

SEYYID ‘ABD AL-‘AZĪM AL-HASANI

HIS LIFE, TRANSMITTED TRADITIONS, MILIEU,
AUTHORITIES AND STUDENTS

BY ĀYATULLAH AL-SHAYKH JA‘FAR AL-SUBHĀNI

TRANSLATION AND DETAILED ANNOTATIONS BY AFZAL
SUMAR

THIS TRANSLATION IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF THE
LATE MR RAMZANBHAI MANJI WALLI, MRS FATMABAI MANJI
WALLI, MRS RAYHANABAI MANJI WALLI, MR ABBASSBHAI
MANJI WALLI AND ALL THE DECEASED MEMBERS OF THE
MANJI WALLI FAMILY AS WELL AS ALL THE DECEASED
BELIEVERS WORLDWIDE, IN GRATITUDE TO HAJJI
MUHAMMADBHAI MANJI WALLI

SINCERE GRATITUDE IS DUE TO MIQDAD VERSI FOR
READING THE ENTIRE DRAFT OF THIS WORK AND
SUGGESTING VALUABLE FEEDBACK THAT HAS IMPROVED
THIS WORK TREMENDOUSLY

SHAYKH JA‘FAR AL-SUBHĀNI PUBLISHED THIS ESSAY IN
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ESSAYS: RESEARCHES ON THE SUBJECTS OF PHILOSOPHY,
THEOLOGY, LAW, JURISPRUDENCE AND SOCIETY”. THE
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SEYYID ‘ABD AL-‘AZĪM AL-ḤASANI

HIS LIFE, TRANSMITTED TRADITIONS, MILIEU, AUTHORITIES AND STUDENTS¹

BY ĀYATULLAH AL-SHAYKH JA‘FAR AL-SUBḤĀNĪ

I used to visit the grave of our master ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Ḥasani occasionally and whenever good fortune permitted me, for he was one of the descendants of the eldest grandson of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ), al-Ḥasan bin ‘Ali (‘a). He was a scion of that lofty and blessed tree (of Prophethood), whose branches are spread out in Irān, ‘Irāq, Syria, Yemen and other places.

However, after I had delved thoroughly into his biography and read the words and statements of the biographers in his favour, as well as the descriptions of honour and respect with which Ṣāḥib bin ‘Abbād² described him in a biographical treatise, which he devoted to his life, I was overcome with shame and realised my shortcomings and negligence with respect to him. This is because Seyyid ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Ḥasani was one of the defenders of the true beliefs by his speech and conduct and he was one of the ‘sources of reference’ (مراجع) in matters of the faith. This is evidenced by the directive of the tenth Imām to his Shi‘ites to turn to him (i.e. Seyyid ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Ḥasani) in respect of religious matters, which appeared ambiguous and complex to them. The text of that directive will be presented soon.

¹ This paper was presented at a conference organised in honour and in memory of Seyyid ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Ḥasani, in the town of Ray, in the month of Rabi‘ al-Thāni 1424 AH/2003 AD.

² Translator’s note: His name was Abū al-Qāsim Ismā‘il bin ‘Abbād bin al-‘Abbās bin ‘Abbād bin Aḥmad bin Idrīs. A man of letters of the Buyid period, he was also known with the honorific title of Kāfi al-Kufāt. He was probably born at Istakhr in 326 AH/938 AD in a family of high officials. His father had been a vizier of the Buyid prince Rukn al-Dawla. He himself became the vizier of Rukn al-Dawla's son Mu‘ayyid al-Dawla when the latter was the governor of Isfahān and its dependencies. Ṣāḥib bin ‘Abbād had written many official correspondences (al-Rasā’il) as part of his administrative and political duties, a volume of which has survived and which was written during the reign of Mu‘ayyid al-Dawla, wherein the author comes across as demonstrating a constant and efficient pre-occupation with exactitude in the management of finances and the maintenance of public order. After the death of Mu‘ayyid al-Dawla, he continued to function as vizier to Fakhr al-Dawla who confirmed him in his position. Ṣāḥib bin ‘Abbād is remembered as one of the great viziers of Muslim history even by his adversaries, belonging to the category of ministers who were able to acquire an almost autonomous personal power, becoming temporarily the true masters of the state while serving incompetent princes who were either unsuited or indifferent to the tasks of administration.

Ṣāḥib bin ‘Abbād however, gained greater fame due to the foremost place he occupied in the history of Arab literature and also due to his patronage of scholars and poets. He was apprenticed to the profession of *Kātib* in his youth with Ibn ‘Amid, his mentor who possessed a strong traditional cultural background as well as knowledge of theology and philosophy. Further, during his stay in Baghdād he was able to frequent the literary circles there and collect many traditions which he was able to put to use later. He was also fortunate to gain chance access to many teachers including the grammarian Ibn Fāris, at Ray. Thus these favourable circumstances allowed him to acquire an extensive knowledge in all fields of Arabic culture such as exegesis, ḥadīth, history and the literary sciences such as grammar, theology and literary criticism. He was a poet and also skilled in prose and showed a marked taste for rhymed prose.

