

Golden Crowns Series

Quddús

by

Lowell Johnson



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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 Tíhrán, 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, harmony 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 Kázim and his new teachings, so he travelled all the way to Karbilá, near Baghdád in ‘Iráq, to sit in Siyyid Kázim’s classes. Siyyid Kázim was the one who foretold the coming of the Báb. Very soon, Quddús became Siyyid Kázim’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 Kázim 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 Kázim was himself. But even though Siyyid Kázim made it quite clear to them, none of the other disciples realized that the man whom Siyyid Kázim 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 Kázim’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 he 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 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 companionship 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 Shiráz ... 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

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, Hájí 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 Ṭíhrán.

The next person whom Quddús met in Shíráz was Mullá Šádiq. Mullá Šádiq 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 Šádiq to the Governor of the province. The Governor ordered the arrest of both Quddús and Mullá Šádiq.

After questioning Mullá Šádiq, 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 Šádiq 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 Šádiq bravely put themselves into the hands of God, and Mullá, Šádiq 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, Şádiq 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 Hájí Siyyid Javád, a very great scholar, into the Faith. From Kirmán, Quddús went to many other cities, always teaching, always inspiring 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

completed. Mullá Ḥusayn read the writing and immediately recognized 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 be 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 instructions.

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 Niyálá, 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 Niyálá 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 Sári. 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 many 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 understanding 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.

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, he 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 Shiráz. 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.

Day after day the enemy attacked the Fort of Shaykh Ṭabarsí. Each time the Bábís would raise the cry of ‘Yá Şáhibu’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 Mullá 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 Mullá 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 Mullá 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 Şáhibu’z-Zamán!’ , but during the fighting, Mullá Ĥusayn’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 Ĥusayn 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 Ĥusayn 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 Ĥusayn’s name. He was surprised to see Mullá Ĥusayn 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 Ĥusayn listened to every word Quddús said. The man heard Quddús say to Mullá Ĥusayn, ‘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 Ĥusayn 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 Ĥusayn. I have told him many things which I could not tell him before.’ When they went to where Mullá Ĥusayn lay, he was dead. But there was a little smile still on his face, and he looked so peaceful it seemed as though he had only fallen asleep.

Quddús himself took care of Mullá Ĥusayn’s body. He put his own shirt on Mullá Ĥusayn and gave the order for him to be buried to the south of, and next to, the Shrine of Şhaykh Ṭabarsí. Quddús’ last words before Mullá Ĥusayn 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 Ĥusayn, 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, however, 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 Tabarsí 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 Şáhibu’z-Zamán!’, the whole army ran for their lives. They rushed all the way to Bârfurúsh 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 Bábis. 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 Şáhibu’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 Şáhibu'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 statement, 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 headquarters. 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.

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 Tíhrán 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 Husayn, 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 forgiveness 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 Chihriq 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 Kázim, 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.

Sources

The following books were consulted in the writing of this story of Quddús:

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