

An Introduction to the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*

Nobuko Iwakura

Abstract:

The English translation of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* was released to the world at Ridván, 1993. Throughout the Baha'i world, Baha'is are eager—perhaps overly eager—to show their respect for this great Book and put its laws into practice. Since it has not yet been translated into Japanese, most Japanese believers have not been able to study this holy Book. This paper is therefore designed to give Japanese believers a general introduction to the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* and to explain how we should approach it.

Baha'u'llah, the Manifestation of God for today, says in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* that He has not revealed “a mere code of laws” but has “unsealed the choice wine” for us. We can see, then, that we not only need to know what His laws are, but realize that through them, we are coming in contact with His love. For like a loving parent, He only tells us the rules we need to protect ourselves. As society's standards crumble, Baha'u'llah offers us the unflinching standard by which to judge our actions. Only by knowing what God wants for us and following His laws can we be truly free from the shackles of animal desire.

In this charter for a future world civilization, Baha'u'llah reconfirms some of the laws of past religions while abrogating others. The laws can be divided into three main types: Those guiding the relationship between God and the individual believer; physical and spiritual laws for the benefit of the individual; and laws governing the relationships between people and between the individual and society. Examples of each type are given here. Since these laws are to serve as the nucleus of a world civilization for centuries, Baha'u'llah has given the Universal House of Justice the right to add new laws, as well as to repeal laws that it has made.

It must be remembered that the laws of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* are not all applicable at this time. Thus, even when the Japanese translation is issued, we will not be bound by the laws. Yet Baha'u'llah has promised great things to those who obey them. We certainly look forward in great anticipation to the day when we can read them in our own language.