

Firstly, a dictionary definition of certitude offers the following:

- a. To have certainty or confidence.
- b. Certainty is defined as: 'something established as inevitable; without doubt.'

Definition of certitude as interpreted from the Writings:

Those who wish to achieve certitude, would require engaging in the process of establishing certainty and truth about God and His Manifestations, thereby understanding and recognizing the Creator and His Messengers. Achieving this certitude, would also include the understanding of the station of the Prophets, and the truth of Their Mission.

In short, the achievement of certitude involves the search for truth, with the aim of understanding (knowing) and recognizing God and His Messengers, as well as understanding Their station and the truth of Their Mission as ordained by God, thereby eliminating any doubt from the mind and heart of the seeker.

The questions arising out of this definition are:

- i. How do we know and recognize God
 - ii. What is the station of the Manifestations?
 - iii. What is the mission of the Messengers?
- i. How do we know and recognize God?

The way in which we learn to know God is by His signs and attributes. The acquisition of the knowledge of God can be likened to our knowledge of the sun, which we understand and know of through exposure to the rays and heat thereof. The reality of the sun and its composition is not known to us. Likewise, we cannot understand God, except through His Manifestations, Who can be likened unto the rays of the sun. They manifest the attributes and reality of God. In knowing and recognizing the Manifestations, we know and recognize God. The following extracts, are offered in support of this statement:

But the question may be asked: How shall we know God? We know Him by His attributes. We know Him by His signs. We know Him by His names. We know not what the reality of the sun is, but we know the sun by the ray, by the heat, by its efficacy and penetration. We recognize the sun by its bounty and effulgence, but as to what constitutes the reality of the solar energy, that is unknowable to us.

(`Abdu'l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace*, Page: 422)

Day and night you must strive that you may attain to the

significances of
the heavenly Kingdom, perceive the signs of Divinity, acquire certainty of
knowledge and realize that this world has a Creator, a Vivifier, a
Provider, an Architect - knowing this through proofs and evidences and not
through susceptibilities, nay, rather, through decisive arguments and real
vision - that is to say, visualizing it as clearly as the outer eye
beholds
the sun. In this way may you behold the presence of God and attain to the
knowledge of the holy, divine Manifestations.

You must come into the knowledge of the divine
Manifestations and

Their teachings through proofs and evidences. You must unseal the
mysteries of the supreme Kingdom and become capable of discovering the
inner realities of things. Then shall you be the manifestations of the
mercy of God and true believers, firm and steadfast in the Cause of
God.

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace*,
Pages: 227-228)

ii. What is the station of the Manifestations?

The Manifestations of God have a dual station. In one respect, They can be
thought of as one spiritual realty, as one soul, sent to us from God, all
with the same mission of proclaiming His faith and acknowledging His
unity.

The other station is that of distinction. This distinction refers to
Their

individuality, whereby Each is known by a different name, has a definite
mission and is the Bearer of a specific Revelation. The divine words of
Bahá'u'lláh expresses more eloquently the station of the
Manifestations:

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.

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.

The other station is the station of distinction, and pertaineth to the world of creation, and to 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, fulfils a definite mission, and is entrusted with a particular Revelation.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, Pages: 50-52)

The beauty of their countenance is but a reflection of His image, and their revelation a sign of His deathless glory. They are the Treasuries of divine knowledge, and the Repositories of celestial wisdom. Through them is transmitted a grace that is infinite, and by them is revealed the light that can never fade. Even as He hath said: "There is no distinction whatsoever between Thee and them; except that they are Thy servants, and are created of Thee." This is the significance of the tradition: "I am He, Himself, and He is I, myself."

(Bahá'u'lláh: The Kitab-i-Iqan, Page: 100)

iii. What is the mission of the Messengers?

To know God is to have knowledge of the Messengers which He sends to mankind. These "luminous souls" act as intermediaries between the Creator and humanity. They work within the process of educating mankind, but Each comes at a different time, with a specific message, suited to the needs of the people of that given time. They all promote the religion of God. The following Writings convey more adequately the significance of the role of the Manifestations:

Now we need an educator who will be at the same time a material, human and spiritual educator, and whose authority will be effective in all conditions.

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, Page: 8)

One Holy Soul gives life to the world of humanity, changes the aspect of the terrestrial globe, causes intelligence to progress, vivifies souls, lays the basis of a new life, establishes new foundations, organizes the world, brings nations and religions under the shadow of one standard, delivers man from the world of imperfections and vices, and inspires him

with the desire and need of natural and acquired perfections. Certainly nothing short of a divine power could accomplish so great a work. We ought to consider this with justice, for this is the office of justice.

