ordered by them to shed the blood of one no less holy than the Imám Músáy-i-Kázim himself!” (The Seventh Imám). Shortly after, he departed

for Khurasán and there sought to earn his livelihood as a porter and crier. To the believers of that province, he recounted the tale of that tragedy, and expressed his repentance of the act which he had been compelled to perpetrate. Every time he recalled that incident, every time the name of Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí was mentioned to him, tears which he could not repress flowed from his eyes, tears that were a witness to the affection which that holy man had instilled into his heart." [DB ch. 21, p. 446]

- ⁸ Hájí is the title of a person who has completed the rite of pilgrimage to Mecca (called Háj). This pilgrimage is enjoined on all Muslims who are able to undertake it. Jináb is a courtesy title (His Honor).
- ⁹ Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, Vol. I, p. 153.
- ¹⁰ Áqá Mírzá Áqá-i-Afnán (Núru'd-Dín), "His mother was a sister of Khadíjih Bigum, the wife of the Báb, Áqá Mírzá Áqá was born two years before the Báb's Declaration. In a Tablet to His wife revealed in the prison of Máh-Kú, the Báb assures her that when Áqá Mírzá Áqá reaches the age of maturity, he will be her helper and protector. These prophetic words of the Báb were fulfilled, for Áqá Mírzá Áqá dedicated his life to the service of his beloved aunt whom he revered and served with unbounded devotion. Khadíjih Bigum lovingly taught him the Faith and at the age of thirteen Áqá Mírzá Áqá recognized the truth of the Mission of the Báb. . . . From the early days Áqá Mírzá Áqá became the recipient of many favours and bounties from Bahá'u'lláh. . . . Soon after His Declaration near Baghdád, Bahá'u'lláh sent Nabíl-i-A'zam to Persia to announce the momentous news to the Bábís. Nabíl went to the home of Áqá Mírzá Áqá and announced the joyful tidings to the believers in Shíráz. Áqá Mírzá Áqá immediately gave his allegiance to Bahá'u'lláh and considered himself a humble servant at His threshold. (Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, Vol. 4, p. 328)
- ¹¹ Abú-La'hab, (the name means the "father of flame") was one of the uncles of Muḥammad who refused to acknowledge the prophethood of Muḥammad and was one of his staunchest opponents. The Súrah of Al-La'hab, the Súrah (Chapter) 111 of the Qur'án is in reference to him.
- ¹² Mírzá Áqá Ján, the amanuensis of Bahá'u'lláh for forty years. [GPB 115]
- ¹³ Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Majíd-i-Shírází was one of the early believers (see *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, Vol. I, p. 154).
- ¹⁴ Hájí Siyyid Javád-i-Karbilá'í was one of the prominent believers at the time of Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdad (see *Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh* vol. 1 p. 155).
- ¹⁵ Islamic Traditions: The religion of Islam is supported by two pillars, one is the Qur'án and the other is Sunnah, the words and deeds (living example) of the Prophet Muḥammad, which were heard or observed by His close followers and were recorded for posterity. Customarily, the word

Tradition (Ḥadīth) is used in reference to the words or sayings of the Prophet (the verbal part of Sunnah). The followers of the Shí'ah sect of Islam hold that the words and deeds of the Imáms (the descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad through His daughter Fátimih) form a corpus that is complementary to the Prophetic Sunnah and Traditions. There are a number of Traditions attributed to some of the Imáms that contain prophecies regarding the person and appearance of the Qá'im which were interpreted literarily by the Shí'ah clergy.

¹⁶ The followers of many religions are expecting some special events to take place that signify the time of the end, coinciding with the coming or return of their promised one. The most common events and signs are:

First: The rolling up of the heavens.

Second: The sun will be darkened.

Third: The moon shall not give her light.

Fourth: The stars shall fall from heaven.

Fifth: The dead shall arise from their tombs.

Sixth: Ferocious animals will make peace with grazing animals.

Seventh: They will share the same pasture and food.

(from *The Brilliant Proof*, pp. 31-32)

¹⁷ Qá'im (one of the stations claimed by the Báb), the word means "He who ariseth" or "the one that is standing." It is the title of the promised one of Islam whose advent coincides with the Day of Resurrection. Bahá'u'lláh states "When the Qá'im ariseth, that day is the Day of resurrection." [KI ¶152]

¹⁸ Afnán (Literally means "twigs") are the family of the Báb (cousins, uncles etc.) who became believers. They chose Afnán as their family name (an allusion to the Báb being the main trunk of the tree, and they being the twigs).

¹⁹ Quoted from H. M. Balyuzi, *Bahá'u'lláh, The King of Glory*. Oxford: George Ronald, 1980. pp. 164-65.

