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Compiled by E. G. Browne

Excerpt

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I

AN EPITOME OF BÁBÍ AND BAHÁ'Í
HISTORY TO A.D. 1898, TRANSLATED
FROM THE ORIGINAL ARABIC OF
MÍRZÁ MUHAMMAD JAWÁD OF
QAZWÍN

B. B.

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The Beginning is in the Name of the Eternal Lord, whom I praise, and whose Word I glorify, and whose Grace I thank, since He hath taught me by His Wisdom that wherein is my deliverance, my salvation, and my life in His Everlasting Kingdom. I ask Him to strengthen me in the service of His Pure Law, to endow me with steadfastness, and to fortify me, so that I may ever devote myself, according to His commands, to that which is of service to my fellow-creatures, and of advantage to me and my brethren both Here and Hereafter. Verily He is the Almighty, the Inspirer, the Helper!

On the 2nd of Muḥarram A.H. 1233 (November 12, 1817) was born our Great Master His Holiness BAHÁ'U'LLÁH (to whom be Glory!). His original name was Mírzá Ḥusayn 'Alí, son of the well-known Sayyid Mírzá 'Abbás, one of the Ministers of the Royal Court of Persia, entitled "Mírzá Buzurg," a native of the district of Núr in the province of Mázandarán, one of the provinces of *Persia. He was born in Tīhrán, the metropolis of the Persians.

When he reached twenty-seven years of age there appeared His Holiness the Harbinger, whose noble name was Mírzá 'Alí Muḥammad, and who is entitled the *Báb* and the First Point (*Nuqṭa-i-Úlá*), who declared himself to be

Birth of
Bahá'u'lláh,
Nov. 12, 1817.

"Manifestation"
of the
Báb, May 24,
1844.

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the Promised *Qá'im* (He who shall arise) and the Mahdí, whose advent is expected in Islám. This event happened on the 5th of Jumádá I, A.H. 1260 (May 24, 1844).

From the very beginning of his Manifestation, the Báb began to give good tidings of the imminence of some Great Event and the advent of some Promised Benefactor, of whom he made mention in his writings with great emphasis, even as John the Baptist foretold the appearance

of the Lord Christ, whom he mentions with the utmost veneration and respect in the Gospel of Matthew, ch. iii, verse 11: "I baptize you with the Water of Repentance, but He who cometh after me is stronger than I, whose shoes I am unworthy to bear, He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and Fire." And he (the Báb) gives good tidings to his followers of the Universal Manifestation, whom he describes as "He whom God shall manifest," or "He who shall appear," which expression is contained in most of his writings. He lays great stress on His celebration, description and Manifestation, while he himself, notwithstanding his claim to the highest of stations, reckons himself only a servant in relation to Him so mentioned and described. Moreover this announcement was continued from the beginning of his Manifestation (in A.D. 1844) until

he was crucified in the city of Tabríz, the chief town of the province of Ázarbáyján, together with one of his disciples, Mirzá Muḥammad 'Alí, a native of Zanwaz near Tabríz, on the 28th of Shábán, 1266 (July 8, 1850). But since the author of the abridged history entitled *A Traveller's Narrative*¹ has recorded the details of the birth

¹ The Persian text of this work, which has been ascribed to 'Abbás Efendi, together with an English translation and copious historical

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of His Holiness the Harbinger (*i.e.* the Báb), his Manifestation, and the chief events of his life, and Mr Browne, the Oriental scholar, has translated this book into English, and printed and published it, there is no need for me to repeat what is recorded in it.

When our great Master Bahá'u'lláh reached the age of thirty-two, he set out for the place called

Badasht.

*Badasht in the direction of Mázandarán, where he met His Holiness Hájji Muḥammad 'Alí al-Mázandarání [or -Bárfurúshí], who was entitled *Janáb-i-Quddús*, and Qurratu'l-'Ayn¹, and others of the Friends.

When he was thirty-three years of age he went to the place called Shaykh Ṭabarsí in Mázandarán,

where he suffered at the hands of the Shí'a divines and their followers, and was im-

Shaykh
Ṭabarsí.

prisoned in the town of Ámul, one of the dependencies of Mázandarán, and was much afflicted, and despoiled of his property.

When he reached the age of thirty-five, being at the time in one of the summer resorts of Shimírán, on the outskirts of the city of Ṭihrán, there happened the attempt on the life of the Sháh (Náṣiru'd-Dín), which was as follows.

