*Golden Crowns Series*

Quddús

*by*

Lowell Johnson



The National Spiritual Assembly

Bahá’ís of South and West Africa

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Introduction to the *Golden Crowns* Series

In these next pages you will read of great sacrifices. Anyone reading

the stories of the early believers in the Bahá’í Faith will wonder why

these people sacrificed so much. What was different about the

Messages of the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh which made ordinary people

rise to the heights of heroism and die gloriously for their Faith?

The teachings of the Báb\* and Bahá’u’lláh† repeat the divine

principles announced by the Prophets of the past. You can read these

teachings in a very small book entitled *The Hidden Words*. It was

written by Bahá’u’lláh. But added to these eternal truths, the Báb

and Bahá’u’lláh have given new teachings never announced by any

Prophet of God before. Here are some of them:

The first teaching of the Bahá’í Faith is that all men belong to one

human family. Speaking to all men, Bahá’u’lláh says, ‘Ye are the

fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch.’ By this He means that

the world of men is like a tree, the nations and peoples are the

different branches of that tree, and the men and women are as the

fruits and blossoms of that tree. In all past religions, the world of

men was divided into two parts—one part known as the people of

the Book of God or the pure tree, and the other known as the lost

people or the evil tree. Bahá’u’lláh has changed this teaching by

announcing that the world is one world and all people in it members

of one family. This is a special teaching of Bahá’u’lláh not to be

found in any other religion. Some people are asleep, He says, and

they need to be awakened; some are sick, they need to be healed;

some are like children, they need to be taught; but all receive the

bounty and gifts of God.

\* The Báb is the title given to the Forerunner of Bahá’u’lláh. He was born in

Shíráz, Írán (Persia) on the 20th of October 1819 and was martyred in Tabríz,

Írán on the 9th of July 1850. The ‘Báb’ means the ‘Gate’.

† Bahá’u’lláh is the name of God’s newest Manifestation on earth. He was born

in Ṭihrán, Írán on the 12th of November 1817 and died near Haifa, Israel on

the 29th of May 1892. ‘Bahá’u’lláh’ means the ‘Glory of God’.

Another new principle in the Bahá’í Faith is the need to investigate

truth. That is to say, no man should blindly follow his ancestors and

forefathers. Each man must see with his own eyes, hear with his own

ears, and investigate truth for himself.

Another teaching is this: that the foundation of all the religions

of God is one. There is only one God. Therefore, there can be only

one religion—the Religion of God. All the past Prophets have taught

the same basic truths, which have all come from the same mouth of

God. This teaching is a new teaching and is special in the Bahá’í

Faith.

A new principle is that religion must be the cause of unity, har-

mony and agreement amongst men. If religion becomes the cause

of disagreement and hatred, if it leads to separation and fighting,

then it would be better if there were no religion in the world.

The Bahá’í Faith also teaches that religion must agree with

science and reason. If it does not agree with science and reason then

it is superstition. Down to the present day it has been the custom for

a man to accept a religious teaching even if it does not agree with

his reason and judgement. The agreement of religious belief with

reason and science opens new windows to the soul of man.

Bahá’u’lláh has taught the equality of men and women. This is

special to the teachings of the Bahá’í Faith, for all other religions

have placed men above women.

A new religious principle is that prejudices, whether religious,

racial, patriotic or political, destroy the solid foundation for a

peaceful life. Therefore, men must overcome their prejudices so that

they can see the underlying truth, that the family of man is one

family and not divided into separate parts.

Universal peace is promised in the Bahá’í teachings. This universal

peace will be accomplished by putting into practice the principles

of Bahá’u’lláh. Peace shall come to all nations, governments, peoples,

religions, races, and all parts of mankind. No other Prophet has

ever promised peace to the world during His ministry, but this is

one of the special teachings of Bahá’u’lláh.

The Báb and Bahá’u’lláh have taught that every man must gain

knowledge and receive an education. It is a religious law in the

Bahá’í Faith that both girls and boys must be educated.

Bahá’u’lláh has set forth the solution and provided the remedy for

the economic question. The solution of the economic problem, He

says, lies in the realm of the spirit. No religious books of the past

Prophets speak of this important human problem.

The greatest new principle of the new religion is the establishment

and appointment of the Centre of the Covenant. This is another

teaching not given by any of the Prophets of the past. Bahá’u’lláh

has appointed a Centre of the Covenant\* to carry on His work and

hold the Bahá’ís together after His passing. When a person becomes

a Bahá’í, he must agree to follow the laws contained in the Covenant.

In this way, Bahá’u’lláh has protected the religion of God against

differences and splits. He has made it impossible for anyone to create

a new sect or faction of belief. To make sure of the unity of the

believers, He has entered into a Covenant with all the people of the

world, including the Interpreter and Explainer of His teachings, so

that no one may interpret or explain the religion of God according

to his own ideas or opinion, and thus create a sect founded upon his

own understanding of the divine words.

These are some of the principles of religion brought by the Báb

and Bahá’u’lláh which are different from the religions of the past.

Thousands of men and women died during the nineteenth century

rather than give up their faith in these teachings. Today, in the

twentieth century, millions of Bahá’ís live their lives so that they

can demonstrate these teachings and bring them to all people,

everywhere.

In the *Golden Crowns* series, Lowell Johnson tells the stories of some

of these early believers who won the crown of martyrdom. One of

these believers was Quddús. Quddús’ story now follows.

\* Bahá’u’lláh appointed His eldest Son, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, as the Centre of the

Covenant. He guided the Bahá’ís until He passed away in Haifa, Israel, on the

28th of November 1921. ‘‘Abdu’l-Bahá’ means the ‘Servant of Bahá’ or the

‘Servant of the Glory’.

Note

*For this edition, these stories have*

*been extensively revised. They may*

*be read aloud effectively, or else*

*used for private reading.*

# Quddús

Mullá Ḥusayn\* was the first to believe in the Báb, but Muḥammad-

‘Alí (later known as Quddús) was His favourite disciple. ‘Quddús’

means ‘Holy’, or the ‘Most Holy’.

Through his mother, Quddús was a direct descendant of the

Prophet Muḥammad. He was born in the town of Bárfurúsh, in the

northern part of Írán. His mother died when he was very young, and

his father died while Quddús was a boy studying at school in the city

of Mashhad. Therefore, he was raised by his stepmother, who loved

him very much. He was an intelligent boy and a very good scholar.

When he was eighteen years old, Quddús heard about Siyyid

Káẓim and his new teachings, so he travelled all the way to Karbilá,

near Baghdád in ‘Iráq, to sit in Siyyid Káẓim’s classes. Siyyid

Káẓim was the one who foretold the coming of the Báb. Very soon,

Quddús became Siyyid Káẓim’s favourite student. He always took

the lowliest seat in the room. He was very quiet, very modest, and he

seldom spoke to the rest of his companions.

Siyyid Káẓim was often heard to remark that certain ones amongst

his disciples, although they sat in the lowliest of seats and were

always very quiet, were greater in the sight of God than Siyyid

Káẓim was himself. But even though Siyyid Káẓim made it quite

clear to them, none of the other disciples realized that the man whom

Siyyid Káẓim was talking about was Quddús.

Quddús was an independent seeker after the Promised One.

Therefore, when several of his companions came to Mullá Ḥusayn

in Shíráz and asked if Mullá Ḥusayn had found the Promised One,

Quddús was not with them. He was out seeking his Beloved by

himself.

