



of progressive Revelation from God.

"Kitáb-i-íqán"

is Persian for The Book of Certitude. As the title implies, this book is the creative Word of God: it takes the Logos to confer upon the soul of man a positive knowledge of things divine. By his unaided effort a man cannot become spiritual. Conversion changes the soul's misgivings into assurance through rebirth. For the soul this is a higher station — or residence in "The City of Absolute Certitude." Whoever dwells there has discovered that faith is not merely the mind's consent to take on wider beliefs, nor even to a radical change of doctrine: faith is an endowment from the Higher Kingdom and changes all beliefs into an aliveness in the spirit. The quickening of the soul renews the atoms of the body to the very marrow of the bone. "It bestoweth wealth without gold, and conferreth immortality without death." Thus transformed, the soul is thereafter and eternally established in the Kingdom of God. Around it there is an inimitable fragrance of attraction. Its advancement leads on through valleys of growth as it unfolds hidden virtues and exercises powers. The capacity for response to sorrows and joys, humility and exaltation has been heightened

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greatly. At given stages the awakened soul may be dominated by the Word as knowledge, at others by the Word as love. Although these qualities are bestowed upon every believer, the individuality of each soul is sustained throughout all stages of illumination and nearness. Nonetheless, the soul born again through the Word is forever beyond the unfaith that assails an uncommitted majority of mankind. No lesser station can reward the deathless quest for certainty within the soul of man. At mid-century the outcry is compelling. Inexorable conflicts long held in check have become spiritual crises. To be sure, there are multitudes which have not joined in searching for the meaning of existence. Among them are men and women madly in pursuit of happiness, but they betray the excitement of running away from themselves rather than towards the goal. And even if worldlings do find surcease in the enjoyment of the earth as their all in all, — fulfillment is something else. Inescapably, the years of maturity precipitate an inner crisis, which adolescence cannot know anything about. Let the pagans tell us if they are finding alegria — joy of the world — nowadays? For there is almost no serenity. The attainment of serenity in certain epochs of the past is more than a legendary golden age. Illustrious pages of history yet may be rewritten

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as a rhythm of seeking and finding the lost certainties. There have been centuries in which the most highly differentiated personalities

were men of faith. Largemindedness embraced both the science and religion of the period and reconciled the facts of nature with the truths of religion. In so gentle a climate for the soul, artists thrived and painted wondrous pictures reflecting the joy of the world in the Madonna and Child in company with the saints.

Amid the imposing cultures, the mutuality of the love of God was the underlying bond between important individuals and the masses which held to religion with unquestioning faith. In every unified society, the learned as well as the unlearned were assimilated under the only demonstrable yoke of any civilization — the religious law. The classes then had more serenity under a code of restraint than modern personalities are displaying without one.

In the springtime and lingering summer of the brilliant seasons — for Israel, Christendom, or in Islám's halcyon days — religion pervaded the atmosphere and engaged the temperaments or talents of all types of men. The common denominator and most persistent feature of distinctive cultures has been the sense of dependence upon God — the Mover of all things. The certainty of a Higher Dominion over the world quieted the restlessness

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of man's instinctive nature as society struggled for a more human condition throughout the making and unmaking of states.

By concern with the Will of God as well as the daily exigencies, the common man's life was conditioned to purpose and took on some meaning. He had submitted to a divine Plan and thereby was bound to others under it. Indeed, he was related to the whole world — or that small part he knew of it.

By faith a whole people or union of peoples entered into a stage of peace, or at least an awareness in harmony with the time in which they were living. Rulers and artists, warriors, landlords and serfs worked within the frame of limitations, but they all rested in the certainty of the promised Kingdom of Heaven.

Were not they — our ancestors — the same breed of men? Cannot modern men and women be cured of hypertension and begin through the Word once again to find the lost certainty? Through faith will come serenity and maturity.

The Íqán claims that the renewal principle at work from age to age lies within the offices of the Holy Spirit. The Word is the Bearer of the Spirit that restores and redeems the soul. Man is dwarfed whenever he is deprived of its bestowals. And yet deprived man will be — if the clergy stands between the seeker and the divine light.

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Therefore, in the first paragraph of The Íqán,

Bahá'u'lláh

proclaims that certainty can never be regained until man renounces his dependence upon self-appointed leaders — learned or ignorant — and turns for

divine guidance only to the Messengers sent by God. The Prophets are Themselves the standard for man's knowledge of God: all religious truth has its root in Their Revelation. Theirs is the Voice proclaiming God's challenge: to Them alone man shall make his response. With this mighty theme and the explanation it deserves the succeeding pages of The Íqán are inscribed.