(ʿAbdu'l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, Pages: 9-10)

The holy Manifestations Who have been the Sources or Founders of the various religious systems were united and agreed in purpose and teaching. Abraham, Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, the Bab and Bahá'u'lláh are one in spirit and reality. Moreover, each Prophet fulfilled the promise of the One Who came before Him and, likewise, Each announced the One Who would follow.

(ʿAbdu'l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace*, Pages: 197-198)

These sanctified Mirrors, these Day-springs of ancient glory are one and all the Exponents on earth of Him Who is the central Orb of the universe, its Essence and ultimate Purpose

(Bahá'u'lláh: The Kitab-i-Iqan, Pages: 99-100)

Through the Teachings of this Day Star of Truth every man will advance and develop until he attaineth the station at which he can manifest all the potential forces with which his inmost true self hath been endowed. It is for this very purpose that in every age and dispensation the Prophets of God and His chosen Ones have appeared amongst men, and have evinced such power as is born of God and such might as only the Eternal can reveal.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, Pages: 67-68)

Having established, to some degree an understanding of the word certitude, or, the implications, as pertains to individual perception and endeavor, the following question is examined:

2. What is the process whereby certitude is achieved?

To gain certitude or certainty about any given subject, a fundamental emphasis is placed on seeking out truth. The search for truth encompasses the vital process of acquiring knowledge (divine). The acquisition of knowledge, in turn, is a process whereby the individual cannot depend on the word or beliefs of others. Rather, this gathering of information and knowledge needs to be undertaken by the individual, independently of others. With this belief in mind, the principle of 'Independent investigation of truth', cannot be overlooked. Bahá'u'lláh teaches us to investigate reality. To determine what reality is, one cannot depend on or

search out the hearsay statements of others, as it is not possible to ascertain whether these statements are grounded within the realms of reality. In support of the above, the following Hidden Word, as well as a statement by Abdu'l-Bahá are offered:

O SON OF SPIRIT! The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice;

turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee. By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbor. Ponder this in thy heart; how it behooveth thee to be. Verily justice is My gift to thee and the sign of My loving-kindness. Set it then before thine eyes.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Arabic Hidden Words, Page: 2)

The first teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is the duty incumbent upon all to investigate reality. What does it mean to investigate reality? It means that man must forget all hearsay and examine truth himself, for he does not know whether statements he hears are in accordance with reality or not. Wherever he finds truth or reality, he must hold to it, forsaking, discarding all else; for outside of reality there is naught but superstition and imagination. Reality or truth is one, yet there are many religious beliefs, denominations, creeds and differing opinions in the world today. Why should these differences exist? Because they do not investigate and examine the fundamental unity, which is one and unchangeable. If they seek reality itself, they will agree and be united; for reality is indivisible and not multiple. It is evident, therefore, that there is nothing of greater importance to mankind than the investigation of truth.

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace*, Pages: 62-63)

The Investigation of truth, therefore, pertains to the search of knowing and understanding the reality of God and the Manifestations. What, then, are the requirements in this search process?

Bahá'u'lláh, in the Kitab-i-Iqan (pages 192-197), describes the conditions which qualifies a seeker who is in search of truth:

- a. The seeker must cleanse and purify his heart of all acquired knowledge
- b. At all times, he must put his trust in God, and detach himself from this mortal world
- c. He must not exalt himself above others

- d. Be patient and resigned to the will of God
- e. He should not engage in idle talk, and observe silence (i.e. avoid backbiting)
- f. Be content with little
- g. He should commune with God at the start of every day
- h. Show kindness
- i. Forgive the sinful, and pray for remission of their sins
- j. He should not hesitate to give up his life for his Beloved
- k. Persevere, with all his heart, in the quest of his Beloved

The sincere and pure-hearted seeker pursues a path of acquiring knowledge (divine), so as to unravel the mysteries of the reality of God. We are encouraged to acquire knowledge and become educated in this mortal world, however, it is not this path of intellectual learning that leads us to God.

The path of divine knowledge is the one the seeker travels along so as to attain closer access to God, which is the ultimate purpose for our being created. Attaining the Presence of God is possible only through knowing and understanding the Manifestations. The following words of Bahá'u'lláh are offered as a means of reflection:

We have decreed, O people, that the highest and last end of all learning be the recognition of Him Who is the Object of all knowledge; and yet, behold how ye have allowed your learning to shut you out, as by a veil, from Him Who is the Day Spring of this Light, through Whom every hidden thing hath been revealed. Could ye but discover the source whence the splendor of this utterance is diffused, ye would cast away the peoples of the world and all that they possess, and would draw nigh unto this most blessed Seat of glory.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, Page: 199)

