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'Abdu'l-Bahá

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***START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A
TRAVELER'S NARRATIVE***

A Traveler's Narrative

by 'Abdu'l-Bahá

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A TRAVELER'S NARRATIVE
WRITTEN TO ILLUSTRATE THE
EPISODE OF THE BÁB

[Pages 1–20]

Touching the individual known as the Báb and the true nature of this sect diverse tales are on the tongues and in the mouths of men, and various accounts are contained in the pages of Persian history and the leaves of European chronicles. But because of the variety of their assertions and the diversity of their narratives not one is as worthy of confidence as it should be. Some have loosed their tongues in extreme censure and condemnation; some foreign chronicles have spoken in a commendatory strain; while a certain section have recorded what they themselves have heard without addressing themselves either to censure or approbation.

Now since these various accounts are recorded in other pages, and since the setting forth thereof would lead to prolixity, therefore what relates to the history of this matter (sought out with the utmost diligence during the time of my travels in all parts of Persia, whether far or near, from those without and those within, from friends and strangers), and that whereon the disputants are agreed, shall be briefly set forth in writing, so that a summary of the facts of the case may be at the disposal of those who are athirst after the fountain of knowledge and who seek to become acquainted with all events.

The Báb was a young merchant of the Pure Lineage. He was born in the year one thousand two hundred and thirty-five [A.H.] on the first day of Muharram,¹ and when after a few years His father Siyyid Muḥammad-Riḍá died, He was brought up in Shíráz in the arms of His maternal uncle Mírzá Siyyid ‘Alí the merchant. On attaining maturity He engaged in trade in Búshihir, first in partnership with His maternal uncle and afterwards independently. On account of what was observed in Him He was noted for godliness, devoutness, virtue, and piety, and was regarded in the sight of men as so characterized.

¹ 20 October 1819.

In the year one thousand two hundred and sixty [A.H.], when He was in His twenty-fifth year, certain signs became apparent in His conduct, behavior, manners, and demeanor whereby it became evident in Shíráz that He had some conflict in His mind and some other flight beneath His wing. He began to speak and to declare the rank of Báb-hood.² Now what He intended by the term Báb [Gate] was this, that He was the channel of grace from some great Person still behind the veil of glory, Who was the possessor of countless and boundless perfections, by Whose will He moved, and to the bond of Whose love He clung. And in the first book which He wrote in explanation of the Súrih of Joseph,³ He addressed Himself in all passages to that Person unseen from Whom He received help and grace, sought for aid in the arrangement of His preliminaries, and craved the sacrifice of life in the way of His love.

Amongst others is this sentence: "O Remnant of God, I am wholly sacrificed to Thee; I am content with curses in Thy way; I crave naught but to be slain in Thy love; and God the Supreme sufficeth as an Eternal Protection."

He likewise composed a number of works in explanation and elucidation of the verses of the Qur'án, of sermons, and of prayers in Arabic; inciting and urging men to expect the appearance of that Person; and these books He named "Inspired Pages" and "Word of Conscience." But on investigation it was discovered that He laid no claim to revelation from an angel.

Now since He was noted amongst the people for lack of instruction and education, this circumstance appeared in the sight of men supernatural. Some men inclined to Him, but the greater part manifested strong disapproval; whilst all the learned doctors and lawyers of repute who occupied chairs, altars, and pulpits were unanimously agreed on eradication and suppression, save some divines of the Shaykhí party who were anchorites and

² 23 May 1844.

³ Qur'án 12.

recluses, and who, agreeably to their tenets, were ever seeking for some great, incomparable, and trustworthy person, whom they accounted, according to their own terminology, as the “Fourth Support” and the central manifestation of the truths of the Perspicuous Religion.

Of this number Mullá Ḥusayn of Bushrúyih, Mírzá Aḥmad of Azghand, Mullá Šádiq Muqaddas [the Holy], Shaykh Abú-Turáb of Ishtihard, Mullá Yúsuf of Ardibíl, Mullá Jalíl of Urúmíyyih, Mullá Mihdí of Kand, Shaykh Sa’íd the Indian, Mullá ‘Alí of Bastám, and the like of these came out unto Him and spread themselves through all parts of Persia.

The Báb Himself set out to perform the circumambulation of the House of God.⁴ On His return, when the news of His arrival at Búshihir reached Shíráz, there was much discussion, and a strange excitement and agitation became apparent in that city. The great majority of the doctors set themselves to repudiate Him, decreeing slaughter and destruction, and they induced Ḥusayn Khán Ajúdán-báshí, who was the governor of Fárs, to inflict a beating on the Báb’s missionaries, that is on Mullá Šádiq Muqaddas; then, having burnt his moustaches and beard together with those of Mírzá Muḥammad-‘Alí of Barfurúsh and Mullá ‘Alí-Akbar of Ardistán, they put halters on all the three and led them round the streets and bazaars.

Now since the doctors of Persia have no administrative capacity, they thought that violence and interference would cause extinction and silence and lead to suppression and oblivion; whereas interference in matters of conscience causes stability and firmness and attracts the attention of men’s sight and souls; which fact has received experimental proof many times and often. So this punishment caused notoriety, and most men fell to making inquiry.

The governor of Fárs, acting according to that which the

⁴ Undertake the pilgrimage to Mecca.

doctors deemed expedient, sent several horsemen, caused the Báb to be brought before him, censured and blamed Him in the presence of the doctors and scholars, and loosed his tongue in the demand for reparation. And when the Báb returned his censure and withstood him greatly, at a sign from the president they struck Him a violent blow, insulting and contemning Him, in such wise that His turban fell from His head and the mark of the blow was apparent on His face. At the conclusion of the meeting they decided to take counsel, and, on receiving bail and surety from His maternal uncle Ḥájí Siyyid 'Alí, sent Him to His house forbidding Him to hold intercourse with relations or strangers.

One day they summoned Him to the mosque urging and constraining Him to recant, but He discoursed from the pulpit in such wise as to silence and subdue those present and to stablish and strengthen His followers. It was then supposed that He claimed to be the medium of grace from His Highness the Lord of the Age (upon Him be peace); but afterwards it became known and evident that His meaning was the Gatehood [Bábíyyat] of another city and the mediumship of the graces of another Person Whose qualities and attributes were contained in His books and treatises.

At all events, as has been mentioned, by reason of the doctors' lack of experience and skill in administrative science, and the continual succession of their decisions, comment was rife; and their interference with the Báb cast a clamor throughout Persia, causing increased ardor in friends and the coming forward of the hesitating. For by reason of these occurrences men's interest increased, and in all parts of Persia some [of God's] servants inclined toward Him, until the matter acquired such importance that the late king Muḥammad Sháh delegated a certain person named Siyyid Yaḥyá of Daráb, who was one of the best known of doctors and Siyyids as well as an object of veneration and confidence, giving him a horse and money for the journey so that he might proceed to Shíráz and personally investigate this

matter.⁵

When the above-mentioned Siyyid arrived at Shíráz he interviewed the Báb three times. In the first and second conferences questioning and answering took place; in the third conference he requested a commentary on the Súrih called Kawthar⁶, and when the Báb, without thought or reflection, wrote an elaborate commentary on the Kawthar in his presence, the above-mentioned Siyyid was charmed and enraptured with Him, and straightway, without consideration for the future or anxiety about the results of this affection, hastened to Burújird to his father Siyyid Ja'far, known as Kashfí, and acquainted him with the matter. And, although he was wise and prudent and was wont to have regard to the requirements of the time, he wrote without fear or care a detailed account of his observations to Mírzá Lutf-‘Alí the chamberlain in order that the latter might submit it to the notice of the late king, while he himself journeyed to all parts of Persia, and in every town and station summoned the people from the pulpit-tops in such wise that other learned doctors decided that he must be mad, accounting it a sure case of bewitchment.

Now when the news of the decisions of the doctors and the outcry and clamor of the lawyers reached Zanján, Mullá Muḥammad-‘Alí the divine, who was a man of mark possessed of penetrating speech, sent one of those on whom he could rely to Shíráz to investigate this matter. This person, having acquainted himself with the details of these occurrences in such wise as was necessary and proper, returned with some [of the Báb’s] writings. When the divine heard how matters were and had made himself acquainted with the writings, notwithstanding that he was a man expert in knowledge and noted for profound research, he went mad and became crazed as was predestined: he gathered up his books in the lecture-room saying, “The season of spring and wine

⁵ Muḥammad Sháh died September 4, 1848; the English translation of A Traveler’s Narrative first appeared in 1891.

⁶ Qur’án 108.

has arrived,” and uttered this sentence: “Search for knowledge after reaching the known is culpable.” Then from the summit of the pulpit he summoned and directed all his disciples [to embrace the doctrine], and wrote to the Báb his own declaration and confession.

The Báb in His reply signified to him the obligation of congregational prayer.

Although the doctors of Zanján arose with heart and soul to exhort and admonish the people they could effect nothing. Finally they were compelled to go to Ṭihrán and made their complaint before the late king Muḥammad Sháh, requesting that Mullá Muḥammad-‘Alí might be summoned to Ṭihrán. So the royal order went forth that he should appear.

Now when he came to Ṭihrán they brought him before a conclave of the doctors; but, so they relate, after many controversies and disputations naught was effected with him in that assembly. The late king therefore bestowed on him a staff and fifty túmans for his expenses, and gave him permission to return.

At all events, this news being disseminated through all parts and regions of Persia, and several proselytes arriving in Fárs, the doctors perceived that the matter had acquired importance, that the power to deal with it had escaped from their hands, and that imprisonment, beating, tormenting, and contumely were fruitless. So they signified to the governor of Fárs, Ḥusayn Khán, “If thou desirest the extinction of this fire, or seekest a firm stopper for this rent and disruption, an immediate cure and decisive remedy is to kill the Báb. And the Báb has assembled a great host and meditates a rising.”

So Ḥusayn Khán ordered ‘Abdu’l-Ḥamíd Khán the high constable to attack the house of the Báb’s maternal uncle at midnight on all sides, and to bring Him and all His followers handcuffed. But ‘Abdu’l-Ḥamíd Khán and his hosts found no one in the house save the Báb, His maternal uncle, and Siyyid Kázim of Zanján; and as it chanced that on that night the sickness of the plague and

the extreme heat of the weather had compelled Ḥusayn Khán to flee, he released the Báb on condition of His quitting the city.

On the morning after that night the Báb with Siyyid Kázim of Zanján set out from Shíráz for Işfáhán. Before reaching Işfáhán He wrote a letter to the Mu'tamídu'd-Dawlih, the governor of the province, requesting a lodging in some suitable place with the sanction of the government. The governor appointed the mansion of the Imám-Jum'ih. There He abode forty days; and one day, agreeably to the request of the Imám, He wrote without reflection a commentary on [the Súrih of] V'al-'Asr before the company.⁷ When this news reached the Mu'tamíd he sought an interview with Him and questioned Him concerning the "Special Mission." At that same interview an answer proving the "Special Mission" was written.

The Mu'tamíd then gave orders that all the doctors should assemble and dispute with Him in one conclave, and that the discussion should be faithfully recorded without alteration by the instrumentality of his private secretary, in order that it might be sent to Ṭihrán, and that whatever the royal edict and decree should ordain might be carried out.

The doctors, however, considering this arrangement as a weakening of the Law, did not agree, but held a conclave and wrote, "If there be doubt in the matter there is need of assembly and discussion, but as this person's disagreement with the most luminous Law is clearer than the sun therefore the best possible thing is to put in practice the sentence of the Law."

The Mu'tamíd then desired to hold the assembled conference in his own presence so that the actual truth might be disclosed and hearts be at peace, but these learned doctors and honorable scholars, unwilling to bring the Perspicuous Law into contempt, did not approve discussion and controversy with a young merchant, with the exception of that most erudite sage Áqá Muḥammad-

⁷ Qur'án 103.

Mihdí, and that eminent Platonist Mírzá Ḥasan of Núr. So the conference terminated in questionings on certain points relating to the science of fundamental dogma, and the elucidation and analysis of the doctrines of Mullá Sadrá. So, as no conclusion was arrived at by the governor from this conference, the severe sentence and harsh decision of the learned doctors was not carried out; but, anxious to abate the great anxiety quickly and prevent a public tumult effectually, he gave currency to a report that a decree had been issued ordering the Báb to be sent to Ṭihrán in order that some decisive settlement might be arrived at, or that some courageous divine might be able to confute [Him].

He accordingly sent Him forth from Işfáhán with a company of his own mounted bodyguard; but when they reached Murchih-Khar he gave secret orders for His return to Işfáhán, where he afforded Him a refuge and asylum in his own roofed private quarters; and not a soul save the confidential and trusty dependents of the Mu'tamíd knew aught of the Báb.

A period of four months passed in this fashion, and the Mu'tamíd passed away to the mercy of God. Gurgín Khán, the Mu'tamíd's nephew, was aware of the Báb's being in the private apartments, and represented the matter to the Prime Minister. Ḥájí Mírzá Aqásí, that celebrated minister, issued a decisive command and gave instructions that they should send the Báb secretly in disguise under the escort of Núsayrí horsemen to the capital.

When He reached Kinár-Gird a fresh order came from the Prime Minister appointing the village of Kulayn as an abode and dwelling-place. There He remained for a period of twenty days. After that, the Báb forwarded a letter to the Royal Presence craving audience to set forth the truth of His condition, expecting this to be a means for the attainment of great advantages. The Prime Minister did not admit this, and made representation to the Royal Presence: "The royal cavalcade is on the point of starting, and to engage in such matters as the present will conduce to

the disruption of the kingdom. Neither is there any doubt that the most notable doctors of the capital also will behave after the fashion of the doctors of Işfáhán, which thing will be the cause of a popular outbreak, or that, according to the religion of the immaculate Imám, they will regard the blood of this siyyid as of no account, yea, as more lawful than mother's milk. The imperial train is prepared for travel, neither is there hindrance or impediment in view. There is no doubt that the presence of the Báb will be the cause of the gravest trouble and the greatest mischief. Therefore, on the spur of the moment, the wisest plan is this: to place this person in the Castle of Mákú during the period of absence of the royal train from the seat of the imperial throne, and to defer the obtaining of an audience to the time of return."

Agreeably to this view a letter was issued addressed to the Báb in his Majesty's own writing, and, according to the traditional account of the tenor of this letter, the epitome thereof is this:

(After the titles). "Since the royal train is on the verge of departure from Ẓihrán, to meet in a befitting manner is impossible. Do you go to Mákú and there abide and rest for a while, engaged in praying for our victorious state; and we have arranged that under all circumstances they shall show you attention and respect. When we return from travel we will summon you specially."

After this they sent Him off with several mounted guards (amongst them Muḥammad Big, the courier) to Tabríz and Mákú.

Besides this the followers of the Báb recount certain messages conveyed [from Him] by the instrumentality of Muḥammad Big (amongst which was a promise to heal the foot of the late king, but on condition of an interview, and the suppression of the tyranny of the majority), and the Prime Minister's prevention of the conveyance of these letters to the Royal Presence. For he himself laid claim to be a spiritual guide and was prepared to perform the functions of religious directorship. But others deny

these accounts.

At all events in the course of the journey He wrote a letter to the Prime Minister saying, "You summoned Me from Işfáhán to meet the doctors and for the attainment of a decisive settlement. What has happened now that this excellent intention has been changed for Mákú and Tabríz?"

Although He remained forty days in the city of Tabríz the learned doctors did not condescend to approach Him and did not deem it right to meet Him. Then they sent Him off to the Castle of Mákú, and for nine months lodged Him in the inaccessible castle which is situated on the summit of that lofty mountain. And 'Alí Khán of Mákú, because of his excessive love for the family of the Prophet, paid Him such attention as was possible, and gave permission [to some persons] to converse with Him.

Now when the accomplished divines of Ádhirbayján perceived that in all the parts round about Tabríz it was as though the last day had come by reason of the excessive clamor, they requested the government to punish the [Báb's] followers, and to remove the Báb to the Castle of Chihríq. So they sent Him to that castle and consigned Him to the keeping of Yaḥyá Khán the Kurd.

Glory be to God! Notwithstanding these decisions of great doctors and reverend lawyers, and severe punishments and reprimands--beatings, banishments, and imprisonments--on the part of governors, this sect was daily on the increase, and the discussion and disputation was such that in meetings and assemblies in all parts of Persia there was no conversation but on this topic. Great was the commotion which arose: the doctors of the Perspicuous Religion were lamenting, the common folk clamorous and agitated, and the Friends rejoicing and applauding.

But the Báb Himself attached no importance to this uproar and tumult, and, alike on the road and in the castles of Mákú and Chihríq, evening and morning, nay, day and night, in extremest rapture and amazement, He would restrict Himself to repeating and meditating on the qualities and attributes of that absent-yet-

present, regarded-and-regarding Person of His.⁸ Thus He makes a mention of Him whereof this is the purport:

“Though the ocean of woe rageth on every side, and the bolts of fate follow in quick succession, and the darkness of griefs and afflictions invade soul and body, yet is My heart brightened by the remembrance of Thy countenance and My soul is as a rose garden from the perfume of Thy nature.”

In short, after He had remained for three months in the Castle of Chihríq, the eminent doctors of Tabríz and scholars of Ádhirbayján wrote to Ṭihrán and demanded a severe punishment in regard to the Báb for the intimidation and frightening of the people. When the Prime Minister Ḥájí Mírzá Aqásí beheld the ferment and clamor of the learned doctors in all districts of Persia, he perforce became their accomplice and ordered Him to be brought from Chihríq to Tabríz. In the course of His transit by Urúmíyyih the governor of the district Qásim Mírzá treated Him with extraordinary deference, and a strange flocking together of high and low was apparent. These conducted themselves with the utmost respectfulness.

When the Báb reached Tabríz they brought Him after some days before the government tribunal. Of the learned doctors the Nizámu'l-'Ulamá, Mullá Muḥammad-i-Mamaqání, Mírzá Aḥmad the Imám-Jum'ih, Mírzá 'Alí-Aṣghar the Shaykhu'l-Islám, and several other divines were present. They asked concerning the claims of the Báb. He advanced the claim of Mihdí-hood; whereon a mighty tumult arose. Eminent doctors in overwhelming might compassed Him on all sides, and such was the onset of orthodoxy that it had been no great wonder if a mere youth had not withstood the mountain of Elburz. They demanded proof. Without hesitation He recited texts, saying, “This is the permanent and most mighty proof.” They criticized His grammar. He adduced arguments from the Qur'án, setting forth therefrom

⁸ A reference to Bahá'u'lláh, “Him Whom God shall make manifest,” whose precursor the Báb considered Himself to be.

instances of similar infractions of the rules of grammar. So the assembly broke up and the Báb returned to His own dwelling.

