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Ruh al-Quddus

Ruh al-Quddus (the Holy One) was a Babi disciple and martyr. He was the last of those who joined the ranks of the Bab's Letters of the Living, the earliest and highest-ranking group of the Bab's disciples, but the Bab ranked him first spiritually. He led the Babis at the Sheikh Tabarsi upheaval in 1848. The Bab, founder of the Babi faith in Iran, established a following that eventually developed into the Baha'i faith.

Mulla Muhammad Ali Barfurushi, later given the name Ruh al-Quddus by the Bab, was born in Barfurush (Babul in northern Iran) to a farming family in 1821. During the course of his education in Barfurush and Mashhad, he became a sheikh. He set off in about 1837 for Karbala to study under Sayyid Kazim Rashti and returned to Barfurush in 1843. He arrived in Shiraz and accepted the Bab in 1844, becoming the last of the Letters of the Living. He accompanied the Bab on his pilgrimage to Mecca during 1844–1845. Quddus and two other Babis were arrested in Shiraz in 1845 because they had changed the Islamic call to prayer in accordance with the Bab's instructions. Their captors burned their beards and pierced their noses and paraded them through the streets. After his release, Quddus traveled on to Yazd, Kirman, Isfahan, and Tehran, finally returning to Barfurush. At each place he announced the Bab's claims.

In early 1848, Quddus joined Mulla Husayn Bushrui in Mashhad and the two preached the new religion at that shrine city. Later that year, Quddus was one of the main participants at the Conference of Badasht, at which the Bab's inauguration of the new religious dispensation was made clear to all. After this conference, Quddus was arrested and confined in the house of the senior cleric of Sari but was soon freed. He joined the Babis besieged there. Up to this time, Mulla Husayn had been regarded as the foremost disciple of the Bab, but at this time, he showed the other Babis that, following the guidance given him by the Bab, they were to regard Quddus as his spiritual superior. When Mulla Husayn was killed in fighting, Quddus led the Babi forces alone. Eventually, the prince leading the royal army swore on the Koran to allow free passage out of the fort to the Babis. Once they emerged, however, he seized and killed all of them. Quddus was handed over to the senior religious leader of Barfurush, who, on May 16, 1849, paraded him through the streets, tortured and killed him, and then instigated the mob to tear him to pieces. He was 28.

The few writings of Quddus that remain display a close similarity to that of the Bab in both form and content. It is clear that the Bab and Baha'u'llah, the Bab's successor, regarded Quddus as second only to the Bab in importance in the Babi religion. The Bab and Baha'u'llah identified him as "The Last," a name of God, and Baha'u'llah also referred to him as "The Last Point"—as distinct from the Bab, who was "The First Point." Abdul-Baha, Baha'u'llah's son, states that Quddus and the Bab were the two witnesses prophesied in the Book of Revelation.

Moojan Momen and B. Todd Lawson

Further Reading

Shoghi Effendi. *God Passes By*. Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974; Zarandi, Nabil. *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabil's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá'í Revelation*. Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1970.

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