One evening, on his search for the Promised One, Quddús came

to the city of Shíráz. There he saw Mullá Ḥusayn, whom he had

met in Siyyid Káẓim’s classes, walking in the street. Quddús was

\* See the booklet on Mullá Ḥusayn [online at bahai-library.com/johnson\_mulla\_husayn].

tired and dirty from his journey, but when he saw Mullá Ḥusayn,

he became very excited. He took Mullá Ḥusayn into his arms and

begged him to tell him if he had yet found the Promised One. Mullá

Ḥusayn tried to calm him down, and told him he must rest for a

while, and then they would talk. But Quddús would not calm down.

At that moment Quddús started looking at a Young Man walking

a short distance away from Mullá Ḥusayn. Quddús turned to Mullá

Ḥusayn and said, ‘Why do you try to hide Him from me? I can

recognize Him by His walk. I swear by God that no one except Him,

whether in the East or in the West, can claim to be the Truth. No one

else in the whole world can have the power which I see in that holy

person.’

Mullá Ḥusayn was surprised by Quddús’ words, so he excused

himself for a minute and went to talk to the Young Man. Mullá

Ḥusayn told the Báb what Quddús had said, and the Báb told him

not to be surprised, as He had been talking with him through the

spirit, and knew him already. He had been waiting for him to come.

So the Báb asked Mullá Ḥusayn to go to him, and bring him into

His presence immediately.

It was in this remarkable way that Quddús became the last of the-

eighteen Letters of the Living to recognize the Báb. These eighteen,

together with the Báb, made up the first nineteen believers in the new

Revelation.

When Quddús arrived in Shíráz and recognized the Báb as the

Promised One, he was only twenty-two years of age. Although he was

young in years, no one showed as much courage and faith as Quddús

during the difficult years which were to follow. When the Báb

called each of the Letters of the Living into His presence and gave

each one a special command to carry out, it was Quddús whom the

Báb chose to stay with Him and be His companion.

When the Báb received the message from Mullá Ḥusayn that

Bahá’u’lláh had become one of His followers Quddús was with Him.

From that moment, Quddús noticed that the Báb showed a new

spirit and new hope. It was clear that the Báb had great faith in this

new believer, Bahá’u’lláh, and He told Quddús that the time had

now come for Him to start on His pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina.

He chose Quddús to accompany Him.

2

The Báb and Quddús, together with the Báb’s Ethiopian servant,

joined a group of pilgrims who were leaving Shíráz for Mecca and

Medina. They first went to the town of Búshihr where the Báb had

worked in former years as a humble merchant with His uncle.

After making the final arrangements for the trip, they climbed

aboard a sailing ship and spent two months travelling on stormy

seas. The weather was very bad, and many of the pilgrims became

sick from the motion of the sea. But nothing could keep the Báb from

His prayers and His writing. Quddús was His secretary during the

whole time. At all times during the day lie was busy taking down

every word which the Báb told him to write. The Báb and Quddús

were always calm and peaceful while the others on the ship were sick

and afraid.

When the Báb and Quddús arrived at the end of their sea trip,

they landed at the city of Jeddah. It was here that the Báb put on the

proper clothes for a pilgrim and set out on His journey by camel

across the desert to Mecca. Although the Báb asked Quddús to ride

a camel as well, he refused. Quddús preferred to walk ahead of the

Báb’s camel holding the camel’s bridle so he could protect the Báb

in case anything might happen. Quddús walked all the way from

Jeddah to Mecca, happily taking care of his Master’s needs and

completely forgetting that he was tired, and his feet were sore. Every

night Quddús would sacrifice his sleep, and stay awake beside his

Beloved, ready at a moment’s notice to protect Him and keep Him

safe.

While they were in Mecca the most important work for Quddús

was to deliver a message from the Báb to the Sharíf, the keeper of the

most holy House of God. In this letter, the Báb set forth in clear

words the purpose of His Message and called upon the Sharíf to

The voyage

to Mecca

accept the Truth of His Cause. He also sent some of His other

Writings so that the Sharíf could recognize the power of His Words.

It was the Báb’s purpose in writing this letter to inform the head

Chief of the Muslim Faith that the Promised One had arrived, the

Promised One that all the faithful Muslims were waiting for.

The Báb gave this very important letter to Quddús to deliver to the

Sharíf. Quddús followed his Master’s instructions and delivered it,

sealed, into the Sharíf’s own hands.

The Sharíf was a good man. However, he was very busy and had

no time to read. A few days later Quddús went back to the Sharíf

and asked him if he had any answer for the Báb. The Sharíf told him

that he was too busy at the moment. He would read the message and

answer it at a later time. Little did the Sharíf know that he was too

busy to read a Message from God.

From Mecca the Báb and Quddús went on to Medina, and from

there they returned to Jeddah, once more made the sea voyage for

two months, and landed again at Búshihr. Altogether, their

pilgrimage lasted for nine months. And that was the end of Quddús’

companionship with the Báb.

When the Báb and Quddús arrived at Búshihr, the Báb called

Quddús into His presence and said to him, ‘The days of your com-

panionship with Me are drawing to a close. The hour of separation

has struck, a separation which no reunion will follow except in the

Kingdom of God, in the presence of the King of Glory. … The hand

of destiny will ere long plunge you into an ocean of tribulation for

His sake. … I, too, will be immersed beneath its depths. Rejoice …

for you have been chosen as the standard-bearer … of the noble

army that will suffer martyrdom in His name. In the streets of

Shíráz … the severest injuries will afflict your body. You will

survive … The hosts of the Unseen will hasten forth to assist you,

and will proclaim to all the world your heroism and glory.’

With these words, the Báb said goodbye to Quddús. He gave

Quddús a letter to deliver to His uncle, and also some of His

[Image]

Writings. He then told Quddús to give His loving greetings to

wife, His mother and all His loved ones in Shíráz.

And so Quddús set out on his journey to Shíráz to carry out His

beloved Master’s wishes. Arriving in Shíráz, he was greeted with

love by the Báb’s uncle, Ḥájí Mírzá Siyyid ‘Alí, who insisted that

he stay with him in his own home. The Báb’s uncle had known for

some time about the Báb and His Message, but never the complete

story. When Quddús explained it fully to him, he immediately saw

the Truth and became the first follower of the Báb in Shíráz since

the Báb’s Eighteen Letters of the Living. So strong became his faith,

and so great his love for the Báb, that he gave his whole life to His

service. He was an outstanding business man in the city of Shíráz,

but he never let anything stand in the way of telling people about the

new Message, or of protecting the Faith and the Báb Himself. So

great was his love that he later gave his life as one of the Seven

Martyrs of Ṭihrán.

The next person whom Quddús met in Shíráz was Mullá Ṣádiq

Mullá Ṣádiq became so on fire with the love of the Báb that one day

when he was leading the faithful Muslims in prayer at the mosque,

he added to the Muslim call to prayer certain words which the Báb

had written and commanded to be used. The other men of the clergy

were so angry that they reported Mullá Ṣádiq to the Governor of the

province. The Governor ordered the arrest of both Quddús and

Mullá Ṣádiq.

After questioning Mullá Ṣádiq, the Governor cursed him and

ordered his servants to remove all his clothes and to beat him a

thousand times with a whip. He then commanded that the beards

of both Quddús and Mullá Ṣádiq should be burned, their noses

pierced, that a rope be put through the hole, and that they be led

through the streets of the city for everyone to see.