The heaven-cradled Crown-Prince was at that time governor of Ádhirbayján. He pronounced no sentence with regard to the Báb, nor did he desire to interfere with Him. The doctors, however, considered it advisable at least to inflict a severe chastisement, and beating was decided on. But none of the corps of farráshes would agree to become the instruments of the infliction of this punishment. So Mírzá 'Alí-Aşghar the Shaykhu'l-Islám, who was one of the noble Siyyids, brought Him to his own house and applied the rods with his own hand. After this they sent the Báb back to Chihríq and subjected Him to a strict confinement.

Now when the news of this beating, chastisement, imprisonment, and rigor reached all parts of Persia, learned divines and esteemed lawyers who were possessed of power and influence girt up the loins of endeavor for the eradication and suppression of this sect, exerting their utmost efforts therefore. And they wrote notice of their decision, to wit "that this person and his followers are in absolute error and are hurtful to Church and State." And since the governors in Persia enjoyed the fullest authority, in some provinces they followed this decision and united in uprooting and dispersing the Bábís. But the late King Muḥammad Sháh acted with deliberation in this matter, reflecting, "This Youth is of the Pure Lineage and of the family of him addressed with 'were it not for thee.' So long as no offensive actions which are incompatible with the public peace and well-being proceed from him, the government should not interfere with him." And whenever the learned doctors appealed to him from the surrounding districts, he either gave no answer, or else commanded them to act with deliberation.

Notwithstanding this, between eminent doctors and illustrious scholars and those learned persons who were followers of the Báb opposition, discussion, and strife did so increase that in some provinces they desired [to resort to] mutual imprecation;

and for the governors of the provinces, too, a means of acquiring gain was produced, so that great tumult and disturbance arose. And since the malady of the gout had violently attacked the king's foot and occupied his world-ordering thought, the good judgment of the Chief Minister, the famous Ḥájí Mírzá Aqásí, became the pivot of the conduct of affairs, and his incapacity and lack of resource became apparent as the sun. For every hour he formed a new opinion and gave a new order: at one moment he would seek to support the decision of the doctors, accounting the eradication and suppression of the Bábís as necessary: at another time he would charge the doctors with aggressiveness, regarding undue interference as contrary to justice: at another time he would become a mystic and say, "All these voices are from the King,"⁹ or repeat with his tongue, "Moses is at war with Moses,"¹⁰ or recite, "This is nought but Thy trial."¹¹ In short this changeable minister, by reason of his mismanagement of important matters and failure to control and order the affairs of the community, so acted that disturbance and clamor arose from all quarters and directions: the most notable and influential of the doctors ordered the common folk to molest the followers of the Báb, and a general onslaught took place. More especially when the claim of Mihdí-hood reached the hearing of eminent divines and profound doctors they began to make lamentation and to cry and complain from their pulpits, saying, "One of the essentials of religion and of the authentic traditions transmitted from the holy Imáms, nay, the chief basis of the foundations of the church of His Highness Ja'far, is the Occultation of the immaculate twelfth Imám (upon both of them be peace). What has happened to Jabúlqá? Where has Jabúlsá gone? What was the Minor Occultation? What has become of the Major Occultation? What are the sayings of Ḥusayn ibn Rúh, and what the tradition of Ibn

⁹ The Mathnaví.

¹⁰ The Mathnaví.

¹¹ Qur'án 7:154.

Mihriyâr? What shall we make of the flight of the Guardians and the Helpers? How shall we deal with the conquest of the East and the West? Where is the Ass of Antichrist? When will the appearance of the Súfyán be? Where are the signs which are in the traditions of the Holy Family? Where is that whereon the Victorious Church is agreed? The matter is not outside one of two alternatives: either we must repudiate the traditions of the Holy Imáms, grow wearied of the Church of Ja'far, and account the clear indications of the Imám as disturbed dreams; or, in accordance with the primary and subsidiary doctrines of the Faith and the essential and explicit declarations of the most luminous Law, we must consider the repudiation, nay, the destruction of this person as our chief duty. If so be that we shut our eyes to these authentic traditions and obvious doctrines universally admitted, no remnant will endure of the fundamental basis of the Church of the immaculate Imám: we shall neither be Sunnites, nor shall we be of the prevalent sect to continue awaiting the promised Saint and believing in the begotten Mihdí.¹² Otherwise we must regard as admissible the opening of the Gate of Saintship, and consider that He Who is to arise of the family of Muḥammad possesses two signs: the first condition, Holy Lineage; the second, [that He is divinely] fortified with brilliant verses. What can we do with these thousand-year-old beliefs of the delivered band of Shí'ites, or what shall we say concerning their profound doctors and preeminent divines? Were all these in error? Did they journey in the vale of transgression? What an evidently false assertion is this! By God, this is a thing to break the back! O people, extinguish this fire and forget these words! Alas! woe to our Faith, woe to our Law!"

Thus did they make complaint in mosques and chapels, in pulpits and congregations.

But the Bábí chiefs composed treatises against them, and set

¹² The Shí'ites.

in order replies according to their own thought. Were these to be discussed in detail it would conduce to prolixity, and our object is the statement of history, not of arguments for believing or rejecting; but of some of the replies the gist is this: that they held the Proof as supreme, and the evidence as outweighing traditions, considering the former as the root and the latter as the branch, and saying, “If the branch agree not with the root it serves not as an argument and is unworthy of reliance; for the reported consequence has no right to oppose itself to the established principle, and cannot argue against it.” Indeed in such cases they regarded interpretation as the truth of revelation and the essence of true exegesis: thus, for instance, they interpreted the sovereignty of the Qá’im as a mystical sovereignty, and His conquests as conquests of the cities of hearts, adducing in support of this the meekness and defeat of the Chief of Martyrs (may the life of all being be a sacrifice for him). For he was the true manifestation of the blessed verse “And verily our host shall overcome for them,”¹³ yet, notwithstanding this, he quaffed the cup of martyrdom with perfect meekness, and, at the very moment of uttermost defeat, triumphed over his enemies and became the most mighty of the troops of the Supreme Host. Similarly they regarded the numerous writings which, in spite of His lack of education, the Báb had composed, as due to the promptings of the Holy Spirit; extracted from books contrary sayings handed down by men of mark; adduced traditions apparently agreeing with their objects; and clung to the announcements of certain notables of yore. They also considered the conversion of austere and recluse doctors and eminent votaries of the Perspicuous Religion [of Islám] as a valid proof, deemed the steadfastness and constancy of the Báb a most mighty sign, and related miracles and the like; which things, being altogether foreign to our purpose, we have passed by with brevity, and will now proceed with our original topic.

¹³ Qur’án 37:173.

At the time of these events certain persons appeared amongst the Bábís who had a strange ascendancy and appearance in the eyes of this sect. Amongst these was Mírzá Muḥammad-‘Alí of Mázindarán, who was the disciple of the illustrious Siyyid (may God exalt his station) Ḥájí Siyyid Kázim of Rasht, and who was the associate and companion of the Báb in His pilgrimage journey. After a while certain manners and states issued from him such that all, acting with absolute confidence, considered obedience to him as an impregnable stronghold, so that even Mullá Ḥusayn of Bushrúyih, who was the leader of all and the arbiter appealed to alike by the noble and the humble of this sect, used to behave in his presence with great humility and with the self-abasement of a lowly servant.

This personage set himself to exalt the word of the Báb with the utmost steadfastness, and the Báb did full justice to speech in praising and glorifying him, accounting his uprising as an assistance from the Unseen. In delivery and style he was “evident magic,” and in firmness and constancy superior to all. At length in the year [A.H.] 1265 at the sentence of the chief of lawyers the Sa’ídu’l-‘Ulamá’ the chief divine of Barfurúsh, he yielded his head and surrendered his life amidst extremest clamor and outcry.

And amongst them was she who was entitled Qurratu’l-‘Ayn the daughter of Ḥájí Šálih, the sage of Qazvín, the erudite doctor. She, according to what is related, was skilled in diverse arts, amazed the understandings and thoughts of the most eminent masters by her eloquent dissertations on the exegesis and tradition of the Perspicuous Book, and was a mighty sign in the doctrines of the glorious Shaykh of Ahsá. At the Supreme Shrines she borrowed light on matters divine from the lamp of Kázim, and freely sacrificed her life in the way of the Báb. She discussed and disputed with the doctors and sages, loosing her tongue to establish her doctrine. Such fame did she acquire that most people who were scholars or mystics sought to hear her speech and were

eager to become acquainted with her powers of speculation and deduction. She had a brain full of tumultuous ideas, and thoughts vehement and restless. In many places she triumphed over the contentious, expounding the most subtle questions. When she was imprisoned in the house of [Maḥmúd] the Kalantar of Ṭīhrán, and the festivities and rejoicings of a wedding were going on, the wives of the city magnates who were present as guests were so charmed with the beauty of her speech that, forgetting the festivities, they gathered round her, diverted by listening to her words from listening to the melodies, and rendered indifferent by witnessing her marvels to the contemplation of the pleasant and novel sights which are incidental to a wedding. In short in elocution she was the calamity of the age, and in ratiocination the trouble of the world. Of fear or timidity there was no trace in her heart, nor had the admonitions of the kindly-disposed any profit or fruit for her. Although she was of [such as are] damsels [meet] for the bridal bower, yet she wrested preeminence from stalwart men, and continued to strain the feet of steadfastness until she yielded up her life at the sentence of the mighty doctors in Ṭīhrán. But were we to occupy ourselves with these details the matter would end in prolixity.

Well, Persia was in this critical state and the learned doctors perplexed and anxious, when the late Prince Muḥammad Sháh died, and the throne of sovereignty was adorned with the person of the new monarch. Mírzá Taqí Khán Amír-Nizám, who was Prime Minister and Chief Regent, seized in the grasp of his despotic power the reins of the affairs of the commonwealth, and urged the steed of his ambition into the arena of willfulness and sole possession. This minister was a person devoid of experience and wanting in consideration for the consequences of actions; bloodthirsty and shameless; and swift and ready to shed blood. Severity in punishing he regarded as wise administration, and harshly entreating, distressing, intimidating, and frightening the people he considered as a fulcrum for the advancement of the

monarchy. And as His Majesty the King was in the prime of youthful years the minister fell into strange fancies and sounded the drum of

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absolutism in [the conduct of] affairs: on his own decisive resolution, without seeking permission from the Royal Presence or taking counsel with prudent statesmen, he issued orders to persecute the Bábís, imagining that by overweening force he could eradicate and suppress matters of this nature, and that harshness would bear good fruit; whereas [in fact] to interfere with matters of conscience is simply to give them greater currency and strength; the more you strive to extinguish the more will the flame be kindled, more especially in matters of faith and religion, which spread and acquire influence so soon as blood is shed, and strongly affect men's hearts. These things have been put to the proof, and the greatest proof is this very transaction. Thus they relate that the possessions of a certain Bábí in Káshán were plundered, and his household scattered and dispersed. They stripped him naked and scourged him, defiled his beard, mounted him face backwards on an ass, and paraded him through the streets and bazaars with the utmost cruelty, to the sound of drums, trumpets, guitars, and tambourines. A certain gabr who knew absolutely naught of the world or its denizens chanced to be seated apart in a corner of a caravansary. When the clamor of the people rose high he hastened into the street, and, becoming cognizant of the offence and the offender, and the cause of his public disgrace and punishment in full detail, he fell to making search, and that very day entered the society of the Bábís, saying, "This very ill-usage and public humiliation is a proof of truth and the very best of arguments. Had it not been thus it might have been that a thousand years would have passed ere one like me became informed."

At all events the minister with the utmost arbitrariness, without receiving any instructions or asking permission, sent forth commands in all directions to punish and chastise the Bábís. Governors and magistrates sought a pretext for amassing wealth,

and officials a means of [acquiring] profits; celebrated doctors from the summits of their pulpits incited men to make a general onslaught; the powers of the religious and the civil law linked hands and strove to eradicate and destroy this people.

Now this people had not yet acquired such knowledge as was right and needful of the fundamental principles and hidden doctrines of the Báb's teachings, and did not recognize their duties. Their conceptions and ideas were after the former fashion, and their conduct and behavior in correspondence with ancient usage. The way of approach to the Báb was, moreover, closed, and the flame of trouble visibly blazing on every side. At the decree of the most celebrated of the doctors, the government, and indeed the common people, had, with irresistible power, inaugurated rapine and plunder on all sides, and were engaged in punishing and torturing, killing and despoiling, in order that they might quench this fire and wither these [poor] souls. In towns where these were but a limited number all of them with bound hands became food for the sword, while in cities where they were numerous they arose in self-defense agreeably to their former beliefs, since it was impossible for them to make inquiry as to their duty, and all doors were closed.

In Mázindarán amongst other places the people of the city of Barfurúsh at the command of the chief of the lawyers the Sa'ídu'l-'Ulamá' made a general attack on Mullá Ḥusayn of Bushrúyih and his followers, and slew six or seven persons. They were busy compassing the destruction of the rest also when Mullá Ḥusayn ordered the adhán to be sounded and stretched forth his hand to the sword, whereupon all sought flight, and the nobles and lords coming before him with the utmost penitence and deference agreed that he should be permitted to depart. They further sent with them as a guard Khusraw of Qádí-Kalá with horsemen and footmen, so that, according to the terms of the agreement, they might go forth safe and protected from the territory of Mázindarán. When they, being ignorant of the fords and paths, had

emerged from the city, Khusraw dispersed his horsemen and footmen and set them in ambush in the forest of Mázindarán, scattered and separated the Bábís in that forest on the road and off the road, and began to hunt them down singly. When the reports of muskets arose on every side the hidden secret became manifest, and several wanderers and other persons were suddenly slain with bullets. Mullá Ḥusayn ordered the adhán to be sounded to assemble his scattered followers, while Mírzá Lutf-‘Alí the secretary drew his dagger and ripped open Khusraw’s vitals. Of Khusraw’s host some were slain and others wandered distractedly over the field of battle. Mullá Ḥusayn quartered his host in a fort near the burial-place of Shaykh Tabarsí, and, being aware of the wishes of the community, relaxed and interrupted the march. This detachment was subsequently further reinforced by Mírzá Muḥammad-‘Alí of Mázindarán with a number of other persons, so that the garrison of the fort numbered three hundred and thirteen souls. Of these, however, all were not capable of fighting, only one hundred and ten persons being prepared for war. Most of them were doctors or students whose companions had been during their whole life books and treatises; yet, in spite of the fact that they were unaccustomed to war or to the blows of shot and sword, four times were camps and armies arrayed against them and they were attacked and hemmed in with cannons, muskets, and bomb-shells, and on all four occasions they inflicted defeat, while the army was completely routed and dispersed. On the occasion of the fourth defeat Abbás-Qulí Khán of Larján was captain of the forces and Prince Mihdí-Qulí Mírzá commander in the camp. The Khán above mentioned used at nights to conceal and hide himself in disguise amongst the trees of the forest outside the camp, while during the day he was present in the encampment. The last battle took place at night and the army was routed. The Bábís fired the tents and huts, and night became bright as day. The foot of Mullá Ḥusayn’s horse caught in a noose, for he was riding, the others being on foot. Abbás-Qulí

Khán recognized him from the top of a tree afar off, and with his own hand discharged several bullets. At the third shot he threw him from his feet. He was borne by his followers to the fort, and there they buried him. Notwithstanding this event [the troops] could not prevail by superior force. At length the Prince made a treaty and covenant, and swore by the Holy Imáms, confirming his oath by vows plighted on the glorious Qur'án, to this effect: "You shall not be molested; return to your own places." Since their provisions had for some time been exhausted, so that even of the skins and bones of horses naught remained, and they had subsisted for several days on pure water, they agreed. When they arrived at the army food was prepared for them in a place outside the camp. They were engaged in eating, having laid aside their weapons and armor, when the soldiers fell on them on all sides and slew them all. Some have accounted this valor displayed by these people as a thing miraculous, but when a band of men are besieged in some place where all avenues and roads are stopped and all hope of deliverance is cut off they will assuredly defend themselves desperately and display bravery and courage.

In Zanján and Nayríz likewise at the decree of erudite doctors and notable lawyers a bloodthirsty military force attacked and besieged. In Zanján the chief was Mullá Muḥammad-'Alí the mujtahid, while in Nayríz Siyyid Yaḥyá of Daráb was the leader and arbiter. At first they sought to bring about a reconciliation, but, meeting with cruel ferocity, they reached the pitch of desperation; and, the overpowering force of the victorious troops having cut off every passage of flight, they unclosed their hands in resistance. But although they were very strong in battle and amazed the chiefs of the army by their steadfastness and endurance, the overwhelming military force closed the passage of flight and broke their wings and feathers. After numerous battles they too at last yielded to covenants and compacts, oaths and promises, vows registered on the Qur'án, and the wonderful stratagems of the officers, and were all put to the edge of the

sword.

Were we to occupy ourselves in detail with the wars of Nayríz and Zanján, or to set forth these events from beginning to end, this epitome would become a bulky volume. So, since this would be of no advantage to history, we have passed them over briefly.

During the course of the events which took place at Zanján the Prime Minister devised a final and trenchant remedy. Without the royal command, without consulting with the ministers of the subject-protecting court, he, acting with arbitrary disposition, fixed determination, and entirely on his own authority, issued commands to put the Báb to death. This befell in brief as follows. The governor of Ádhirbayján, Prince Ḥamzih Mírzá, was unwilling that the execution of this sentence should be at his hands, and said to the brother of the Amír, Mírzá Ḥasan Khán, “This is a vile business and an easy one; anyone is capable and competent. I had imagined that His Excellency the Regent would commission me to make war on the Afghans or Uzbegs or appoint me to attack and invade the territory of Russia or Turkey.” So Mírzá Ḥasan Khán wrote his excuse in detail to the Amír.