His biographers disagree as to the identity of his affiliation with any particular school in Islam. The Shi‘ites, such as Ibn Bābwayhi claim him to be theirs and the Mu‘tazili Qādi ‘Abd al-Jabbār even accused him of being a Rāfidhi, while others mention him to belong to the Zaydis, the Ḥanafis, the Shafi‘is and even to the Ḥashwiyya, but he is supposed to have considered himself to be a Mu‘tazili. However, like many Mu‘tazilites of the Baghdād School, his position regarding the *Imamate* was in favour of Imām ‘Ali (‘a) and in later life he also came to believe that the Caliphate was conferred by virtue of *naṣṣ*, i.e. explicit designation and thus came to be allied with the Shi‘ites.

He died at Rayy in 385 AH/995 AD. For more details refer to the article by Cl. Cahen on Ṣāḥib bin ‘Abbād in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, second edition, volume 3, pg 671.

HIS LINEAGE

The Imāmi scholar and biographer Shaykh al-Najāshi (d 450 AH/1058 AD) has recorded his lineage at the beginning of his biography as: ‘Abd al-‘Azīm bin ‘Abdullah bin ‘Ali bin al-Ḥasan bin Zayd bin al-Ḥasan bin ‘Ali bin Abī Ṭālib (‘a) and this is his correct lineage. However, he then writes at the end of the biography: ‘He (i.e. ‘Abd al-‘Azīm) died and when he was undressed so that the funeral bath could be given to him, a small piece of paper was found in one of his pockets in which was written his lineage, as follows: “I am Abū al-Qāsim ‘Abd al-‘Azīm bin ‘Abdillah bin ‘Ali bin al-Ḥasan bin Zayd bin ‘Ali³ bin al-Ḥasan bin ‘Ali bin Abī Ṭālib (‘a).” But the first rendering of his lineage is correct for Imām al-Ḥasan’s progeny continued through the agency of two sons,⁴ who were:

- 1) Zayd bin al-Ḥasan, and
- 2) Al-Ḥasan al-Muthannā’.⁵

Thus it is apparent that Imām al-Ḥasan (‘a) did not have a son by the name of ‘Ali through whom he may have had grandchildren (as the second version of Seyyid ‘Abd al-‘Azīm’s lineage above implies).

Therefore on the basis of the above, Seyyid ‘Abd al-‘Azīm was separated from Imām al-Ḥasan (‘a) by four generations only (as implied by the first version of his lineage).

As a poet says, as if placing these words in the mouth of Seyyid ‘Abd al-‘Azīm,

ليس ما بيني و بين المجتبي

غير عينين وحاء ثم زاي

*There is not between myself and al-Mujtabā’ (i.e. Imām al-Ḥasan (‘a))
Save two ‘ayns (ع) and a ḥā’ (حاء), and then a zay (ز).*

³ Translator's Note: This is the additional name, which does not appear in the first statement of lineage.

⁴ Translator's note: Shaykh al-Mufid writes in his book *Kitāb al-Irshād* that Imām al-Ḥasan (‘a) had eight sons, namely; Zayd bin al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥasan bin al-Ḥasan, ‘Umar bin al-Ḥasan and his two brothers Qāsim and ‘Abdullah, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān bin al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn bin al-Ḥasan known as *al-athram* (meaning: ‘the one with the broken tooth’) and his brother Ṭalḥa bin al-Ḥasan. Nothing is known about the last two sons of Imām al-Ḥasan save that they were noble men. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān bin al-Ḥasan died at al-Abwā’ whilst a pilgrim, during the life time of his uncle al-Ḥusayn with whom he had gone on pilgrimage. ‘Umar bin al-Ḥasan and his two brothers Qāsim and ‘Abdullah were martyred in Karbalā’ with their uncle al-Ḥusayn (‘a). Zayd bin al-Ḥasan who was the eldest of Imām al-Ḥasan (‘a)’s children was in charge of the Prophet’s *ṣadaqāt* and highly esteemed and noble. The poets praised him and he was well-known for his generosity with people coming to him from far and wide seeking his favours. He died at the ripe old age of ninety years without claiming the office of the *Imāmate* after his father. Shaykh al-Mufid has recorded a number of poems eulogising him in *al-Irshād*. Al-Ḥasan bin al-Ḥasan was a noble and pious man and in charge of the *ṣadaqāt* of Amīr al-Mu’minīn. He was present in Karbalā’ with his uncle al-Ḥusayn (‘a). He was captured wounded and later recovered from his wounds. He was married to a daughter of Imām al-Ḥusayn (‘a) by the name of Faṭīma and died at the age of thirty five. He did not claim the *Imāmate* either, after his father. For details see *Kitāb al-Irshād* of Shaykh al-Mufid, pg 289 – 295.

⁵ Translator's Note: This would be al-Ḥasan bin al-Ḥasan bin ‘Ali bin Abī Ṭālib (‘a).

⁶ Translator's Note: This refers to his father ‘Abdullah and grandfather ‘Ali.

⁷ Translator's Note: This refers to his great grandfather al-Ḥasan.

⁸ Translator's Note: This refers to his great great grandfather Zayd, the son of Imām al-Ḥasan (‘a).

DID HE MEET IMĀM AL-RIDHĀ' (‘A)?

The Imāmi jurist, traditionist and biographer Shaykh al-Ṭūṣī (d 460 AH/1067 AD) has considered him in his biographical work (*Rijāl*) to be from the companions of the Imāms al-Hādī and al-‘Askari (‘a), whilst Seyyid al-Ṭāfrīshi, Mirzā’ al-Astarābādi and al-Quhpā’i have considered him among the companions of Imām al-Jawād (‘a).