This was done as the Governor had commanded, and no one tried

to help them out of their trouble. Quddús and Mullá Ṣádiq bravely

put themselves into the hands of God, and Mullá, Ṣádiq even had a

smile on his face while he was being whipped, for he knew he had

done nothing wrong. Soon after this they were ordered to leave the

city of Shíráz and warned that if they ever tried to return, they would

both be killed.

Do you remember the last words of the Báb to Quddús? ‘In the

streets of Shíráz … the severest injuries will afflict your body. …

The hosts of the Unseen will hasten forth to assist you, and will

proclaim to all the world your heroism and glory.’

In this way Quddús and Mullá, Ṣádiq were the first to suffer on

Persian soil for the sake of their beloved Faith.

3

From Shíráz, Quddús went on to Kirmán where he brought Ḥájí

Siyyid Javád, a very great scholar, into the Faith. From Kirmán,

Quddús went to many other cities, always teaching, always in-

spiring others to give their lives to the Báb.

While Quddús was in Ṭihrán, he was brought into the presence of

Bahá’u’lláh. The thoughts of Bahá’u’lláh about Quddús at that time

are not known, but Bahá’u’lláh’s brother, Áqáy-i-Kalím, was very

impressed. He told a friend, ‘The charm of Quddús, his easy manner,

his courtesy, his grace, combined with a dignity of bearing, was liked

by everyone. We watched him one day as he prepared for his prayers,

and we noticed how different he was, how much more graceful he

was, than anyone else who was present. He seemed to be, in our eyes,

everything that was graceful and pure.’

From Ṭihrán, Quddús went on to his home in Bárfurúsh, in the

province of Mázindarán, where he spent many months with his

family and relatives. His stepmother gave Quddús as much kindness

and care as his own mother could have given. She looked forward

with great hope to the day when Quddús would be married. That

was what would make her happier than anything else, she said.

Quddús was then about twenty-five years of age, and she often said

to him, ‘I am afraid I will go to my grave without having my

happiness made complete.’

Quddús told her, ‘The day of my wedding is not yet come. That

day will be the most glorious. It will not be in this house, it will be

out in the open air. It will be in the midst of the Sabzih-Maydán,

while thousands of people look on. There I shall celebrate my

wedding and see all my hopes come true.’ His stepmother did not

understand what he meant by these words until three years later

when Quddús was killed in the Sabzih-Maydán, and he sacrificed

his life for the Báb.

For about two years Quddús lived in Bárfurúsh. He talked with all

classes of people and, by the gentleness of his character and his great

knowledge, he became greatly loved by everyone in the town.

One day, Mullá Ḥusayn came to Quddús’ home, and reported that

he had just returned from visiting the Báb in the prison of Máh-Kú.

It was wonderful for Quddús to see Mullá Ḥusayn. He took him into

his arms lovingly, waited upon his guest, and did everything to make

Mullá Ḥusayn comfortable. With his own hands he washed the

blisters on Mullá Ḥusayn’s feet and removed the dust from Mullá

Ḥusayn’s clothes. He gave Mullá Ḥusayn the seat of honour at his

table, and invited all his friends to meet him.

After dinner, when all the guests had left, Quddús asked to hear

all the news about the Báb. After a long talk, Mullá, Ḥusayn said

finally, ‘But He gave me no definite directions about what I should

do next to spread the Cause. He told me that in Mázindarán a

hidden treasure would be revealed to me, and I would know what to

do.’

Now we know that Quddús was the favourite disciple of the Báb.

We also know that the Báb chose Quddús to be with Him for fourteen

months of His life so that He could prepare Quddús to carry on His

work while He was in prison. While Quddús was with the Báb, he

learned many things which the other Letters of the Living were not

privileged to learn. Quddús was also given a special spiritual power

which made him the greatest of all the Bábís next to the Báb Himself.

When Quddús heard that Mullá Ḥusayn was looking for a hidden

treasure, he showed Mullá Ḥusayn a piece of writing which he had

[Image]

completed. Mullá Ḥusayn read the writing and immediately recog-

nized the special power which the Báb had given to Quddús.

Without hesitation he said, ‘It is Quddús who is the hidden treasure

which the Báb promised I would find. Although my Master is now

in prison in the mountains of Ádhirbáyján, the reflection of His glory

now stands before me.’ From that moment on, Mullá Ḥusayn

accepted Quddús as his new leader, and he did whatever Quddús

asked him to do, just as if it were the Báb Who was commanding him.

Quddús thus became the new leader of the Bábís, while the Báb was

in the prison of Máh-Kú and the castle of Chihríq.

The next morning, when Quddús’ friends gathered at his home a

second time, they heard Quddús say to Mullá Ḥusayn, ‘Now, at this

very hour, you should arise, and go to Khurásán. In the city of

Mashhad, you should build a house in which we can live and receive

guests. To this house you shall invite every pure soul, and we shall

prepare them to join together to teach the Cause of God.’

Mullá Ḥusayn departed. Soon the house in Mashhad was finished.

It was named the Bábíyyih after the Báb, a name which it still has to

this day. Soon after it was built, Quddús went to Mashhad to live

with Mullá Ḥusayn. Together they worked as a team. Mullá Ḥusayn

would go out amongst the people and interest them in the Faith. He

would then bring the people to the Bábíyyih to listen to Quddús.

Quddús would teach them, accept their declarations, and send them

out to teach others. In this way, a wonderful spirit was spread

throughout the whole city of Mashhad. So many people came to the

house to be taught that the Chief Constable of the city couldn’t

control the traffic. And the news of the Faith spread from Mashhad

to all parts of the province, and even beyond.

4

It was during this time, when the Faith was spreading rapidly all

over Írán that the Báb sent a Message from His prison to all the

believers asking them to hold a conference in the province of

Khurásán. It was especially important for Quddús to be there, as he

was the leader of the Bábís while the Báb was in prison. Before

leaving Mashhad, Quddús called the believers of Mashhad into his

presence, and said to them, ‘From now on, you must look to Mullá

Ḥusayn as your leader. You must obey whatever he tells you to do

without question. There are going to be very difficult times for you

in the near future. The days when you will he tested greatly are soon

coming. But, if you obey Mullá Ḥusayn, he will see that you are

saved when the troubles are at their worst.’

With these words, Quddús left the believers in the city of Mashhad,

and started for the little village of Badasht. On his way to Badasht,

he was met by Bahá’u’lláh in the village of Sháh-Rúd, and they

went to the conference together.

It was then the beginning of summer. When Bahá’u’lláh arrived

in Badasht, He rented three gardens—one for the use of Quddús, one

for Ṭáhirih and her servant, and one for Himself. Ṭáhirih, you may

remember, was the only woman to be named a Letter of the Living.

Altogether there were eighty-one Bábís who attended this first

conference in Bahá’í history. All eighty-one of those present were the

guests of Bahá’u’lláh. The conference lasted for twenty-two days.

The purpose of this conference was to break with the old laws and

explain the new Age to the &ibis. Until then they had mostly been

following the laws of Muḥammad. But the time had come for them

to follow the new teachings of the Báb. As you will see, it was to be

a time of testing the pure hearts and the sincere believers.

At that time, Bahá’u’lláh was not the leader of the Faith. Most of

the Bábís looked to Quddús as their leader, because he was the

closest to the Báb. The conference had been called by the Báb, but

since He was still in prison, He could not be there.

