

I.
THE HISTORY
OF
RABBAN HÔRMÎZD THE PERSIAN.

II.
THE HISTORY
OF
RABBAN BAR-'IDTÂ.

THE HISTORIES
OF
RABBAN HORMÎZD THE PERSIAN
AND
RABBAN BAR-'IDTÂ.

THE SYRIAC TEXTS EDITED WITH ENGLISH
TRANSLATIONS

BY

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VOLUME II, PART I.
ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS.



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I DEDICATE
THIS WORK
TO
MAJOR-GENERAL SIR F. R. WINGATE,
K. C. B., K. C. M. G., D. S. O., R. A., A. D. C.
SIRDAR OF THE EGYPTIAN ARMY AND GOVERNOR-GENERAL
OF THE SUDÂN PROVINCES,
IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE
OF
MUCH FRIENDLY ENCOURAGEMENT AND
SYMPATHETIC HELP IN EGYPT.

Preface.

IN the first volume of my edition of the "Book of Governors" by Thomas of Margâ I gave a brief account of Rabban Hôrmîzd, the founder of the famous monastery at Al-Ḳôsh which bears his name, and which is situated about thirty miles to the North of the city of Môsul, and a series of extracts, with translations, from the life of the saint which was written in Syriac by Simon, the disciple of Mâr Yôzâdhaḡ. Simon's life of Rabban Hôrmîzd was, at that time, unknown to scholars, and during the years which have followed the publication of the extracts from it many requests have been made to me to publish it in full, with an English translation. The manuscript from which I had edited the extracts was copied for me by the Deacon Îsâ bar-Isha'yâ at Al-Ḳôsh in 1892 from a comparatively modern manuscript which was in the possession of the monks of the Monastery of Rabban Hôrmîzd, and was greatly prized by them. When I was staying at the Monastery in November and December 1890 the

courteous and hospitable monks of that old-world house shewed me their manuscript one night and allowed me to read it through, and I came to the conclusion that the text was unknown in Europe and was worth publishing. I asked the Abbot for permission to have a copy of the manuscript made for me, and it was granted, and the above mentioned deacon undertook the task. Shortly afterwards one of the monks in the Monastery produced another manuscript containing a somewhat lengthy metrical Life of Rabban Hôrmîzd by Mâr Sergius of Âdhôrbâijân, and this also seemed to be unknown in Europe. The composition contains 3496 lines, and is divided into twenty-two "gâtes" or sections, each of which is named after a letter of the Syriac alphabet; the longest "gate" contains 1098 lines and the shortest 50 lines, and the last letter of the last word of each line ends with the letter after which the "gate" is named. When we consider the length of the text, and the skill with which the consistency of this arrangement has been maintained, no doubt can exist concerning the profound knowledge of Syriac which the writer must have possessed. A great many verbal forms, adverbs etc., are, as was to be expected, artificial, and are not to be found in ancient Syriac texts, but the greater number of them are of interest. An important feature of the manuscript which I saw were the numerous glosses, over five hundred in number, which were written in red

ink on the margins of the pages, and the fact of their existence proved that the composition was some hundreds of years old, and that the Nestorians considered it to be of sufficient value to merit careful explanation and annotation. Permission to have a copy of the manuscript made was given to me by the owner, and when the deacon 'Îsâ had finished his copy it was sent to me, together with that of the prose Life of Rabban Hôrmîzd, and reached London in due course.

The manuscript of the prose Life of Rabban Hôrmîzd from which my copy was taken had neither colophon nor date, and it appeared to have been written in the XIXth century; enquiries made, however, elicited the information that the text was derived from a manuscript of the XIIth or XIIIth century which had been in the possession of a native gentleman of great age, but which at his death had disappeared and could not be traced. The manuscript of the metrical Life of Rabban Hôrmîzd from which my copy was taken was declared to have been written in the XVIIth century, and this manuscript was, in turn, said to have been copied from one belonging to an older period; further information on the subject I was unable to obtain. The prose Life, it is easy to see, is a work which, in its original form, might well date from a period before the XIIth century, and the metrical Life, which is evidently

based upon it, is clearly some two or three centuries later. It is impossible to assign an exact date for the composition of the later work, chiefly because so little is known about the history of the Monastery of Rabban Hôrmîzd during the Middle Ages, but when it was written that famous religious house would appear to have been in a very flourishing condition; for the great length of the metrical Life of the Saint, and the fact that it was sung throughout on the days of the festivals of his commemoration indicate that the brethren were numerous, and that the following of Rabban Hôrmîzd was a large one. From the compositions published in the present work the following facts of the Life of Rabban Hôrmîzd may be ascertained.

Hôrmîzd was born at Bêth Lâphat, that is to say Shirâz, in the country of the Huzâyê, either in the latter half of the sixth or in the first half of the seventh century of our era; his father was called Joseph and his mother Thecla, and both parents were wealthy Christians and were famed for their almsgiving. At the age of twelve he was sent to school, at eighteen he could repeat by heart the Psalms and the New Testament, and at twenty he set out on a journey to the desert of Scete, where he wished to become a monk. On the road he met three monks of the Monastery of Bar-'Idtâ, who urged him to become an inmate of their monastery, and he did so; a few

months after his entrance there he received the tonsure and thus finally adopted the profession of monk. He lived a hard, stern life, and his ascetic virtues were so great that he is declared to have raised a dead youth to life, and to have turned water into oil. When he had served in the monastery for seven years Sylvanus, Bishop of Kârdô, visited the Abbot on certain business, and discovering by conversation with Hôrmîzd, who was now twenty-seven years of age, that the young man was far advanced in the spiritual life, persuaded him to forsake the monastery, and to make a cell for himself wherein he could follow the life of an anchorite. This he did, and his life became more strict than ever; he fasted for ten days at a time and enjoyed no regular sleep at nights, and such short intervals of oblivion as exhausted nature made him fall into he obtained by leaning against the stone walls of his cell; he passed most of each day and of each night in vigil, and in prayer, which was accompanied by tears. This manner of life is declared to have conduced greatly to the refinement of his spiritual nature, and to have enabled him to understand "things near and afar off", and to have enabled him to drive away the Devil and his hosts who tormented him frequently, and came to him in forms of various kinds. When Hôrmîzd had lived in and near the Monastery of Bar-'Idtâ for thirty-nine years, he departed and took up his abode in the monastery of Abbâ