Now the Siyyid Báb had disposed all His affairs before setting out from Chihríq towards Tabríz, had placed His writings and even His ring and pen-case in a specially prepared box, put the key of the box in an envelope, and sent it by means of Mullá Báqir, who was one of His first associates, to Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Karím of Qazvín. This trust Mullá Báqir delivered over to Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Karím at Qum in presence of a numerous company. At the solicitations of those present he opened the lid of the box and said, “I am commanded to convey this trust to Bahá’u’lláh: more than this ask not of me, for I cannot tell you.” Importuned by the company, he produced a long epistle in blue, penned in the most graceful manner with the utmost delicacy and firmness in a beautiful minute shikastih hand, written in the shape of a man so closely that it would have been imagined that it was a single wash of ink on the paper. When they had read this epistle

[they perceived that] He had produced three hundred and sixty derivatives from the word Bahá. Then Mullá 'Abdu'l-Karím conveyed the trust to its destination.

Well, we must return to our original narrative. The Prime Minister issued a second order to his brother Mírzá Ḥasan Khán, the gist of which order was this: "Obtain a formal and explicit sentence from the learned doctors of Tabríz who are the firm support of the Church of Ja'far (upon him be peace) and the impregnable stronghold of the Shí'ite faith; summon the Christian regiment of Urúmíyyih; suspend the Báb before all the people; and give orders for the regiment to fire a volley."

Mírzá Ḥasan Khán summoned his chief of the farráshes, and gave him his instructions. They removed the Báb's turban and sash which were the signs of His Siyyid-hood, brought Him with four of His followers to the barrack square of Tabríz, confined Him in a cell, and appointed forty of the Christian soldiers of Tabríz to guard Him.

Next day the chief of the farráshes delivered over the Báb and a young man named Áqá Muḥammad-'Alí who was of a noble family of Tabríz to Sám Khán, colonel of the Christian regiment of Urúmíyyih, at the sentences of the learned divine Mullá Muḥammad of Mamaqán, of the second ecclesiastical authority Mullá Mírzá Báqir, and of the third ecclesiastical authority Mullá Murtadá-Qulí and others. An iron nail was hammered into the middle of the staircase of the very cell wherein they were imprisoned, and two ropes were hung down. By one rope the Báb was suspended and by the other rope Áqá Muḥammad-'Alí, both being firmly bound in such wise that the head of that young man was on the Báb's breast. The surrounding housetops billowed with teeming crowds. A regiment of soldiers ranged itself in three files. The first file fired; then the second file, and then the third file discharged volleys. From the fire of these volleys a mighty smoke was produced. When the smoke cleared away they saw that young man standing and the Báb seated by the side

of His amanuensis Áqá Siyyid Ḥusayn in the very cell from the staircase of which they had suspended them. To neither one of them had the slightest injury resulted.

Sám Khán the Christian asked to be excused; the turn of service came to another regiment, and the chief of the farráshes withheld his hand. Áqá Ján Big of Khamsíh, colonel of the bodyguard, advanced; and they again bound the Báb together with that young man to the same nail. The Báb uttered certain words which those few who knew Persian understood, while the rest heard but the sound of His voice.

The colonel of the regiment appeared in person: and it was before noon on the twenty-eighth day of Sha'bán in the year [A.H.] one thousand two hundred and sixty-six.¹⁴ Suddenly he gave orders to fire. At this volley the bullets produced such an effect that the breasts [of the victims] were riddled, and their limbs were completely dissected, except their faces, which were but little marred.

Then they removed those two bodies from the square to the edge of the moat outside the city, and that night they remained by the edge of the moat. Next day the Russian consul came with an artist and took a picture of those two bodies in the posture wherein they had fallen at the edge of the moat.

On the second night at midnight the Bábís carried away the two bodies.

On the third day the people did not find the bodies, and some supposed that the wild beasts had devoured them, so that the doctors proclaimed from the summits of their pulpits saying, “The holy body of the immaculate Imám and that of the true Shí'ite are preserved from the encroachments of beasts of prey and creeping things and wounds, but the body of this person have the wild beasts torn in pieces.” But after the fullest investigation and inquiry it hath been proved that when the Báb had dispersed all

¹⁴ 9 July 1850.

His writings and personal properties and it had become clear and evident from various signs that these events would shortly take place, therefore, on the second day of these events, Sulaymán Khán the son of Yaḥyá Khán, one of the nobles of Ádhirbayján devoted to the Báb, arrived, and proceeded straightway to the house of the mayor of Tabríz. And since the mayor was an old friend, associate, and confidant of his; since, moreover, he was of the mystic temperament and did not entertain aversion or dislike for any sect, Sulaymán Khán divulged this secret to him saying, “Tonight I, with several others, will endeavor by every means and artifice to rescue the body. Even though it be not possible, come what may we will make an attack, and either attain our object or pour out our lives freely in this way.” “Such troubles,” answered the mayor, “are in no wise necessary.” He then sent one of his private servants named Ḥájí Alláh-Yár, who, by whatever means and proceedings it was, obtained the body without trouble or difficulty and handed it over to Ḥájí Sulaymán Khán. And when it was morning the sentinels, to excuse themselves, said that the wild beasts had devoured it. That night they sheltered the body in the workshop of a Bábí of Milán: next day they manufactured a box, placed it in the box, and left it as a trust. Afterwards, in accordance with instructions which arrived from Ṭihrán, they sent it away from Ádhirbayján. And this transaction remained absolutely secret.

Now in these years [A.H. one thousand two hundred and] sixty-six and sixty-seven throughout all Persia fire fell on the households of the Bábís, and each one of them, in whatever hamlet he might be, was, on the slightest suspicion arising, put to the sword. More than four thousand souls were slain, and a great multitude of women and children, left without protector or helper, distracted and confounded, were trodden down and destroyed. And all these occurrences were brought about solely by the arbitrary decision and command of Mírzá Taqí Khán, who imagined that by the enactment of a crushing punishment

this sect would be dispersed and disappear in such wise that all sign and knowledge of them would be cut off. Ere long had passed the contrary of his imagination appeared, and it became certain that [the Bábís] were increasing. The flame rose higher and the contagion became swifter: the affair waxed grave and the report thereof reached other climes. At first it was confined to Persia: later it spread to the rest of the world. Quaking and affliction resulted in constancy and stability, and grievous pains and punishment caused acceptance and attraction. The very events produced an impression; impression led to investigation; and investigation resulted in increase. Through the ill-considered policy of the Minister this edifice became fortified and strengthened, and these foundations firm and solid. Previously the matter used to be regarded as commonplace: subsequently it acquired a grave importance in men's eyes. Many persons from all parts of the world set out for Persia, and began to seek with their whole hearts. For it hath been proved by experience in the world that in the case of such matters of conscience laceration causeth healing; censure produceth increased diligence; prohibition induceth eagerness; and intimidation createth avidity. The root is hidden in the very heart, while the branch is apparent and evident. When one branch is cut off other branches grow. Thus it is observed that when such matters occur in other countries they become extinct spontaneously through lack of attention and exiguity of interest. For up to the present moment of movements pertaining to religion many have appeared in the countries of Europe, but, noninterference and absence of bigotry having deprived them of importance, in a little while they became effaced and dispelled.

After this event there was wrought by a certain Bábí a great error and a grave presumption and crime, which has blackened the page of the history of this sect and given it an ill name throughout the civilized world. Of this event the marrow is this, that during the time when the Báb was residing in Ádhirbayján a youth, Şádiq by name, became affected with the utmost devotion

to the Báb, night and day was busy in serving Him, and became bereft of thought and reason. Now when that which befell the Báb in Tabríz took place, this servant, actuated by his own fond fancies, fell into thoughts of seeking blood-revenge. And since he knew naught of the details of the events, the absolute autocracy of the Amír-Nizám, his unbridled power, and sole authority; nor [was aware] that this sentence had been promulgated absolutely without the cognizance of the Royal Court, and that the Prime Minister had presumptuously issued the order on his own sole responsibility; since, on the contrary, he supposed that agreeably to ordinary custom and usage the attendants of the court had had a share in, and a knowledge of this sentence, therefore, [impelled by] folly, frenzy, and his evil star, nay, by sheer madness, he rose up from Tabríz and came straight to Ṭihrán, one other person being his accomplice. Then, since the Royal Train had its abode in Shimírán, he thither directed his steps. God is our refuge! By him was wrought a deed so presumptuous that the tongue is unable to declare and the pen loath to describe it. Yet to God be praise and thankfulness that this madman had charged his pistol with shot, imagining this to be preferable and superior to all projectiles.

Then all at once commotion arose, and this sect became of such ill repute that still, strive and struggle as they may to escape from the curse and disgrace and dishonor of this deed, they are unable to do so. They will recount from the first manifestation of the Báb until the present time; but when the thread of the discourse reaches this event they are abashed and hang their heads in shame, repudiating the presumptuous actor and accounting him the destroyer of the edifice and the cause of shame to mankind.

Now after the occurrence of this grave matter all of this sect were suspected. At first there was neither investigation nor inquiry, but afterwards in mere justice it was decided that there should be investigation, inquiry, and examination. All who were known to be of this sect fell under suspicion. Bahá'u'lláh was

passing the summer in the village of Afchih situated one stage from Ṭīhrán. When this news was spread abroad and punishment began, everyone who was able hid himself in some retreat or fled the country. Amongst these Mírzá Yaḥyá, the brother of Bahá'u'lláh, concealed himself, and, a bewildered fugitive, in the guise of a dervish, with kashkúl in hand, wandered in mountains and plains on the road to Rasht. But Bahá'u'lláh rode forth with perfect composure and calmness from Afchih, and came to Niyávarán, which was the abode of the Royal Train and the station of the imperial camp. Immediately on His arrival He was placed under arrest, and a whole regiment guarded Him closely. After several days of interrogation they sent Him in chains and fetters from Shimírán to the jail of Ṭīhrán. And this harshness and punishment was due to the immoderate importunity of Ḥájí 'Alí Khán, the Ḥájíbu'd-Dawlih, nor did there seem any hope of deliverance, until His Majesty the King, moved by his own kindly spirit, commanded circumspection, and ordered this occurrence to be investigated and examined particularly and generally by means of the ministers of the imperial court.

Now when Bahá'u'lláh was interrogated on this matter He answered in reply, “The event itself indicates the truth of the affair and testifies that this is the action of a thoughtless, unreasoning, and ignorant man. For no reasonable person would charge his pistol with shot when embarking on so grave an enterprise. At least he would so arrange and plan it that the deed should be orderly and systematic. From the very nature of the event it is clear and evident as the sun that it is not the act of such as Myself.”

So it was established and proven that the assassin had on his own responsibility engaged in this grievous action and monstrous deed with the idea and design of taking blood revenge for his Master, and that it concerned no one else. And when the truth of the matter became evident the innocence of Bahá'u'lláh from this suspicion was established in such wise that no doubt remained

for anyone; the decision of the court declared His purity and freedom from this charge; and it became apparent and clear that what had been done with regard to Him was due to the efforts of His foes and the hasty folly of the Ḥajjību'd-Dawliḥ. Therefore did the government of eternal duration desire to restore certain properties and estates which had been confiscated, that thereby it might pacify Him. But since the chief part of these was lost and only an inconsiderable portion was forthcoming, none came forward to claim them. Indeed Bahá'u'lláh requested permission to withdraw to the Supreme Shrines¹⁵ [of Karbilá and Najaf] and, after some months, by the royal permission and with the leave of the Prime Minister, set out accompanied by one of the King's messengers for the Shrines.

Let us return, however, to our original subject. Of the Báb's writings many remained in men's hands. Some of these were commentaries on, and interpretations of the verses of the Qur'án; some were prayers, homilies, and hints of [the true significance of certain] passages; others were exhortations, admonitions, dissertations on the different branches of the doctrine of the Divine Unity, demonstrations of the special prophetic mission of the Lord of existing things [Muḥammad], and (as it hath been understood) encouragements to amendment of character, severance from worldly states, and dependence on the inspirations of God. But the essence and purport of His compositions were the praises and descriptions of that Reality soon to appear which was His only object and aim, His darling, and His desire.¹⁶ For He regarded His own appearance as that of a harbinger of good tidings, and considered His own real nature merely as a means for the

¹⁵ Atabát 'Alíyat, literally Supreme Shrines, a term by which the Shí'ih Muslims referred to the cities of Kazímayn, Najaf, and Karbilá and generally applied to the region of eastern 'Iráq, of which Baghdád was the center. When Bahá'u'lláh was released from prison and banished from Persia, He chose Baghdád for the place of His exile.

¹⁶ That is, Bahá'u'lláh.

manifestation of the greater perfections of that One. And indeed He ceased not from celebrating Him by night or day for a single instant, but used to signify to all His followers that they should expect His arising: in such wise that He declares in His writings, “I am a letter out of that most mighty book and a dewdrop from that limitless ocean, and, when He shall appear, My true nature, My mysteries, riddles, and intimations will become evident, and the embryo of this religion shall develop through the grades of its being and ascent, attain to the station of ‘the most comely of forms,’¹⁷ and become adorned with the robe of ‘blessed be God, the Best of Creators.’¹⁸ And this event will disclose itself in the year [A.H. one thousand two hundred and] sixty-nine,¹⁹ which corresponds to the number of the year of ‘after a while,’ and ‘thou shalt see the mountains which thou thinkest so solid passing away like the passing of the clouds’²⁰ shall be fulfilled.” In short He so described Him that, in His own expression, He regarded approach to the divine bounty and attainment of the highest degrees of perfection in the worlds of humanity as dependent on love for Him, and so inflamed was He with His flame that commemoration of Him was the bright candle of His dark nights in the fortress of Mákú, and remembrance of Him was the best of companions in the straits of the prison of Chihríq. Thereby He obtained spiritual enlargements; with His wine was He inebriated; and at remembrance of Him did He rejoice. All of His followers too were in expectation of the appearance of these signs, and each one of His intimates was seeking after the

¹⁷ Qur’án 95:4.

¹⁸ Qur’án 23:14.

¹⁹ 1852. Ĥin, according to the Abjad notation, equals 68. Cf. *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabíl’s Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá’í Revelation*, trans. and ed. Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1932), p. 18, note 1: In 1268 Bahá’u’lláh, chained in the Black Pit of Tíhrán, received the first intimations of His Divine Mission, and that same year hinted of this in His odes.

²⁰ Qur’án 27:90.

fulfillment of these forecasts.

Now from the beginning of the manifestation of the Báb there was in Ṭihrán (which the Báb called the Holy Land) a Youth of the family of one of the ministers and of noble lineage, gifted in every way, and adorned with purity and nobility. Although He combined lofty lineage with high connection, and although His ancestors were men of note in Persia and universally sought after, yet He was not of a race of doctors or a family of scholars. Now this Youth was from His earliest adolescence celebrated amongst those of the ministerial class, both relatives and strangers, for single-mindedness, and was from childhood pointed out as remarkable for sagacity, and held in regard in the eyes of the wise. He did not, however, after the fashion of His ancestors, desire elevation to lofty ranks nor seek advancement to splendid but transient positions. His extreme aptitude was nevertheless admitted by all, and His excessive acuteness and intelligence were universally avowed. In the eyes of the common folk He enjoyed a wonderful esteem, and in all gatherings and assemblies He had a marvelous speech and delivery. Notwithstanding lack of instruction and education such was the keenness of His penetration and the readiness of His apprehension that when during His youthful prime He appeared in assemblies where questions of divinity and points of metaphysic were being discussed, and, in presence of a great concourse of doctors and scholars loosed His tongue, all those present were amazed, accounting this as a sort of prodigy beyond the discernment natural to the human race. From His early years He was the hope of His kindred and the unique one of His family and race, nay, their refuge and shelter.

However, in spite of these conditions and circumstances, as He wore a kuláh on His head and locks flowing over His shoulder, no one imagined that He would become the source of such matters, or that the waves of His flood would reach the zenith of this firmament.

When the question of the Báb was noised abroad signs of partiality appeared in Him. At the first He apprised His relatives and connections, and the children and dependents of His own circle; subsequently He occupied His energies by day and night in inviting friends and strangers [to embrace the new faith]. He arose with mighty resolution, engaged with the utmost constancy in systematizing the principles and consolidating the ethical canons of that society in every way, and strove by all means to protect and guard these people.

When He had [thus] established the foundations in Tīhrán He hastened to Mázindarán, where He displayed in assemblies, meetings, conferences, inns, mosques, and colleges a mighty power of utterance and exposition. Whoever beheld His open brow or heard His vivid eulogies perceived Him with the eye of actual vision to be a patent demonstration, a latent magnetic force, and a pervading influence. A great number both of rich and poor and of erudite doctors were attracted by His preaching and washed their hands of heart and life, being so enkindled that they laid down their lives under the sword dancing [with joy].

Thus, amongst many instances, one day four learned and accomplished scholars of the divines of Núr were present in His company, and in such wise did He expound that all four were involuntarily constrained to entreat Him to accept them for His service. For by dint of His eloquence, which was like “evident sorcery,” He satisfied these eminent doctors that they were in reality children engaged in the rudiments of study and the merest tyros, and that therefore they must read the alphabet from the beginning. Several protracted conferences were passed in expounding and elucidating the Point and the Alif of the Absolute, wherein the doctors present were astounded, and filled with amazement and astonishment at the seething and roaring of the ocean of His utterance. The report of this occurrence reached the hearing of far and near, and deep despondency fell on the adversaries. The regions of Núr were filled with excitement and

commotion at these events, and the noise of this mischief and trouble smote the ears of the citizens of Barfurúsh. The chief divine of Núr, Mullá Muḥammad, was in Qishlaq. When he heard of these occurrences he sent two of the most distinguished and profound of the doctors, who were possessed of wondrous eloquence, effective oratorical talent, conclusiveness of argument, and brilliant powers of demonstration, to quench this fire, and to subdue and overcome this Young Man by force of argument, either reducing Him to penitence, or causing Him to despair of the successful issue of His projects. Glory be to God for His wondrous decrees! When those two doctors entered the presence of that Young Man, saw the waves of His utterance, and heard the force of His arguments, they unfolded like the rose and were stirred like the multitude, and, abandoning altar and chair, pulpit and preferment, wealth and luxury, and evening and morning congregations, they applied themselves to the furtherance of the objects of this Person, even inviting the chief divine to tender his allegiance. So when this Young Man with a faculty of speech like a rushing torrent set out for Ámul and Sarí He met with that experienced doctor and that illustrious divine in Qishlaq of Núr. And the people assembled from all quarters awaiting the result. His accomplished reverence the divine, although he was of universally acknowledged excellence, and in science the most learned of his contemporaries, nevertheless decided to have recourse to augury as to [whether he should engage in] discussion and disputation. This did not prove favorable and he therefore excused himself, deferring [the discussion] until some other time. His incompetency and shortcoming thereby became known and suspected, and this caused the adherence, confirmation, and edification of many.