One of the sect [of the Bábís] named Ṣádiq, after the execution of His Holiness the Harbinger

(*i.e.* the Báb), conceived the idea of exacting revenge without taking counsel with any man of sense; and, meeting Náṣiru'd-Dín Sháh on the 28th of Shawwál, 1268 (May 17, 1852)

Attempt on
the life of
Náṣiru'd-Dín
Sháh, May 17,
1852.

while he was out riding, discharged at him a fire-arm

notes by myself, was published at the Cambridge University Press in 1891 under the title of *A Traveller's Narrative, written to illustrate the History of the Báb.*

* page 3.

¹ Also called *Janáb-i-Táhira*, the Bábí poetess and martyr.

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charged with shot, which, however, did not kill him. This deed, which arose from lack of thought and consideration of consequences, brought grievous sufferings on this sect (the Bábís), of whom the Government arrested many, and condemned them to death. The various classes of citizens slew them with all manner of torments¹, and in consequence thereof, moreover, much suffering befel our great Lord

Bahá'u'lláh while he was sojourning in the above-mentioned summer resort. He was arrested and imprisoned for four months.

surrounded by order of the Government by a body of troopers, who led him, walking and bare-footed, in the extreme heat of summer, to Tíhrán, where he was confined in the prison for four months in fetters and chains. During this period he used to pass some of his nights without food, sleeping on *the ground; and I know not how I can describe this prison, for it was notorious for badness and foulness of air and water, nor did the rays of the sun, the light of day, or pure air ever enter it. There he remained until the Russian Minister in the Capital exerted himself to protect him, when it was proved on enquiry and investigation that His Holiness our Great Master had no knowledge of the above-mentioned event, and his non-complicity therein became clear. So, his innocence being established, he was released through the efforts of the afore-mentioned Minister; but, having regard to existing circumstances and the severities which prevailed, it was considered expedient that he should reside

in the "Abode of Peace" (*Dáru's-Salám*) of Bahá'u'lláh exiled to Baghdád. So His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh set out, being accompanied by his family, and a specially selected officer on the part of the

¹ A list of 28 of these victims will be found in my *Traveller's Narrative*, Vol. ii, pp. 323—334. * page 4.

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I. MÍRZÁ JAWÁD'S HISTORICAL EPITOME 7

Sháh, and another on the part of the Russian Legation, for Baghdád, the administrative centre of 'Iráq-i-'Arab (Mesopotamia). This happened when he was thirty-six¹ years of age, on the 1st of Muḥarram, 1269 (October 14, 1852¹); and after a while he was joined by Mírzá Yaḥyá called *Azal*.

Now in those days, by reason of grievous sufferings and unremitting persecution, this community (the Bábís) was dissolved in the lands of Persia, and their assembly was scattered, and most of them were slain with all manner of torments and the harshest punishments; their possessions were plundered, their wives and children were led into captivity, and if one of them survived, he hid himself in some corner, or chose for himself exile from his country. But at this juncture His Holiness our Great Master set himself in Baghdád to the elevation of the Word and the diffusion of its lights with a zeal which could not be exceeded. His efforts led to a general diffusion of the Word, and this religion became famous throughout all regions more than it had been at first. Thereby was the fire of envy kindled in the heart of Mírzá Yaḥyá and his companions, so that after about a year, in order *to extinguish this fire, His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh determined to leave Baghdád, and so set out suddenly, without the knowledge of any one, with a servant named Abu'l-Qásim, for Sulaymáníyya in Kurdistán. This happened in A.H. 1271 (A.D. 1854), Bahá'u'lláh being then thirty-eight years of age. The servant was killed after a few days at the hands of thieves, while he was travelling from one place to another on special business, so that His Holiness our Master Bahá'u'lláh remained alone in these deserts and mountains. Many nights passed over him when he was

Bahá'u'lláh
retires into the
mountains of
Sulaymáníyya
in 1854.

¹ Ms. has "thirty-seven" and "1853" erroneously. * page 5.

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without food, and none of his companions knew where he was until a definite time which will be mentioned, and he has made mention of this in a Tablet in Persian which he addressed to the sister of his wife named Maryam and entitled "the Red Leaf" (*al-Waraqatu'l-Hamrá*), some portions of which I shall cite in this place to seek a blessing and for the better information [of my readers]. He says (may my life be his sacrifice!) :—

"O Maryam! The wrongs which I suffer have obliterated the wrongs suffered by my First Name from the Tablet of the Universe. O Maryam!