Abraham of Rîshâ ; he was now fifty-nine years of age, and was able to perform miracles of all kinds. Six or seven years later, *i. e.*, at the age of sixty-five or sixty-six, he left the second of the monasteries which had been his homes, and passing out of the country of Margâ went and settled down in the mountain of Bêth 'Edhrai near Al-Ķôsh. When he had been there some little time the people in the neighbourhood offered to build him a monastery, and Khôdhâhwî, the son of Shûbhî, having contributed seven talents of silver, and 'Uḵbê, the governor of Môṣul, three more, the work was taken in hand straightway, and the building was finished in twenty months ; the consecration ceremony was performed by Jomarṣâ II, the Catholicus, who signed a deed declaring that the monastery was to be under the direct jurisdiction of the Nestorian Patriarch, and that no Metropolitan or Bishop should have any authority to interfere in any way with Rabban Hôrmîzd's administration of it. 'Uḵbê, the governor of Môṣul, was clearly a patron of the Nestorians, for he expelled the Jacobites from the district wherein Hôrmîzd lived, and Nestorians came and settled in their place. At no great distance from Al-Ķôsh was the town of Arsham, where there were many Jacobites, but under the favour of the governor 'Abhd-Îshô', Bishop of Bêth Nûdhērân, and Hôrmîzd went and consecrated a Nestorian church there. Close by, too, was the Jacobite monastery of

Bezķîn, where, according to the narrator of Hôrmîzd's life, the monks led a very immoral life, and bitter enmity existed between its Abbot and his monks, and Hôrmîzd, and his followers. As a result of this ten monks of Bezķîn went to Hôrmîzd's cell and tried to kill him, and having failed to do so, they brought against him serious charges of having committed fornication and murder ; Hôrmîzd, however, was protected by Providence from the assault of those who intended to murder him, and was able to prove before the governor of Môşul his innocence of the foul charges which had been brought against him. Soon after this the son of the Arab governor of Môşul, who was sick unto death, was healed by Hôrmîzd, whereupon the monks of the Monastery of Bezķîn joined with those of the Monastery of Mâr Mattai on Gebel Maķlûb in making an attempt to drive him out of the district, but they were unsuccessful ; Divine Providence seeing that the monks of the former house had filled up the measure of their iniquity decreed their destruction, and sent an angel to carry it out forthwith. The angel carried in his right hand a crowbar wherewith he smote the walls of the Monastery of Bezķîn and overthrew them, and the governor 'Ûķbê only succeeded in escaping with difficulty ; as soon as the Nestorians of Arsham, and Ĥarëbhâ, and Kezyôn heard what had happened they swarmed over the mountains and carried off everything which they could remove.

The destruction of the Monastery of Bezķin made bold the Nestorians in the neighbourhood in general, and Hôrmîzd in particular, for he was moved to go to the Monastery of Mattai and destroy an idol which was said to be worshipped there. Unknown to his monks Hôrmîzd set out at daybreak, and arrived at the Jacobite monastery at sunset. The journey must have been hard work for the old man, for from Al-Kôsh to Mâr Mattai by any road cannot be a distance of less than twenty miles; the climb up from the plain to the top of the mountain on which the monastery is built was long and extremely tiring for aged feet, but Hôrmîzd, animated by his fanatical courage and spirit, found it no obstacle to his progress. When he arrived at the door of the Monastery he spoke to the porter civilly, and having been deceived by a number of falsehoods which Hôrmîzd told him, he led him into the building, and having brought him into the place of the shrine of the holy man Mâr Mattai, he left him for the night. As soon as he was alone Hôrmîzd prayed, and the angel of the Lord having come to his assistance, he broke open the shrine, and took out from beneath it "a miserable little idol of brass, the eyes of which were "of gems made of striped beryls". According to the historian of Hôrmîzd's life it was "Marcion the sorcerer", who flourished in the second century, who led astray and corrupted the Jacobites, and taught them

to hide "miserable little idols" in their shrines, and his error was approved of and ratified by Cyril of Alexandria, the great opponent of Nestorius from A. D. 428 to 444. The angel who was with Hôrmîzd told him that these idols, or figures, were intended to protect their worshippers from evil spirits and devils of every kind, but the fact that they were placed "in the lowermost parts" of the shrines, *i. e.*, beneath them, indicates that they were believed to protect the shrine itself and the building in which it was contained. That Marcion or Cyril introduced the custom of placing figures or idols under shrines may well be doubted, for it is known that the Babylonians and Assyrians hoped to protect their buildings by means of figures of gods or devils which they buried beneath the pavements of certain parts of them. A similar custom existed, of course, in Egypt, but it is far more likely that the Jacobites inherited their belief in the efficacy of magical figures of gods from the Pagan inhabitants of Mesopotamia than that they adopted it from the Egyptians. Cyril of Alexandria, who is, in our text, called the "priest of devils and the minister of fiends", may have permitted the Mesopotamian Jacobites to retain the heathen custom because he was familiar with it in Egypt, but whether he did so through the influence of the Egyptian sorceress "Kâkî", *i. e.* ~~Kâkî~~ *Kâkî*, cannot be said. Hôrmîzd having stolen the brass figure from the shrine of Mâr