In brief outline the narrative is this. For some while He wandered about in those districts. After the death of the late prince Muḥammad Sháh He returned to Tihrán, having in His mind [the intention of] corresponding and entering into relations with

the Báb. The medium of this correspondence was the celebrated Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Karím of Qazvín, who was the Báb’s mainstay and trusted intimate. Now since a great celebrity had been attained for Bahá’u’lláh in Tīhrán, and the hearts of men were disposed towards Him, He, together with Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Karím, considered it as expedient that, in face of the agitation amongst the doctors, the aggressiveness of the greater part of [the people of] Persia, and the irresistible power of the Amír-Nizám, whereby both the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh were in great danger and liable to incur severe punishment, some measure should be adopted to direct the thoughts of men towards some absent person, by which means Bahá’u’lláh would remain protected from the interference of all men. And since further, having regard to sundry considerations, they did not consider an outsider as suitable, they cast the lot of this augury to the name of Bahá’u’lláh’s brother Mírzá Yaḥyá.

By the assistance and instruction of Bahá’u’lláh, therefore, they made him notorious and famous on the tongues of friends and foes, and wrote letters, ostensibly at his dictation, to the Báb. And since secret correspondences were in process the Báb highly approved of this scheme. So Mírzá Yaḥyá was concealed and hidden while mention of him was on the tongues and in the mouths of men. And this mighty plan was of wondrous efficacy, for Bahá’u’lláh, though He was known and seen, remained safe and secure, and this veil was the cause that no one outside [the sect] fathomed the matter or fell into the idea of molestation, until Bahá’u’lláh quitted Tīhrán at the permission of the King and was permitted to withdraw to the Supreme Shrines.

When He reached Baghdád and the crescent moon of the month of Muharram of the year [A.H. one thousand two hundred and] sixty-nine (which was termed in the books of the Báb “the year of ‘after a while’” and wherein He had promised the disclosure of the true nature of His religion and its mysteries) shone forth from the horizon of the world, this covert secret, as

is related, became apparent amongst all within and without [the society]. Bahá'u'lláh with mighty steadfastness became a target for the arrows of all amongst mankind, while Mírzá Yahyá in disguise passed his time, now in the environs and vicinity of Baghdád engaged for better concealment in various trades, now in Baghdád itself in the garb of the Arabs.

Now Bahá'u'lláh so acted that the hearts of this sect were drawn towards Him, while most of the inhabitants of 'Iráq were reduced to silence and speechlessness, some being amazed and others angered. After remaining there for one year He withdrew His hand from all things, abandoned relatives and connections, and, without the knowledge of His followers, quitted 'Iráq alone and solitary, without companion, supporter, associate, or comrade. For nigh upon two years He dwelt in Turkish Kurdistán, generally in a place named Sar-Galú, situated in the mountains, and far removed from human habitations. Sometimes on rare occasions He used to frequent Sulaymáníyyih. Ere long had elapsed the most eminent doctors of those regions got some inkling of His circumstances and conditions, and conversed with Him on the solution of certain difficult questions connected with the most abstruse points of theology. Having witnessed on His part ample signs and satisfactory explanations they observed towards Him the utmost respectfulness and deference. In consequence of this He acquired a great fame and wonderful reputation in those regions, and fragmentary accounts of Him were circulated in all quarters and directions, to wit that a stranger, a Persian, had appeared in the district of Sulaymáníyyih (which hath been, from of old, the place whence the most expert doctors of the Sunnites have arisen), and that the people of that country had loosed their tongues in praise of Him. From the rumor thus heard it was known that that Person was none other than Bahá'u'lláh. Several persons, therefore, hastened thither, and began to entreat and implore, and the urgent entreaty of all brought about His return.

Now although this sect had not been affected with quaking or consternation at these grievous events, such as the slaughter of their Chief and the rest, but did rather increase and multiply; still, since the Báb was but beginning to lay the foundations when He was slain, therefore was this community ignorant concerning its proper conduct, action, behavior, and duty, their sole guiding principle being love for the Báb. This ignorance was the reason that in some parts disturbances occurred; for, experiencing violent molestation, they unclosed their hands in self-defense. But after His return Bahá'u'lláh made such strenuous efforts in educating, teaching, training, regulating, and reconstructing this community that in a short while all these troubles and mischiefs were quenched, and the utmost tranquility and repose reigned in men's hearts; so that, according to what hath been heard, it became clear and obvious even to statesmen that the fundamental intentions and ideas of this sect were things spiritual, and such as are connected with pure hearts; that their true and essential principles were to reform the morals and beautify the conduct of the human race, and that with things material they had absolutely no concern.

When these principles, then, were established in the hearts of this sect they so acted in all lands that they became celebrated amongst statesmen for gentleness of spirit, steadfastness of heart, right intent, good deeds, and excellence of conduct. For this people are most well-disposed towards obedience and submissiveness, and, on receiving such instruction, they conformed their conduct and behavior thereto. Formerly exception was taken to the words, deeds, demeanor, morals, and conduct of this sect: now objection is made in Persia to their tenets and spiritual state. Now this is beyond the power of man, that he should be able by interference or objection to change the heart and conscience, or meddle with the convictions of anyone. For in the realm of conscience naught but the ray of God's light can command, and on the throne of the heart none but the pervading power of

the King of Kings should rule. Thus it is that one can arrest and suspend [the action of] every faculty except thought and reflection; for a man cannot even by his own volition withhold himself from reflection or thought, nor keep back his musings and imaginings.

At all events the undeniable truth is this, that for nigh upon thirty-five years no action opposed to the government or prejudicial to the nation has emanated from this sect or been witnessed [on their part], and that during this long period, notwithstanding the fact that their numbers and strength are double what they were formerly, no sound has arisen from any place, except that every now and then learned doctors and eminent scholars (really for the extension of this report through the world and the awakening of men) sentence some few to death. For such interference is not destruction but edification when thou regardest the truth, which will not thereby become quenched and forgotten, but rather stimulated and advertised.

I will at least relate one short anecdote of what actually took place. A certain person violently molested and grievously injured a certain Bábí. The victim unclosed his hand in retaliation and arose to take vengeance, unsheathing his weapon against the aggressor. Becoming the object of censure and reprimand of this sect, however, he took refuge in flight.

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When he reached Hamadán his character became known, and, as he was of the clerical class, the doctors vehemently pursued him, handed him over to the government, and ordered chastisement to be inflicted. By chance there fell out from the fold of his collar a document written by Bahá'u'lláh, the subject of which was reproof of attempts at retaliation, censure and reprobation of the search after vengeance, and prohibition from following after lusts. Amongst other matters they found these expressions contained in it: “Verily God is quit of the seditious,” and likewise: “If ye be slain it is better for you than that ye should slay. And when ye are tormented have recourse to the controllers of affairs and the refuge of the people; and if ye be neglected then entrust your affairs to the Jealous Lord. This is the mark of the sincere, and the characteristic of the assured.” When the governor became cognizant of this writing he addressed that person saying, “By the decree of that Chief whom you yourself obey correction is necessary and punishment and chastisement obligatory.” “If,” replied that person, “you will carry out all His precepts I shall have the utmost pleasure in [submitting to] punishment and death.” The governor smiled and let the man go.

So Bahá'u'lláh made the utmost efforts to educate [His people] and incite [them] to morality, the acquisition of the sciences and arts of all countries, kindly dealing with all the nations of the earth, desire for the welfare of all peoples, sociability, concord, obedience, submissiveness, instruction of [their] children, production of what is needful for the human race, and inauguration of true happiness for mankind; and He continually kept sending tracts of admonition to all parts, whereby a wonderful effect was produced. Some of these epistles have, after extreme search and inquiry, been examined, and some portions of them shall now be set down in writing.

All these epistles consisted of [exhortations to] purity of morals, encouragement to good conduct, reprobation of certain individuals, and complaints of the seditious. Amongst others this sentence was recorded:

“My captivity is not My abasement: by My life, it is indeed a glory unto Me! But the abasement is the action of My friends who connect themselves with Us and follow the devil in their actions. Amongst them is he who taketh lust and turneth aside from what is commanded; and amongst them is he who followeth the truth in right guidance. As for those who commit sin and cling to the world they are assuredly not of the people of Bahá.”

So again: “Well it is with him who is adorned with the decoration of manners and morals: verily he is of those who help their Lord with clear perspicuous action.”

“He is God, exalted is His state, wisdom and utterance. The True One (glorious is His glory) for the showing forth of the gems of ideals from the mine of man, hath, in every age, sent a Trusted One. The primary foundation of the faith of God and the religion of God is this, that they should not make diverse sects and various paths the cause and reason of hatred. These principles and laws and firm sure roads appear from one dawning-place and shine from one dayspring, and these diversities were out of regard for the requirements of the time, season, ages, and epochs. O unitarians, make firm the girdle of endeavor, that perchance religious strife and conflict may be removed from amongst the people of the world and be annulled. For love of God and His servants engage in this great and mighty matter. Religious hatred and rancor is a world-consuming fire, and the quenching thereof most arduous, unless the hand of Divine Might give men deliverance from this unfruitful calamity. Consider a war which happeneth between two states: both sides have foregone wealth and life: how many villages were beheld as though they were not! This precept is in the position of the light in the lamp of utterance.”

“O people of the world, ye are all the fruit of one tree and the leaves of one branch. Walk with perfect charity, concord, affection, and agreement. I swear by the Sun of Truth, the light of agreement shall brighten and illumine the horizons. The all-knowing Truth hath been and is the witness to this saying. Endeavor to attain to this high supreme station which is the station of protection and preservation of mankind. This is the intent of the King of intentions, and this the hope of the Lord of hopes.”

“We trust that God will assist the kings of the earth to illuminate and adorn the earth with the refulgent light of the Sun of Justice. At one time We spoke in the language of the Law, at another time in the language of the Truth and the Way; and the ultimate object and remote aim was the showing forth of this high supreme station. And God sufficeth for witness.”

“O friends, consort with all the people of the world with joy and fragrance. If there be to you a word or essence whereof others than you are devoid, communicate it and show it forth in the language of affection and kindness: if it be received and be effective the object is attained, and if not leave it to him, and with regard to him deal not harshly but pray. The language of kindness is the lodestone of hearts and the food of the soul; it stands in the relation of ideas to words, and is as an horizon for the shining of the Sun of Wisdom and Knowledge.”

“If the unitarians had in the latter times acted according to the glorious Law [which came] after His Highness the Seal [of the Prophets] (may the life of all beside Him be His sacrifice!), and had clung to its skirt, the foundation of the fortress of religion would not have been shaken, and populous cities would not have been ruined, but rather cities and villages would have acquired and been adorned with the decoration of peace and serenity.”

“Through the heedlessness and discordance of the favored people and the smoke of wicked souls the Fair Nation is seen to be darkened and enfeebled. Had they acted [according to what

they knew] they would not have been heedless of the light of the Sun of Justice.”

“This Victim hath from earliest days until now been afflicted at the hands of the heedless. They exiled Us without cause at one time to ‘Iráq, at another time to Adrianople, and thence to Akká, which was a place of exile for murderers and robbers; neither is it known where and in what spot We shall take up Our abode after this greatest prison-house. Knowledge is with God, the Lord of the Throne and of the dust and the Lord of the lofty seat. In whatever place We may be, and whatever befall Us, the saints must gaze with perfect steadfastness and confidence towards the Supreme Horizon and occupy themselves in the reformation of the world and the education of the nations. What hath befallen and shall befall hath been and is an instrument and means for the furtherance of the Word of Unity. Take hold of the command of God and cling thereto: verily it hath been sent down from beside a wise Ordainer.”

“With perfect compassion and mercy have We guided and directed the people of the world to that whereby their souls shall be profited. I swear by the Sun of Truth which hath shone forth from the highest horizons of the world that the people of Bahá had not and have not any aim save the prosperity and reformation of the world and the purifying of the nations. With all men they have been in sincerity and charity. Their outward [appearance] is one with their inward [heart], and their inward [heart] identical with their outward [appearance]. The truth of the matter is not hidden or concealed, but plain and evident before [men’s] faces. Their very deeds are the witness of this assertion. Today let everyone endowed with vision win his way from deeds and signs to the object of the people of Bahá and from their speech and conduct gain knowledge of their intent. The waves of the ocean of divine mercy appear at the utmost height, and the showers of the clouds of His grace and favor descend every moment. During the days of sojourn in ‘Iráq this Oppressed One sat down and

consorted with all classes without veil or disguise. How many of the denizens of the horizons entered in enmity and went forth in sympathy! The door of grace was open before the faces of all. With rebellious and obedient did We outwardly converse after one fashion, that perchance the evildoers might win their way to the ocean of boundless forgiveness. The splendors of the Name of the Concealer were in such wise manifested that the evildoer imagined that he was accounted of the good. No messenger was disappointed and no inquirer was turned back. The causes of the aversion and avoidance of men were certain of the doctors of Persia and the unseemly deeds of the ignorant. By [the term] ‘doctors’ in these passages are signified those persons who have withheld mankind from the shore of the Ocean of Unity; but as for the learned who practice [their knowledge] and the wise who act justly, they are as the spirit unto the body of the world. Well is it with that learned man whose head is adorned with the crown of justice, and whose body glorieth in the ornament of honesty. The Pen of Admonition exhorteth the friends and enjoineth on them charity, pity, wisdom, and gentleness. The Oppressed One is this day a prisoner; His allies are the hosts of good deeds and virtues; not ranks, and hosts, and guns, and cannons.²¹ One holy action maketh the world of earth highest paradise.

“O friends, help the Oppressed One with well-pleasing virtues and good deeds! Today let every soul desire to attain the highest station. He must not regard what is in him, but what is in God. It is not for him to regard what shall advantage himself, but that whereby the Word of God which must be obeyed shall be upraised. The heart must be sanctified from every form of selfishness and lust, for the weapons of the unitarians and the saints were and are the fear of God. That is the buckler which guardeth man from the arrows of hatred and abomination. Unceasingly hath the standard of piety been victorious, and accounted amongst the

²¹ Throughout His Writings the “Oppressed One” refers to Bahá’u’lláh Himself.

most puissant hosts of the world. Thereby do the saints subdue the cities of [men's] hearts by the permission of God, the Lord of hosts. Darkness hath encompassed the earth: the lamp which giveth light was and is wisdom. The dictates thereof must be observed under all circumstances. And of wisdom is the regard of place and the utterance of discourse according to measure and state. And of wisdom is decision; for man should not accept whatsoever anyone sayeth.

“Under all circumstances desire of the True One (glorious is His glory) that He will not deprive His servants of the sealed wine²² and the lights of the Name of the Self-Subsistent.

“O friends of God, verily the Pen of Sincerity enjoineth on you the greatest faithfulness. By the Life of God, its light is more evident than the light of the sun! In its light and its brightness and its radiance every light is eclipsed. We desire of God that He will not withhold from His cities and lands the radiant effulgence of the Sun of Faithfulness. We have directed all in the nights and in the days to faithfulness, chastity, purity, and constancy; and have enjoined good deeds and well-pleasing qualities. In the nights and in the days the shriek of the pen ariseth and the tongue speaketh, that against the sword the word may arise, and against fierceness patience, and in place of oppression submission, and at the time of martyrdom resignation. For thirty years and more, in all that hath befallen this oppressed community they have been patient, referring it to God. Everyone endowed with justice and fairness hath testified and doth testify to that which hath been said. During this period this Oppressed One was engaged in good exhortations and efficacious and sufficient admonitions, till it became established and obvious before all that this Victim had made Himself a target for the arrows of calamity unto the showing forth of the treasures deposited in [men's] souls. Strife and contest were and are seemly in the beasts of prey of the earth,

²² The ordinances of God.

[but] laudable actions are seemly in man.

“Blessed is the Merciful One: Who created man: and taught him utterance.²³ After all these troubles, neither are the ministers of state content, nor the doctors of the church. Not one soul was found to utter a word for God before the court of His Majesty the King (may God perpetuate his kingdom). There shall not befall Us aught save that which God hath decreed unto Us. They acted not kindly, nor was there any shortcoming in the display of evil. Justice became like the phoenix, and faithfulness like the philosopher’s stone: none spake for the right. It would seem that justice had become hateful to men and cast forth from all lands like the people of God. Glory be to God! In the episode of the land of Tá not one spoke for that which God had commanded. Having regard to the display of power and parade of service in the presence of the King (may God perpetuate his kingdom) they have called good evil and the reformer a sedition-monger. The like of these persons would depict the drop as an ocean, and the mote as a sun. They call the house at Kulayn ‘the strong fortress,’ and close their eyes to the perspicuous truth. They have attacked a number of reformers of the world with the charge of seditiousness. As God liveth, these persons had and have no intent nor hope save the glory of the state and service to their nation! For God they spoke and for God they speak, and in the way of God do they journey.

“O friends, ask of Him Who is the Desire of the denizens of earth that He will succor His Majesty the King (may God perpetuate his kingdom) so that all the dominions of Persia may by the light of the Sun of Justice become adorned with the decoration of tranquility and security. According to statements made, he, at the promptings of his blessed nature, loosed those who were in bonds, and bestowed freedom on the captives. The representation of certain matters before the faces of [God’s] ser-

²³ Qur’án 55:3–4.

vants is obligatory, and natural to the pious, so that the good may be aware and become cognizant [thereof]. Verily He inspireth whom He pleaseth with what He desireth, and He is the Powerful, the Ordainer, the Knowing, the Wise.

“A word from that land hath reached the Oppressed One which in truth was the cause of wonder. His Highness the Mu'tamí-du'd-Dawlih, Farhád Mírzá, said concerning the Imprisoned One that whereof the repetition is not pleasing. This Victim consorted very little with him or the like of him. So far as is recollected on [only] two occasions did he visit Murgh-Mahallih in Shimírán where was the abode of the Oppressed One. On the first occasion he came one day in the afternoon, and on the second one Friday morning, returning nigh unto sundown. He knows and is conscious that he should not speak contrary to the truth. If one enter his presence let him repeat these words before him on behalf of the Oppressed One: ‘O Prince! I ask justice and fairness from your Highness concerning that which hath befallen this poor Victim.’ Well is it for that soul whom the doubts of the perverse withhold not from the display of justice, and deprive not of the lights of the luminary of equity. O saints of God! at the end of Our discourse We enjoin on you once again chastity, faithfulness, godliness, sincerity, and purity. Lay aside the evil and adopt the good. This is that whereunto ye are commanded in the Book of God, the Knowing, the Wise. Well is it with those who practice [this injunction]. At this moment the pen crieth out, saying, ‘O saints of God, regard the horizon of uprightness, and be quit, severed, and free from what is beside this. There is no strength and no power save in God.’”

