

Martyrdom of the Báb¹

July 9, 2024

Desert Rose Bahá'í Institute, Eloy, Arizona

SLIDE ONE

Welcome. We gather today to commemorate the anniversary of the Martyrdom of the Báb. His execution was the futile attempt by the ruling Persian clergy, in the country today known as Írán, to wipe out the Bábí religion by killing its leader, Siyyid Muhammad 'Alí, known as the Báb.

SLIDE TWO

His brief ministry began with the declaration of His Revelation on the night of May 23, 1844.

SLIDE THREE

and ended with his execution at noon on July 9, 1850.

SLIDE FOUR

Just as the crucifixion of Christ was in vain, evidenced by the world-wide spread of His faith, so it was with the Martyrdom of the Báb. In fact, there were numerous parallels in their lives.

SLIDE FIVE

In his book, *Thief in the Night*, William Sears tells of his own search to learn more about The Báb. Sears' relates:

The death of this young man occurred in July 1850. He was slain publicly because of his words and his teaching. Everything I learned about his life reminded me of Christ. In fact, after

¹ See related documents online at https://bahai-library.com/toth_martyrdom_bab_presentation.

carefully searching into his background, I could find but one parallel in all recorded history to his brief, turbulent career; only the moving story of the passion of Jesus Christ himself.

As part of my record of 'findings', I here set down the remarkable similarity in the story of their lives:

SLIDE SIX

- They were both youthful.
- They were both known for their meekness and loving kindness.
- They both performed healing miracles.
- The period of their ministry was very brief in each case and moved with dramatic swiftness to its climax.
- Both boldly challenged the time-honored conventions, laws, and rites of the religions into which they had been born.
- They courageously condemned the unbridled graft and corruption which they saw on every side, both religious and secular.

SLIDE SEVEN

- The purity of their own lives shamed the people among whom they taught.
- Their chief enemies were among the religious leaders of the land. These officials were the instigators of the outrages they were made to suffer.
- They both had indignities heaped upon them.
- They were both forcibly brought before the government authorities and were subject to public interrogation.
- They were both scourged following this interrogation.
- They both went, first in triumph then in suffering, through the streets of the city where they were to be slain.

SLIDE EIGHT

- They were both paraded publicly, and heaped with humiliation, on the way to their place of martyrdom.
- They both spoke words of hope and promise to the one who was to die with them; in fact, almost the exact same words: 'Thou shalt be with me in paradise.'
- They were both martyred publicly before the hostile gaze of the onlookers who crowded the scene.
- A darkness covered the land following their slaying, in each case beginning at noon.
- Their bodies were both lacerated by soldiers at the time of their slaying.

SLIDE NINE

- They both remained in ignominious suspension before the eyes of an unfriendly multitude.
- Their bodies came finally into the hands of their loving followers.
- When their bodies, in each case, had vanished from the spot where they had been placed, the religious leaders explained away the fact.
- Only a handful of their followers were with them at the time of their death.
- In each case, one of their chief disciples denied knowing them. This same disciple, in each case, later became a hero.

SLIDE TEN

- Each of them had an outstanding woman follower who played a dramatic part in making the disciples turn their faces from the past to look toward the future.
- Confusion, bewilderment and despair seized their followers in each case, following their martyrdom.
- Each of them addressed their disciples, charging them to carry their messages to the ends of the earth."

SLIDE ELEVEN

Sears writes: The words of Christ I already knew. With great interest I read the words of this young man:

Verily I say, this is the Day spoken of by God in His Book...Ponder the words of Jesus addressed to His disciples, as He sent them forth...

Ye are even as the fire which in the darkness of the night has been kindled upon the mountain top. Let your light shine before the eyes of men. Such must be the purity of your character and the degree of your renunciation, that the people of the earth may through you recognize and be drawn closer to the heavenly Father who is the Source of purity and grace. ²

SLIDE TWELVE

After quoting Jesus, the Báb admonished His followers,

Verily I say, immensely exalted is this Day above the days of the Apostles of old. Nay, immeasurable is the difference! You are the witnesses of the Dawn of the promised Day of God... Scatter throughout the length and breadth of this land, and, with steadfast feet and sanctified hearts, prepare the way for His coming... Arise in His name, put your trust wholly in Him, and be assured of ultimate victory.¹³

So, just as with Christ, the authorities who feared His influence, chose to execute Him. The loss to his followers was naturally intense, but how much more painful it must have been for his beloved wife, Khadíjih. Imagining her pain, poet Roger White wrote The Song of Khadíjih-Bagum.

² *The Dawnbreakers*, Nabil, p. 92

³ *The Dawnbreakers*, Nabil, pp. 93-94

SLIDE THIRTEEN

All in green went my Love riding / My heart sank fully sore

To know the One / Whose stirrup I kissed / I would see no more

no more / see Him Whom I adore.

To know Him clad / in rope and chain / And hung above the throng

The world's One Light / by evil quenched / And I be left but long

but long / left sorrow as my song.