Mattai was taken by the angel of the Lord and carried back by miraculous agency to his own monastery, where he at once displayed his theft to the one hundred and eleven monks who formed his household. As a result of certain prayers made by Hôrmîzd the brass figure began to speak, and to bewail his evil estate and to lament that he had become the laughing stock of those who had once worshipped him ; to degrade him still more George a priest took the idol and carried it about through the villages and told all the people its history. The next exploit of Hôrmîzd was to go again to the Monastery of Mâr Mattai, and, having obtained access to the chamber where the books were kept, to defile and destroy a number of Jacobite works by means of a fountain of filthy water, which welled up there in answer to his prayers ; as soon as this act of destruction was committed the water ceased to flow, and the "angel of the Lord" carried him bodily out of the monastery and deposited him outside the gate, from which place he made his way home.

Soon after these things Hôrmîzd involved himself in a dispute with Ignatius, who appears to have been the archimandrite of Mâr Mattai, and who was said to offer up birds, kids, sheep, cats, apes, etc., in his cell as offerings to the devil whom he worshipped, and to burn magical drugs instead of incense. Ignatius bewitched the governor of Môsul by means of

certain magical cakes which were made in the form of the devil whom he worshipped, and succeeded in inducing him to summon Hôrmîzd into his presence that he might witness a contest between the magical powers which both Ignatius and Hôrmîzd claimed to possess. This governor was not 'Ûkbê, but his successor who was called 'Ali, and he seems to have been an intimate friend of Ignatius, who had worked his sorceries upon his sick son, a boy of thirteen. Hôrmîzd came in answer to the urgent summons of 'Ali, and having walked over the waters of the Tigris into Môşul by his miraculous power, he entered the governor's house and stood before him. When all was ready Ignatius invoked his devils, and they came and carried him up into the air to make manifest their great power, but Hôrmîzd laid a ban upon them in the name of Christ, and made them to stay in mid-air, and to hold Ignatius fast there for a season. When he was satisfied that he had displayed the superiority of his power to the governor and his company, he removed the ban from the devils and ordered them to drop Ignatius down upon the earth; this they did straightway and he fell to the ground, and his body burst asunder, and he died, even as did Arius. Thus Hôrmîzd once again triumphed over the Jacobites, and he convinced the governor of the greatness of his power, by healing his son; finally he died in his own monastery, aged eighty-six or eighty-seven years.

A perusal of the Lives of Rabban Hôrmîzd will convince the reader that they are not of any great historical value, but that they are, notwithstanding, of considerable importance there can be no doubt. They describe incidentally how the famous Monastery near Al-Ḳôsh came to be built, and they illustrate very clearly the character of Nestorian Christianity in the seventh and following centuries of our era. They prove that the belief in magic was rife both among the Nestorians and Jacobites, and that several centuries of Christianity had not succeeded in eliminating it from their minds. They believed that men who led ascetic lives obtained the power of working miracles and of raising the dead, and of altering and suspending the laws of nature whenever the interests of themselves or of their followers demanded it. It is also clear that the followers of each saint ascribed to him in due order healing and life-giving attributes, which, they asserted, were identical in power and efficacy with those of Christ and His Apostles. The character of Hôrmîzd is well described, and may be taken as a good type of that of all great Nestorian ascetics from his own day to the present time; we see that he was curiously humble in some things, and unnaturally vain in others, and that abject self-abasement and intense conceit were mingled in equal proportions in his disposition. He was, however, a spiritual force in the country wherein he lived, and

the mediaeval Christianity of Mesopotamia and of the mountainous districts to the north and north-east of Môşul owes much to him and his fellows, whose holy though unpractical lives moved the peoples about them to godly works, and whose acts were devoted to the attempt to stem the mighty tide of Muḥammadism which was flooding the land everywhere. Too much attention must not, of course, be paid to the statements made about the Jacobites by the Nestorians in their works, for then, as now, these sects were very jealous of each other, and the description of the baptism of the son of the governor of Môşul, as well as that of the trial of the magical powers of Hôrmîzd and Ignatius, must be received with great caution. Before we pass to the consideration of the Life of Bar-'İdtâ it may be well to describe briefly the Monastery of Rabban Hôrmîzd as it exists in our days.

This building lies about twenty-eight or thirty miles to the north of Môşul, and about a mile from the little Chaldaean town of Al-Ḳôsh, which is famous among the Christian sects of Mesopotamia as the birth-place of Nahum the Prophet. It is built half about half way up the range of mountains which encloses the plain of Môşul on the north, and stands in a sort of amphitheatre, which is approached by a rocky path that leads through a narrow defile; this path has been paved by generations of monks. The

church is of stone and is of a dusky red colour ; it is built upon an enormous rock. In the hills round about the church and buildings of the monastery are rows of caves hewn out of the solid rock, in which the stern ascetics of former generations lived and died. They have neither doors nor any protection from the inclemency of the weather, and the chill which they strike into the visitor gives an idea of what those who lived in them must have suffered from the frosts of winter and the drifting rain. Some of them have niches hewn in their sides or backs in which the monks probably slept, but many lack even these means of comfort. The cells are separate one from the other, and are approached by narrow terraces, but some of them are perched in almost inaccessible places, and, unless other means of entrance existed in former days, could only have been approached by the monks crawling down from the crest of the mountain and swinging themselves into them. I saw no marks of fire in any of the cells. Some cells have a second small cave hewn out behind the larger one which is entered through an opening just large enough for a man of average size to crawl through. The monks belong to the order of Saint Anthony and live stern lives. They eat meat on Easter Day and Christmas Day only, and their usual food consists of boiled wheat and lentils, and dark-coloured, heavy bread cakes. They drink neither wine nor spirits, and