In short, formerly in all provinces in Persia accounts and stories concerning this sect diverse and discordant, yea, incompatible with the character of the human race and opposed to the divine endowment, passed on the tongues and in the mouths of men and obtained notoriety. But when their principles acquired fixity and stability and their conduct and behavior were known

and appreciated, the veil of doubt and suspicion fell, the true character of this sect became clear and evident, and it reached the degree of certainty that their principles were unlike men's fancies, and that their foundation differed from [the popular] opinion and estimate. In their conduct, action, morality, and demeanor was no place for objection; the objection in Persia is to certain of the ideas and tenets of this sect. And from the indications of various circumstances it hath been observed that the people have acquired belief and confidence in the trustworthiness, faithfulness, and godliness of this sect in all transactions.

Let us return to our original topic. During the period of their sojourn in 'Irâq these persons became notorious throughout the world. For exile resulted in fame, in such wise that a great number of other parties sought alliance and union, and devised means of [acquiring] intimacy [with them]. But the Chief of this sect, discovering the aims of each faction, acted with the utmost consistency, circumspection, and firmness. Reposing confidence in none, He applied Himself as far as possible to the admonition of each, inciting and urging them to good resolutions and aims beneficial to the state and the nation. And this conduct and behavior of the Chief acquired notoriety in 'Irâq.

So likewise during the period of their sojourn in 'Irâq certain functionaries of foreign governments were desirous of intimacy, and sought friendly relations [with them], but the Chief would not agree. Amongst other strange haps was this, that in 'Irâq certain of the Royal Family came to an understanding with these [foreign] governments, and, [induced] by promises and threats, conspired with them. But this sect unloosed their tongues in reproach and began to admonish them, saying, "What meanness is this, and what evident treason; that man should, for worldly advantages, personal profit, easy circumstances, or protection of life and property, cast himself into this great detriment and evident loss, and embark in a course of action which will conduce to the greatest abasement and involve the utmost infamy and

disgrace both here and hereafter! One can support any baseness save treason to one's country, and every sin admits of pardon and forgiveness save [that of] dishonoring one's government and injuring one's nation." And they imagined that they were acting patriotically, displaying sincerity and loyalty, and accounting sacred the duties of fidelity; which noble aim they regarded as a moral obligation. So rumors of this were spread abroad through 'Irâq-i-'Arab, and such as wished well to their country loosed their tongues in uttering thanks, expressing approval and respect. And it was supposed that these events would be represented in the Royal Presence; but after a while it became known that certain of the Shaykhs at the Supreme Shrines who were in correspondence with the court, yea, even with the King, were in secret continually attributing to this sect strange affinities and relations, imagining that such attempts would conduce to favor at the Court and cause advancement of [their] condition and rank. And since no one could speak freely on this matter at that court which is the pivot of justice, whilst just ministers aware [of the true state of the case] also regarded silence as their best policy, the 'Irâq question, through these misrepresentations and rumors, assumed gravity in Tihrán, and was enormously exaggerated. But the consuls-general, being cognizant of the truth, continued to act with moderation, until Mírzá Buzurg Khán of Qazvín became consul-general in Baghdád. Now since this person was wont to pass the greater portion of his time in a state of intoxication and was devoid of foresight, he became the accomplice and confederate of those Shaykhs in 'Irâq, and girded up his loins stoutly to destroy and demolish. Such power of description and [strength] of fingers as he possessed he employed in making representations and statements. Each day he secretly wrote a dispatch to Tihrán, made vows and compacts with the Shaykhs, and sent diplomatic notes to His Excellency the Ambassador-in-chief [at Constantinople]. But since these statements and depositions had no basis or foundation, they were all postponed and adjourned;

until at length these Shaykhs convened a meeting to consult with the [Consul-] General, assembled a number of learned doctors and great divines in the [mosque of the] ‘two Kázims’ (upon them be peace), and, having come to an unanimous agreement, wrote to the divines of Karbilá the exalted and Najaf the most noble, convoking them all. They came, some knowing, others not knowing. Amongst the latter the illustrious and expert doctor, the noble and celebrated scholar, the seal of seekers after truth, Shaykh Murtaadá, now departed and assoiled, who was the admitted chief of all, arrived without knowledge [of the matter in hand]. But, so soon as he was informed of their actual designs, he said, “I am not properly acquainted with the essential character of this sect, nor with the secret tenets and hidden theological doctrines of this community; neither have I hitherto witnessed or perceived in their demeanor or conduct anything at variance with the Perspicuous Book which would lead me to pronounce them infidels. Therefore hold me excused in this matter, and let him who regards it as his duty take action.” Now the design of the Shaykhs and the Consul was a sudden and general attack, but, by reason of the noncompliance of the departed Shaykh, this scheme proved abortive, resulting, indeed, only in shame and disappointment. So that concourse of Shaykhs, doctors, and common folk which had come from Karbilá dispersed.

Just at this time mischievous persons--[including] even certain dismissed ministers--endeavored on all sides so to influence this sect that they might perchance alter their course and conduct. From every quarter lying messages and disquieting reports continually followed one another in uninterrupted and constant succession to the effect that the deliberate intention of the court of Persia was the eradication, suppression, annihilation, and destruction of this sect; that correspondence was continually being carried on with the local authorities; and that all [the Bábís] in ‘Iráq would shortly be delivered over with bound hands to Persia. But the Bábís passed the time in calmness and silence, without

in any way altering their behavior and conduct.

So when Mírzá Buzurg Khán failed to effect and accomplish the designs of his heart by such actions also, he ill-advisedly fell to reflecting how he might grieve and humiliate [the Bábís]. Every day he sought some pretext for offering insult, aroused some disturbance and tumult, and raised up the banner of mischief, until the matter came nigh to culminating in the sudden outbreak of a riot, the lapse of the reins of control from the hand, and the precipitation of [men's] hearts into disquietude and perturbation and [their] minds into anguish and agony.

Now when [the Bábís] found themselves unable to treat this humor by any means (for, strive as they would, they were foiled and frustrated), and when they failed to find any remedy for this disorder or any fairness in this flower, they deliberated and hesitated for nine months, and at length a certain number of them, to stop further mischief, enrolled themselves as subjects of the Sublime Ottoman Government, that [thereby] they might assuage this tumult. By means of this device the mischief was allayed, and the consul withdrew his hand from molesting them; but he notified this occurrence to the Royal Court in a manner at variance with the facts and contrary to the truth, and, together with the confederate Shaykhs, applied himself in every way to devices for distracting the senses [of the Bábís]. Finally, however, being dismissed, and overwhelmed with disaster, he became penitent and sorry.

Let us proceed with our original topic. For eleven years and somewhat over, Bahá'u'lláh abode in 'Iráq-i-'Arab. The behavior and conduct of the sect were such that [His] fame and renown increased. For He was manifest and apparent amongst men, consorted and associated with all parties, and would converse familiarly with doctors and scholars concerning the solution of difficult theological questions and the verification of the true sense of abstruse points of divinity. As is currently reported by persons of every class, He used to please all, whether inhabitants

or visitors, by His kindly intercourse and courteous address; and this sort of demeanor and conduct on His part led them to suspect sorcery and account Him an adept in the occult sciences.

During this period Mírzá Yaḥyá remained concealed and hidden, continuing and abiding in his former conduct and behavior, until, when the edict for the removal of Bahá'u'lláh from Baghdád was issued by His Majesty the Ottoman monarch, Mírzá Yaḥyá would neither quit nor accompany [Him]: at one time he meditated setting out for India, at another settling in Turkistán; but, being unable to decide on either of these two plans, he finally, at his own wish, set out before all in the garb of a dervish, in disguise and change of raiment, for Kárkúk and Arbíl. Thence, by continuous advance, he reached Mosul, where, on the arrival of the main body, he took up his abode and station alongside their caravan. And although throughout this journey the governors and officials observed the utmost consideration and respectfulness, while march and halt were alike dignified and honorable, nevertheless was he always concealed in change of raiment, and acted cautiously, on the idea that some act of aggression was likely to occur.

In this fashion did they reach Constantinople, where they were appointed quarters in a guesthouse on the part of the glorious Ottoman monarchy. And at first the utmost attention was paid to them in every way. On the third day, because of the straitness of their quarters and the greatness of their numbers, they migrated and moved to another house. Certain of the nobles came to see and converse with them, and these, as is related, behaved with moderation. Notwithstanding that many in their assemblies and gatherings continued to condemn and vilify them saying, “This sect are a mischief to all the world and destructive of treaties and covenants; they are a source of trouble and baleful to all lands; they have kindled a fire and consumed the earth; and though they be outwardly fair-seeming yet are they deserving of every chastisement and punishment,” yet still the Bábis continued to

conduct themselves with patience, calmness, deliberation, and constancy, so that they did not, even in self-defense, importune [the occupants of] high places or frequent the houses of any of the magnates of that kingdom. Whomsoever amongst the great He [Bahá] interviewed on His own account, they met, and no word save of sciences and arts passed between them; until certain noblemen sought to guide Him, and loosed their tongues in friendly counsel, saying, "To appeal, to state your case, and to demand justice is a measure demanded by custom." He replied in answer, "Pursuing the path of obedience to the King's command We have come to this country. Beyond this We neither had nor have any aim or desire that We should appeal and cause trouble. What is [now] hidden behind the veil of destiny will in the future become manifest. There neither has been nor is any necessity for supplication and importunity. If the enlightened-minded leaders [of your nation] be wise and diligent, they will certainly make inquiry, and acquaint themselves with the true state of the case; if not, then [their] attainment of the truth is impracticable and impossible. Under these circumstances what need is there for importuning statesmen and supplicating ministers of the Court? We are free from every anxiety, and ready and prepared for the things predestined to Us. 'Say, all is from God'²⁴ is a sound and sufficient argument, and 'if God toucheth thee with a hurt there is no dispeller thereof save Him'²⁵ is a healing medicine."

After some months a royal edict was promulgated appointing Adrianople in the district of Roumelia as their place of abode and residence. To that city the Bábís, accompanied by [Turkish] officers, proceeded all together, and there they made their home and habitation. According to statements heard from sundry travelers and from certain great and learned men of that city, they behaved and conducted themselves there also in such wise that the inhabitants of the district and the government officials used to

²⁴ Qur'án 4:80.

²⁵ Qur'án 6:17; 10:107.

eulogize them, and all used to show them respect and deference. In short, since Bahá'u'lláh was wont to hold intercourse with the doctors, scholars, magnates, and nobles [thereby] obtaining fame and celebrity throughout Roumelia, the materials of comfort were gathered together, neither fear nor dread remained, they reposed on the couch of ease, and passed their time in quietude, when one Siyyid Muḥammad by name, of Iṣfáhán, one of the followers [of the Báb], laid the foundations of intimacy and familiarity with Mírzá Yaḥyá, and [thereby] became the cause of vexation and trouble. In other words, he commenced a secret intrigue and fell to tempting Mírzá Yaḥyá, saying, “The fame of this sect hath risen high in the world, and their name hath become noble: neither dread nor danger remaineth, nor is there any fear or [need for] caution before you. Cease, then, to follow, that thou mayest be followed by the world; and come out from amongst adherents, that thou mayest become celebrated throughout the horizons.” Mírzá Yaḥyá, too, through lack of reflection and thought as to consequences, and want of experience, became enamored of his words and befooled by his conduct. This one was [like] the sucking child, and that one became as the much-prized breast. At all events, how much soever some of the chiefs of the sect wrote admonitions and pointed out to him the path of discretion saying, “For many a year hast thou been nurtured in thy brother’s arms and hast reposed on the pillow of ease and gladness; what thoughts are these which are the results of madness? Be not beguiled by this empty name,²⁶ which, out of regard for certain considerations and as a matter of expediency, was bestowed [upon thee]; neither seek to be censured by the community.

²⁶ Mírzá Yaḥyá’s title was Subh-i-Azal, the Morning of Eternity. Bahá'u'lláh, in this connection, cites Amos 4:12–13, which says that God “maketh the morning darkness.” Cf. Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1953), p. 146. See Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974), p.114, for other titles of Mírzá Yaḥyá.

Thy rank and worth depend on a word, and thine exaltation and elevation were for a protection and a consideration,” yet still, the more they admonished him, the less did it affect him; and how much soever they would direct him, he continued to account opposition as identical with advantage. Afterwards, too, the fire of greed and avarice was kindled, and although there was no sort of need, their circumstances being easy in the extreme, they fell to thinking of salary and stipend, and certain of the women dependent on Mírzá Yaḥyá went to the [governor’s] palace and craved assistance and charity. So when Bahá’u’lláh beheld such conduct and behavior on his part He dismissed and drove away both [him and Siyyid Muḥammad] from Himself.

Then Siyyid Muḥammad set out for Constantinople to get his stipend, and opened the door of suffering. According to the account given, this matter caused the greatest sorrow and brought about cessation of intercourse. In Constantinople, moreover, he presumptuously set afloat certain reports, asserting, amongst other things, that the notable personage who had come from ‘Iráq was Mírzá Yaḥyá. Sundry individuals, perceiving that herein was excellent material for mischief-making and a means for the promotion of mutiny, ostensibly supported and applauded him, and stimulated and incited him, saying, “You are really the chief support and acknowledged successor: act with authority, in order that grace and blessing may become apparent. The waveless sea hath no sound, and the cloud without thunder raineth no rain.” By such speech, then, was that unfortunate man entrapped into his course of action, and led to utter vain words which caused the disturbance of [men’s] thoughts. Little by little those who were wont to incite and encourage began without exception to utter violent denunciations in every nook and corner, nay in the court itself, saying, “The Bábís say thus, and expound in this wise: [their] behavior is such, and [their] speech so-and-so.” Such mischief-making and plots caused matters to become misapprehended, and furthermore certain schemes got afloat which were

regarded as necessary measures of self-protection; the expediency of banishing the Bábís came under consideration; and all of a sudden an order came, and Bahá'u'lláh was removed from Roumelia; nor was it known for what purpose or whither they would bear Him away. Diverse accounts were current in [men's] mouths, and many exaggerations were heard [to the effect] that there was no hope of deliverance.

Now all those persons who were with Him with one accord entreated and insisted that they should [be permitted to] accompany Him, and, how much soever the government admonished and forbade them, it was fruitless. Finally one Ḥájí Ja'far by name was moved to lamentation, and with his own hand cut his throat. When the government beheld it thus, it gave permission to all of them to accompany Him, conveyed them from Adrianople to the seashore, and thence transported them to Akká. Mírzá Yaḥyá they sent in like manner to Famagusta.

During the latter days [passed] in Adrianople Bahá'u'lláh composed a detailed epistle setting forth all matters clearly and minutely. He unfolded and expounded the main principles of the sect, and made clear and plain its ethics, manners, course, and mode of conduct: He treated certain political questions in detail, and adduced sundry proofs of His truthfulness: He declared the good intent, loyalty, and sincerity of the sect, and wrote some fragments of prayers, some in Persian, but the greater part in Arabic. He then placed it in a packet and adorned its address with the royal name of His Majesty the King of Persia, and wrote [on it] that some person pure of heart and pure of life, dedicated to God, and prepared for martyr-sacrifice, must, with perfect resignation and willingness, convey this epistle into the presence of the King. A youth named Mírzá Badí, a native of Khurásán, took the epistle, and hastened toward the presence of His Majesty the King. The Royal Train had its abode and station outside Ṭihrán, so he took his stand alone on a rock in a place far off but opposite to the Royal Pavilion, and awaited day and night the passing of

the Royal escort or the attainment of admission into the Imperial Presence. Three days did he pass in a state of fasting and vigilance: an emaciated body and enfeebled spirit remained. On the fourth day the Royal Personage was examining all quarters and directions with a telescope when suddenly his glance fell on this man who was seated in the utmost respectful attitude on a rock. It was inferred from the indications [perceived] that he must certainly have thanks [to offer], or some complaint or demand for redress and justice [to prefer]. [The King] commanded one of those in attendance at the court to inquire into the circumstances of this youth. On interrogation [it was found that] he carried a letter which he desired to convey with his own hand into the Royal Presence. On receiving permission to approach, he cried out before the pavilion with a dignity, composure, and respectfulness surpassing description, and in a loud voice, "O King, I have come unto thee from Sheba with a weighty message!"²⁷ [The King] commanded to take the letter and arrest the bearer. His Majesty the King wished to act with deliberation and desired to discover the truth, but those who were present before him loosed their tongues in violent reprehension, saying, "This person has shown great presumption and amazing audacity, for he hath without fear or dread brought the letter of him against whom all peoples are angered, of him who is banished to Bulgaria and Slavonia, into the presence of the King. If so be that he do not instantly suffer a grievous punishment there will be an increase of this great presumption." So the ministers of the court signified [that he should suffer] punishment and ordered the torture. As the first torment they applied the chain and rack, saying, "Make known thy other friends that thou mayest be delivered from excruciating punishment, and make thy comrades captive that thou mayest escape from the torment of the chain and the keenness of the sword." But, torture, brand, and torment him as they might, they

²⁷ Cf. Qur'án 27:22.

saw naught but steadfastness and silence, and found naught but dumb endurance [on his part]. So, when the torture gave no result, they [first] photographed him (the executioners on his left and on his right, and he sitting bound in fetters and chains beneath the sword with perfect meekness and composure), and then slew and destroyed him. This photograph I sent for, and found worthy of contemplation, for he was seated with wonderful humility and strange submissiveness, in utmost resignation.

Now when His Majesty the King had perused certain passages and become cognizant of the contents of the epistle, he was much affected at what had taken place and manifested regret, because his courtiers had acted hastily and put into execution a severe punishment. It is even related that he said thrice, “Doth anyone punish [one who is but] the channel of

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correspondence?” Then the Royal Command was issued that their Reverences the learned doctors and honorable and accomplished divines should write a reply to that epistle. But when the most expert doctors of the capital became aware of the contents of the letter they ordained: “That this person, without regarding [the fact] that he is at variance with the Perspicuous Religion, is a meddler with custom and creed, and a troubler of kings and emperors. Therefore to eradicate, subdue, repress, and repel [this sect] is one of the requirements of the Well-established Path, and indeed the chief of obligations.”