This Book verifies the respective stations and missions of the Founders of religion. With none of the Prophets does the Author find fault: to Them He gives praise, and affirms the oneness of Their primary Teachings. Abraham, Moses, Christ, Muhammad, — and, in this Day, the Báb, — are the Names of the Revealers of divine Law. Unto Them God entrusted the moral education of the race. With Them is centered the Covenant made in heaven for man's redemption.

Their Succession is a cosmic drama, which unfolds the architectural design of the universe. Their Messages tell progressively the pattern of society, its supernatural government, true history and destiny. They released the collective Spirit which recurrently animated the daily lives of men. They proclaimed the laws out of which came the

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ties of fraternity, marriage, family, and the larger community which is civilization. And Theirs is the luminous Message of the Kingdom of God eventually to rule the earth through the Coming of a World Redeemer.

The Íqán proves the Báb's

two-fold station as the Forerunner of the World Redeemer, besides, His rank in the Succession out of Abraham's lineage. In answer to a twentieth century poet's demand, "Where is that Prophet crying within my heart?", the Báb is the eternal — Here am I! For what the Báb

says is that same utterance which brings to pass mediation between Heaven and earth. He is "The Gate" to "The City

of Absolute Certitude." In His appearance the Prophet comes again to earth as "a flamelike Youth" — speaks — then dies a sacrifice under the relentless magic worked together by bad kings and priests.

Admittedly the drama is traditional and its concatenation of events both touching and fearful. But for modern men, the Episode of the Báb is far more compelling because its enactment takes place at the beginning of their own age. (1844-1850)

Implicit in The Íqán is

the station of Bahá'u'lláh. His Coming is inherent

in the destiny of mankind. By right of the Spirit, Bahá'u'lláh

is the World Redeemer: its Effulgence through His Revelation is able to bestow the sense of certainty on the entire human race.

The barriers of prejudice and tribal consciousness are dissolved by the waters of life flowing through His majestic verses. All the outmoded limitations based upon ancestral patterns, pride in race, militant nationhood, hereditary warfare, religious sectarianism or something else are ended by divine decree. The world of mankind in the sight of its maker stands revealed in the reality of oneness. Only the separateness of the human time-sense resists fulfilment of the Kingdom of Heaven in the world of actuality.

And, therefore, Bahá'u'lláh is summoning all mankind to arise as an entity, gladly adopting His universal Principles and building the worldwide Commonwealth. Through the collaboration of nations, the unseen hosts now brooding over the earth will inform the reign of divine law and peace. The qualifications foretold by Isaiah have been met: The Mighty Counsellor has taken "the government upon his shoulder." The superhuman ruler of the nascent civilization is a heavenly King: and yet to His followers in ninety-one countries, He is a Father, watching from Above over them one and all. Wisdom, majesty, love — such were among the qualities Bahá'u'lláh embodied while He lived on earth (1817-1892). From His native land of Írán He was banished by the judgment from authority vested in temporal and spiritual rulers. The Sultanate

and the Caliphate held Him as a Prisoner so that the old order might be preserved. But Bahá'u'lláh steadfastly proclaimed that the old order cannot be preserved. To external conditions that brought Him sorrow for forty years, He never capitulated because His Kingliness was divine.

Finally, Bahá'u'lláh was exiled in company with His disciples to the grim fortress at 'Akka, Syria. By this decision His enemies carried out in their blindness and ignominiousness, the fulfilment of an ancient prophecy: "Carmel and Sharon — they shall see the Glory of the Lord." At long last The Bible is no longer a sealed Book, — for Daniel closed it only until "the time of the end," when its ultimate meaning and mystery were to be disclosed by that Promised One for Whom it was written.

The Íqán is invincibly true because God does not make His Self-Revelation immanent within the creatures. The Oneness of God does not descend into the variety and multiplicity of His creation. The immemorial dogma of the Unknowableness of God's Essence is affirmed once again; moreover, as this is a mature age, The Íqán proclaims it with matchless clarity.

