

Muhammad-‘Alí Sabbáq of Yazd

Early in youth, Muhammad-‘Alí Sabbáq became a believer while in ‘Iráq. He tore away hindering veils and doubts, escaped from his delusions and hastened to the welcoming shelter of the Lord of Lords. A man to outward seeming without education, for he could neither read nor write, he was of sharp intelligence and a trustworthy friend. Through one of the believers, he was brought into the presence of Bahá’u’lláh, and was soon widely known to the public as a disciple. He found himself a corner to live in, close beside the house of the Blessed Beauty, and mornings and evenings would enter the presence of Bahá’u’lláh. For a time he was supremely happy.

When Bahá’u’lláh and His retinue left Baghdád for Constantinople, Áqá Muhammad-‘Alí was of that company, and fevered with the love of God. We reached Constantinople; and since the Government obliged us to settle in Adrianople we left Muhammad-‘Alí in the Turkish capital to assist the believers as they came and went through that city. We then went on to Adrianople. This man remained alone and he suffered intense distress for he had no friend nor companion nor anyone to care for him.

After two years of this he came on to Adrianople, seeking a haven in the loving-kindness of Bahá’u’lláh. He went to work as a peddler, and when the great rebellionⁱ began and the oppressors drove the friends to the extreme of adversity, he too was among the prisoners and was exiled with us to the fortress at Akká.

He spent a considerable time in the Most Great Prison, after which Bahá’u’lláh desired him to leave for Sidon, where he engaged in trade.

Sometimes he would return and be received by Bahá'u'lláh, but otherwise he stayed in Sidon. He lived respected and trusted, a credit to all. When the Supreme Affliction came upon us, he returned to Akká and passed the remainder of his days near the Holy Tomb.

The friends, one and all, were pleased with him, and he was cherished at the Holy Threshold; in this state he soared to abiding glory, leaving his kin to mourn. He was a kind man, an excellent one: content with God's will for him, thankful, a man of dignity, long-suffering. Upon him be the glory of the All-Glorious. May God send down, upon his scented tomb in Akká, tiers of celestial light.

ⁱThe rebellion of Mírzá Yahyá, who had been named provisional chief of the Bábí community. The Báb had never appointed a successor or viceregent, instead referring His disciples to the imminent advent of His Promised One. In the interim a virtual unknown was, for security reasons, made the ostensible leader. Following His declaration in 1863 as the Promised One of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh withdrew for a time, in Adrianople, to allow the exiles a free choice as between Him and this unworthy half brother, whose crimes and follies had threatened to destroy the infant Faith. Terrified at being challenged to face Bahá'u'lláh in a public debate, Mírzá Yahyá refused, and was completely discredited. As Bahá'í history has repeatedly demonstrated, this crisis too, however grievous, resulted in still greater victories for the Faith—including the rallying of prominent disciples to Bahá'u'lláh, and the global proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh's mission, in His Tablets to the Pope and Kings. Cf. *God Passes By*, p. 28, Chapter X and passim.