Little by little, however, it became clear that Bahá’u’lláh was

really the most important Person at the conference. Every day,

Bahá’u’lláh revealed a new Tablet which was chanted to the

believers. In these Tablets, He gave each person present a new name

for the new Day. Qurratu’l-‘Ayn was given the new name ‘Ṭáhirih’,

Muḥammad-‘Alí was given the name ‘Quddús’, and so on. Even

Bahá’u’lláh, Who had always been known as Ḥusayn-‘Alí, accepted

the name which the Báb had already given to Him, the name ‘Bahá’.

One day at the conference, Bahá’u’lláh took ill, and had to stay in

bed in His tent. As soon as Quddús heard of the illness, he hurried to

Bahá’u’lláh side. Soon, the rest of the believers also came to

Bahá’u’lláh’s tent, and they gathered around Him. No sooner had

they arrived than a messenger came from Ṭáhirih, asking Quddús

to come to her in her garden. Quddús was very angry to be given an

order by a woman, so he said, ‘I have cut myself entirely off from

Ṭáhirih. I refuse to go.’ With that answer, the messenger went back

to Ṭáhirih, but she sent him back again to Quddús. ‘Ṭáhirih insists

that you come to see her in her garden’, he said. ‘If you do not come

to her, she will come to you.’

Now, in those days, it was not proper for a woman to appear with

the men. No man must ever look at the face of a woman, unless it

were his wife. And certainly no man was supposed to look at Ṭáhirih,

because she was supposed to be the return of Fáṭimih, the daughter

of the Prophet Muḥammad, a pure and holy woman. Because of

this, Quddús did not believe that Ṭáhirih would do such a thing. So

he said, will not go with you.’ Then, the messenger said to Quddús,

‘Either you must come with me to Ṭáhirih, or else you must cut off

my head with this sword.’ What a surprise this was to Quddús,

especially when the messenger laid his sword at Quddús’ feet and

leaned over for Quddús to cut off his head! But nothing was going to

stop Quddús now, so he lifted the sword and said, ‘All right, if it be

your wish to have your head cut off, I will cut it off.’ But just at that

moment, there was Ṭáhirih standing in front of them!

What a shock for everyone! And what a terrible thing for a

woman to do! She had not only come into the tent with the men, but

she was no longer wearing her veil, and she was very beautifully

dressed. No man had ever seen anything like this before! One man

was so shocked he cut his own throat. With blood on his face and

body, he ran away from the meeting. Several others left the meeting

and the Faith, too. The others could not speak, they could not believe

their eyes!

Ṭáhirih stepped forward and seated herself to the right of Quddús.

She spoke some words to everyone present, and announced that she

was the promised Trumpet-blast. She then turned to Quddús and

said, ‘You were not very careful about the way you taught the Faith

in Khurásán.’ Quddús was very angry and said, ‘I can do as I

please. I do not have to follow the will and good-pleasure of my

fellow-disciples.’

That was the beginning of a quarrel between Ṭáhirih and Quddús

which lasted for several days. Ṭáhirih would say to the Bábís,

‘Quddús has made many mistakes, and I was sent here by the Báb

to teach him what to do.’ Quddús would then answer, ‘Ṭáhirih is the

one who is wrong. She is not telling you the truth. Anyone who

follows Ṭáhirih is following the wrong path.’ Some of the Bábís

agreed with Ṭáhirih, some agreed with Quddús. A few believed that

both of them were right, and that the believers were being tested to

see how strong their faith was.

After a few days, Bahá’u’lláh was able to stop the argument in a

beautiful way. Ṭáhirih and Quddús were brought together, and

Quddús admitted that Ṭáhirih was right. He and Ṭáhirih then

became the best of friends again, and the believers were called upon

by Bahá’u’lláh to accept the teachings of the Báb.

Although the Bábís at that time did not know it, it seems that

Quddús and Ṭáhirih had planned this whole argument

together. Ṭáhirih had taken her instructions from Bahá’u’lláh. He

had told her what she must do. He had also told Quddús that he

must argue with Ṭáhirih. Why did Bahá’u’lláh choose this way of

introducing the new teachings? Because the Báb wanted everyone

present to think for himself and decide for himself whether to follow

the old way of Islam, or the new way of life brought by the Báb.

It was to be a time of great testing of hearts. Between Ṭáhirih and

Quddús, they brought up all the arguments for and against the new

teachings of the Báb, so that everyone would have a chance to think

about them and arrive at a clear decision. So, although it looked as if

Quddús and Ṭáhirih were very angry with each other during the

conference, they were, in fact, only following Bahá’u’lláh’s in-

structions.

When the Conference of Badasht had ended, the believers set out

for Mázindarán. Quddús and Ṭáhirih rode in the same carriage.

5

While Bahá’u’lláh, Ṭáhirih and Quddús and some of’ the believers

were resting on the way, at the village of Níyálá, some people started

throwing stones down at them from the top of the mountain. Because

of the danger, Bahá’u’lláh dressed Quddús in His own clothes, and

sent him away. After the attack had died down, Bahá’u’lláh spoke

to the people of Níyálá and made them see that they were doing

wrong.

Quddús was saved from being killed, but was caught by the

enemy anyway, and placed under guard at the home of a relative

in the town of Sárí. For ninety-five days he was kept in this house,

and although he was treated well, he could not do the thing he

wanted to do most—he could not go out and teach his beloved

Faith.

At this time it became very difficult for the Bábís in Írán. More and

more of the Iranians were accepting the Bib as the return of Jesus

and Muḥammad. More and more people were hearing that the Báb

had ended some of the laws of Muḥammad at the Conference of

Badasht. And so, more and more, the leaders of the Muslim Faith

came to hate the Bábís, and wanted to stop the spread of this new

religion. It even became dangerous for the Bábís to leave their

homes, either by day or by night. The Muslims tried to kill as man)

Bábís as they could. They would go into the Bábí homes while the

men were away during the day and kill the women and children.

At night, the Muslims would attack the Bábís on their way home, or

while they were walking on the roads or in the streets, and kill them

or put them in gaol.

After a time, the Báb sent a message to Mullá Ḥusayn that he

must go to help Quddús, who was still under guard in the house of

his relative in the town of Sari. So Mullá Ḥusayn gathered his men

together and set out. On the way, Mullá Ḥusayn and his men were

attacked so many times that he decided he must stop at the Shrine

of Shaykh Ṭabarsí and build a fort where he could protect himself

and his men from being killed.

As soon as the Fort of Shaykh Ṭabarsí was built, Bahá’u’lláh

came to inspect it. After inspecting the Fort, Bahá’u’lláh gave His

approval, made a few suggestions to improve it and make it more

comfortable and then He said to Mullá Ḥusayn, ‘The one thing this

fort and company require is the presence of Quddús.’ Bahá’u’lláh

knew that if Quddús were there, everything would be perfect. So He

told Mullá Ḥusayn to send Mullá Mihdí with six men to Sari to

fetch Quddús. It would be very simple, He said. All they would have

to do was tell his relative that he must hand Quddús over to them,

that was all. ‘The fear of God and the dread of His punishment’, said

Bahá’u’lláh, ‘will prompt him to surrender unhesitatingly his

captive.’

The men went immediately to the town of Sari, and it was as

Bahá’u’lláh had said. They demanded Quddús, and the relative let

him go, with no trouble or argument. Such was the power of God.