There is no doubt that he was from the companions of the Imāms al-Jawād and al-Hādī (‘a), on the basis of the many traditions which he transmits from them, but as for his being from the companions of Imām al-‘Askari (‘a) during the period of his *Imāmate*, that is a matter that needs careful scrutiny. This is because Imām al-Hādī died in 254 AH/867 AD and Imām al-‘Askari undertook the responsibilities of the *Imāmate* after the death of his father in that year in the month of Rajab, whilst Seyyid ‘Abd al-‘Azīm died in the year 252 AH/866 AD. Thus he did know the person of the Imām al-‘Askari during the *Imāmate* of his father but due to the fact that he died well before the tenth Imām, would negate the possibility of him being from the companions of the eleventh Imām.

The question now is: Did he meet Imām al-Ridhā’ (‘a) or not? Now it may be inferred that he did so, on the basis of the tradition, which he transmits from Hishām bin al-Ḥakam⁹ who died in 199 AH/814 AD (and it is said, perhaps even earlier).

This tradition is as follows: Al-Kulayni reports from Aḥmad, who reports from ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Ḥasani, from Hishām bin al-Ḥakam, from Abū ‘Abdillāh al-Ṣādiq (‘a) who said:

هذا صراط علي مستقيم

‘This is the path of ‘Ali, which is straight.’¹⁰

Therefore if Seyyid ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Ḥasani’s age at the time of receiving this report was twenty years, then he would be from those who were born around 180 AH/796 AD, and Imām al-Ridhā’ (‘a) died in 203 AH/818 AD, which may suggest that he did meet the eighth Imām. All this would stand true if this chain were authentic and correct. However the chain itself provides a clue to our problem, which is: that it is known that Seyyid ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Ḥasani narrates a lot from those who died in

⁹ Translator’s note: This is Hishām bin al-Ḥakam, regarding whom the Imāmi biographer al-Najashi writes that he was known by the epithet of Abū Muḥammad. He is reported variously to have been a client of the tribe of Banū Kinda or Banū Shaybān. As for his place of birth, it was Kūfā’, while he grew up in Wāsiṭ and carried out trade in Baghdād where he moved at the end of his life around the year 199 AH and it is said that he died in that same year. He had many books to his credit. He transmitted traditions from the sixth and seventh Imāms and was reliable in hadith transmission as well as proficient in hadith verification. Shaykh al-Ṭūṣī writes that he was among the close associates of Imām al-Kāzīm (‘a) and engaged in many debates with the opponents on matters relating to the principles of religion. He would soundly defeat any opponent on the subject of the *Imāmate* and was very adept in the art of polemics; ever ready with apt rejoinders. Ibn Shahr Āshūb writes that Imām al-Ṣādiq (‘a) elevated him to the position of a leader whilst he was yet a youth and said the following regarding him: ‘he is our supporter by means of his heart, tongue and hands; he is one who protects and champions our cause, spreads forth and disseminates our teachings, supports our rights and fends off the attacks and falsehoods hurled at us by our enemies. Whoever follows him and his teachings follows us while whoever opposes him has opposed us’. For further biographical details and considerations, refer to *Mu’jam Rijāl al-Hadīth* of Syed al-Khū’i, volume 20, pg 297-323.

¹⁰ *Al-Kāfi* volume 1, pg 224.

the second and third decades of the third century *hijri*, while Hishām died before 200 *hijri* (815 AD) and so this indicates a missing link between the Seyyid and Hishām. Add to the above, the fact that the Seyyid narrates a lot from Imām al-Ridhā' (‘a) via intermediaries.¹¹ All of this would combine to suggest that he did not meet the eighth Imām after all.

Perhaps it may be inferred that he met Imām al-Ridhā' (‘a) on the basis of a tradition which Shaykh al-Mufid (d 413 AH/1022 AD) records in his *Kitāb al-Ikhtisāṣ* where he writes: ‘it is narrated from Seyyid ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Ḥasani, from Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ridhā' (‘a) that he said:

“O ‘Abd al-‘Azīm, convey my greetings to my friends and tell them not to let Satan have recourse to their souls. Command them to be truthful in their speech and to return faithfully what is entrusted to them. Order them to maintain silence and leave off wrangling and disputations regarding that which does not concern them and to embark upon visiting each other for that is most beloved to me...They must not engage in maligning each other for I have vowed that one who does that and vexes a friend of mine, then I shall call upon Allāh to punish him in this world with a severe punishment and he will be from the losers in the hereafter. And inform them that Allāh has forgiven and pardoned the evil deeds of the good-doers from among them except one who associates another with Allāh or hurts a friend from my friends or harbours ill-will towards him, for Allāh will not forgive him till he desists from it, if he desists. However if he does not, then the spirit of faith will be removed from his heart and he will secede from my friendship. Nor will he have any luck in this world and I seek refuge in Allāh from that!”¹²

But there seems to have occurred a mistake in the chain of this tradition, for the Imām identified by the epithet ‘Abū al-Ḥasan’ is Abū al-Ḥasan the third (i.e. the tenth Imām al-Hādi) rather than Abū al-Ḥasan the second (i.e. the eighth Imām al-Ridhā') while al-Mufid erroneously wrote ‘al-Ridhā’ in place of ‘al-Hādi’ (‘a).¹³ The evidence for this claim is that Seyyid ‘Abd al-‘Azīm would have been a young teenager throughout the life of al-Ridhā' (‘a) and it would have hardly been fitting for him to have been the carrier of the Imām’s message to his Shi‘ites and friends, indeed it would not be fitting except for one advanced in age and well-known among men for his love and loyalty.