²⁰ The Islamic concept of the Day of Resurrection is very similar to this concept in Judaism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism. In general they believe that the advent of the promised one of Islam, the Mahdí (literally meaning the Guided One for Sunnis) or Qá'im (literally meaning the Standing One or the Rising One for the Shí'ahs) is coincidental with the Day of Resurrection. In that day all the dead will rise from their graves in their physical bodies and will be present in the plane of resurrection. They will all be judged by the weight of their good deeds. All have to pass over a bridge (called Şerat) that spans Hell and connects the plane of judgment to Heaven (Paradise). This bridge is narrower than a hair, sharper than a

blade, and longer than any conceivable measure. The people of the right (those whose good deeds outweigh their bad deeds), will have no trouble passing over the bridge. The more righteous a person the faster he/she passes over the bridge. Those whose bad deeds are heavier will fall from the bridge into Hell. The majority of Muslims believe in corporeal resurrection and physical Heaven and Hell.

- ²¹ The Muslims believe that their promised one (Mahdí or Qá'im) will come with worldly power and authority, will establish justice and punish the unjust (Justice and equity will fill the world, in the same manner that injustice and inequity has filled it up). They believe that he will establish the ascendancy of Islam and Muslims over all other religions and people and will kill the nonbelievers (in Shí'ah belief, even the non-Shí'ah Muslims).
- ²² The followers of the Shí'ah sect of Islam believe that an authentic and reliable Tradition from the Prophet Muḥammad states: "I leave two things of value amidst you in trust which if you hold on to, you will never go astray: the Qur'án and the members of my household. These will never be separated until the Day of Judgment." They believe that the "members of my household" means Imám 'Alí Ibn-i-Abí Táleb (the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet) and 'Alí's male descendants (those who were accepted by the Shí'ahs as Imáms, the inspired religious leaders, (their number differs, i.e., four or six or eleven according to different sects)). The main sect of Shí'ah Islam (who accept twelve Imáms, 'Alí and eleven of his descendants) accept the authority of those whom they call the "Fourteen Sinless or Inerrant," – the Prophet Muḥammad, Imám 'Alí, his wife Fátimih, the daughter of the Prophet, and their accepted male descendants or Imáms. The "Twelfth Imám" is believed to be the promised one of Islam, also called Qá'im (the one that is standing) and Mahdí (the guided one). The Shí'ah believe that he is the son of the Eleventh Imám, Ḥasan al-'Askarí, who was known not to have a son. There are several stories about the identity of his mother and his miraculous birth. Some stories hold that his mother was a slave girl named Rayḥáneḥ or Şaḳíl or a Byzantine slave-girl who was bought by the Tenth Imám, 'Alí al-Hadí, for his son the Eleventh Imám, Ḥasan al-'Askarí. In some versions of story, the girl was a princess, the daughter of a Byzantine Emperor, who was informed in a vision that she would be the mother of the Mahdí. The Twelfth Imám is believed to have been born in 255 AH/868 AD (or in some stories five years later, close to the date of the death of the Eleventh Imám on 260 AH/ 873 AD) in Sámarrá, in Iraq. He was given the same name as the Prophet, Abu'l-Qásim Muḥammad. The miraculous and extraordinary story of his birth originated from an unknown woman who was a relative of the Eleventh Imám. She said that she visited the Eleventh Imám's house one day and did not see any signs of pregnancy in the Imám's wife, but

when she was leaving in the afternoon, the Imám asked her to stay because his wife was going to give birth to his son. That night the Imám's wife gave birth to a boy, who at the moment of birth prostrated and prayed by reciting a few Qur'anic verses. This lady related that when she went back to the Imám's house for another visit a few weeks later, she saw a five- or six-year-old boy playing in the yard. She asked the boy who he was and the boy told her that he was the child that was born few weeks ago and when she expressed surprise, the boy said that we (Imáms) grow at an extraordinary rate. (For more details see Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, pp. 160-61)