6

As Quddús was coming up to the Fort of Shaykh Ṭabarsí, Mullá

Ḥusayn called all his men together at the Fort and told them that

both the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh wanted Quddús to be there. They must

think of Quddús as being the Báb Himself. ‘As for myself,’ he said,

‘you must consider me his lowly servant. You must obey Quddús so

completely that even if he were to tell you that you must kill me, you

must immediately obey. If you hesitate, you will be untrue to your

Faith. You must not go to him unless he invites you. You must give

up your own wishes and desires, and follow his plans and his

commands. You must act in such a way that I will be proud of you.’

Then, Mullá Ḥusayn took about a hundred of his men to meet

Quddús. In the hands of each man he put two candles, and they

went out into the night. What a joy for them to see their beloved

Quddús! Still holding their candles, they followed their new leader

back to the fort, singing the hymn, ‘Holy, holy, the Lord our God,

the Lord of the angels and the spirit!’ And ‘quddús’ means ‘holy’.

As Quddús climbed off his horse at Shaykh Ṭabarsí, his first

question was about Bahá’u’lláh. Mullá Ḥusayn told him that, if

God willed, Bahá’u’lláh would visit the fort again. Quddús then

asked how many men were in the fort. According to a Muslim

tradition, there should have been three hundred and thirteen to

fulfil an ancient prophecy about the New Day. One by one, Mullá

Ḥusayn counted the men as they walked through the gate of the

fort. In all, he counted three hundred and twelve. As he left the gate

to report the number to Quddús, a young man suddenly rushed into

the fort. He had run all the way from Bárfurúsh so he could join the

men at the fort, and give his life for the beloved Báb. When Mullá

Ḥusayn told Quddús that there were now three hundred and

thirteen, Quddús said, ‘Whatever the tongue of the Prophet of God

has spoken concerning the promised One must be fulfilled.’ In this

way, it would be proved that the New Day had come and the people

would recognize the truth.

The leadership which Quddús gave to the men at Shaykh Ṭabarsí

was a spiritual leadership. One of the most interesting things about

the Bábís in the fort is that they were not fighters or soldiers trained

in warfare. Most of them were students and teachers, and men of

gentle occupation. They were intelligent men who had studied the

Qur’án. They got their strength from the spirit and not from their

muscles. What they were hungry for was more spiritual under-

standing of this New Day. Therefore, Quddús was the perfect man

to be in the fort to give them new life at every turn. He was a scholar.

[Image]

When he arrived at the fort, he gave Mullá Ḥusayn some talks he

had written down, and asked that they be read aloud to the believers.

One was all about the Báb, the second was about Bahá’u’lláh, and the

third about Ṭáhirih. Some wondered why Quddús had written such

wonderful things about Bahá’u’lláh, because they didn’t know at that

time how important Bahá’u’lláh was. When Quddús was told this,

he said they would understand in due time, if God willed it.

Quddús had also been writing a beautiful explanation of part of

the Qur’án. In spite of all the difficulties, he completed it while in

the fort, and the Bábís were thrilled with its power. It was six times

as long as the Qur’án.

For a time every morning and every afternoon during those days,

Quddús would ask Mullá Ḥusayn and some of his other companions

to chant to him the Writings of the Báb. Quddús would seat himself

in an open square next to the fort, and with his friends sitting

around him, lie would listen to the words of his beloved Master.

Even while the battles were raging around him, he always spent this

time listening to the words of the Báb. Completely calm, he would let

the bullets fall anywhere they wanted to. He would only pray, ‘I

glory in that I was the first to suffer for Thy sake in Shíráz. I long to

be the first to suffer in Thy path a death that shall be worthy of Thy

Cause.’

That is the kind of knowledge and the kind of faith which Quddús

had. When his companions saw his courage and listened to his

wisdom, their faith became stronger, they themselves became more

brave. At first they had thought that Mullá Ḥusayn showed so much

attention to Quddús because the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh had told him

that Quddús must be there. But gradually, they came to love

Quddús so much themselves that they gave their hearts to him as

completely as they had to Mullá Ḥusayn.

7

Day after day the enemy attacked the Fort of Shaykh Ṭabarsí. Each

time the Bábís would raise the cry of ‘Yá Ṣáḥibu’z-Zamán!’\* and

they would ride out to the battle. Although the Bábís were small in

number, untrained in the ways of making war, and often hungry

because of lack of food, they always beat off the armies attacking

them. Quddús and Mullá Ḥusayn would ride ahead of the others,

and they showed so much courage that the others fought bravely

behind and beside them.

One day the enemy cut off their supply of water. Anyone who left

the fort to fetch water would surely be killed. Quddús therefore

ordered his men not to leave the fort. One of the men said to him,

‘Our bread has already been cut off by the enemy. What will happen

now if our water should be cut off as well?’

When asked this question, Quddús turned to Mullá Ḥusayn and

said, ‘God willing, this very night we shall have a downpour of rain,

followed by a heavy fall of snow. This will help us turn back the

attack they are planning.’

That very night so much rain fell at the Fort and around it that

much of the ammunition of the enemy was completely ruined, and

the Bábís had enough water to last many, many weeks. The next

night there was a very heavy snowfall and Quddús said to the man

who had complained, ‘Praise be to God Who has answered our

prayer and caused both rain and snow to fall upon our enemies. It

has brought trouble to them and refreshment to our fort.’

The attacks of the enemy continued, however, and so Quddús

ordered a moat (a deep wide ditch) to be dug around the fort as a

further protection. For nineteen days they worked hard digging the

moat, and then it was finished. Soon after, the enemy sent a large

army against the fort. This time the army was headed by Prince

Mihdí-Qulí Mírzá. The Prince camped on a hill above the fort, and

\* O Lord of the Age.

ordered his soldiers to fire in that direction. It was not yet daybreak,

when Quddús gave the signal, ‘Mount your steeds, O heroes of

God!’ and the gates of the fort were thrown open. Two hundred

and two men on horses followed Quddús and Muller Ḥusayn in the

direction of the army. Although the army had many more men than

the two hundred and two Bábís, the Bábís rode through it as though

there were no army there. They rode right up to the headquarters

of the Prince, and into his private rooms. The Prince was so surprised

and so afraid that he threw himself out the back window of his

room, and ran away without even stopping to put on his shoes.

As the Bábís went through the headquarters of the Prince, they

found boxes filled with gold and silver and many expensive things.

But they refused to touch any of it, except a pot of gunpowder, and

the favourite sword of the Prince. After the battle, they all gathered

around Quddús while Mullá Ḥusayn kept watch. Suddenly, the

army attacked again. Quddús was hit in the mouth by a bullet. It

knocked out several of his teeth and wounded his tongue and throat.

He was unable to speak. When Muller Ḥusayn saw blood dripping

from Quddús’ mouth, he was horrified, and was about to beat

himself on the head, but Quddús stopped him in time. Then Muller

Ḥusayn took both the sword of Quddús and the favourite sword of

the Prince, and went after the army himself. The whole army quickly

turned around and ran the other way.

With pain and regret, they carried Quddús back to the fort.

Everyone was sad because he had been hurt. When he saw that they

were sad, Quddús took a piece of paper and wrote on it, because he

could not speak. He wrote on the paper, ‘We should accept the will

of God. We should stand firm and steadfast in the hour of trial. …

Although my body is in pain, my soul is happy. I am so thankful to

God. If you love me, do not be sad, for that will sadden me too.’ This

is how Quddús taught the Bábís to be happy while serving God, no

matter how much pain it causes.