HIS TEACHERS AND AUTHORITIES

A fleeting glance at the traditions transmitted by Seyyid ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Ḥasani tells us firstly of his close associations with the two Imāms Muḥammad bin ‘Ali al-Jawād and ‘Ali al-Hādi (‘a) and secondly, of his close links with the prominent authorities of the Hadith. In what follows we shall seek to present the names of the authorities from whom he narrated traditions as culled from the four major books of traditions and other books of tradition compilations. His authorities number

¹¹ Such as Ibrāhīm bin Abi Maḥmūd, in ‘*Uyūn Akhbār al-Ridhā'* volume 2, pg 113, and volume 1 pg 27. *Mustadrak al-Waṣā'il* volume 3, pg 614, *al-Tawḥīd* pg 176. Also Sahl bin Sa'd, as in the book *Fadhā'il al-Asḥ-ḥur al-Thalātha* of al-Ṣadūq, pg 63.

¹² *Al-Ikhtisāṣ* of Shaykh al-Mufid pg 247.

¹³ Translator's Note: Four of the Twelve Imāms are known to have had the epithet ‘Abū al-Ḥasan’. They are Imām ‘Ali (‘a), the seventh Imām al-Kāzīm (‘a), the eighth Imām al-Ridhā' (‘a) and lastly the tenth Imām al-Hādi (‘a).

thirty-three and the following are their names along with the sources where the recorded traditions transmitted by Seyyid ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Ḥasani on their authority occur.

- 1) ‘Ali bin Asbāt (*al-Kāfi* volume: 1, pg 118).
- 2) ‘Ali bin Ja‘far (*Masā’il ‘Ali bin Ja‘far*, pg 343).
- 3) Al-Ḥusayn bin Miyāḥ (*al-Kāfi* volume: 1, pg 424).
- 4) Bakkār (*al-Kāfi* volume: 1, pg 424).
- 5) Ibn Udhayna (*al-Kāfi* volume: 1, pg 424).
- 6) Muḥammad bin al-Fudhayl (*al-Kāfi* volume: 1, pg 423).
- 7) Ibrāhīm bin Abī Maḥmūd (*‘Uyūn akhbār al-Ridhā’* volume: 2, pg 113).
- 8) Yaḥya bin Sālim (*al-Kāfi* volume: 1, pg 423).
- 9) Mūsa bin Muḥammad (*al-Kāfi* volume: 1, pg 220).
- 10) Muḥammad bin Abī ‘Umayr (*al-Kāfi* volume: 1, pg 218).
- 11) Mūsa bin Muḥammad al-‘Ijli (*al-Kāfi* volume: 1, pg 207).
- 12) Hishām bin al-Ḥakam (*al-Kāfi* volume: 1, pg 424). His mention has been made previously.
- 13) His father, ‘Abdullah bin ‘Ali (*al-‘Amāli* of Shaykh Ṭūṣī, pg 652).
- 14) Al-Ḥasan bin Maḥbūb (*Ma‘āni al-akhbār*, pg 339).
- 15) His grandfather, ‘Ali bin al-Ḥasan (*Kamāl al-Dīn*, pg 312, chapter 28, hadith number 3).
- 16) Mālīk bin ‘Āmir (*al-Kāfi* volume: 1, pg 377).
- 17) Maḥmūd bin Abī al-Bilād (*‘Uyūn akhbār al-Ridhā’* volume: 1, pg 27).
- 18) Al-Ḥasan bin al-Ḥusayn (*‘Ilal al-Sharā‘i* volume: 2, pg 599).
- 19) Sulaymān bin Ja‘far al-Ja‘fari (*al-‘Amāli* of Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, pg 85).
- 20) Muḥammad bin ‘Amr bin Yazīd (*‘Ilal al-Sharā‘i* volume: 2, pg 598).
- 21) Ḥarb (*‘Ilal al-Sharā‘i* volume: 2, pg 599).
- 22) Sulaymān bin Sha‘bān (*‘Ilal al-Sharā‘i* volume: 2, pg 598).
- 23) Al-Ḥasan bin al-Ḥusayn al-‘Irni (*al-Kāfi* volume: 2, pg 369, *Kāmil al-Ziyarāt*, pg 163 where his name occurs as al-‘Umariy, which seems to be an apparent case of corruption).
- 24) Al-Ḥusayn bin ‘Ali (*al-Kāfi* volume: 3, pg 563).
- 25) Ibrāhīm bin Hāshim (*‘Uyūn akhbār al-Ridhā’* volume: 1, pg 286).
- 26) Al-Ḥasan bin al-Ḥakam al-Nakha‘i (*Kāmil al-Ziyarāt*, pg 256).
- 27) Al-Ḥasan bin ‘Abdallah bin Yūnus bin Dhibyān (*‘Ilal al-Sharā‘i* volume: 1, pg 178).
- 28) Sulaymān bin Ḥafs al-Marwazi (*‘Uyūn akhbār al-Ridhā’* volume: 2, pg 22).
- 29) Safwān bin Yaḥya (*Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni‘ma*, pg 319).
- 30) Muḥammad bin ‘Ali bin Muḥammad bin Kathīr (*al-Taḥṣīn* of Ibn Ṭāwūs, pg 576).
- 31) ‘Abd al-Salām bin Ṣāliḥ al-Ḥarawi (*‘Uyūn akhbār al-Ridhā’* volume: 1, pg 188).
- 32) Ishāq al-Nāsiḥ, the client of Ja‘far (*Bihār al-Anwār* volume: 57, pg 214).
- 33) Aḥmad bin ‘Īsa al-‘Alawi (*Bihār al-Anwār* volume: 75, pg 453).