they have neither light nor fire. They drink rain water which they preserve in rock cisterns. They are called to prayer by the ringing of a bell at sunset, midnight, day-break, and at certain times of the day. The number of the monks in 1820 was about fifty; in 1843 it was thirty-nine; in 1879—80 it was sixteen, and in 1890 it was about ten. The library of the monastery formerly contained a number of very valuable manuscripts, but about the year 1844 the Kurds swooped down upon the monks, and pillaged and set fire to the buildings and murdered all who opposed them. The monks succeeded in removing about five hundred MSS to a vault or house on the side of a hill close by, but, unfortunately, a heavy flood of rain from the mountains swept both them and their hiding place away, and nothing more was seen of them. A large number of manuscripts also were destroyed by the Kurds, who cut and tore them up before the eyes of the monks, and who, having defiled the various portions of them, hurled them down into the stream which flows down from the mountain on one side of the monastery. There is, alas, but little worth stealing there now, even by a Kurd, but the Nestorians in the mountains are threatened with destruction by the marauding hill-tribes which rob and plunder unchecked by any. When I visited the monastery in 1890 I made enquiries with the view of ascertaining if the monks ever made any attempt to sing or read

the metrical Life of Rabban Hôrmîzd of which I had seen a copy, and I found they had not, and that they had no knowledge of the past history of their house. Subsequently I asked Mr. Nimrûd Rassam, with whom I visited the monastery, to make further enquiries on the subject, and the result of his researches are expressed in a letter written in Syriac, of which I append the text with an English translation. This document is of considerable interest, for, leaving out of consideration the information which it contains, it illustrates the skill and facility with which educated Nestorians write Syriac at the present day.

LETTER FROM MR. NIMRÛD RASSAM, H. B. M'S VICE-
CONSUL AT MÔSUL.

“Now therefore it hath appeared right and seemly
“unto us that with an exact and true examination we
“should make known and shew forth concerning the
“generation of the holy man Rabban Hôrmîzd, and
“concerning his time, and concerning the customs
“which are observed in his Monastery at this present
“time, to all those who approach [the investigation
“of] history.

“Now after this [man] Rabban had been thoroughly
“trained in the Holy Scriptures [in] the house of his
“parents in Shîrâz, and had arrived at the age of
“twenty years, he made up his mind to die unto the

“world in order that he might live unto Christ. And
“he was directed by the protecting care of Divine
“Providence, and arrived at and entered into the
“Monastery of Rabban Bar-’Îdtâ, and he became a
“monk therein for a space of nine and thirty years.
“At this time a war broke out between Phocas, the
“king of the Greeks, and Chosroës, the king of the
“Persians, in the year of the Greeks nine hundred
“and eighteen, which is the year six hundred and
“seven of our Redeemer, according to that which the
“History of Bar-’Îdtâ sheweth us. Now Rabban Hôr-
“mîzd was as yet in the Monastery of Rabban Bar-
“Îdtâ. And after these things he departed [from that
“Monastery] in the company of six brethren to the
“Monastery of Mâr Abhrâhâm, that is, the Monastery
“of Rîshâ, wherein he remained seven years. And
“from here also, through a divine revelation, he de-
“parted to the mountain of Bêth ’Edhrai, and he
“dwelt alone there in a cave on the eastern side of
“Al-Kôsh, the village of Nahum the Prophet. And
“in Rabban Hôrmîzd was fulfilled the revelation which
“came to Mâr Mikhâ, one of the two and seventy
“disciples of Mâr Awgîn who, before his death, when
“he was comforting and encouraging the people of
“his village Al-Kôsh, made a revelation unto them,
“saying, ‘God is about to send unto you a great and
“mighty eagle, and he shall make his nest in this
“your Mountain, and he shall beget many young

“‘ones;’ and this thing actually came to pass, and
“[the words were] fulfilled in Rabban Hôrmîzd, the
“‘holy man. In his lifetime he built his monastery,
“and the brethren gathered together unto him, [and
“‘became] his young ones. And his monastery was
“‘consecrated by Mâr Tûmârsâ, the Catholicus and
“‘Patriarch. And he remained in this monastery two
“and twenty years, and Christ wrought by his hands
“‘mighty deeds and miracles; and, after his death, in
“‘like manner also very many healings were performed
“for the sick folk who thronged to his monastery,
“and who took refuge in faith in the place where his
“bones were laid, and from that time onwards, year
“by year, the believing folk gathered together from
“out of all the hamlets, and villages, and cities, and
“kept a festival in his honour, with watching and
“prayer, and with great rejoicing, on the second day
“of the third week [after] the Festival of the Resur-
“rection; and they kept another festival of com-
“memoration on the first day of Îlôl, and they performed
“in full the service of prayer according to the special
“order of service which had been duly drawn up for
“his commemoration. And afterwards, little by little,
“certain other hymns (*or*, versicles) were added unto
“the order of service which had been set apart for
“him, by Mâr ‘Amânu’îl (Emmanuel), the Metropolitan
“of Bêth Garmai, and Mâr Sargîs (Sergius) of Âdhôr-
“bâijân, and Mâr Îshô’-yahbh of Arbîl, and George

