



DARBANDĪ, MULLA ĀQĀ

DARBANDĪ, MULLA ĀQĀ b. ‘Ābed b. Ramaẓān, commonly known as Fāẓel Darbandī (d. Tehran, 1286/1869-70), Shī‘ite scholar and preacher of the Qajar period, renowned for his disputatious and irascible character. His name suggests an origin in the city of Darband or its environs, but the place and year of his birth are not known. He studied in Najaf, where his principal teacher was Mulla Moḥammad Šarīf-al-‘Olamā’ Māzandarānī (d. 1245/1829-30), whose patience he frequently tried with his endless objections to the texts being studied and his tendency to brawl with his fellow students. He early formed a high opinion of his own worth and once informed Shaikh Moḥammad-Ḥasan Najafī, author of *Jawāher al-kalām*, a well-known work on the principles of jurisprudence, that it was much inferior to his own writings (Modarres, p. 216). He also argued with the Ottoman civil authorities and with the Hanafite mufti of Baghdad, Shaikh Šehāb-al-Dīn Alūsī, supposedly reducing the latter to shamefaced silence on the question of the permissibility of cursing the Umayyad caliph Mo‘āwīa (41-60/661-80; Tonokābonī, p. 111). His verbal attacks on the Babis are said to have brought on an assassination attempt (Algar, p. 166). By his own account Darbandī even quarreled with the dead: He dreamed of the medieval scholar Ebn Abī’l-Ḥadīd (d. 655/1257) and took him to task for alleged misinterpretation of passages in *Nahj al-balāḡa* (Tonokābonī, p. 112).

Darbandī attempted to teach at Karbalā’, but the peculiarities of his character made it impossible for him to retain students. He then migrated to Persia, arriving in Tehran soon after the dismissal of the vizier Mīrzā Āqā Khan Nūrī in 1275/1858. In the following Moḥarram he denounced members of the



government for alleged immoral conduct in such scurrilous detail that he was temporarily banished to Kermānšāh (Algar, p. 166). Although on another occasion he upbraided Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah (1264-1313/1747-1896) for failing to trim his opulent mustache, he seems generally to have enjoyed good relations with the monarch, at whose request he wrote *Sa'adat-e nāṣerīya*, a fantastic and highly inaccurate account of the martyrdom of Imam Ḥosayn.

In his way, however, Darbandī was devoted to the cult centered on the martyrdom at Karbalā'. When he preached on those tragic events he would weep violently, lacerate his face, throw off his turban, and sometimes even throw himself from the minbar to the ground. A similar emotionalism and lack of restraint pervade his *Eksīr al-'ebādāt fī asrār al-šehādāt*, a voluminous work in Arabic on the same topic, which was criticized by the early 20th-century scholar of Hadith Ḥosayn Nūrī for the numerous false traditions included in it (Modarres, p. 217). Most of his other writings (listed in Modarres, p. 217) have also been criticized for lack of scholarly precision, but at least in his own time Darbandī enjoyed fame for eloquence in both Persian and Arabic and for erudition in the science of Hadith transmitters.

After his death he was taken to Karbalā' for burial.

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