This answer was not approved before the [Royal] Presence, for the contents of this epistle had no obvious discordance with the Law or with reason, and did not meddle with political or administrative matters, nor interfere with or attack the Throne of Sovereignty. They ought, therefore, to have discussed the real points at issue, and to have written clearly and explicitly such an answer as would have caused the disappearance of doubts and the solution of difficulties, and would have become a fulcrum for discussion to all.

Now of this epistle sundry passages shall be set forth in writing to conduce to a better understanding [of the matter] by all people. At the beginning of the epistle was a striking passage in the Arabic language [treating] of questions of faith and assurance; the sacrifice of life in the way of the Beloved; the state of resignation and contentment; the multiplicity of misfortunes, calamities, hardships, and afflictions; and falling under suspicion of seditiousness through the machinations of foes; the establishment of His innocence in the presence of His Majesty the King; the repudiation of seditious persons and disavowal of the rebellious party; the conditions of sincere belief in the verses of the Qur’án; the needfulness of godly virtues, distinction from all other creatures in this transitory abode, obedience to the commandments, and

avoidance of things prohibited; the evidence of divine support in the affair of the Báb; the inability of whosoever is upon the earth to withstand a heavenly thing; His own awakening at the divine afflux, and His falling thereby into unbounded calamities; His acquisition of the divine gift, His participation in spiritual God-given grace, and His illumination with immediate knowledge without study; the excusableness of His [efforts for the] admonition of mankind, their direction toward the attainment of human perfections, and their enkindlement with the fire of divine love; encouragements to the directing of energy towards the attainment of a state greater than the degree of earthly sovereignty; eloquent prayers [written] in the utmost self-abasement, devotion, and humility; and the like of this. Afterwards He discussed [other] matters in the Persian language. And the form of it is this:

“O God, this is a letter which I wish to send to the King; and Thou knowest that I have not desired aught of him save the display of his justice to Thy people, and the showing forth of his favors to the dwellers in Thy Kingdom. And verily, by My soul, I have not desired aught save what Thou hast desired, neither, by Thy Might, do I desire aught save what Thou desirest. Perish that being which desireth of Thee aught save Thyself! And, by Thy Glory, Thy good pleasure is the limit of My hope, and Thy Will the extremity of My desire! Be merciful then, O God, to this poor [soul] Who hath caught hold of the skirt of Thy richness, and to this humble [suppliant] Who calleth on Thee, for Thou art indeed the Mighty, the Great. Help, O God, His Majesty the King to execute Thy laws amongst Thy servants and to show forth Thy justice amidst Thy creatures, that he may rule over this sect as he ruleth over those who are beside them. Verily Thou art the Potent, the Mighty, the Wise.

“Agreeably to the permission and consent of the King of the age, this Servant turned from the place of the Royal Throne²⁸

²⁸ Ṭihrán.

toward 'Iráq-i-'Arab, and in that land abode twelve years. During the period of [His] sojourn [there] no description of His condition was laid before the Royal Presence, neither did any representation go to foreign states. Relying upon God did He abide in that land, until a certain functionary came to 'Iráq, who, on his arrival, fell to designing the affliction of a company of poor unfortunates. Every day, beguiled by certain of the doctors of Persia, he persecuted these servants; although nothing prejudicial to Church or State, or at variance with the principles and customs of their countrymen had been observed in them. So this Servant [was moved] by this reflection: 'May it not be that by reason of the deeds of the transgressors some action at variance with the world-ordering counsel of the King should be engendered!' Therefore was an epitome [of the matter] addressed to Mírzá Sa'íd Khán, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, that he might submit it to the [Royal] Presence, and that it might be done according to that which the Royal command might promulgate. A long while elapsed, and no command was issued; until matters reached such a state that it was to be feared that sedition might suddenly break out and the blood of many be shed. Of necessity, for the protection of the servants of God, a certain number [of the Bábís] appealed to the governor of 'Iráq. If [the King] will consider what has happened with just regard, it will become clear in the mirror of his luminous heart that what occurred was [done] from considerations of expediency, and that there was apparently no resource save this. The Royal Personage can bear witness and testify to this, that in whatever land there were some few of this sect the fire of war and conflict was wont to be kindled by reason of the aggression of certain governors. But this Transient One after His arrival in 'Iráq withheld all from sedition and strife; and the witness of this Servant is His action, for all are aware and will testify that the multitude of this faction in Persia at that time was more than [it had been] before, yet, notwithstanding this, none transgressed his proper bounds nor assailed anyone. It is nigh

on fifteen years that all continue tranquil, looking unto God and relying on Him, and bear patiently what hath come upon them, casting it on God. And after the arrival of this Servant in this city which is called Adrianople certain of this community enquired concerning the meaning of 'victory.' Diverse answers were sent in reply, one of which answers will be submitted on this page, so that it may become clear before the [Royal] Presence that this Servant hath in view naught save peace and reform. And if some of the divine favors, which, without merit [on My part], have been graciously bestowed [on Me], do not become evident and apparent, this much [at least] will be known, that [God], in [His] abounding grace and undeserved mercy, hath not deprived this Oppressed One of the ornament of reason. The form of words which was set forth on the meaning of 'victory' is this:

“He is God, exalted is He. “It hath been known that God (glorious is His mention) is sanctified from the world and what is therein, and that the meaning of “victory” is not this, that anyone should fight or strive with anyone. The Lord of He doeth what He will²⁹ hath committed the kingdom of creation, both land and sea, into the hand of kings, and they are the manifestations of the Divine Power according to the degrees of their rank: verily He is the Potent, the Sovereign. But that which God (glorious is His mention) hath desired for Himself is the hearts of His servants, which are treasures of praise and love of the Lord and stores of divine knowledge and wisdom. The will of the Eternal King hath ever been to purify the hearts of [His] servants from the promptings of the world and what is therein, so that they may be prepared for illumination by the effulgences of the Lord of the Names and Attributes. Therefore must no stranger find his way into the city of the heart, so that the Incomparable Friend may come unto His own place--that is, the effulgence of His Names and Attributes, not His Essence (exalted is He), for that

²⁹ Qur'ân 3:35; 22:19.

Peerless King hath been and will be holy for everlasting above ascent or descent. Therefore today “victory” neither hath been nor will be opposition to anyone, nor strife with any person; but rather what is well-pleasing is that the cities of [men’s] hearts, which are under the dominion of the hosts of selfishness and lust, should be subdued by the sword of the Word, of Wisdom, and of Exhortation. Everyone, then, who desireth “victory” must first subdue the city of his own heart with the sword of spiritual truth and of the Word, and must protect it from remembering aught beside God: afterwards let him turn his regards towards the cities of [others’] hearts. This is what is intended by “victory”: sedition hath never been nor is pleasing to God, and that which certain ignorant persons formerly wrought was never approved. If ye be slain for His good pleasure verily it is better for you than that ye should slay. Today the friends of God must appear in such fashion amidst [God’s] servants that by their actions they may lead all unto the pleasure of the Lord of Glory. I swear by the Sun of the Horizon of Holiness that the friends of God never have regarded nor will regard the earth or its transitory riches. God hath ever regarded the hearts of [His] servants, and this too is by reason of [His] most great favor, that perchance mortal souls may be cleansed and sanctified from earthly states and may attain unto everlasting places. But that Real King is in Himself sufficient unto Himself [and independent] of all: neither doth any advantage accrue to Him from the love of contingent beings, nor doth any hurt befall Him from their hatred. All earthly places appear through Him and unto Him return, and God singly and alone abideth in His own place which is holy above space and time, mention and utterance, sign, description, and definition, height and depth. And none knoweth this save Him and whosoever hath knowledge of the Book. There is no God but Him, the Mighty, the Bountiful.’ Finis.

“But good deeds depend on this, that the Royal Person should himself look into that [matter] with just and gracious regard,

and not be satisfied with the representations of certain persons unsupported by proof or evidence. We ask God to strengthen the King unto that which He willeth: and what He willeth should be the wish of the worlds.

“Afterwards they summoned this Servant to Constantinople. We reached that city along with a number of poor unfortunates, and after Our arrival did not hold intercourse with a single soul, for We had naught to say [unto them], and there was no wish save that it should be clearly demonstrated by proof to all that this Servant had no thought of sedition and had never associated with the seditious. And, by Him in praise of Whose spirit the tongues of all things speak, to turn in any direction was difficult in consideration of certain circumstances; but these things were done for the protection of lives. Verily My Lord knoweth what is in My soul, and verily He is witness unto what I say. The just king is the shadow of God in the earth; all should take refuge under the shadow of his justice and rest in the shade of his favor. This is not the place for personalities, or censures [directed] specially against some apart from others; for the shadow tells of him who casteth the shadow. God (glorious is His mention) hath called Himself the Lord of the worlds for that He hath nurtured and doth nurture all; exalted is His favor which hath preceded contingent beings and His mercy which hath preceded the worlds.

“This is sufficiently clear, that, [whether] right or wrong according to the imagination of the people, this community have accepted as true and adopted the religion for which they are notorious, and that on this account they have foregone what they had, seeking after what is with God. And this same renunciation of life in the way of love for the Merciful [God] is a faithful witness and an eloquent attest unto that whereunto they lay claim. Hath it [ever] been beheld that a reasonable man renounced his life without proof or evidence [of the truth of that for which he died]? And if it be said, ‘This people are mad,’ this [too] is very improbable, for it is not [a thing] confined to one or two persons,

but rather have a great multitude of every class, inebriated with the Kawthar of divine wisdom, hastened with heart and soul to the place of martyrdom in the way of the Friend. If these persons, who for God have foregone all save Him, and who have poured forth life and wealth in His way, can be belied, then by what proof and evidence shall the truth of that which others assert concerning that wherein they are be established in the presence of the King?

“The late Ḥájí Siyyid Muḥammad (may God exalt his station and overwhelm him in the depth of the ocean of His mercy and forgiveness), although he was of the most learned of the doctors of the age and the most pious and austere of his contemporaries, and although the splendor of his worth was of such a degree that the tongues of all creatures spoke in praise and eulogy of him and confidently asserted his asceticism and godliness, did nevertheless in the war against the Russians forego much good and turn back after a little contest, although he himself had decreed a holy war, and had set out from his native country with conspicuous ensign in support of the Faith. O would that the covering might be withdrawn, and that what is hidden from [men’s] eyes might appear!

“But as to this sect, it is twenty years and more that they have been tormented by day and by night with the fierceness of the Royal anger, and that they have been cast each one into a [different] land by the blasts of the tempests of the King’s wrath. How many children have been left fatherless! How many fathers have become childless! How many mothers have not dared, through fear and dread, to mourn over their slaughtered children! Many [were] the servants [of God] who at eve were in the utmost wealth and opulence, and at dawn were beheld in the extreme of poverty and abasement! There is no land but hath been dyed with their blood and no air whereunto their groanings have not arisen. And during these few years the arrows of affliction have rained down without intermission from the clouds of fate. Yet,

notwithstanding all these visitations and afflictions, the fire of divine love is in such fashion kindled in their hearts that, were they all to be hewn in pieces, they would not forswear the love of the Beloved of all the dwellers upon earth; nay rather with their whole souls do they yearn and hope for what may befall [them] in the way of God.

“O King! The gales of the mercy of the Merciful One have converted these servants and drawn them to the region of the [Divine] Unity--‘The witness of the faithful lover is in his sleeve’--but some of the doctors of Persia have troubled the most luminous heart of the King of the Age with regard to those who are admitted into the Sanctuary of the Merciful One and those who make for the Kaaba of Wisdom. O would that the world-ordering judgment of the King might decide that this Servant should meet those doctors, and, in the presence of His Majesty the King, adduce arguments and proofs! This Servant is ready, and hopeth of God that such a conference may be brought about, so that the truth of the matter may become evident and apparent before His Majesty the King. And afterwards the decision is in thy hand, and I am ready to confront the throne of thy sovereignty; then give judgment for Me or against Me. The Merciful Lord saith in the Furqán, which is the enduring proof amidst the host of existences, ‘Desire death, then, if ye be sincere.’³⁰ He hath declared the desiring of death to be the proof of sincerity; and it will be apparent in the mirror of the [King’s] luminous mind which party it is that hath this day foregone life in the way of Him [Who is] adored by the dwellers upon earth. Had the doctrinal books of this people, [composed] in proof of that wherein they are, been written with the blood which has been shed in His way (exalted is He), books innumerable would assuredly have been apparent and visible amongst mankind.

“How, then, can one repudiate this people, whose words and

³⁰ Qur’án 2:88; 62:6.

deeds are consistent, and accept those persons who neither have foregone nor will forego one atom of the consideration [which they enjoy] in the way of [God] the Sovereign?

“Some of the doctors of Persia who have denounced this Servant have never either met or seen Him, nor [even] become cognizant of [His] intent: nevertheless they said what they desired and do what they will. Every statement requires proof, and is not [established] merely by assertion or by outward gear of asceticism.

“A translation of some passages from the contents of the Hidden Book of Fátimih (upon her be the blessings of God) which are apposite to this place will [now] be submitted in the Persian language, in order that some things [now] concealed may be revealed before the [Royal] Presence. Those addressed in these utterances in the above-mentioned book (which is today known as ‘Hidden Words’) are those people who are outwardly notable for science and piety, but who are inwardly subservient to their passions and lust. He says:

“‘O faithless ones! Why do ye outwardly claim to be shepherds, while inwardly ye have become the wolves of My sheep? Your likeness is like unto the star before the morning, which is apparently bright and luminous, but really causeth the misguidance and destruction of the caravans of My city and country.’

“So likewise He saith:

“‘O outwardly fair and inwardly faulty! Thy likeness is like unto clear bitter water, wherein outwardly the utmost sweetness and purity is beheld, but when it falleth into the assaying hands of the taste of the [Divine] Unity He doth not accept a single drop thereof. The radiance of the sun is on the earth and on the mirror alike; but regard the difference as from the guard-stars to the earth; nay, between them is a limitless distance.’

“So likewise He saith:

“‘O child of the world! Many a morning hath the effulgence of My grace come unto thy place from the day-spring of the

placeless, found thee on the couch of ease busied with other things, and returned like the lightning of the spirit to the bright abode of glory. And I, desiring not thy shame, declared it not in the retreats of nearness to the hosts of holiness.'

“So likewise He saith:

“O pretender to My friendship! In the morning the breeze of My grace passed by thee, and found thee sleeping on the bed of heedlessness, and wept over thy condition, and turned back.’
Finis.

“In the presence of the King’s justice, therefore, the statement of an adversary ought not to be accepted as sufficient. And in the Furqán, which distinguisheth between truth and falsehood, He says, ‘O ye who believe, if there come unto you a sinner with a message, then discriminate, lest you fall upon a people in ignorance and on the morrow repent of what ye have done.’³¹ And it hath come down in holy tradition, ‘Credit not the calumniator.’ The matter hath been misapprehended by certain doctors, neither have they seen this Servant. But those persons who have met [Him] testify that this Servant hath not spoken contrary to that which God hath ordained in the Book, and recite this blessed verse: He saith (exalted is He) ‘Do ye disavow Us for aught save that We believe in God, and what hath been sent down unto Us, and what was sent down before?’³²

“O King of the age! The eyes of these wanderers turn and gaze in the direction of the mercy of the Merciful One, and assuredly to these afflictions shall the greatest mercy succeed, and after these most grievous hardships shall follow great ease. But [Our] hope is this, that His Majesty the King will himself turn his attention to [these] matters, which thing will be the cause of hope in [Our] hearts. And this is unmixed good which hath been submitted, and God sufficeth for a witness.

³¹ Qur’án 49:6.

³² Qur’án 5:64.

“Glory be to Thee, O God! O God, I bear witness that the heart of the King is between the fingers of Thy power: if Thou pleasest, turn it, O God, in the direction of mercy and kindness: verily Thou art the Exalted, the Potent, the Beneficent: there is no God but Thee, the Mighty from whom help is sought.

“Concerning the qualifications of the doctors, He saith: ‘But amongst the lawyers he who guardeth himself, observeth his religion, opposeth his lust, and obeyeth the command of his Lord--it is incumbent on the people to follow him...’ unto the end. And if the King of the age will regard this utterance, which proceeded from the tongue of the recipient of divine inspiration, he will observe that those characterized by the qualities transmitted in the aforementioned tradition are rarer than the philosopher’s stone. Therefore the claim of every person pretending to science neither hath been nor is heard.

“So likewise in describing the lawyers of the latter time He says: ‘The lawyers of that time are the most evil of lawyers under the shadow of heaven: from them cometh forth mischief, and unto them it returneth.’

“And if any person deny these traditions, the establishing thereof is [incumbent] on this Servant; but since [Our] object is brevity therefore the detail of the authorities hath not been submitted.

“Those doctors who have indeed drunk of the cup of renunciation never interfered with this Servant, even as the late Shaykh Murtadá (may God exalt his station and cause him to dwell under the shadow of the domes of His grace) used to show [Us] affection during the days of [Our] sojourn in ‘Iráq, and used not to speak concerning this matter otherwise than God hath permitted. We ask God to help all [men] unto that which He loveth and approveth.

“Now all people have shut their eyes to all [these] matters, and are bent on the persecution of this sect; so that should it be demanded of certain persons, who (after God’s grace) rest in the

shadow of the King's clemency and enjoy unbounded blessings, 'In return for the King's favor what service have ye wrought? Have ye by wise policy added any country to [his] countries? Or have ye applied yourselves to aught which would cause the comfort of the people, the prosperity of the kingdom, and the continuance of fair fame for the state?', they have no reply save this, that, falsely or truly, they designate a number of persons in the presence of the King by the name of Bábís, and forthwith engage in slaughter and plunder; even as in Tabríz and elsewhere they sold certain ones, and received much wealth; and this was never represented before the presence of the King. All these things have occurred because of this, that they have found these poor people without a helper. They have foregone matters of moment, and have fallen upon these poor unfortunates.

"Many sects and diverse tribes rest tranquil in the shadow of the King, and of these sects one is this people. Were it not best that the lofty endeavor and magnanimity of those who surround the King should be so witnessed: that they should be scheming for all factions to come under the King's shadow, and that they should govern amidst all with justice? To put in force the ordinances of God is unmixed justice, and with this all are satisfied; nay, the ordinances of God [ever] have been and will be the instrument and means for the protection of [His] creatures, as He saith (exalted is He) 'And in retaliation ye have life, O people of understanding.'³³ [But] it is far from the justice of His Majesty the King that, for the fault of one person, a number of persons should become the objects of the scourges of wrath. God (glorious is His mention) saith: 'None shall bear the burden of another.'³⁴ And this is sufficiently evident, that in every community there have been and will be learned and ignorant, wise and foolish, sinful and pious. And to commit abominable actions is far from the wise man. For the wise man either seeketh the

³³ Qur'án 2:175.