Thus these were his authorities and teachers.

THOSE WHO NARRATED AND TRANSMITTED FROM HIM

Among those who narrated from him, are identified a group of great and erstwhile scholars of hadith such as al-Barqī, Ibrāhīm bin Hishām, Sahl bin Ziyād al-Ādami

and others, who were well-known for their proficiency in the narration of traditions and for being firmly established in this field. The following are their names and the sources where their narrations, transmitted on Seyyid ‘Abd al-‘Azīm’s authority occur.

- 1) Sahl bin Ziyād al-Ādami who died in 255 AH/869 AD (*al-Faqīh* volume: 3, hadith number 343).
- 2) Aḥmad bin Mihrān (*al-Kāfi* volume: 1, pg 118).
- 3) Aḥmad bin Abī ‘Abdillah al-Barqī, the compiler of *al-Maḥāsin*, who died in 274 AH/887 AD (*Masā’il ‘Ali bin Ja’far*, pg 343).
- 4) ‘Abdullah bin Mūsa al-Rūyāni, Abū Turāb (*al-‘Amāli* of Shaykh Ṭūṣī, pg 589).
- 5) Ibrāhīm bin ‘Ali (*Ma‘āni al-akhbār*, pg 339).
- 6) Muḥammad bin Faydh al-‘Ijli, Abū Ṣāliḥ (*al-‘Amāli* of Shaykh al- Ṭūṣī, pg 136).
- 7) Al-Ḥusayn bin Ibrāhīm al-‘Alawi al-Naṣībī (*Miṣbāḥul Mutahajjid*, volume: 2 and *al-‘Amāli* of Shaykh Ṭūṣī, pg 602).
- 8) Sahl bin Sa’d (*Fadhā’il al-Ash-hur al-Thalātha* of Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, pg 63).
- 9) Al-Nawfali (*al-Kāfi* volume: 2, pg 661).
- 10) Sahl bin Jamhūr (*al-Kāfi* volume: 3, pg 669).
- 11) Aḥmad bin al-Ḥasan (*al-Ikhtisās*, pg 96).
- 12) ‘Abdullah bin Muḥammad al-‘Ijli (*al-‘Amāli* of Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, pg 388).
- 13) Bakr bin Ṣāliḥ al-Dhabbi (*Mukhtaṣar Baṣā’ir al-Darajāt*, pg 94).
- 14) Ḥamza bin Qāsim al-‘Alawi (*al-‘Amāli* of Shaykh al-Mufīd, pg 319).
- 15) Muḥammad al-‘Alawi al-‘Arīdhi (*Biḥār al-Anwār*, volume: 75, pg 453).
- 16) ‘Abdullah bin al-Ḥusayn al-‘Alawi (*Biḥār al-Anwār*, volume: 60, pg 236).

THE TERM ‘MUSNAD’ AND WHAT IT MEANS

The term ‘*musnad*’ is designated in opposition to the term ‘*mursal*’. Thus if a tradition is transmitted by means of a complete chain which stretches right up to an infallible, then it is designated ‘*musnad*’, and if not, then it is called ‘*mursal*’.

Al-Sakkūni reports from Abū ‘Abdillah al-Ṣādiq (‘a) who said: ‘Amīr al-Mu’minīn (‘a) said:

“When you narrate a report then (be sure to) name the person who reported it to you, for if that (report) was truthful, then it will be (counted) in your favor, and if it was false, then it will be (counted) against him”.¹⁴

The term ‘*musnad*’ is also in contrast to the term ‘*muṣannaḥ*’. In this case the two terms are designations of two types of tradition compilations. The difference between the two is that the recording of traditions in the latter is according to topical chapters (containing the reported traditions of different narrators); while in the former it is according to the narrator at which the chain terminates. Thus the ‘*Musnad*’ of ‘Abdullah bin ‘Abbās’ is an expression meaning; a compilation of

¹⁴ Translator’s note: The author has unfortunately not supplied a reference for this tradition and neither have I been able to identify it. Nevertheless, there is no reason to doubt the genuineness of the tradition nor its attribution to the named Imāms in light of the author’s known erudition and care in scholarship.

traditions on different topics and subjects, all the chains of which are connected to him and terminate at him.

Fu'ād Sezgin in his work *Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums* volume: 1, pg 227, writes, 'the traditionists began the recording of the traditions in the style of the *'musnad'* at the close of the second century *hijri'*. This is correct as far as the *'musnad'* literature of the Sunnis is concerned. As for the Shi'ites, they preceded them in this field, for the four hundred *Uṣūl* works¹⁵ were all in the style of the *'musnad'*. Thus the *'Musnad of Zurāra'* is an expression denoting a hadith compilation of all that Zurāra reported in different fields, and the Shi'ites began to compile traditions in this style beginning in the era of Imām al-Bāqir (‘a) (which would fall in the last quarter of the first century and into the beginning of the second century *hijri*, which was the duration of his *imāmate*).