In all the Divine Books the promise of the Divine Presence hath been explicitly recorded. By this Presence is meant the Presence of Him Who is the Dayspring of the signs, and the Dawning-Place of the clear tokens, and the Manifestation of the Excellent Names, and the Source of the attributes, of the true God, exalted be His glory. God in His Essence and in His own Self hath ever been unseen, inaccessible, and unknowable. By Presence, therefore, is meant the Presence of the One Who is His Viceregent amongst men. He, moreover, hath never had, nor hath He, any peer or likeness. For

were He to have any peer or likeness, how could it then be demonstrated that His being is exalted above, and His essence sanctified from, all comparison and likeness? Briefly, there hath been revealed in the Kitab-i-Iqan (Book of Certitude) concerning the Presence and Revelation of God that which will suffice the fair-minded. We beseech Him - exalted be He

- to aid every one to become the essence of truthfulness, and to draw nigh unto Him. He, verily, is the Lord of strength and power. No God is there but Him, the All-Hearing, the Lord of Utterance, the Almighty, the All-Praised.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, Pages: 118-119)

Bahá'u'lláh also affirms that, in the spiritual realm, there is an "essential unity" between all the Manifestations of God. They all reveal the "Beauty of God", manifest His names and attributes, and give utterance to His Revelation. In this regard, He states:

Were any of the all-embracing Manifestations of God to declare: "I am God", He, verily, speaketh the truth, and no doubt attacheth thereto. For it hath been repeatedly demonstrated that through their Revelation, their attributes and names, the Revelation of God, His names and His attributes, are made manifest in the world...

While the Manifestations reveal the names and attributes of God and are the means by which humanity has access to the knowledge of God and His Revelation, Shoghi Effendi states that the Manifestations should "never

...

be identified with that invisible Reality, the Essence of Divinity itself".

(Bahá'u'lláh: Aqdas: Notes, Page: 233)

The endeavor of searching after truth, points the individual in the direction of seeking Divine knowledge. Bahá'u'lláh clearly states that we should not be dependent on our intellectual learning, or allow it to become a veil between us and the realities of God and His revelation. It is

Divine knowledge that leads to finding truth about the reality of God and His Messengers. At one point, Bahá'u'lláh specifically directs this message

to the learned amongst the Babi's. He tells them, also, not to contend with

the Revealers of Divine Knowledge (Kitab-i-Iqan, pg. 248). This warning, however, must necessarily be adhered to by all of mankind, as each one is capable of establishing truth for himself.

When one engages in acquiring divine knowledge, the process inevitably involves the recognition and comprehension of our true reality, which is

spiritual in essence. In order to better understand this recognition, the following question is examined:

3. Why do we need to achieve this certitude?

In an attempt to answer this question, one has to acknowledge one of the reasons mankind was created. The ultimate purpose for being created is to know and to love God (this Divine knowledge is acquired through recognition and knowledge of the Manifestations), thereby working toward attaining His Presence. It is fundamentally important, therefore to know and understand the station and mission of the Messengers of God, as it relates to the spiritual education of humanity. While in this world, man is in need of developing and cultivating those spiritual qualities so as to function and progress (which is an infinite process) in the next world. The elements needed to function in the next world, must potentially be obtained here. These elements are divine qualities or attributes, which include spirituality, the knowledge and love of God, faith and assurance (certitude). Pursuing personal and selfish needs does not coincide with this objective. Abdu'l-Bahá tells us that doing thus, makes us less worthy than the animal, "sinking lower than the brute beasts". Man has been intended for a life far superior and worthy. Our quest is spiritual. The physical body disintegrates, whereas the spirit continues in its existence. In the words of Abdu'l-Bahá and Bahá'u'lláh:

Just as he prepared himself in the world of the matrix by acquiring forces necessary in this sphere of existence, so, likewise, the indispensable forces of the divine existence must be potentially attained in this world.

What is he in need of in the Kingdom which transcends the life and limitation of this mortal sphere? That world beyond is a world of sanctity and radiance; therefore, it is necessary that in this world he should acquire these divine attributes. In that world there is need of spirituality, faith, assurance, the knowledge and love of God. These he must attain in this world so that after his ascension from the earthly to the heavenly Kingdom he shall find all that is needful in that eternal life ready for him.

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace*, Page: 226)

Live then the days of thy life, that are less than a fleeting moment, with thy mind stainless, thy heart unsullied, thy thoughts pure, and thy nature sanctified, so that, free and content, thou mayest put away this mortal frame, and repair unto the mystic paradise and abide in the eternal kingdom

for evermore.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Persian Hidden Words, Page:
44)

The All-loving God created man to radiate the Divine light and to illumine the world by his words, action and life. If he is without virtue he becomes no better than a mere animal, and an animal devoid of intelligence is a vile thing.