All in green went my Love riding / His counsel my sole balm

Be patient under God's decree / This parting speeds the dawn

the dawn / speeds never-fading dawn.

SLIDE FOURTEEN

When one ponders the station of the Báb, it is easy to understand the suffering of Khadíjih and difficult to understand the animosity of the clerics.

Bahá'u'lláh, Prophet-Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, for Whose Faith the Báb was the Forerunner and its Herald, beseeches God on behalf of the Báb, in a prayer known as the Tablet of Ahmad, to

Magnify Thou, O Lord my God, Him Who is the Primal Point, the Divine Mystery, the Unseen Essence, the Day-Spring of Divinity, and the Manifestation of Thy Lordship, through Whom all the knowledge of the past and all the knowledge of the future were made plain, through Whom the pearls of Thy hidden wisdom were uncovered, and the mystery of Thy treasured name disclosed, Whom Thou hast appointed as the Announcer of the One through Whose name the letter B and the letter E have been joined and united, through Whom Thy majesty, Thy sovereignty and Thy might were made known, through Whom Thy words have been sent down, and Thy laws set forth with clearness, and Thy signs spread abroad, and Thy Word established, through Whom the hearts of Thy chosen ones

were laid bare, and all that were in the heavens and all that were on the earth were gathered together, Whom Thou hast called 'Alí-Muhammad in the kingdom of Thy names, and the Spirit of Spirits in the Tablets of Thine irrevocable decree, Whom Thou hast invested with Thine own title, unto Whose name all other names have, at Thy bidding and through the power of Thy might, been made to return, and in Whom Thou hast caused all Thine attributes and titles to attain their final consummation.

SLIDE FIFTEEN

In one of His last revealed works, the *Kitáb-i-Panj-Sha'n*, the Báb intimated when He would be martyred. Shoghi Effendi, in *God Passes By*, wrote

He had alluded to the fact that the sixth Naw-Rúz after the declaration of His mission would be the last He was destined to celebrate on earth. In His interpretation of the letter Há, He had voiced His craving for martyrdom, while in the Qayyúmu'l-Asmá' He had actually prophesied the inevitability of such a consummation of His glorious career. Forty days before His final departure from Chihríq, He had even collected all the documents in His possession and placed them, together with His pen-case, His seals and His rings, in the hands of Mullá Báqir, a Letter of the Living, whom He instructed to entrust them to Mullá 'Abdu'l-Kar-i-Qazvíní, surnamed Mírzá Aḥmad, who was to deliver them to Bahá'u'lláh in Ṭihrán.

So profound was all that took place prior to, during, and following the public execution which Bahá'ís refer to as the Martyrdom of the Báb, that many a poet, painter, songwriter, playwright and filmmaker has been moved to immortalize the events.

SLIDE SIXTEEN

Poet Michael Fitzgerald, penned the following poem he entitled, *Vortex*:

As the pinnacle of giving Beyond giving, the Báb
Rides high noon into the vortex—this young man, merchant,

spirit-genius, breaks open / a millennium at the deep end
of seven hundred and fifty rifles—**history implodes one hot day—**
in Tabríz—remember that day, / and learn the inside of giving double—
learn ultimate things in the fleck of the second—
weep at what it takes to win time's arc.

SLIDE SEVENTEEN

More than a Man, from *Open the Gates*, by Smith and Dragoman is a musical example of art inspired by the Báb's martyrdom, further enhanced by being used as the basis for the following video:

[click to begin video]

SLIDE EIGHTEEN

Again, as with Christ, the attempt to extinguish the Báb's religion through his execution had the opposite effect. His body, which had been left out to be eaten by wild animals, was rescued by His believers and hidden in various locations for over 40 years, arriving in 'Akká, Palestine in 1899. **Though Bahá'u'lláh, His family, and some followers were yet prisoners and exiles, Bahá'u'lláh pointed out to His eldest son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, a spot on Mount Carmel and tasked him with seeing to the interment of the Báb's precious remains on that site.**

SLIDE NINETEEN

H.M. Balyuzi, in *The Báb - The Herald of the Day of Days*, writes:

In the year 1908, the despotism of the Ottoman rulers came to an end, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá found His freedom.

The next year on Naw-Rúz Day — March 21st — in a vault beneath the building which He had raised with undaunted resolution and with heartache, He deposited the casket containing the remains of the Báb within a marble sarcophagus, a gift of the Bahá'ís of Rangoon.

SLIDE TWENTY

Nearly forty years later, Shoghi Effendi undertook to adorn the Shrine of the Báb with a super-structure, both strong and beautiful, crowned with a golden dome.

SLIDE TWENTY-ONE

Today it dazzles the heart of Mount Carmel — the Mountain of God — a spiritual home for a flourishing world community — a beacon of hope for the whole of mankind.⁴

SLIDE TWENTY-TWO

The shrine is lovingly referred to as the Queen of Carmel.

Video: Queen of Carmel

⁴ H.M. Balyuzi, *The Báb - The Herald of the Day of Days*, p. 192