Soon Quddús recovered, but he was unable to help during the next

attack on the fort a few days later. Mullá Ḥusayn, therefore, had to

lead the men by himself. He knew it was his last battle. As he rode

out of the fort with his men behind him, they shouted again, ‘Yá

Ṣáḥibu’z-Zamán!’, but during the fighting, Mullá Ḥusayn’s horse

got caught in a rope, and he was shot in the chest. A few hours later

he died, but before he died, he was carried back to the fort, and a

wonderful thing happened.

As soon as Mullá Ḥusayn was brought to his room, Quddús

ordered the rest of the men to leave. He said to them, ‘Leave me

alone with him. There are certain things which I want only him to

know.’ Everyone left Mullá Ḥusayn and Quddús alone in his room,

but they stood outside the door and waited. One of the men was

looking through a crack in the door, and heard Quddús call Mullá

Ḥusayn’s name. He was surprised to see Mullá Ḥusayn rise up and

seat himself on his knees in front of Quddús in his usual manner.

With his head lowered and his eyes down, Mullá Ḥusayn listened to

every word Quddús said. The man heard Quddús say to Mullá

Ḥusayn, ‘You have hurried to leave this world, and you are leaving

me to face the enemy. If it pleases God, I will join you in a short

time, and I shall also taste the sweetness of being in heaven.’

For two hours, Mullá Ḥusayn and Quddús conversed with each

other, but no one knows what they said. After a long time, Quddús

opened the door to his companions and said, ‘I have said my last

goodbye to Mullá Ḥusayn. I have told him many things which I

could not tell him before.’ When they went to where Mullá Ḥusayn

lay, he was dead. But there was a little smile still on his face, and lie

looked so peaceful it seemed as though he had only fallen asleep.

Quddús himself took care of Mullá Ḥusayn’s body. He put his

own shirt on Mullá, Ḥusayn and gave the order for him to be buried

to the south of, and next to, the Shrine of Shaykh Ṭabarsí. Quddús’

last words before Mullá Ḥusayn was buried were these: ‘Well is it

with you to have remained to your last hour faithful to the Covenant

of God. I pray God that there will never be a division between you

and me.’ He then kissed the eyes and the forehead of Mullá Ḥusayn,

and himself laid the body in the grave. Then he told everyone

standing near that they must keep secret the place where Mullá

Ḥusayn was buried. He then commanded that the thirty-six men

who had been martyred that day be buried on the north side of the

Shrine—all in one grave. And his final word to them was: ‘Let the

loved ones of God learn from the example of these martyrs of our

Faith. Let them be and remain as united in life as these are now in

death.’

No less than ninety of the companions of Quddús were wounded

on that night, most of whom died as a result. Quddús had Mírzá

Muḥammad-Báqir take Mullá Ḥusayn’s place as organizer of the

men. Mírzá Muḥammad-Báqir was the man who had built the

Fort and the Bábíyyih so well.

So badly was the enemy beaten that night that it was forty-five

days before they could make another attack. During this time, how-

ever, the Bábís were not allowed out of the fort to get any food.

They even ground up bones to make some flour and cooked Mullá

Ḥusayn’s horse for meat. When this was finished and the men came

near to starving again, Quddús had Mírzá, Muḥammad-Báqir

distribute the last of the rice amongst the men. When everyone had

received his share, Quddús said, ‘Whoever feels himself strong

enough to stand the troubles soon to come may remain with us in this

fort. If any one amongst you has the slightest fear, he must leave here

at once. Soon the enemy will strike us again, and this time there will

be no way for anyone to escape the coming hardships.’

That very night one of the men in the fort betrayed his friends and

sent the news to ‘Abbás-Qulí Khán, the officer in charge of the

enemy’s army, that Mullá Ḥusayn had been killed, as well as many

others. He urged ‘Abbás-Qulí Khán to attack the Bábís now, while

they were hungry and going through these terrible tests. When

‘Abbás-Qulí Khán heard the news that Mullá Ḥusayn had been

killed, he was overjoyed. He was sure that now he would have no

trouble in capturing the Fort of Shaykh Ṭabarsí and getting a

promotion from the Sháh for his good work. He killed the messenger

who had brought him the news, and prepared to make another attack.

On the day of the attack, he marched with two regiments of men

toward the fort. Quddús saw them coming and said to Mírzá

Muḥammad-Báqir, ‘Take eighteen men beside yourself, and march

out to meet these two regiments. Teach ‘Abbás-Qulí Khán that,

although Mullá Ḥusayn is no longer with us, God’s power still gives

his friends strength to overcome the enemy.’

Mírzá Muḥammad-Báqir quickly chose eighteen of his men, and

as they rode out of the fort shouting ‘Yá Ṣáḥibu’z-Zamán!’, the whole

army ran for their lives. They rushed all the way to Bárfurúsh before

stopping. ‘Abbás-Qulí Khán was so shaken with fear that he fell off

his horse, leaving one of his boots still in the stirrup. With only one

boot on, he ran off, following the army which was running away

even faster than he was.

And so it happened that nineteen men won over a whole army,

through the help and protection of God. This victory was a great

relief for the Bábís. It reminded them once more of the power of God,

and it gave them a feeling of unity which they had not had since the

death of Mullá Ḥusayn. Once again, however, they were running out

of food. They pulled some dead horses off the battlefield and cooked

their meat.

There was one cow left in the fort, but the man in charge of the

caw would not kill it. He used the milk every day to make a pudding

for Quddús. As the men became more and more hungry, however,

Quddús could no longer eat more than a few teaspoonfuls of the

dish, and then he would always give the rest of it to the men. ‘I have

stopped enjoying food,’ he would say, ‘since Mullá Ḥusayn has left

us. My heart bleeds when I see my hungry companions around me.’

In spite of his sadness, however, he would always continue to write

his explanation of the Qur’án, and encourage his men to be brave

and patient to the very end.

One man, Mullá Mírzá Muḥammad, tells this story about Quddús

and those days in the fort: ‘God knows’, he said, ‘that although we

were hungry, we no longer thought about food. Our thoughts were

no longer about our daily bread. We were so carried away by the

words which Quddús would read and say to us that we wouldn’t

even be tired. We could have gone on like that for years. Nothing

could make us unhappy. Whenever the lack of food made us lose

our strength, Mírzá Muḥammad-Báqir would hurry to Quddús.

Quddús would then walk amongst us, say a few words to each of us,

and our spirits would return with great joy. We only needed to see

his face, and we would feel ourselves so strong that, if the enemy

were to attack us at that moment, we would feel ourselves ready to

rush into the battle and win another victory.’

While their enemies were getting ready for another attack, the

Bábís went on with their lives inside the fort, happily preparing

for the coming of Naw-Rúz.\* During Naw-Rúz of that year (1849),

they sang praises to God with the hymn ‘Holy, holy, the Lord our

God, the Lord of the angels and the spirit.’ They sang songs and

were happy. They thanked God for the many blessings which the

Almighty had given to them. Nothing could stop their happiness at

being in the presence of Quddús and serving God as His heroes.