The place, form, nature, and relations imagined by man as categories of his Maker are beyond intellection: God

is — and yet is transcendent  
to the human mind and consequently exalted above all definitions.  
In the desert of contemporary bewilderment,

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there are many puzzled seekers after God. Some of them have a ferocity for their own deification. Such engaging and speculative minds are instances of sophisticated credulity: men and women take on the fads of the day. The popularity of "new thought" has been gaining by the crumbling of orthodoxy. Many of the liveliest minds have turned away from ancestral beliefs to the substitution of mentalism for religion. And even within what remains of orthodoxy's citadel, there are mystics who claim to be directly in communion with the Godhead. Notwithstanding, both schools of thought are quoting the Scriptures to prove their souls are not dependent upon an Intermediary

Power. By reciting chapter and verse of The Bible, it is made obvious to all save themselves how intimately dependent they are on its inspiration. Without the mediation of the Founders of religion, they would know nothing of their Maker nor of themselves. Should the cord of the revealed verses be severed man would have no spiritual consciousness at all.

Bahá'u'lláh's followers view

the mystic's path that lies beyond the Messenger as impassable, — and man's vain groping for it as an impertinence. Nor is a Bahá'í troubled by the inconceivability of God the Essence. For he is of "the people of adoration" — with dispassionate reasoning about Imponderableness the lovers have nothing to do.

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Allow rationalists to become metaphysical about God if they insist upon limiting their hearts to principles and categories of thought. Once again the people of faith are invulnerable to arguments: they have a Person. The believers belong to an all-knowing and all-loving Person. For them Bahá'u'lláh is that sovereign Personality because He is able to enform the soul's need for certainty and fulfilment. The Manifestation is the embodiment of the First Principle, which is the Effulgence of the Holy Spirit proceeding from the indivisible Essence of God. Clothed with a body, the divine Spirit is a Prophet, speaking the Eloquence of God in the midst of mortal men. The Manifestation is the Reflection of the Holy Spirit — the shining and moving Reality that can be known by all men. Nor is there anything anonymous about it. The Founders of religion are singled out among the nations: They can be named and Their stations differentiated in terms of Personality, time and rank; but in the essential unity of the divine Spirit the Many are become the One. Never can there be any Separatenesses from

the Oneness and Unity of God. Theology mistakenly brings Christ to earth as a Uniqueness or Incarnation of the Godhead. Rather it is the personal Qualities of God — the radiance of the godly Attributes and only the Attributes — which are immanent

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in the Manifestations past and present. Through the intermediary rays of the Holy Spirit, the divine and beloved Person — whenever He returns — makes

the soul of man remember his Maker. The divine Person by His love wins the soul's response to the love of God and His knowledge lends to the human soul a little knowledge of what is eternal. The Word of the divine Person is uniquely the Word of God — spoken from age to age — and

to it men must accommodate their lives.

Bahá'u'lláh pleads with Israel

as "the people of the Book" to become conscious of the meaning of its Words. "The time of the end," "Judgment," "Life," "Tomb," "Resurrection," "Return" and other Biblical accents are not merely symbols and great poetry. (Although they are also that.) The Íqán

proves the Scriptures are interwoven with prime symbols backed by reality: the key Words foretell the drama of redemption which recurs with every renewal of the Covenant made by God with Abraham. By intervention of the Prophet in human affairs, the unchangeable Attributes of God reenter history. For the relative truths and material laws are outmoded by the revolutions of time marking the progression from age to age.

The grand adjustment to the Spirit should have been made by Israel when Christ the Saviour appeared. For He abrogated the material law of

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Moses as the secondary truth, which is relative to the absolute truth of religion.

Israel is precious to Bahá'u'lláh

because of its kinship with the Prophets through Whom is our salvation.

Jewish history gives the plainest lesson on the rhythm of a Prophet's challenge and a people's response to the Light. The divine Truth-telling is forever the rally to greatness. Israel was rightly named "God's Champion" — the transmitter of monotheism and preserver from idolatry amid the nations. But when Israel turned away from the renewal principle to take up man-made goals, then between her people and the Light there fell the shadow. (After all, it is the earth's turning from the sun that brings on darkness — with the sun there is always light.)

The Bahá'ís are gladdened by

Israel's statehood and fulfilment of her traditional hope of homecoming.

But the ten thousand square miles of earth in which "a remnant" can live and build is less important than her recognition of Him by Whom

the victory is won. For the Jews there can be no homecoming more glorious than meeting with the Father of mankind and fraternity in the worldwide Community of the Most Great Name.

The World Faith and World Community founded by the World Redeemer, Bahá'u'lláh, is the magnificent finale of the homelessness of the Jews. Besides, it is the culmination of Israel's

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higher mission: the non-nationalistic ideal of world salvation that reached its apogee in Isaiah.