³⁴ Qur'án 6:164; 17:16; 35:19; 39:9; 53:39.

world or abandoneth it. If he abandoneth it, assuredly he will not regard aught save God, and, apart from this, the fear of God will withhold him from committing forbidden and culpable actions. And if he seeketh the world, he will assuredly not commit deeds which will cause and induce the aversion of [God's] servants and produce horror in those who are in all lands; but rather will he practice such deeds as will cause the adhesion of mankind. So it hath been demonstrated that detestable actions have been and will be [wrought only] by ignorant persons. We ask God to keep His servants from regarding aught but Him, and to bring them near to Him: verily He is potent over all things.

“Glory be to Thee, O God! O My God, Thou hearest My groaning, and seest My state and My distress and My affliction, and knowest what is in My soul. If My cry be sincerely for Thy sake, then draw thereby the hearts of Thy creatures unto the horizon of the heaven of Thy recognition, and turn the King unto the right hand of the throne of Thy Name the Merciful; then bestow on him, O My God, the blessing which hath descended from the heaven of Thy favor and the clouds of Thy mercy, that he may sever himself from that which he hath and turn toward the region of Thy bounties. O Lord, help him to support the oppressed amongst [Thy] servants, and to raise up Thy Word amidst Thy people; then aid him with the hosts of the unseen and the seen, that he may subdue cities in Thy Name and rule over all who are upon the earth by Thy power and authority, O Thou in Whose hand is the Kingdom of creation: and verily Thou art He who ruleth at the beginning and in the end: there is no God save Thee, the Potent, the Mighty, the Wise.

“They have misrepresented matters before the presence of the King in such a way that if any ill deed proceed from any one of this sect they account it as [a part] of the religion of these servants. But, by God, beside Whom there is none other God, this Servant hath not sanctioned the committing of sins, much less that whereof the prohibition hath been explicitly revealed in

the Book of God! God hath prohibited unto men the drinking of wine, and the unlawfulness thereof hath been revealed and recorded in the Book of God,³⁵ and the doctors of the age (may God multiply the like of them) have unanimously prohibited unto men this abominable action; yet withal do some commit it. Now the punishment of this action falls on these heedless persons, while those manifestations of the glory of sanctity [continue] holy and undefiled: unto their sanctity all Being, whether of the unseen or the seen, testifieth.

“Yea, these servants [of God] regard God as ‘doing what He pleaseth and ordering what He willeth.’³⁶ There is no retreat nor way of flight for anyone save unto God, and no refuge nor asylum but in Him. And at no time hath the caviling of men, whether learned or unlearned, been a thing to rely on, nor will it be so. The [very] prophets, who are the pearls of the Ocean of Unity and the recipients of Divine Revelation, have [ever] been the objects of men’s aversion and caviling; much more these servants. Even as He saith: ‘Every nation schemed against their apostle to catch him. And they contended with falsehood therewith to refute the truth.’³⁷ So likewise He saith, ‘There came not unto them any apostle but they mocked at him.’³⁸ Consider the appearance of the Seal of the Prophets, the King of the Elect (the soul of the worlds be His sacrifice); after the dawning of the Sun of Truth from the horizon of the Ḥijáz what wrongs befell that Manifestation of the Might of the Lord of Glory at the hands of the people of error! So heedless were men that they were wont to consider the vexation of that Holy One as one of the greatest of good works and as the means of approaching God Most High. For in the first years the doctors of that age, whether Jews or Christians, turned aside from that Sun of the Highest Horizon; and, at the

³⁵ Qur’án 5:92.

³⁶ Qur’án 2:254; 3:35; 22:14, 19

³⁷ Qur’án 40:5.

³⁸ Qur’án 15:11; 36:29

turning aside of those persons, all, whether humble or noble, girt up their loins to quench the radiance of that Light of the Horizon of Ideals. The names of all are recorded in books: amongst them were Wahb ibn Rahí**b**, Ka’b ibn Ashraf, ‘Abdu’l**l**áh [ibn] Ubayy, and the like of these persons; till at length the matter reached such a point that they convened a meeting to take counsel as to the shedding of the most pure blood of that Holy One, as God (glorious is His mention) hath declared: ‘And when those who misbelieved plotted against thee to confine thee, or slay thee, or drive thee out; and they plotted, and God plotted; and God is the best of plotters.’³⁹ So likewise He saith: ‘And if their aversion be grievous unto thee, then, if thou art able to seek out a hole down into the earth, or a ladder up into the sky, that thou mayest show them a sign--[do so]: but if God pleased He would assuredly bring them all to the true guidance: be not therefore one of the ignorant.’⁴⁰ By God, the hearts of those near [unto God] are scorched at the purport of these two blessed verses; but the like of these matters certainly transmitted [to Us] are blotted out of sight, and [men] have not reflected, neither do reflect, what was the reason of the turning aside of [God’s] servants at the appearance of the daysprings of divine lights.

“So, too, before the Seal of the Prophets, consider Jesus the Son of Mary. After the appearance of that Manifestation of the Merciful One all the doctors charged that Quintessence of Faith with misbelief and rebelliousness; until at length, with the consent of Annas, who was the chief of the doctors of that age, and likewise Caiaphas,⁴¹ who was the most learned of the judges, they wrought upon that Holy One that which the pen is ashamed and unable to repeat. The earth with its amplitude was too strait for Him, until God took Him up into the heaven. But were a detailed account of the prophets to be submitted it is feared that

³⁹ Qur’án 8:30.

⁴⁰ Qur’án 6:35.

⁴¹ See John 11:49–50; Acts 4:6–10; 18:13–28; Acts 4:6–10.

weariness might result.

“O would that thou mightest permit, O King, that We should send unto Thy Majesty that whereby eyes would be refreshed, souls tranquilized, and every just person assured that with Him [i.e., Bahá’u’lláh] is knowledge of the Book. Were it not for the turning aside of the ignorant and the willful blindness of the doctors, verily I would utter a discourse whereat hearts would be glad and would fly unto the air from the murmur of whose winds is heard, ‘There is no God but He.’ But now, because the time admitteth it not, the tongue is withheld from utterance, and the vessel of declaration is sealed until God shall unclose it by His power: verily He is the Potent, the Powerful.

“Glory be to Thee, O God! O My God, I ask of Thee in Thy Name, whereby Thou hast subdued whomsoever is in the heavens and the earth, that Thou wilt keep the lamp of Thy religion with the glass of Thy power and Thy favors, so that the winds of denial pass not by it from the region of those who are heedless of the mysteries of Thy Sovereign Name: then increase its light by the oil of Thy wisdom: verily Thou art Potent over whomsoever is in Thy earth and Thy heaven.

“O Lord, I ask of Thee by the Supreme Word, whereat whosoever is in the earth and the heaven feareth save him who taketh hold of the ‘Most Firm Handle,’⁴² that Thou wilt not abandon Me amongst Thy creatures: lift Me up unto Thee, and make Me to enter in under the shadow of Thy mercy, and give Me to drink of the pure wine of Thy grace, that I may dwell under the canopy of Thy glory and the domes of Thy favors: verily Thou art powerful unto that Thou wishest, and verily Thou art the Protecting, the Self-Sufficing.

“O King! The lamps of justice are extinguished, and the fire of persecution is kindled on all sides, until that they have made My people captives. This is not the first honor which hath been

⁴² Qur’ân 2:257; 31:21

violated in the way of God. It behooveth everyone to regard and recall what befell the kindred of the Prophet until that the people made them captives and brought them in unto Damascus the spacious; and amongst them was the Prince of Worshipers, the Stay of the elect, the Sanctuary of the eager (the soul of all beside him be his sacrifice). It was said unto them, ‘Are ye seceders?’ He said, ‘No, by God, we are servants who have believed in God and in His signs, and through us the teeth of faith are disclosed in a smile, and the sign of the Merciful One shineth forth; through our mention spreadeth Al-Bathá,⁴³ and the darkness which intervened between earth and heaven is dispelled.’ It was said, ‘Have ye forbidden what God hath sanctioned, or sanctioned what God hath forbidden?’ He said, ‘We were the first who followed the commandments of God: we are the source of command and its origin, and the firstfruits of all good and its consummation: we are the sign of the Eternal, and His commemoration amongst the nations.’ It was said, ‘Have ye abandoned the Qur’án?’ He said, ‘Through us did the Merciful One reveal it; and we are gales of the All-Glorious amidst [His] creatures; we are streams which have arisen from the most mighty Ocean whereby God revived the earth after its death; from us His signs are diffused, His evidences are manifested, and His tokens appear; and with us are His mysteries and His secrets.’ It was said, ‘For what fault [then] were ye afflicted?’ He said, ‘For the love of God and our severance from all beside Him.’

“Verily We have not repeated his expressions (upon him be peace), but rather We have made manifest a spray from the Ocean of Life which was deposited in his words, that by it those who advance may live and be aware of what hath befallen the trusted ones of God on the part of an evil and most reprobate people. And today We see the people censuring those who acted unjustly of yore, while they oppress more vehemently than those

⁴³ Mecca.

oppressed, and know it not. By God, I do not desire sedition, but the purification of [God's] servants from all that withholdeth them from approach to God, the King of the Day of Invocation.

“I was asleep on My couch: the breaths of My Lord the Merciful passed over Me and awakened Me from sleep: to this bear witness the denizens [of the realms] of His Power and His Kingdom, and the dwellers in the cities of His Glory, and Himself, the True. I am not impatient of calamities in His way, nor of afflictions for His love and at His good pleasure. God hath made affliction as a morning shower to this green pasture, and as a match for His lamp whereby earth and heaven are illumined.

“Shall that which anyone hath of wealth endure unto him, or avail him tomorrow with him who holdeth his forelock? If any should look on those who sleep under slabs and keep company with the dust, can he distinguish the bones of the king's skull from the knuckles of the slave? No, by the King of Kings! Or doth he know governors from herdsmen, or discern the wealthy and the rich from him who was without shoes or carpet? By God, distinction is removed, save for him who fulfilled righteousness and judged uprightly. Where are the doctors, the scholars, the nobles? Where is the keenness of their glances, the sharpness of their sight, the subtlety of their thoughts, the soundness of their understandings? Where are their hidden treasures and their apparent gauds, their bejeweled thrones and their ample couches? Alas! All have been laid waste, and the decree of God hath rendered them as scattered dust! Emptied is what they treasured up, and dissipated is what they collected, and dispersed is what they concealed: they have become [such that] thou seest naught but their empty places, their gaping roofs, their uprooted beams, their new things waxed old. As for the discerning man, verily wealth will not divert him from regarding the end; and for the prudent man, riches will not withhold him from turning toward [God] the Rich, the Exalted. Where is he who held dominion over all whereon the sun arose, and who spent lavishly and

sought after curious things in the world and what is therein created? Where is the lord of the swarthy squadron and the yellow standard? Where is he who ruled Zawrá,⁴⁴ and where he who wrought injustice in [Damascus] the spacious? Where are they at whose bounty treasures were afraid, at whose openhandedness and generosity the ocean was dismayed? Where is he whose arm was stretched forth in rebelliousness, whose heart turned away from the Merciful One? Where is he who used to make choice of pleasures and cull the fruits of desires? Where are the dames of the bridal chambers, and the possessors of beauty? Where are their waving branches and their spreading boughs, their lofty palaces and trellised gardens? Where is the smoothness of the expanses thereof and the softness of their breezes, the rippling of their waters and the murmur of their winds, the cooing of their doves and the rustling of their trees? Where are their laughing hearts and their smiling teeth? Woe unto them! They have descended to the abyss and become companions to the pebbles; today no mention is heard of them nor any sound; nothing is known of them nor any hint. Will the people dispute it while they behold it? Will they deny it when they know it? I know not in what valley they wander erringly: do they not see that they depart and return not? How long will they be famous in the low countries and in the high, descend and ascend? ‘Is not the time yet come to those who believe for their hearts to become humble for the remembrance of God?’⁴⁵ Well is it with that one who hath said or shall say, ‘Yea, O Lord, the time is ripe and hath come,’ and who severeth himself from all that is. Alas! naught is reaped but what is sown, and naught is taken but what is laid up, save by the grace of God and His favor. Hath the earth conceived Him whom the veils of glory prevent not from ascending into the Kingdom of His Lord, the Mighty, the Supreme? Have We any good works whereby defects shall be removed or which shall

⁴⁴ Baghdád.

⁴⁵ Qur’án 57:15.

bring Us near unto the Lord of causes? We ask God to deal with Us according to His grace, not His justice, and to make Us of those who turn toward Him and sever themselves from all beside Him.

“O King, I have seen in the way of God what no eye hath seen and no ear hath heard. Friends have disclaimed Me; ways are straitened unto Me; the pool of safety is dried up; the plain of ease is [scorched] yellow. How many calamities have descended, and how many will descend! I walk advancing toward the Mighty, the Bounteous, while behind Me glides the serpent. My eyes rain down tears until My bed is drenched; but My sorrow is not for Myself. By God, My head longeth for the spears for the love of its Lord, and I never pass by a tree but My heart addresseth it [saying], ‘O would that thou wert cut down in My name and My body were crucified upon thee in the way of My Lord’; yea, because I see mankind going astray in their intoxication, and they know it not: they have exalted their lusts, and put aside their God, as though they took the command of God for a mockery, a sport, and a plaything; and they think that they do well, and that they are harbored in the citadel of security. The matter is not as they suppose: tomorrow they shall see what they [now] deny.

“We are about to shift from this most remote place of banishment⁴⁶ unto the prison of Akká. And, according to what they say, it is assuredly the most desolate of the cities of the world, the most unsightly of them in appearance, the most detestable in climate, and the foulest in water; it is as though it were the metropolis of the owl; there is not heard from its regions aught save the sound of its hooting. And in it they intend to imprison the Servant, and to shut in Our faces the doors of leniency and take away from Us the good things of the life of the world during what remaineth of Our days. By God, though weariness should weaken Me, and hunger should destroy Me, though My couch should be made of

⁴⁶ Adrianople.

the hard rock and My associates of the beasts of the desert, I will not blench, but will be patient, as the resolute and determined are patient, in the strength of God, the King of Preexistence, the Creator of the nations; and under all circumstances I give thanks unto God. And We hope of His graciousness (exalted is He) the freedom of Our necks from chains and shackles in this imprisonment: and that He will render [all men's] faces sincere toward Him, the Mighty, the Bounteous. Verily He answereth him who prayeth unto Him, and is near unto him who calleth on Him. And We ask Him to make this dark calamity a buckler for the body of His saints, and to protect them thereby from sharp swords and piercing blades. Through affliction hath His light shone and His praise been bright unceasingly: this hath been His method through past ages and bygone times.

“The people shall know what today they understand not when their steeds shall stumble, their beds be rolled up, their

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swords be blunted, and their footsteps slip. I know not how long they shall ride the steed of desire and wander erringly in the desert of heedlessness and error. Of glory shall any glory endure, or of abasement any abasement? Or shall he endure who used to stay himself on high cushions, and who attained in splendor the utmost limit? No, by My Lord the Merciful! ‘All that is thereon is transient, and there remaineth [only] the face of My Lord’ the Mighty, the Beneficent. What buckler hath not the arrow of destruction smitten, or what pinion hath not the hand of fate plucked? From what fortress hath the messenger of death been kept back when he came? What throne hath not been broken, or what palace hath not been left desolate? Did men but know what pure wine of the mercy of their Lord, the Mighty, the All-Knowing, was beneath the seal, they would certainly cast aside reproach and seek to be satisfied by this Servant; but now have they veiled Me with the veil of darkness which they have woven with the hands of doubts and fancies. The White Hand shall cleave an opening to this sombre night. On that day the servants [of God] shall say what those caviling women said of yore, that there may appear in the end what began in the beginning. Do they desire to tarry when their foot is in the stirrup? Or do they see any return in their going? No, by the Lord of Lords, save in the Resurrection! On that day men shall arise from the tombs and shall be questioned concerning their riches. Happy that one whom burdens shall not oppress on that day whereon the mountains shall pass away and all shall appear for the questioning in the presence of God the Exalted! Verily He is severe in punishing.

“We ask God to sanctify the hearts of certain of the doctors from rancor and hatred that they may regard things with eyes which closure overcometh not; and to raise them unto a station where the world and the lordship thereof shall not turn them aside

from looking toward the Supreme Horizon, and where [anxiety for] gaining a livelihood and [providing] household goods shall not divert them from [the thought of] that day whereon the mountains shall be made like carpets. Though they rejoice at that which hath befallen Us of calamity, there shall come a day whereon they shall wail and weep. By My Lord, were I given the choice between the glory and opulence, the wealth and dignity, the ease and luxury wherein they are, and the distress and affliction wherein I am, I would certainly choose that wherein I am today, and I would not now exchange one atom of these afflictions for all that hath been created in the kingdom of production! Were it not for afflictions in the way of God My continuance would have no sweetness for Me, nor would My life profit Me. Let it not be hidden from the discerning and such as look towards the chiefest outlook that I, during the greater part of My days, was as a Servant sitting beneath a sword suspended by a single hair who knoweth not when it shall descend upon Him, whether it shall descend instantly or after a while. And in all this We give thanks to God the Lord of the worlds, and We praise Him under all circumstances: verily He is a witness unto all things.

“We ask God to extend His shadow,⁴⁷ that the unitarians may haste thereto, and that the sincere may take shelter therein; and to bestow on [these] servants flowers from the garden of his grace and stars from the horizon of his favors; and to assist him in that which he liketh and approveth; and to help him unto that which shall bring him near to the Dayspring of His Most Comely Names, that he may not shut his eyes to the wrong which he seeth, but may regard his subjects with the eye of favor and preserve them from violence. And we ask Him (exalted is He) to make thee a helper unto His religion and a regarder of His justice, that thou mayest rule over [His] servants as thou rulest over those of thy kindred, and mayest choose for them what thou

⁴⁷ Reference to the Sháh of Persia.

wouldest choose for thyself. Verily He is the Potent, the Exalted, the Protecting, the Self-Subsistent.”