However, unfortunately time took its toll on the *'musnad'* literature of the Shi'ites, especially after the first and second phases of the *'Jāmi'* compilations¹⁶ when the Shi'ites thought them dispensable and stopped taking care of them.

THE NUMBER OF HIS REPORTED TRANSMISSIONS

Scholars differ with respect to the number of traditions he has transmitted. Thus Shaykh Ismā'il al-Kāzārī (d 1136 AH/1723 AD) has transmitted sixty traditions on his authority in his book *'Jannāt al-Na'im'*, while Shaykh Muḥammad Bāqir al-Kajūri (d 1313 AH/1895 AD) has transmitted seventy-five traditions on his authority in his book *'Rawḥun wa Rayḥān'*.

Muḥammad bin Ibrāhīm al-Kalbāsiy (d 1262 AH/1842 AD) has narrated forty traditions on his authority in his book *'Al-Tadhkira al-'Aẓīma'* and al-Muḥaqqiq al-Shaykh 'Azīzullah al-'Aṭāradi has transmitted seventy eight traditions from him in his book *'Abd al-'Aẓīm al-Ḥasani, Ḥayātuhu wa Musnaduhu'*.

Recently, a work by the title of *'Musnad Ḥaḍrat 'Abd al-'Aẓīm al-Ḥasani (as)'* was published. This work was prepared by Shaykh al-'Aṭāradi and 'Ali Ridhā' al-Hazārī who verified one hundred and twenty traditions from him. This work was published and disseminated by the organizers of the conference held in memory of Seyyid 'Abd al-'Aẓīm al-Ḥasani in the suburb of Ray of the city of Tehran in 2003 AD.

¹⁵ Translator's Note: The "*Uṣūl*" formed the primary texts of Shi'ite hadith literature. They tended to be little notebooks or manuscripts compiled by the companions and disciples of the Imāms, during their times. The companions would jot down the narrated traditions of the Imāms as well as their teachings on various aspects of the faith. And if there was an intermediary between the compiler and the Imāms, such an intermediary tended to be just one or two persons. This literature belonged to the time before the period of the larger compilations, which have come down to us today. Most of these primary compilations are no longer extant. For a useful study of this literature in the English language, please refer to the article: 'Al-Uṣūl al-Arba'u Mi'a' by E.Kohlberg, published in *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* (JSAI), 10, 1987.

¹⁶ Translator's Note: The first phase of the *'Jāmi'* compilations, meaning 'the comprehensive compilations' was in the fourth century *hijri*/tenth century AD, when the hadith works *Uṣūl al-Kāfi* of al-Kulayni, *Man lā Yaḍḥuruhu al-Faqīh* of al-Ṣadūq, *al-Tabḍīb* and *al-Istibṣār* of al-Ṭūsi were compiled. The second phase of the comprehensive compilations took place in the eleventh and twelfth centuries' *hijri*/seventeenth century AD, when the hadith works *al-Wāfi* of Muḥsin Fayd al-Kāshāni, *Waṣā'il al-Shi'a* of al-Hurr al-'Āmili and *Bihār al-Anwār* of al-Majlisi were compiled. For a concise account of these collections and their contents please refer to: *Introduction to Hadith* by A.Fadli, tr. N.Virjee, United Kingdom, 2002, pg 80-88.

This last figure is perhaps the utmost one can verify in these days by the aid of computer assisted software and if anything has missed their attention then perhaps it is unimportant.

The foregoing information may raise a question, which is: a man as learned as the Seyyid, who met two Imāms, who transmitted from thirty-three personalities and from whom sixteen traditionists reported in turn should have had a far greater number of transmitted traditions to his credit than the number mentioned above. Thus what is the reason for the small number of his transmitted traditions?

Two possible answers may be suggested here:

- 1) In those times many resources and books of the Shi'ites were lost due to destruction, sabotage, burning and other destructive factors. This is because the Shi'ites were living in an environment of dissimulation and fear, except in certain limited areas where they enjoyed some relative freedom and ease. An apt example would be the jurist Muḥammad bin Abī 'Umayr,¹⁷ who narrates from four hundred and fourteen authorities. His sister hid his books by burying them so that they may not be confiscated. Shaykh al-Najāshi writes: 'His sister buried his books when he was imprisoned for four years and while she was in hiding. As a result his books were destroyed. It is also said that she left them in a room and rainwater destroyed them! So he began to transmit from memory and from what was in the possession of the people of his previously transmitted reports. This is the reason why Shi'ite scholars accept his *'mursal'* transmissions. And he had written many books.'¹⁸
- 2) That Seyyid 'Abd al-'Azīm al-Ḥasani was a man pursued by the tyrannical authorities, which made him flee and seek refuge in Ray. There he lived in a cellar far from the sight of the people and perhaps this state of his of being a refugee led to so many years of his life being wasted! Therefore, it was in such a severe environment that he narrated traditions to any seeker interested in traditions and knowledge.