8

On the very day of Naw-Rúz, Quddús wrote a message to his

companions in which he said that the time was now coming when

many of them would be martyred for the Cause. On the ninth day

after Naw-Rúz, four armies started to fire their guns on the little

fort of Shaykh Ṭabarsí. When the guns began to sound, Quddús

came out of his room and walked to the centre of the fort. His face

was filled with smiles, and he had never appeared to be so calm. As

he was walking across the floor, a cannon-ball suddenly fell before

him. He calmly rolled it over with his foot, and said, ‘How little

these enemies realize the power of God! Have they forgotten that

God can do anything He wants? Do they try to frighten the heroes

of God—these heroes who care nothing for royalty or honour or

earthly reward?’

\* New Year in Írán.

He then turned to his men and said these wonderful words: ‘Do

not be afraid of anything which comes from the enemy. You are the

ones whom Muḥammad spoke about in the Qur’án when He said:

“Oh, how I long to behold the countenance of my brethren; my

brethren who will appear in the end of the world! Blessed are we,

blessed are they; greater is their blessedness than ours.” You must

not be afraid today, or you will lose the honour Muḥammad has

given you. Each one of you has his own time when he will die. When

that time comes, nothing and no one can change it. No matter how

anyone tries, he can never make your life shorter or longer than it is

meant to be. Only God knows, and we must abide by His plan. If you

should become afraid for one moment of the booming of these guns

which will continue to fire on this fort, you will lose the protection of

God.’

Although the men were becoming more and more thirsty and

hungry, this speech put new life into their hearts. They prepared

themselves for the new attack. As the shells fell inside the fort during

the next few days, the Bábís chanted the verses of the Qur’án so

loudly that the army could hear them outside. The Prince was

surprised that they did not give up and surrender. Instead, the Bábís

sang hymns and prayed.

Finally, Ja‘far-Qulí Khán, the leader of one of the four armies,

built a high tower and put his cannon on top of it, so he could fire

it right inside the fort. When Quddús saw the tower being built, he

said to Mírzá Muḥammad-Báqir, ‘Go out and give this new general

a severe beating as you did ‘Abbás-Qulí Khán. Let him know that

God’s lion-hearted warriors, even when they are tired and hungry,

can show such great strength that only God could have given them.

Let him know that the more hungry they become, the more harm

they will do the enemy.’

Mírzá Muḥammad-Báqir again rode out of the fort with eighteen

men. So fiercely did they raise the cry of ‘Yá Ṣáḥibu’z-Zamán!’ that

the enemy panicked. Ja‘far-Qulí Khán and thirty of his men fell

before the swords of the ‘Bábís, and the guns on their tower were

thrown to the ground. Then the Bábís started to break down the

walls the enemy had built, but darkness came, and it was wise to

return inside the fort. None of the Bábís was hurt in this battle.

Instead, they brought back with them into the fort a number of the

enemy’s strongest and best-fed horses.

Shortly after this attack, there was an explosion in the enemy’s

camp, which killed several of their officers and men. Because of this

there was no further attack on the Bábís for a whole month. During

this time, Quddús gave permission for the men to go outside the fort

and gather all the grass they could find. This grass they boiled and

made into soup. It was the only food that they had left. Quddús

spent more and more of his time talking with the men, giving them

words of cheer and helping to make their hearts lighter.

After a month, the cannons started firing again. This time the

army was also storming the fort, so Quddús sent Mírzá Muḥammad-

Báqir into battle with thirty-six men instead of only eighteen. As he

sent them out to fight, these were the words he spoke, ‘Never since

we came into this fort have we started any of the battles we have

fought. Only after they have attacked us, have we gone out to defend

ourselves. If we had wanted to wage a holy war against them, if we

had wanted to bring people into our Faith through the power of

force, we could easily have done so. By now we could have stirred up

all the peoples of the world and prepared them to accept our

Message. Such is not the way, however, which we have chosen to

follow. Our only way of converting the people is by showing them

our faith, our good deeds, and our willingness to die in the path of

our Faith. The hour is fast approaching when we shall be able to

complete this task.’

Mírzá Muḥammad-Báqir jumped on his horse, and followed by

the thirty-six men, raised the cry of ‘Yá Ṣáḥibu’z-Zamán!’ The

Bábís rode forward into the army, and five of them were killed in the

lighting. The enemy gave up the fight, however, and ran away,

leaving their flag on the ground behind them. The Bábís returned to

the fort with the five martyrs, who were all buried in one grave

beside the others who had been killed in other battles. Mírzá

Muḥammad-Báqir gave the flag to Quddús.

9

For several days, all was quiet. Then the Prince sent a message to

Quddús that he wanted to stop the fighting and make peace. Quddús

sent two men to represent him at the Prince’s headquarters. The

Prince received them courteously, and offered them some tea which

they refused, because they did not wish to have more food or drink

than the men in the fort. They did not wish to suffer any less than the

other men. Then the Prince said, ‘The fighting between us has been

going on too long. On both sides we have fought long and hard. It is

enough: let us find a way to settle our differences. With these words,

he took his Holy Qur’án and wrote the following words on one of the

pages, ‘I swear by this most holy Book, by the righteousness of God

who has revealed it, that I have no other purpose than to bring about

peace and friendliness between us. Come out of your fort and be sure

that no one will hurt you. You, yourself, and your companions, I

solemnly declare, are under the protection of the Almighty, of

Muḥammad His Prophet, and of Náṣiri’d-Dín Sháh, our King. I

promise that no man, either in the army or in the neighbourhood,

will ever attack you. May God damn me forever, if I have any other

wish than the one I have stated!’ He then put his seal on the state-

ment, gave the Qur’án to the men, and told them to give his best

greetings to Quddús. Then, he added, ‘This very afternoon, I will

send a number of horses to the gate of the fort which I hope Quddús

and his companions will use to ride to my camp. I shall put up a

special tent for them to use, and they will be my guests until I can

arrange for them to return to their homes, at my expense.’

When the men gave the Qur’án to Quddús, he kissed it reverently

and said, ‘O our Lord, decide between us and between our people

with truth, for the best to decide art Thou.’ Immediately after that,

he told his companions that they must prepare to leave the fort.

‘We shall accept the Prince’s invitation,’ he said, ‘so they can show

if they are sincere.’

At the appointed hour, the horses arrived. Quddús put on the

green turban given to him by the Báb, and he and his companions

left the fort carrying all that was left of their arms and belongings.

They were taken to the tent, and soon after they arrived Quddús

said to his men, ‘From now on, you must accept whatever happens

in the name of God. You must not let anything happen to spoil the

good name you have had up until now. Pray to the Almighty that He

will help you to be faithful to Him, even to your last hour.’

A few hours after sunset they were served a poor and small meal

furnished by the Prince. Quddús, and nine of his men who were with

him in his private tent, refused to eat it. The next morning the Prince

sent for Mírzá Muḥammad-Báqir to come to him. Quddús told him

to go, and report what happened when he returned. Mírzá

Muḥammad-Báqir met the Prince and received another promise

that none of the men would be hurt. A plan was also made to furnish

a horse for each of Quddús’ men as far as the town of Sang-Sar. Then,

they would be permitted to leave for their homes, wherever they

were.

When Mírzá Muḥammad-Báqir returned to Quddús, he said,

‘I believe that what his tongue says, his heart does not believe.’

Quddús agreed.