Now since suitable occasion hath arisen it hath been considered appropriate that some of the precepts of Bahá'u'lláh which are contained in tracts and epistles should also be inserted briefly in this treatise, so that the main principles and practice and [their] foundations and basis may become clear and apparent. And these texts have been copied from numerous tracts.

Amongst them [is this]: “Consort with [people of all] religions with spirituality and fragrance.... Beware lest the zeal of ignorance possess you amongst mankind. All originated from God and returneth unto Him: verily He is the Source of creation and the Goal of the worlds.”

And amongst them [is this]: “Ye are forbidden sedition and strife in the books and epistles; and herein I desire naught save your exaltation and elevation, whereunto beareth witness the heaven and its stars, the sun and its radiance, the trees and their leaves, the seas and their waves, and the earth and its treasures. We ask God to continue His saints and strengthen them unto that which befitteth them in this blessed, precious, and wondrous station, and We ask Him to assist those who surround Me to act according to that whereunto they have been commanded on the part of the Supreme Pen.”

And amongst them [is this]: “The fairest tree of knowledge is this sublime word: ‘Ye are all the fruit of one tree and the leaves of one branch.’ Pride is not for him who loves his country, but for him who loves the [whole] world.”

And amongst them [is this]: “Verily he who educateth his son, or one of the sons [of another], it is as though he educated one of My sons. Upon him be the splendor of God, and His grace, and His mercy which preceded the worlds.”

Amongst them [is this]: “O people of Bahá! Ye have been and are the dawnings of affection and the daysprings of divine grace: defile not the tongue with cursing or execration of anyone,

and guard the eye from that which is not seemly. Show forth that which ye have: if it be accepted, the object is attained; if not, interference is vain: leave him to himself, [while] advancing toward God, the Protecting, the Self-Subsistent. Be not a cause of grief, much less of strife and sedition. It is hoped that ye will be nurtured in the shade of the lote-tree of Divine Grace, and practice that which God desireth. Ye are all leaves of one tree and drops of one sea.”

Amongst them [is this]: “The faith of God and religion of God hath been revealed and manifested from the heaven of the Will of the King of Preexistence only for the union and concord of the dwellers upon earth: make it not a cause of discord and dissension. The principal means and chief instrument for [bringing about] the appearance and irradiance of the luminary of concord is the religion of God and the Law of the Lord; while the growth of the world, the education of the nations, and the peace and comfort of those in all lands are through the divine ordinances and decrees. This is the principal means for this most great gift; it giveth the cup of life, bestoweth everlasting life, and conferreth eternal blessedness. The chiefs of the earth, especially the exemplars of divine justice, must make strenuous efforts to guard this state and to upraise and preserve it. So likewise that which is necessary is inquiry into the condition of the people, and cognizance of the deeds and circumstances of each one of the different classes. We desire of the exemplars of God's power, namely of kings and chiefs, that they will make endeavor: perchance discord may depart out of [their] midst, and the horizons may be illumined with the light of concord. All must hold to that which floweth from the Pen of Reminder, and practice it. God witnesseth and [all] the atoms of existences testify that we have mentioned that which will be the cause of the exaltation, elevation, education, preservation, and reformation of the dwellers upon earth. We desire of God that He will strengthen [His] servants. That which this Oppressed One seeketh of all is

justice and fairness: let them not be satisfied with listening; let them ponder on what hath become manifest from this Oppressed One. I swear by the Sun of Revelation, which hath shone forth from the horizon of the heaven of the Kingdom of the Merciful One, that, if any [other] expositor or speaker had been beheld, I would not have made Myself an object for the malevolence and the calumnies of mankind.” Finis.

By these sentences a clue to the principles, ideas, line of conduct, behavior, and intentions of this sect is placed in the hand; whereas if we seek to become acquainted with the truth of this matter through the accounts and stories which are in the mouths of men, the truth will be entirely concealed and hidden by reason of their manifold differences and contrariety. It is therefore best to discover the principles and objects of this sect from the contents of their teachings, tracts, and epistles. There is no authority nor are there any proofs or texts superior to these, for this is the foundation of foundations and the ultimate criterion. One cannot judge of the generality by the speech or action of individuals, for diversity of states is one of the peculiarities and concomitants of the human race.

At all events, in the beginning of the year one thousand two hundred and eighty-five [A.H.] they transferred Bahá’u’lláh and all those persons who were with Him from Adrianople to the prison of Akká, and Mírzá Yaḥyá to the fortress of Famagusta, and there they remained.⁴⁸ But in Persia after a while sundry persons who were discerning in matters, notable for wise policy, and aware and cognizant of the truth of the earlier and later events, made representation before the presence of His Majesty the King saying, “What has hitherto been reported, related, asserted, and alleged concerning this sect in the Royal Presence was either an exaggeration, or else [the speakers] fabricated statements with a view to [their own] individual designs and the attainment of

⁴⁸ 1868.

personal advantages. If so be that His Majesty the King will investigate matters in his own noble person, it is believed that it will become clear before his presence that this sect have no worldly object nor any concern with political matters. The fulcrum of their motion and rest and the pivot of their cast and conduct is restricted to spiritual things and confined to matters of conscience; it has nothing to do with the affairs of government nor any concern with the powers of the throne; its principles are the withdrawal of veils, the verification of signs, the education of souls, the reformation of characters, the purification of hearts, and illumination with the gleams of enlightenment. That which befits the kingly dignity and beseems the world-ordering diadem is this, that all subjects of every class and creed should be the objects of bounty, and [should abide] in the utmost tranquility and prosperity under the wide shadow of the King's justice. For the divine shadow is the refuge of all the dwellers upon earth and the asylum of all mankind; it is not limited to one party. In particular, the true nature and real doctrine of this sect have [now] become evident and well known: all their writings and tracts have repeatedly and frequently fallen into [our] hands, and are to be found preserved in the possession of the government. If they be perused, the actual truth and inward verity will become clear and apparent. These pages are entirely taken up with prohibitions of sedition, [recommendations of] upright conduct amongst mankind, obedience, submission, loyalty, conformity, and acquisition of laudable qualities, and encouragements to become endowed with praiseworthy accomplishments and characteristics. They have absolutely no reference to political questions, nor do they treat of that which could cause disturbance or sedition. Under these circumstances a just government can [find] no excuse, and possesses no pretext [for further persecuting this sect] except [a claim to the right of] interference in thought and conscience, which are the private possessions of the heart and soul. And, as regards this matter, there has [already] been much

interference, and countless efforts have been made. What blood has been shed! What heads have been hung up! Thousands of persons have been slain; thousands of women and children have become wanderers or captives; many are the buildings which have been ruined; and how many noble races and families have become headless and homeless! Yet naught has been effected and no advantage has been gained; no remedy has been discovered for this ill, nor any easy salve for this wound. [To insure] freedom of conscience and tranquility of heart and soul is one of the duties and functions of government, and is in all ages the cause of progress in development and ascendancy over other lands. Other civilized countries acquired not this preeminence, nor attained unto these high degrees of influence and power, till such time as they put away the strife of sects out of their midst, and dealt with all classes according to one standard. All are one people, one nation, one species, one kind. The common interest is complete equality; justice and equality amongst mankind are amongst the chief promoters of empire and the principal means to the extension of the skirt of conquest. From whatever section of earth's denizens signs of contentiousness appear, prompt punishment is required by a just government; while any person who girds up the loins of endeavor and carries off the ball of priority is deserving of royal favors and worthy of splendid gifts. Times are changed, and the need and fashion of the world are changed. Interference with creed and faith in every country causes manifest detriment, while justice and equal dealing towards all peoples on the face of the earth are the means whereby progress is effected. It is right to exercise caution and care with regard to political factions, and to be fearful and apprehensive of materialist sects; for the subjects occupying the thoughts of the former are [designs of] interference in political matters and [desire of] ostentation, while the actions and conduct of the latter are subversive of safety and tranquility. But this sect are steadfast in their own path and firmly established in conduct and faith; they are pious,

devoted, tenacious, and consistent in such sort that they freely lay down their lives, and, after their own way, seek to please God; they are strenuous in effort and earnest in endeavor; they are the essence of obedience and most patient in hardship and trouble; they sacrifice their existence and raise no complaint or cry; what they utter is in truth the secret longing of the heart, and what they seek and pursue is by the direction of a leader. It is therefore necessary to regard their principles and their Chief, and not to make a trivial thing a pretext. Now since the conduct of the Chief, the teachings of His epistles, and the purport of His writings are apparent and well known, the line of action of this sect is plain and obvious as the sun. Of whatever was possible and practicable by way of discouragement, determent, eradication, intimidation, reprehension, slaughter, banishment, and stripes there was no lack, yet nothing was thereby effected. In other countries when they perceived severity and persecution in such instances to be identical with stimulation and incitement, and saw that paying no attention was more effectual, they abated the fire of revolution. Therefore did they universally proclaim the equal rights of all denominations, and sounded the liberty of all classes from east to west. This clamor and outcry, this uproar and conflagration, are the consequences of instigation, temptation, incitement, and provocation. For thirty years there has been no rumor of disturbance or rebellion, nor any sign of sedition. Notwithstanding the duplication of adherents and the increase and multiplication of this body, through many admonitions and encouragements to virtue this sect are all in the utmost repose and stability: they have made obedience their distinctive trait, and in extreme submissiveness and subordination are the loyal subjects of the King. On what lawful grounds can the government further molest them, or permit them to be slighted? Besides this, interference with the consciences and beliefs of peoples, and persecution of diverse denominations of men is an obstacle to the expansion of the kingdom, an impediment to the

conquest of other countries, an obstruction to multiplication of subjects, and contrary to the established principles of monarchy. In the time when the mighty government of Persia did not interfere with [men's] consciences, diverse sects entered in and abode beneath the banner of the great king, and [many] different peoples reposed and served under the shadow of that mighty government's protection. The extent of the empire increased from day to day; the greater portion of the continent of Asia was under the just rule of its administration; and the majority of the different religions and races were [represented] amongst the subjects of him who wore its crown. But when the custom of interference with the creeds of all sects arose, and the principle of inquiring into men's thoughts became the fashion and practice, the extensive dominions of the empire of Persia diminished, and many provinces and vast territories passed out of her hands, until it reached such a point that the great provinces of Túrán, Assyria, and Chaldea were lost; until--what need of prolixity?--the greater part of the regions of Khurásán likewise passed out of the control of the government of Persia by reason of the interference with matters of conscience and the fanaticism of its governors. For the cause of the Afghan independency and the revolt of the Turcoman tribes was in truth this thing, else were they at no time or period separate from Persia. In face of its evident harmfulness what necessity is there for persecuting the harmless? But if we desire to put in force the sentence [of the doctors of religion] no one will escape fetters and chains and the keenness of the sword, for in Persia, apart from this sect, there exist diverse sects, such as the Mutásharrís, the Shaykhís, the Súfís, the Nusayris, and others, each one of whom regards the other as infidels and accuses them of crime. Under these circumstances what need that the government should persecute this one or that one, or disturb itself about the ideas and consciences of its subjects and people? All are the subjects of the king, and are under the shadow of the royal protection. Everyone who hears and obeys should be

undisturbed and unmolested, while everyone who is rebellious and disobedient deserves punishment at the hands of his Majesty the King. Above all, the times are completely changed, while principles and institutions have undergone alteration. In all countries such actions hinder development and progress, and cause decline and deterioration. Of the violent agitation which has befallen the supports of Oriental government the chief cause and principal factor are in truth these laws and habits of interference; while that state the seat of whose dominion over the Atlantic and the Baltic is in the furthest regions of the North has, by reason of equal dealing with its different subjects and the establishment of the uniform political rights of diverse nationalities, acquired extensive colonies in each of the five continents of the world.⁴⁹ Where is this little island in the North Atlantic, and where the vast territory of the East Indies? Can such extension be obtained save by equal justice to all peoples and classes? At all events, by means of just laws, freedom of conscience, and uniform dealing and equity towards all nationalities and peoples, they have actually brought under their dominion nearly all of the inhabited quarter of the world, and by reason of these principles of freedom they have added day by day to the strength, power, and extent of their empire, while most of the peoples on the face of the earth celebrate the name of this state for its justice. As regards religious zeal and true piety, their touchstone and proof are firmness and steadfastness in noble qualities, virtues, and perfections, which are the greatest blessings of the human race; but not interference with the belief of this one or that one, demolition of edifices, and cutting off of the human race. In the middle ages, whereof the beginning was the time of the fall of the Roman Empire, and the end the capture of Constantinople at the hands of [the followers of] Islám, fierce intolerance and molestation of far and near arose in [all] the countries of Europe

⁴⁹ England.

by reason of the paramount influence of religious leaders. The matter came to such a pass that the edifice of humanity seemed tottering to its fall, and the peace and comfort of chief and vassal, king and subject, became hidden behind the veil of annihilation. Night and day all parties were slaves to apprehension and disquietude: civilization was utterly destroyed: the control and order of countries was neglected: the principles and essentials of the happiness of the human race were in abeyance: the supports of kingly authority were shaken: but the influence and power of the heads of religion and of the monks were in all parts complete. But when they removed these differences, persecution, and bigotries out of their midst, and proclaimed the equal rights of all subjects and the liberty of men's consciences, the lights of glory and power arose and shone from the horizons of that kingdom in such wise that those countries made progress in every direction; and whereas the mightiest monarchy of Europe had been servile to and abased before the smallest government of Asia, now the great states of Asia are unable to oppose the small states of Europe. These are effectual and sufficient proofs that the conscience of man is sacred and to be respected; and that liberty thereof produces widening of ideas, amendment of morals, improvement of conduct, disclosure of the secrets of creation, and manifestation of the hidden verities of the contingent world. Moreover, if interrogation of conscience, which is one of the private possessions of the heart and the soul, take place in this world, what further recompense remains for man in the court of divine justice at the day of general resurrection? Convictions and ideas are within the scope of the comprehension of the King of kings, not of kings; and soul and conscience are between the fingers of control of the Lord of hearts, not of [His] servants. So in the world of existence two persons unanimous in all grades [of thought] and all beliefs cannot be found. 'The ways unto God are as the number of the breaths of [His] creatures' is a mysterious truth, and 'To every [people] We have appointed a

[separate] rite'⁵⁰ is one of the subtleties of the Qur'án. If this vast energy and precious time which have been expended in persecuting other religions, and whereby no sort of result or effect has been obtained, had been spent in strengthening the basis of the monarchy, fortifying the imperial throne, making prosperous the realms of the sovereign, and quickening the subjects of the king, ere now the royal dominions would have become prosperous, the seed-plot of the people would have been watered by the bounty of princely justice, and the splendor of the kingdom of Persia would be evident and apparent as the true dawn throughout the horizons of the world."

These questions and considerations, at all events, certain persons have reported. But let us return to our original subject. The Royal Personage was pleased to investigate the hidden secret in his own noble person. According to the account transmitted, it became clear and obvious before the [Royal] Presence that most of these suspicions arose from the intrigues of persons of influence who were continually engaged in fabricating matters behind the veil of fancy and casting suspicion upon the community, and who, to attain advantages for themselves and preserve their own positions, were wont to make motes appear as globes, and straws as mountains in the mirror of their imagination. For these suspicions there was absolutely no foundation or basis, nor had these assertions any proof or verisimilitude. What power and ability have the helpless people, or what boldness and strength have poor subjects that they should inflict injury or hurt on the sovereign might, or be able to oppose the military forces of the crown?

From that time till now disturbance and sedition have been on the wane in Persia, and clamor and strife have ceased; although [still] on rare occasions certain of the official doctors do, for their own personal and private advantage, stir up the common

⁵⁰ Qur'án 22:35.

folk, raise a hue and cry, and, by their importunity and pertinacity, molest one or two individuals of this sect, as happened ten or twelve years ago in Işfáhán. For there were amongst the inhabitants of Işfáhán two brothers, Siyyids of Tabátábá, Siyyid Ḥasan and Siyyid Ḥusayn, celebrated in those parts for piety, trustworthiness, and nobility; men of wealth, engaged in commerce, behaving towards all men with perfect kindness and courtesy. And to all outward appearance no one had observed in either of these two brothers any swerving from what was best, much less any conduct or behavior which could deserve torment or punishment; for, as is related, they were admitted by all [preeminent] in all praiseworthy and laudable qualities, while their deeds and actions were like exhortations and admonitions. These had transacted business with Mír Muḥammad Ḥusayn the Imám-Jum'ih of Işfáhán; and when they came to make up their accounts it appeared that the sum of eighteen thousand túmans was due to them. They [therefore] broke off [further] transactions, prepared a bond for this sum, and desired it to be sealed. This thing was grievous to the Imám-Jum'ih, so that he came to the stage of anger and enmity. Finding himself in debt, and having no recourse but to pay, he raised clamor and outcry saying “These two brothers are Bábís and deserve severe punishment from the king.” A crowd at once attacked their house, plundered and pillaged all their goods, distressed and terrified their wives and children, and seized and despoiled all their possessions. Then, fearing that they might refer the punishment to the step of the king's throne and loose their tongues in demand of redress, he [i.e., the Imám-Jum'ih] fell to thinking how to compass their death and destroy them. He therefore persuaded certain of the doctors to cooperate with him, and they pronounced sentence of death. Afterwards they arrested those two brothers, put them in chains, and brought them before the public assembly. Yet seek as they might to fix on them some accusation, find some fault, or discover some pretext, they were unable to do so. At length

they said, "You must either renounce this faith, or else lay down your heads beneath the sword of punishment." Although some of those present urged them saying, "Say merely 'We are not of this sect,' and it is sufficient, and will be the means of your deliverance and protection," they would by no means consent, but rather confirmed and declared it with eloquent speech and affecting utterance, so that the rage and violence of the Imám-Jum'ih boiled over, and, not satisfied with killing and destroying them, they inflicted sundry indignities on their bodies after death to mention which is not fitting, and of which the details are beyond the power of speech. Indeed in such wise was the blood of these two brothers shed that even the Christian priest of Julfá cried out, lamented, and wept on that day; and this event befell after such sort that everyone wept over the fate of those two brothers, for during the whole period of their life they had never distressed the feelings even of an ant, while by general report they had in the time of the famine in Persia spent all their wealth in relieving the poor and distressed. Yet, notwithstanding this reputation, were they slain with such cruelty in the midst of the people!

But now for a long while the justice of the King has prevented and withheld, and none dares attempt such grievous molestations.

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