“Wardâ, and Rabban Âdhâm of ‘Akrâ. And the believing men prayed according to this order of service, and they kept the watch of his festival and also of his commemoration in his monastery, and in all the churches in the country round about, until the time of the Patriarch Mâr Âwdû, when the East began to perform service to the West. From this time forward the vigil of Rabban Hôrmîzd began to be discontinued and to pass into oblivion, and his festival languished, and his possessions diminished. And as regards his children, they first of all changed garden grapes into wild grapes, and among them were those who clave to him with their lips, but who cursed him in their hearts, and there were some who esteemed the honour of their spiritual father as nakedness, and who treated him lightly; and if a man were to liken them unto those of the sons of Ham [sic] [who mocked their father] they would not be in any way worthy of blame, and the understanding of every rational being must condemn these men who were afflicted with [such] lasting levity. And his sons did not keep in remembrance the words of the wise man who proclaimed, saying, ‘The honour of a man is the honour of his father’, and they did not even dare to keep in remembrance the title of Rabban Hôrmîzd, for instead of ‘Rabban’, they gave him the title of ‘Sahdâ’ (i. e., Martyr), for which there are no grounds whatsoever in the world, inasmuch as

“no man hath either seen or heard that there was a
“martyr of this name; and mixing words and stringing
“phrases together they changed the name ‘Hôrmîzd’
“into ‘Âdhôr Hôrmîzd’, and transformed ‘Rabban’ in-
“to ‘Sahdâ’, and thus they taught [concerning him].
“And the dwellers in his monastery abandoned the
“order of his service of prayer and vigil, and the
“monks of his house pray the prayer of commemoration
“for Mâr Pethîôn, and Âdhôr Hôrmîzd, and Ânâhîdh,
“and in this way, little by little, the monks and all
“the believing men of country districts and of cities
“have brought to an end his vigil and commemora-
“tion in our own time. These things are sufficient to
“make manifest the truth which hath been asked for,
“and the lengthy matters which would give labour
“[to me to write and thee to read] are [here] made
“very short. Since therefore we have made known
“that sufficient [hath been said] about these things,
“let us incline the ear and hearken unto the narrative
“of the History of Rabban Hôrmîzd.

Your humble friend

NEMRÔD RASSÂM.

Written at Mâwṣel, on
the XXIInd of Khazîrân,
in the year MDCCCCI of our Lord.

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

מחברות

പ്രകാശം നൽകൂ

מחול כחול : חב : מחול

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Passing now to the Life of Bar-'Idtâ, of which the Syriac text and an English translation thereof are given in the present work, it may be noted that it supplies a great deal of information which is new about the ecclesiastical geography of the province of Margâ. The manuscript from which the Syriac text was copied was in a good state of preservation, and was written in the XIIth or XIIIth century; its possessor valued it very highly, but at his death his library was scattered and the whereabouts of many manuscripts have not been traced. The Life was written by Abraham, a priest, at the command of 'Abhd-Îshô', Metropolitan of Adiabene, and is based upon that which was written by Mâr John, a disciple of Bar-'Idtâ, who flourished about A. D. 660. From it we learn that Bar-'Idtâ was born at Raşpâ, or Rûşâpâ, a village on the Euphrates; his parents were Christians, but dying when their son was a child the boy was brought up by his sister Hânâh-Îshô', who was ten years older than he was, and who was a very religious and charitable woman. She first went to Nisibis, where she put her brother to school, and then became a nun in one of the convents in the neighbourhood. Bar-'Idtâ learned to read and write easily, and a fine memory enabled him to learn the Psalms and several other metrical compositions by heart; he became a monk at the age of twenty-three and lived with the brethren under Mâr Abra-

ham, who seems to have succeeded Narses as head of the College of Nisibis about A. D. 508. Bar-'Idtâ possessed a fine voice, and was very popular among his brethren, and when it was his turn to read the service "his voice would drive away sleep from their eyes". When he had remained for thirty years at Nisibis, he was moved to go forth to the province of Margâ, where he founded his famous monastery, A. Gr. 873 = A. D. 562. His monks were at first ten in number, but subsequently they became very numerous; he worked many miracles and was greatly beloved by all who came in contact with him. He was born about A. D. 509, and died about A. D. 612, aged one hundred and three years.

The contrast between the lives of Hôrmîzd and Bar-'Idtâ is very striking, and the Syriac texts prove that whilst the latter was well educated, from a Nestorian point of view, and tolerant and gracious in his dealings with men, the latter was a man of strictly limited intellectual attainments, but endowed to the full with all the religious enthusiasm and mysticism which are characteristic of a deeply spiritual nature that has been developed by excessive fasting and prayer, and by the abstinence, and self-denial, and nakedness, and voluntary poverty which were inseparably connected with the stern rigour of a solitary life in the mountains. The biographers of Hôrmîzd and Bar-'Idtâ have described the lives of their masters

with both affection and care, and, though they narrate in connexion therewith a number of facts which can only have existed in their imaginations, they have left behind them valuable records of two of the most remarkable Nestorians who ever lived.

E. A. WALLIS BUDGE.

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THE HISTORY OF THE DIVINE LABOURS AND OF THE
MARVELLOUS ACTS OF RABBAN HÔRMÎZD, WHICH WAS
COMPOSED BY THE PIOUS MAN OF GOD, RABBAN MÂR SIMON,
THE DISCIPLE OF RABBÂ MÂR YÔZÂDHÂḲ.

[Page 3] By Thy power, O our Lord Jesus Christ, we write Fol. 1 a
the History of the divine labours,¹ and of the marvellous
acts² of Rabban Mâr Hôrmîzd,³ the anchorite and the soldier
of righteousness, which was composed by the pious man of
God, Rabban Mâr Simon, the disciple of Rabba Mâr
Nôzadhaf. May his prayer help us! Amen.

CHAPTER I.

The Author's Preface.

The gardener who hath many storehouses of plants
in the ground [setteth forth in his garden] the plants
which are beautiful to the sight and delightful to look

¹ A summary of the chief facts in the life of Rabban Hôrmîzd will
be found in my *Book of Governors*, vol. 1, p. CLVII ff. (London 1893).