¹⁷ Translator's note: The Imāmi biographer al-Najāshi writes about him as follows: Muḥammad bin Abī 'Umayr Ziyād bin 'Isa, known by the epithet of Abū Aḥmed al-Azdi, was a client of the tribe of Muḥlib bin Abi Ṣafra. A resident of Baghdād from whence his origins lay, he met the seventh Imām Abū al-Ḥasan Mūsa ('a) and heard and narrated traditions from him in some of which the Imām refers to him with the epithet of Abū Aḥmed. (However Shaykh Tūṣi writes that he did not narrate any traditions from the seventh Imām). He also narrated traditions from the eighth Imām al-Ridhā' ('a). (Shaykh Tūṣi writes that he also met the ninth Imām al-Jawād ('a)) He possessed an exalted position and a great rank, both among the Shi'a and the Sunna. Al-Jāhiz confirms him in his work *Al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn* to be an important personality of the Rāfidhites. He was imprisoned during the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd, allegedly because he refused to take up some judicial responsibilities or because he refused to divulge the identities and whereabouts of the Shi'a and the companions of the seventh Imām Mūsa bin Ja'far ('a). For this, it is reported he was whipped so harshly that he was about to give in due to the intensity of the pain when he heard the voice of Muḥammad bin Yūnus bin 'Abd al-Raḥmān (who seems to have been incarcerated in the same prison, perhaps) admonishing and exhorting him thus 'Fear God O Muḥammad bin Abī 'Umayr'. So he bore this tribulation patiently and God granted him relief. It is also reported that Ma'mūn had him arrested till he agreed to undertake judicial responsibilities of some provinces. Al-Najāshi writes that Muḥammad bin Abī 'Umayr composed 94 books and died in 217 AH/832 AD. A certain Aḥmed bin Muḥammad bin 'Isa transmitted the books of a hundred companions of the sixth Imām al-Ṣādiq ('a) from him. His books were on various theological and legal subjects as well as at least one work on the *Maghāzi*. For further details of his life and works, please refer to *Mu'jam Rijāl al-Ḥadīth* of Seyyid al-Khū'i, volume 15, pg 297.

¹⁸ *Rijāl al-Najāshi*, volume 2, pg 206, entry number 888.

Thus we have al-Najāshi relating the following from Seyyid ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Ḥasani’s student Aḥmad bin Muḥammad bin Khālīd al-Barqī¹⁹ who said: ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Ḥasani arrived in Ray whilst fleeing from the authorities and there he lived in a cellar in the house of a Shi‘ite man whose house was located in a side street known as the ‘lane of the *Muwālī*’.²⁰ He used to worship Allah in that cellar, fasting during the daytime and remaining awake during the night. He would come out from his hiding place secretly and visit the grave that is (presently) opposite his and between the two graves is a road. He maintained that the grave was that of a man from the children of Imām Mūsa bin Ja‘far (‘a). He continued to stay in that cellar and gradually news of his whereabouts spread among the Shi‘ites till many of them knew of him. Subsequently, one of the Shi‘ites saw the Prophet (s) in his dream who told him that a man from his progeny would be borne away from the ‘lane of the *Muwālī*’ and buried near an apple tree in the garden of (a certain) ‘Abd al-Jabbār bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, and the Prophet pointed out the place to him. The man then purchased the garden from its owner and when the owner asked him as to why he was interested in the place, he replied by narrating the contents of the dream. He then endowed the spot near the tree as well as the entire garden to Seyyid ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Ḥasani and the Shi‘ites began to bury their dead there too. Later, Seyyid ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Ḥasani fell sick and finally passed away. When he was undressed so that he could be given the funeral bath, a piece of paper was found on his body, which mentioned his genealogy as; “I am Abū al-Qāsim ‘Abd al-‘Azīm bin ‘Abdillah bin ‘Ali bin al-Ḥasan bin Zayd (bin ‘Ali) bin al-Ḥasan bin ‘Ali bin Abī Ṭālib (‘a).”²¹

Some biographers then mention his books after this narration.

HIS SCHOLARLY HERITAGE

The biographers of Seyyid ‘Abd al-‘Azīm mention two books, which are attributed to him.

- 1) *Khuṭab Amīr al-Mu‘minīn* (‘a). Al-Najāshi mentions this work in his biographical entry for Seyyid ‘Abd al-‘Azīm, number 651.

¹⁹ Translator’s note: This is Aḥmad bin Muḥammad bin Khālīd bin ‘Abd al-Raḥmān bin Muḥammad bin ‘Ali al-Barqī. His family hailed from Kūfa but later settled in a small village near Qum called Barq Rūd from which the family got the title Barqī. The reason for this migration is said to have been the participation of Aḥmad’s great grandfather Muḥammad in the failed revolt of Zayd bin ‘Ali bin al-Ḥusayn (‘a) in 122 AH/740 AD due to which he was subsequently killed. His father was a disciple of the eighth and ninth Imāms and transmitted traditions from them. Aḥmad himself was a disciple of the ninth and tenth Imāms and was known as a compiler and transmitter of traditions. Both al-Najāshi and al-Ṭūṣī considered Aḥmad to be trustworthy in hadith transmission. He was the author of numerous books but he is most well-known for his book of traditions by the title ‘*Kitāb al-Maḥāsin*’ which has survived to date and his biographical dictionary. His death date is given as either 274 AH / 888 AD or 280 AH/894 AD. These biographical details have been sourced from the article: ‘A Shi‘a Life-Cycle According to Barqī’s *Kitāb al-Maḥāsin*’ by Roy Vilozny and published in *Arabic*, tome 54, issue 3, 2007.

²⁰ Translator’s note: The expression in the text here is ambiguous. It says (في سكة الموالي). The word سكة means a side street or a lane. Refer to pg 416 of *Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*. The word موالي is the plural of مولى. The plural, if read with a *fatḥa* on the *ḥ* can mean a lord, a master, a protector, etc. If it is read with a *dhamma* on the *ḥ* then it means a client, a companion, a friend, a supporter, a patron, etc. The word in the singular however, can mean any of these meanings. Refer to *Hans Wehr* pg 1101 as well as other dictionaries. Thus here, the expression may mean ‘the lane of the lords’ or ‘the lane of the supporters/friends’. It is my presumption that it means ‘the lane of the friends and supporters of the Shi‘a’.