“The usual miraculous accounts of his talking from the womb, etc . . . may be passed over to the only occasion on which he is said to have made a public appearance. This was in 260/874 when the Eleventh Imam died, it appears that none of the Shi'ih notables knew of the birth of Muḥammad [the “Twelfth Imam”] and so they went to the Eleventh Imam's brother, Ja'far, assuming that he was now the Imam, Ja'far seemed prepared to take on this mantel and entered the house of the deceased Imam in order to lead the funeral prayers. At this juncture a young boy came forward and said: ‘Uncle, stand back! For it is more fitting for me to lead the prayers for my father than for you.’ After the funeral, Ja'far was asked about the boy and said that he did not know who the boy was. For this reason, Ja'far has been vilified by generations of Shi'is as *Kadhhab*, the liar. The boy was seen no more and Shi'is tradition states that from that year he went into occultation. At Sámarrá, beside the gold-domed Shrine of the Imáms 'Alí al-Hadí and Ḥasan al-'Askarí is a mosque under which there is a cave. The end of one of the rooms of the cave is partitioned off by a gate which is called Báb al-Ghayba (Gate of the Occultation) and was built on the instructions of the Caliph an-Náṣir in 606/1209. The area behind the gate is called Ḥujrat al-Ghayba (Chamber of the Occultation) and in the corner of this is a well, the Bi'r al-Ghayba (Well of the Occultation) down which the Imam Mahdí is said to have disappeared. Shi'is gather in the rooms of the cave and pray for his return.” (Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, p. 161)

Shi'ahs believe that the Twelfth Imám, who was born in 255 AH/868 AD, is still alive and continues to be in occultation. He is believed to be residing in two invisible cities called Jábulsá and Jábulqáá, and will appear at the end of the time prior to the day of resurrection, in which time he will kill all the nonbelievers and establish the rule of Shi'ah Islam over the world. In the mind of a Shi'ah, the Báb Who was born in Shiráz in 1819 could not be the Qá'im who was born almost one thousand years earlier and was to come out of occultation.

- ²³ There are many references in the Shí'ah holy traditions regarding signs and events that appear before or at the time of the advent of the Qá'im. Among them are the rising of the sun from the west and the appearance of a star the size of the moon from the east. Several of the enemies of the Shí'ahs who died many centuries ago will return to fight against him, among them is Dajjál (the one-eyed disciple of Satan), and many other signs and event. The Qá'im will kill so many of his enemies with his sword that their blood will flow like a river that reaches the knees of his horse. He is expected to promote Islam and establish the rule of the Qur'án. Contrary to these expectations, the Báb established a new religion and revealed a new Holy Book.
- ²⁴ The Shí'ahs believed that the "Twelfth Imám, did not die but has been concealed by God from the eyes of men. His life has been miraculously prolonged until the day when he will manifest himself again by God's permission. . . . he is still in control of the affairs of men and is the Lord of The Age (*Sáhibaz-Zamán*). . . . The Hidden Imám was popularly believed to be resident in the far-off cities of Jábulsá and Jábulqá and in former times books were written about persons who had succeeded in traveling to these places. Less has been made of this particular tradition in recent times when modern geographical knowledge permeated the Shí'ah masses and it became generally realized that no such places existed."

The Hidden Imam, the Imam Mahdí, is in occultation awaiting the time that God has decreed for his return. This return is envisaged as occurring shortly before the final Day of Judgment. The Hidden Imam will then return as the Mahdí with a company of his chosen ones and there will also return his enemies led by one-eyed Dajjál and the Sufyání. The Imam Mahdí will lead the forces of righteousness against the forces of evil in one final apocalyptic battle in which the enemies of the Imam will be defeated. (Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, pp. 165-66)

- ²⁵ Some scholars think that for a book of this size (almost 200 pages in Persian) to be revealed and transcribed within the span of two days and two nights, the same procedure used in the later instances of revelation, in which Bahá'u'lláh chanted or spoke the revealed words and His amanuensis copied the revelation in the form of the "revelation writings" (*khaṭṭ-i-tanzíl* خط تنزیل), might have been adopted. The text was subsequently transcribed from the revelation writings. For additional information see (Symbol & Secret, Qur'an Commentary in Bahá'u'lláh's Kitáb-i-Íqán, p. 8) and for a sample of the "revelation writings" see (Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, Vol. 1, p. 110.)
- ²⁶ The "Primal Point", from which have been generated all created things, is one of the titles of the Báb. He is also called His Holiness the Exalted One.

- ²⁷ The above description of the circumstances surrounding the revelation of the Kitáb-i-Íqán is partially based on the historical accounts presented by Adib Taherzadeh in *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, Vol. I, pp. 152-163.
- ²⁸ An account of this presentation can be found in *Shoghi Effendi: Recollections* by Ugo Giachery on p. 149.
- ²⁹ H. M. Balyuzi, *Bahá'u'lláh: The King of Glory*, p. 165, and Shoghi Effendi, letter dated February 9, 1930, *Unfolding Destiny*, p. 424.
- ³⁰ See above Footnotes 1, 2 and 3.
- ³¹ See Footnote No. 3 above.
- ³² Quoted in the book *George Townshend*, p. 73.