Quddús then went to his companions and told them they must not

wait for their horses the next day. They must leave for their homes

that very night. He, himself, was soon to go to Bárfurúsh. They

begged him not to leave them, but he said, ‘Do not cry. We shall

soon be together again—this time never to part. We have given our

Cause into the care of God. Whatever is His will, we will joyously

accept.’ Again, he told them to leave for their homes that very night.

It was still morning, so Quddús returned to his tent. Very soon he

received orders from the Prince to report to him. When he arrived at

the tent, Quddús became a prisoner of the Prince, and he was unable

to speak again to his men. The Prince then sent a message to Quddús’

men that Quddús wanted them to join him at the army head-

quarters. Some of the men believed the message, and when they

arrived at the headquarters they were captured, and later sold as

slaves. These few men are almost the only ones who lived to tell the

rest of the world what happened in the Fort at Shaykh Ṭabarsí.

Almost all the rest of the men were killed. First, some of the

Prince’s men forced Mullá Yúsuf, one of Quddús’ most trusted men,

to go to the Bábís and tell them that Quddús wanted them to give

up their guns. After giving him his instructions, the men asked

Mullá Yúsuf what he was going to tell the Bábís. He answered, ‘I

shall tell them what you told me to tell them, and then I shall say,

“It is nothing but a lie”!’ Almost before these words were finished,

he was killed.

Next, the army turned its attention to the Fort. They turned their

guns on it and completely destroyed it. They even burned every part

of it, and made the ground completely level around the Shrine, so it

would look as though nothing had ever happened there.

And finally, after the Bábís had no fort to protect themselves with,

the armies attacked them in their tents and killed almost every man.

Even as they died they sang the hymn they had sung so very often,

‘Holy, holy, O Lord our God, Lord of the angels and the spirit.’ A

few men were taken as captives and three men were saved by the

Prince, because they were very famous in Írán. If they had been

killed, the Prince would have been very unpopular with the people.

The captives were then tortured for fun by the Prince’s men. A few

were cut to pieces with knives, others were pulled apart, a number

were tied to trees and filled with bullets, and still others were blown

from the mouths of cannons. The whole world marvelled at their

sacrifices, and today we wonder how they were able to do it.

10

As soon as all these men were killed, the Prince took Quddús to his

home town of Bárfurúsh. There the Prince was welcomed by the

Sa‘idu’l-‘Ulamá’, the Chief of the Muslim religion in that town. All

the clergy came out to welcome the Prince. The people had hung

flags across the streets and made big fires at night to celebrate the

victory over the Bábís. For three days the Prince said nothing to

anyone about what he intended to do with Quddús. He was afraid

to do anything to him, himself. His plan was to take Quddús to

Ṭihrán and hand him over to the Sháh, and let the Sháh decide

what should be done. But the Sa‘idu’l-‘Ulamá’ had other plans. He

had hated Mullá Ḥusayn, and now he hated Quddús. When he

discovered the Prince’s plans, he argued and argued with him against

the idea. When he found that the Prince would not give in, he called

everyone to the mosque. The Sa‘idu’l-‘Ulamá’ called upon the

people of Bárfurúsh to help him prove to the Prince that he must not

take Quddús to the Sháh. He said to them, swear before God that

I will take neither food nor sleep until I am able to end the life of

this man Quddús with my own hands.’

When the Prince learned that the people of Bárfurúsh were against

him, he became afraid for his own life. Therefore, he called a meeting

of all the priests of Bárfurúsh, so they could decide together what they

should do. As soon as the priests were gathered together, the Prince

gave orders for Quddús to be brought into their presence. When

Quddús appeared, the Prince invited him to be seated beside

himself. Then the Prince turned to the Sa‘idu’l-‘Ulamá’ and said,

‘Your discussions of this problem must be based on the Qur’án and

the sayings of Muḥammad. Only in this way can you decide what is

true and what is false.’

The Sa‘idu’l-‘Ulamá’ was the first to speak. He looked at Quddús’

green turban, and said, ‘Why are you wearing a green turban?

Don’t you know that only a true descendant of the Prophet

Muḥammad can wear a green turban? Anyone else who does so is

damned by God.’

Quddús calmly replied, ‘Was Siyyid Murtaḍá, whom all the

priests praise and admire, a descendant of the Prophet through his

father or his mother?’

One of the priests immediately said, ‘Through his mother only.’

‘Then’, said Quddús, ‘why do you object to me? My mother was

always recognized by the people of this town as a direct descendant

of the Imám Ḥasan. Does this not make her a descendant of the

Prophet Muḥammad? She was always honoured by every one of you

as such in the past.’

No one dared to argue with him. They all knew that what he said

was the truth. But that did not stop the Sa‘idu’l-‘Ulamá’. He

became so angry at his priests because Quddús was more clever than

they, that he threw his turban on the ground and said, ‘This man

has succeeded in proving to you that he is a descendant of the Imam

Ḥasan. Soon he will prove to you that he is the Prophet of God

Himself!’

By now, the Prince had no more courage. Fearing for his own life,

he did something very much like what Pontius Pilate had done when

Jesus was brought before the Sanhedrin, just before His crucifixion.

The Prince said to the priests, ‘I wash my hands of all responsibility

for what you do to this man. You are free to do what you like with

him. You will yourselves have to answer to God on the Day of

judgement.’

With these words, the Prince called for his horse and left for the

town of Sari. No sooner had the Prince left the meeting than the

Sa‘idu’l-‘Ulamá’ gave orders for Quddús to be put to death in a way

which was even worse than the death of Jesus.

First, Quddús was stripped of his clothes, and his green turban

given to him by the Báb was dirtied in the mud. Next, he was led

through the streets barefooted, bareheaded, loaded with chains, with

all the people of the town following him and spitting upon him. The

worst women of the town then attacked him with knives and axes.

While all this was happening to Quddús, he whispered his forgive-

ness to the people: ‘Forgive them, O my God’, he cried. ‘Show them

Thy mercy, for they do not know what we have already learned and

love. I have tried to show them the path that leads to their salvation;

but see how they have risen to kill me! Show them, O God, the way

of Truth, and turn their ignorance into faith.’ His last words were:

‘Would that my mother were with me, and could see with her own

eyes the glory of my wedding!’

No sooner had he said these words than he was torn to pieces and

thrown into the fire. In the middle of the night, a friend went to the

place where he was burned, and gathered up the last few pieces of

his body which had not burned, and buried them not far from the

place where he was killed. So ended the life of the noble-hearted

Quddús.

So terrible was the way in which Quddús had been killed that

when the Báb heard the news in the castle of Chihríq where He was

in prison, He did not write for five whole months. His deep grief and

sadness caused the Pen of Revelation to stop.

# Epilogue

First and most important of the martyrs of the Fort of Shaykh

Ṭabarsí was Quddús, whom the Báb called the ‘Last Name of God’.

Quddús, the eighteenth Letter of the Living, was the Báb’s chosen

companion on His pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, and was the

first to suffer persecution on Iranian soil for the Cause of God. He

was only eighteen years of age when he left his home town of

Bárfurúsh for Karbilá in ‘Iráq. For about four years he was a student

of Siyyid Káẓim, and at the age of twenty-two he met and recognized

the Báb in Shíráz. Five years later, on the 16th of May 1849, he was

killed by the people of his own town.

Both the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh have written many Tablets and

prayers about Quddús, praising him for his services to the Faith.

Bahá’u’lláh even gave him the title the ‘Last Point’, which shows that

Bahá’u’lláh considered Quddús the most important Bábí next to the

the Báb Himself.

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