Epistle to Maryam.

From the Land of Ṭá (Ṭíhrán), after afflictions which cannot be enumerated, we reached 'Iráq-i-'Arab by command of the Tyrant of Persia, where, after the fetters of foes, we were afflicted with the perfidy of friends. Thereafter God knoweth what befell me, until I chose solitary exile, cut off from my household and what it contained, and from the Spirit and what is connected therewith. I journeyed through the deserts of Resignation, travelling in such guise that all men wept over my strangerhood, and all things shed tears of blood over my sorrows. I kept company with the birds of the plain and dwelt with the beasts of the field, passing beyond this transitory world like spiritual lightning, while for two years or rather less I avoided all beside God and shut my eyes to all but Him....Until God's Predestination reminded some of His spiritual servants of this youth of Canaan, and they began *to make enquiry and to establish correspondence with all places and persons, until they discovered a sign of that signless one in a mountain cave. Verily he guideth all things into a straight path."

In short, after His Holiness our Master Bahá'u'lláh had left Baghdád, the conditions underwent a change, the

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ardour of this community was cooled, and sloth overcame them. This period of absence endured two years or rather less, and it wanted but little that the harmony of the companions should be broken up, the name of the First Point (*i.e.* the Báb) obliterated, and the Light of Religion extinguished. Then arose the brother of our glorious Master, Áqá Mírzá Músá, who was entitled *Kalím* ("the Interlocutor")¹ and the father of his wife Shaykh Sulţán, a native of 'Iráq, and His Honour the Servant of the Presence Mírzá Áqá Ján (of Káshán)², and some others, to make investigations and enquiries. They began, therefore, to ask for news and information from every traveller and sojourner until they found their way to His Holiness our Master Bahá'u'lláh, and ascertained that he was in the mountains of Sulaymáníyya in Kurdistán. Thereupon they sent the above-mentioned Shaykh Sulţán, with a number of letters from the faithful in different lands, to wait upon him; and His Holiness our Master returned to Baghdád in consequence of the urgent representations of the above-mentioned (Shaykh Sulţán), and his entreaties and prayers. His arrival on this occasion effected a great improvement in the community, and an important extension of the Word, inasmuch as he devoted himself with all his energy to their purification and the improvement of their characters and conduct both by tongue and by pen. His influence was far-reaching, his doings were noised abroad in all regions, and there hastened to him those members of the community who were scattered abroad throughout the lands.

Return of
Bahá'u'lláh
to Baghdád.

¹ This is also the title given to the Prophet Moses (Músá) by the Muslims, because he talked with God.

² Commonly entitled by the Bahá'ís *Janáb-i-Khádimu'lláh* ("His Honour the Servant of God").

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Amongst the strange events which happened during the days of our great Master's sojourn at Baghdád was the sacrifice of himself of one of the Companions named Áqá Sayyid Isma'íl of Zawára, a dependency of Işfahán. The detail of this is that the above-mentioned man came from his country to Baghdád, and after *having had the honour of being presented to His Holiness our great Master, and the lapse of some days, his state underwent a change, and there appeared in him an ecstasy, rapture and ardour beyond the bounds of computation. One night he had the honour of meeting His Holiness our great Master outside the house, and he bade him sit down beside him. Meanwhile our Master asked for a page of writing and a lamp, and began to peruse it, while the attendant stood holding the candlestick in his hand before his Holy Countenance. After a little while there appeared a complete change and a violent perturbation in the Sayyid above mentioned. The Master turned to him, commanded him to be tranquil, and entered his private apartment; and the Sayyid set out for his lodging in the house of Áqá Muḥammad Rizá of Işfahán, known as *al-'Ariz*. Each day he increased in love, longing and rapture, until His Holiness our great Master honoured with his presence the house above mentioned, at the invitation of Áqá Muḥammad Rizá *al-'Ariz*. Now there were set before our Lord fruits and divers sorts of sweetmeats, which our Master divided amongst those present; and he called the afore-mentioned Sayyid Isma'íl to give him a share thereof. But when he came, he said to him, "Verily I ask you for a spiritual food." After some days he resolved to sacrifice himself, but informed no one of his purpose. So one day in the

* page 7.