² Besides the poetical life of Rabban Hôrmîzd which is given in
English at the end of this volume, a poem was composed in his hon-
our by 'Ammanûël', Bishop of Bêth Garmai (who died A. D. 1080).
The text has been published by Gabriel Cardahi, *Liber Thesauri de
arte poetica Syrorum*, p. 142 (Rome 1875), and a German translation of
it by Prof. G. Hoffmann is in his *Auszüge aus Syrischen Akten Persischer
Märtyrer*, p. 19. It is rightly described by this scholar as "eine ebenso
freche wie plumpe Fälschung der Stiftungsgeschichte" (see p. 180).
Cardahi also published in his work an encomium on Rabban Hôrmîzd
by Âdham of 'Aqrâ in Margâ, see also Duval, *La Littérature Syriacque*
(being vol. 11 of *Anciennes Littératures Chrétiennes*, Paris 1899), p. 217.
For the small hymn and encomium on Rabban Hôrmîzd by Mâr Abbâ
and Sabhr-lshô' see Assemâni, B. O., III. 1, p. 284, Nos. VI and IX.

³ Pers. هورمزد, Chaldee ܠܗܪܡܝܝܐ.

upon ; and it is meet that every man should look with the eye of understanding upon the beautiful things [written in this book] which appeal to the reason, that is to say, the struggles of the contending[s] of Fol. 1 b the perfect men and | of the divine athletes who have for generation after generation triumphed gloriously, and who have become a light in the earth, and a mirror in the inhabited world. And from them he should draw, as from a fountain from which divine beauties flow in overwhelming abundance, the spiritual excellences, even in the smallest measure, which will nourish both the body and the soul. Then shall he be "like unto the tree which is planted by the water-brooks," whereof the fruit is meet for food, and the leaves for healing",² and in this wise shall the things which are spoken of assume visible forms unto him, and they shall be found to be possessions which can indeed be acquired, and the soul shall long for them with fervent love, and they shall incite those who behold them to desire them with an exceedingly great desire. For the keeping in remembrance of the histories of men who have led lives of ascetic excellence is merchandize of no small [value], provided that they have been handed down in tradition by those who are well acquainted with them, and who believe in them.³ Now the keeping in remembrance of the histories which carry edification⁴ with them [Page 4] moves the soul to

¹ Ps. I. 3.

² Rev. XXII. 2.

³ Literally, "when in faith they are handed on".

⁴ *I. e.*, which edify their readers from an ascetic point of view. In this work 𐬠𐬀𐬛𐬀𐬭𐬀 usually means *ascetic* excellence.

the memory of works of excellence, provided that histories of the kind which I shall now narrate have been set down in writing, for unless they be written down it is impossible that [any] benefit shall flow from them unto those who hearken unto them. Moreover, the lapse of time,¹ and the forgetfulness | of the mat- Fol. 2 a
ters² thereof, I mean to say old age, and death, which itself doth make histories which give edification to pass away, obscure and take away from the mind the power to hold them in remembrance. Now it is a great gift for a man to be strenuous in setting down in writing the divine deeds and conversations³ of holy men, because then they can never be delivered over unto error and oblivion,⁴ and because the acts and deeds which our holy fathers performed in the course of their sojourning in this world were fair and beautiful, and because it is for the benefit of the Church of Christ that the victories of the mighty men who have fought in wars of the spirit and understanding should be written down. And moreover, we must not omit to write down the accounts of the acts, and deeds, and lives of those men who, whilst living in a mortal and passible body, made manifest impassibility; and who, though possessing a nature which was prone to error and which had been formed by the waters of passions, strove to emulate the acts, and deeds, and lives of divine beings. For if we were to hide the glorious

¹ Literally, "in the length of time".

² *I. e.*, the things which happen during the lapse of many years.

³ **דברי** means everything which concerns the habits, dress, conversation, and rules of the monastic life.

⁴ *I. e.*, the state of being forgotten.

triumphs of this holy father, this blessed man Rabban Mâr Hôrmîzd, we should merit punishment from his Lord, and he to whom the keeping in remembrance of his marvellous contents, and the honouring of the
 Fol. 2 b divine labours of this | strenuous athlete of Christ, by setting them down in writing, would be bound by a curse. And the humility of the blessed man, and the sureness of his faith, and the true light of his soul, which illumineth the understanding and enableth it, by means of the mystery of its hidden nature to gaze upon the things which are hidden and cannot be examined into, these things, I say, by reason of the excellence¹ of his divine labours, yield in season and out of season the sweet nourishment of the light which is beyond compare. And the place of his enjoyment is in that of the hosts of light, the children of the Palace of the innermost Holy of Holies, wherein [Page 5] we ascribe holiness to the Most High in the form of the Trinity, Who is eternally hidden from the generations and peoples of the children of men, Who is Very Light of Very Light, and Who is beyond the seasons of Time and the divisions thereof. But He revealed Himself in the flesh in the last times, with a body and with a soul, and He made both celestial and terrestrial beings to marvel [thereat] and to be stupefied with amazement; and by His submissive obedience and by His humility He exalted our contemptible dust to the mighty height of the honour of His Majesty. He is the Self-existent and hidden Being, Who is eternally and everlastingly self-existent,

¹ Literally, "prosperity".

and no limit can be ascribed¹ unto His self-existence by living beings, that is to say, by those who belong to the Nine Classes of Angels,² | and by those who Fol. 3 a belong to the race of terrestrial³ beings. Now, when by reason of His love towards us [our] Physician wished to give life unto our deadness,⁴ and to direct aright our course of error, and to lighten our darkness, He arrayed Himself in the garb of humility, and gave life unto the deadness of our race through the MAN Jesus Christ. And through His life-giving commandments He guided us into the path of light of His glorious mansions, saying, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am lowly and humble in My heart, and ye shall find rest for your souls; for My yoke is pleasant, and My burden is light;"⁵ and, "on whom shall I look, and in whom shall I dwell, except the lowly and humble man who trembleth at My word?"⁶ For humility and lowliness are the armour against all evil spirits, and this our

¹ The general meaning is that God is independent of all considerations of time and that neither aeons nor moments can be employed in formulating the length or duration of His existence.