Nothing smaller than the redemption of all mankind would bring to a close the long Day of Atonement. Once in the calendar year, for a day lasting twenty-four hours, Jewish Temples hold commemoration of the past. There is the grandeur of the verses of repentance and praise and the haunting beauty of Israel's genius. The Rabbi lifts high the gleaming scrolls of the torah, whilst its little silver bells ring, and in a golden voice he implores in sonorous Hebrew — then

in English:

"Lift up your heads, O ye Gates!

And be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors,

That the King of Glory may come in.

Who is the King of Glory?

The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory!"

The plight of Christendom parallels Israel's tragedy.

As the Jewish people have been out of touch with the Prophetic guidance and bereft of mediation by Christ their Messiah, so has Christendom's denial of Muhammad cheated her of the direct bestowals of the Holy Spirit.

Wanting the renewal principle, the unity and wholeness of Christendom began to break away.

In His Day, Christ was the perfect Mediator.

Through Him the Kingdom of the Holy Ghost

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entered history. The alchemy of His Cause wrought the transmutation of souls: The unity of the Gospels called into existence the world Christian community of the Middle Ages. Its central Authority then had power to cut off kings who broke the peace. (Leaders of Christendom no longer have power to make binding pronouncements for peace, — or even family relations and other inevitable crises of daily life. For the Christian vitality spent itself many centuries ago.)

Enthralling pages of The Íqán

tell how the eyes of Christendom were blinded by Muhammad's Sun.

When the winter of the Dark Ages was ended by divine decree, the Sun of religion arose in Arabia. "No Prophet of God hath suffered

such harm as I have suffered," lamented Muhammad under the prevailing resistance to His Cause.

Even in this century of analytical thought,

Muhammad is judged under the standards of men, whereas He is — in the Succession of the Founders of religion — the Standard by which to measure all other things. For He was the Fountainhead of a brilliant civilization.

Ignorance of Muhammad is ignorance of the pattern of the theocratic state. The Qur'án reveals the civil and religious code

that integrated a higher nationhood. Islám was the far-reaching

culture that grew like a plant out of the seed of truth and unity. Importantly, Islám was an Empire, which aimed to rule over a vast

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geographical area under a constitution of laws set forth in a Book from God.

Travellers to the ancient cities of the East

have had intimations — if ever they were awakened at dawn by the mysterious and loving Call to Prayer — that Islám is an intensely beautiful religion.

It has a powerful Eros principle sublimated as the soul's approach unto

God. The Mu'adhhdhin is the heart-beat of a nation for a moment

becoming ecstatic in surrender to the divine Will. With the discrimination

cultivated by The Íqán, Westerners can now realize

how vital was Islám's part in the unity of religion.

The concept of finality is the cardinal weakness

of Islám. That was the stumbling-block of the Muslims to recognition

of the Báb. Hence, The Íqán proclaims

the infinitude of truth from God:

"Thou are surely aware of their idle contention, that

all Revelation is ended, that the portals of divine mercy are closed, that

from the day-springs of eternal holiness no sun shall rise again, that

the Ocean of everlasting bounty is forever stilled, and that out of the

Tabernacle of ancient glory the Messengers of God have ceased to be made manifest."

For Christendom a new orientation is imperative.

And it will be reached in the simple way: by turning to the light from

the horizon of this new day. (The efficacy of the Gospels cannot

be recaptured by exegesis, nor vitality by struggling for

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survival in the preaching of fragmentary truths. Renewal does not come out of changing forms of church organization.)

What about the "Second Coming"

in the Glory of the Father? The Íqán defines

"the clouds" in which the Father has come as the obscuring notions

or superstitions, which are interposed by Christians between their own

true vision and the rising Sun of Truth. For "the new earth"

of knowledge is already here in the accomplishments of science; and

"the stars" of ecclesiastical authority have fallen from the heaven of ancestral religion. (The hour is later than the Old Churches realize.)

The challenge of The Íqán

at this compelling hour is for man to recognize the Source of the Light.

The Glory of the Father (Bahá) is the Attribute most becoming to the Lord as He takes an empire over the wavering hearts. By "union with God" is not meant partnership, but, rather, becoming supremely conscious of Him. The wholeness of spiritual experience lies in response to Bahá'u'lláh. With the eyes of the spirit opened

by The Íqán, it can be seen that the dead have drawn

the breath of renewed life and been raised from "the tomb of self"

and separateness: abandoning the superstitions of the nations, the confident souls are moving in the stream of universality. And they are united in binding the invisible tie that yet shall

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link each soul with every other soul throughout the planet.

"In the soil of whose heart will these holy seeds germinate?"

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