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Paris Talks*, Pages:
113-114)

"Thus I called creation into being". And when the sanctified souls rend asunder the veils of all earthly attachments and worldly conditions, and hasten to the stage of gazing on the beauty of the Divine Presence and are honoured by recognizing the Manifestation and are able to witness the splendour of God's Most Great Sign in their hearts, then will the purpose of creation, which is the knowledge of Him Who is the Eternal Truth, become manifest

(Bahá'u'lláh: Aqdas: Notes,
Page: 176)

Our spiritual progress in this world as well as the next, depends largely on our established faith, belief and assurance (certitude) in the Revelation Word of God sent to mankind through His Manifestations. Having acknowledged this fundamental truth, the following question is addressed:

4. When is certitude achieved?

One of the first steps that has to be taken in order to achieve certitude, is to become detached from our material existence, and focus on our spiritual reality. We need to strive constantly, and with determination, to find assurance and certainty within the Revealed Word of God, thereby eliminating our doubts. Our devotion and love for God should lead us along a path of gaining closer access to Him. The words of Bahá'u'lláh is offered in support of the above:

Only when the lamp of search, of earnest striving, of longing desire, of passionate devotion, of fervid love, of rapture, and ecstasy, is kindled within the seeker's heart, and the breeze of His loving-kindness is wafted upon his soul, will the darkness of error be dispelled, the mists of doubts and misgivings be dissipated, and the lights of knowledge and certitude envelop his being.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, Page:
267)

The next question which then follows is:

5. What does the achievement of certitude do for mankind?

Bahá'u'lláh tells us that when we achieve certitude about the Revealed Word

of God, we will be endowed with a 'new eye', 'a new ear', 'a new heart', and 'a new mind'. The heart, soul and spirit of man will be "awakened from its slumber". We will be able to distinguish between "truth and falsehood". We will also discover "evidences of an everlasting Manifestation". There is

no better illustration of words, other than that of Bahá'u'lláh's, with regard to the achievement of certitude:

At that hour will the Mystic Herald, bearing the joyful tidings of the

Spirit, shine forth from the City of God resplendent as the morn, and, through the trumpet-blast of knowledge, will awaken the heart, the soul, and the spirit from the slumber of heedlessness. Then will the manifold favors and outpouring grace of the holy and everlasting Spirit confer such new life upon the seeker that he will find himself endowed with a new eye, a new ear, a new heart, and a new mind. He will contemplate the manifest signs of the universe, and will penetrate the hidden mysteries of the soul.

Gazing with the eye of God, he will perceive within every atom a door that

leadeth him to the stations of absolute certitude. He will discover in all things the mysteries of Divine Revelation, and the evidences of an everlasting Manifestation.

I swear by God! Were he that treadeth the path of guidance and

seeketh to scale the heights of righteousness to attain unto this glorious and exalted station, he would inhale, at a distance of a thousand leagues, the fragrance of God, and would perceive the resplendent morn of a Divine guidance rising above the Day Spring of all things. Each and every thing, however small, would be to him a revelation, leading him to his Beloved, the Object of his quest. So great shall be the discernment of this seeker that he will discriminate between truth and falsehood, even as he doth distinguish the sun from shadow. If in the uttermost corners of the East the sweet savors of God be wafted, he will assuredly recognize and inhale their fragrance, even though he be dwelling in the uttermost ends of the West. He will, likewise, clearly distinguish all the signs of God - His wondrous utterances, His great works, and mighty deeds - from the doings, the words and ways of men, even as the jeweler who knoweth the gem from the

stone, or the man who distinguisheth the spring from autumn, and heat from cold. When the channel of the human soul is cleansed of all worldly and impeding attachments, it will unfailingly perceive the breath of the

Beloved across immeasurable distances, and will, led by its perfume,
attain
and enter the City of Certitude.

(Bahá'u'lláh:

Gleanings, Pages: 267-268)

Having addressed the above questions, I offer the following personal thoughts with regard to the central theme of Kitab-i-Iqan. This book is an excellent tool for teaching the Faith, particularly as it highlights and explains the fundamental verities that operate within Divine Revelation. Consequently, this leads to acknowledging the significance of progressive revelation, and the need for individual and independent investigation of truth. Accepting the Manifestation, however, is an initial step toward attaining the ultimate goal of knowing and loving God. As Bahá'ís, we too need certitude and conviction of Bahá'u'lláh's mission, as well as the individual responsibility that accompanies acceptance of Him and His Revelation. It is of fundamental importance that the progressive role of the Prophets, as our divine educators, is established in the hearts and minds of future generations, that perchance, mankind prepares for the recognition and acceptance of future Manifestations.

METADATA

Views17671 views since posted 1998-03; last edit 2012;

previous at archive.org.../skrenes_meaning_certitude;

URLs changed in 2010, see archive.org.../bahai-library.org

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