² The Angels consist of Nine Classes and three orders, upper, middle, and lower. The upper order is composed of Cherubim, Seraphim, and Thrones: these are called "priests", "chief priests", and "bearers of God's throne". The middle order is composed of Lords, Powers, and Rulers, and the lower order consists of Principalities, Archangels, and Angels. A description of the functions of these nine classes is given by Solomon of al-Basra: see my *Book of the Bee*, p. 9.

³ Literally, "inferior race".

⁴ Or, to vivify our mortality.

⁵ See St. Matthew XI. 29, 30.

⁶ Isaiah LXVI. 2.

Lord depicted in His own Person. He took a napkin, He girded it about His loins, and He began to wash the feet of His disciples, and to wipe [them] with the napkin which was girded about His loins; thus did that lofty and exalted Prince abase Himself, and the Lord of the Rulers and Governors¹ who were in the heavens bent and brought down to this state of
 Fol. 3 b abasement His exalted head; | by the stripping of the body of His manhood He exposed Himself unto the Rulers and Governors, and He put them to shame in His own Person openly, [as if He would say] "For "I have given this example unto you, [Page 6] so that "ye may do [unto others] even as I have done unto "you, for there is no servant who is greater than his "lord, and no apostle who is greater than he that "sent him; and through this armour of humility ye "shall subdue all rebellious strongholds," according to the word of the Gospel of the divine Paul, who saith, "The armour of our service² is not of the flesh, "but of the power of God, and therewith we shall "subdue rebellious strongholds, and overthrow³ evil "thoughts and every high thing which shall be raised "up against the knowledge of God."⁴ And the holy Apostle saith,⁵ "Who shall separate me from the love "of God which is in our Lord Jesus Christ? [Shall] "tribulation, or persecution, or imprisonment, or fa- "mine, or nakedness, or danger, or the sword? As

¹ *I. e.*, two of the Nine Classes of the Angels.

² Or, "fighting".

³ *I. e.*, throw down and cover over.

⁴ 2 Corinthians X. 4, 5.

⁵ Romans VIII. 35—39.

“it is written, For thy sake we die every day, and
 “we are accounted as sheep for food;’ but in all
 “these things we gain the victory through Him that
 “hath loved us. | For I am persuaded, that neither Fol. 4 a
 “death, nor life, nor Angels, nor Principalities, nor
 “Powers,² nor things which now exist or shall come
 “into being, nor height, nor depth, nor any other crea-
 “ture, shall be able to separate me from the love of
 “God which is in our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is the
 glorious and excellent offspring of humiliation, and
 ye must know that it is by this selfsame power of
 humility that ye shall be able to gird up [your] loins
 and your divine souls: and by it ye shall be able to
 gird up your pure souls in such wise that they may
 become fountains of the humility which breatheth forth
 the odour of the glorious marriage of the Son of the
 heavenly King, the Lord of the marriage feast. And
 moreover, by the oil of loving-kindness the lamps of
 your understandings shall burn brightly, and ye shall
 become the sons of your Father which is in heaven,
 and children of the inheritance of Jesus Christ. What
 shall we say then? The Gentiles who never followed³
 after the Law [Page 7] have attained⁴ unto the law of
 righteousness, but [the children of] Israel, who were
 wont to follow after righteousness, never attained unto
 the righteousness which cometh of faith,⁵ | for they Fol. 4 b
 sought to establish the righteousness which cometh of

¹ Psalm XLIV. 22.

² *I. e.*, three of the Nine Classes of the Angels.

³ Literally, “ran after”.

⁴ Literally, “overtaken”.

⁵ Or, belief.

the Law; and they did not desire to make themselves righteous by the faith of Christ but by the works of the Law which could be made manifest, and thereby they stumbled grievously¹ and fell with a fall which knew no rising up. For who can stand against the things which are wrought by God? Or peradventure, shall the thing which hath been fashioned say unto Him that fashioned it, "Thou hast not fashioned me well?" Or [shall it say], "The potter hath no power over his clay, wherefrom he may fashion some [vessels] for honour, and others for dishonour?"²

Now therefore it is the custom of the Divine Book to make mention of the country, and race, and family of the perfect and righteous children of men who in all generations have fulfilled the righteousness of God, even as in the case of Jeremiah the prophet it saith, "When as yet I had not formed thee 'in the womb I knew thee, and before thou hadst 'gone forth from the belly I sanctified thee, and set 'thee [to be] a prophet to the nations.'³ And thus also was it in the case of the selection of the blessed man Abraham, concerning which Moses the prophet relateth, [saying], "And the Lord said unto "Abram, Get thee out from the land in which thou "wast born, and from thy father's house, into a coun- "try which I will shew thee; and I will make thee "a great nation, and I will bless and magnify thy

¹ Literally, "they were tripped up and fell with a fall which was without rising".

² Romans IX. 20, 21.

³ Jeremiah I. 5.

"name."¹ And our Lord, in His holy | Gospel saith Fol. 5 a
unto His blessed Apostles, "Behold, have I not chosen
"you before the foundations of the world were laid?"²
And that the Lord knoweth those that are His the
Divine Book maketh us to know, and the Apostle Paul
saith, "Those whom He hath called He sanctifieth, and
"those whom He hath sanctified He praiseth, and those
"whom He hath praised He justifieth."³

Now, wonder hath laid hold upon me at this athlete
and glorious⁴ soldier, this most prosperous merchant,⁵
[Page 8] concerning whose glorious attributes it is laid
upon [my] words to tell the story, and upon [my] writ-
ten letters the depicting of his life, and acts, and
deeds. And that ye may become heirs of his divine
labours ye have commanded me, O chosen brethren
of God and habitations of the Holy Ghost, to des-
cend into the depths of this intellectual sea and to
bring up to you therefrom the pearl which is adorned
with all manner of beauties, that is to say, the his-
tory of the athlete of our victorious King, the fame
of whose triumphs shall be proclaimed throughout crea-
tion among all the generations of the world, whom
God made to triumph, and whose memorial God hath
magnified in His Church for ever.

¹ Genesis XII. 1, 2.

² Ephesians I. 4.

³ Romans VIII. 30.

⁴ Literally, "without shame".

⁵ *ῥαββαν* = *ραββαν*, and the idea which the writer
wishes to convey is that Rabban Hôrmīzd was a very busy, and
strenuous, and prosperous merchant who trafficked in spiritual wares
of all kinds.

Fol. 5 b Now¹ Scripture mentioneth the place of his | habitation, and saith, "There was a man in the land of "Uz whose name was Job,² and he was an upright "and a righteous man, and a fearer of God, and one "who had turned aside from evil." And moreover, concerning Samuel, [it is manifest] that he was a righteous man, and one worthy of keeping in remembrance, and the Book saith, "There was a certain "man of Râmëthâ dhö-Dhâwkê,³ of the Mount of "Ephraim, whose name was Halkânâ [Elkanah⁴]. We therefore also desire to speak concerning the life, and acts, and deeds, of a man who was renowned for his divine triumphs, not merely as such, but because they were wrought [as a result] of the gift of the grace of our Lord. For who is able to tell concerning [all] the triumphs of him that was arrayed in heavenly victory? [What any man can tell is nothing more in proportion] than is the bucketful of water [in comparison to] the sea. And moreover, we must declare concerning his country, and his city, and his nurture in the fear of God, and the beginning of his discipleship, and his life of sorrow, and his living in the monastery,⁵ and his life and habitation in the mountains, and rocks, and caves of the earth; and also

¹ Some lines appear to be omitted from the text here, for the narrative does not run consecutively; we should expect Job and Samuel to be mentioned above with Jeremiah and Abraham.

² See Job I. 1.

³ The LXX has ἐξ Ἀρμαθαίου Σιζά, and the Hebrew מִן־רָמֶתְהָם צִיִּים.

⁴ 1 Samuel I. 1.

⁵ *I. e.*, the hard life which he led as a coenobite, even before he went out to live alone.

concerning his fasting, and his strict abstinence, and his poverty in dress, and his abnegation, and his asceticism, and his goodness to strangers; and concerning the spiritual endowments [Page 9] and gifts which Christ bestowed upon him because of his divine labours; and concerning the | great and mighty signs Fol. 6 a and deeds of wonder which Christ wrought by his hands; and concerning the exalted gifts of prophecy and of the knowledge of events before they happened which were granted unto him by the mercy of God. And when, by the help of God, and by the prayers of the blessed man, we draw nigh unto the conclusion of his strife and course, we will make an end of [this] history which is full of victory and divine triumphs.

CHAPTER II.

Concerning his family and native country, which was Shîrâz.

Now the family of the blessed man Rabban Hôrmîzd [came] from the country of the Hûzâyê,¹ and belonged to the city of Bêth Lâfat,² that is to say, Shîrâz;³ and the parents of the blessed man were

¹ *I. e.*, Khuzistan, a mountainous country which lies to the north of the Persian Gulf.

² Bêth Lâfat, the בֵּית לֶפֶט of the Talmud (see Hoffmann, *Auszüge*, p. 41), the *Βῆθ Λαφατῶν* of Procopius, and the نيلاط (wrongly for بيلافاذ) of Yâkût (see Noeldeke, *Geschichte der Perser*, p. 41). It lay between Susa Shushtar, and has been identified with the city of Shâhâbâdh now in ruins: according to Noeldeke the name means "the park of Bêl" (Bêl-âbâdh).

³ Shîrâz lies in a high plain or valley about 20 miles long and 10 miles broad, and is, by road, about 165 miles from the modern

Christians, and were firm in the faith. As concerning the riches of [this] world, which passeth away and shall be dissolved, they were exceedingly well provided, and men servants, and maid servants stood before them and ministered unto them with reverence. And his parents performed the service of angels with fasting and with prayer, and they relieved the wants of the poor and needy, and of those who were in misery, and they visited those who were in tribulation. Now the name of his father was Joseph, and that of his mother was Theklâ. And when the child
 Fol. 6 b had arrived at the age of twelve years | they took him to school that he might learn the Psalms and be trained in spiritual doctrine, and when he had remained there learning for six years he could repeat by heart¹ the Psalms and the New Testament, in which books the young man laboured both by night and by day. Now when he had completed the years of his life in that place, and was about twenty years old, there began to stir in him the natural motions of the fear of God which were established in the nature of our constitution by God, the Creator of our nature [Page 10], and these warm desires rose up in him so frequently² that he was always saying to his parents, "I will become a monk, and I will prepare myself with gladness to serve the Lord according to "His will." With this thought of the fear of God, and

city of Bushire near the head of the Persian Gulf. Descriptions of the modern city will be found in the works of Pietro della Valle, Herbert, Chardin, Ouseley, Ker Porter, Morier and others.

¹ Literally, "by the mouth".

² The words *ḥayr ḥayr*.