²¹ *Rijāl al-Najāshi*, volume 2, pg 65, entry number 651.

- 2) *Al-Yawm wa al-Layla*. Şāhib bin ‘Abbād has mentioned this work in a special treatise in which he documents Seyyid ‘Abd al-‘Azīm’s biography. Excerpts from this treatise are presented below. The author²² of *al-Dhari‘ah* attributes this book to him citing from the *Rijāl* of al-Najāshi. However we²³ did not find this attribution there!

HIS POSITION NEAR THE IMĀMS OF THE AHLULBAYT (‘A)

His station near the Imāms of the ahlulbayt (‘a) comes to light in the course of their statements in his favor. Thus he was a brilliant traditionist, a source of reference in matters of the faith, trustworthy in matters of religion and here we mention some of their statements.

Shaykh al-Şadūq (d 381 AH/991 AD) reports from Seyyid ‘Abd al-‘Azīm that he said:

‘I visited my master ‘Ali²⁴ bin Muḥammad bin ‘Ali bin Mūsa bin Ja‘far bin Muḥammad bin ‘Ali bin Ḥusayn bin ‘Ali bin Abī Ṭālib (‘a). When he caught sight of me, he exclaimed:

“Welcome O Abū al-Qāsim, you are indeed our true friend!”

So I said: “O son of the Messenger (s), I wish to present to you my beliefs. If they are correct then I will affirm and adhere to them till I meet Allah, Great and Exalted”. So the Imām said: “Then present them O Abū al-Qāsim”.

So I said: “I maintain that Allah, Blessed and Exalted is one. There is nothing like Him. He is beyond the two limits, the limit of negation and annulment (of attributes) and the limit of anthropomorphism. And that He has neither a body nor a form, nor dimension nor a material core. Rather He is the One who creates bodies and gives forms, the Creator of dimensions and matter. Lord of everything and its Possessor, Creator and Originator.

And (I maintain) that Muḥammad was His servant, His Messenger and the Seal of the Prophets. There is no prophet after him till the Day of Judgement.

And (I maintain) that the Imām, the Caliph and the Guardian of the affair (of guidance) after him was Amīr al-Mu‘minīn ‘Ali bin Abī Ṭālib, and then al-Ḥasan, then al-Ḥusayn, then ‘Ali bin al-Ḥusayn, then Muḥammad bin ‘Ali, then Ja‘far bin Muḥammad, then Mūsa bin Ja‘far, then ‘Ali bin Mūsa, then Muḥammad bin ‘Ali and thereafter, you my master”.

So the Imām said: “And after me will be my son al-Ḥasan. However, I wonder how the people will react with regards to his successor” I asked: “Why do you say that, O master?” He replied, “Because none will see his person, nor will it be permissible to mention his name till he appears, when

²² Translator’s note: This is a reference to the eminent research scholar of the previous century, Āqā Buzurgh al-Tehrāni who passed away in 1970 in ‘Irāq. For details of his life, scholarly career and contributions, please refer to: <http://www.imamreza.net/eng/imamreza.php?id=1990>

²³ Translator’s note: This is a reference to the author of this article; i.e. Shaykh al-Subḥāni.

²⁴ Translator’s note: This is the tenth Imām (‘a).

he will fill the earth with justice and equity as it was previously filled with oppression and tyranny.”

So I responded: “I accept (what you have informed me) and I maintain that their friend is the friend of Allah, their enemy is the enemy of Allah. Obedience to them is obedience to Allah; disobedience to them is disobedience to Allah. I maintain that the (Prophet’s) night journey did occur, that questioning in the grave will happen, that heaven and hell exist, that accounting of deeds will occur and that the Hour will undoubtedly arrive when Allah will resurrect those in the graves.

I further maintain that the (religious) obligations after *al-Wilāya* (i.e. love and adherence to the ahlulbayt) are: Prayers, the *zakāt* levy, fasting, pilgrimage to Mecca, striving (in the path of Allah), commanding good and discouraging evil.”

On hearing this, ‘Ali bin Muḥammad (‘a) said: “O Abū al-Qāsim, what you have mentioned is, by Allah, the religion which Allah has chosen for His servants and one with which he is satisfied. So adhere to it, may Allah cause you to stay steadfast on the established faith, in this world and in the hereafter.”²⁵

Ibn Qawlawayhi narrates from ‘Ali bin al-Ḥusayn bin Mūsa bin Bābwayhi, who narrates from Muḥammad bin Yaḥya al-Aṭṭār, who narrates from some of the natives of Ray, (one of whom said):

‘I visited Abū al-Ḥasan al-‘Askari²⁶ (‘a). He asked me: “Where were you?” I replied: “I was visiting the grave of al-Ḥusayn bin ‘Ali (‘a).” He said: “However, if you had visited the grave of ‘Abd al-‘Azīm which is situated

²⁵ *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, the chapter on unity and anthropomorphism pg 81, hadith number 37.

²⁶ Translator’s note: This is the tenth Shi‘ite Imām Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Ali bin Muḥammad, whom popular Shi‘ism refers to with the honorific title *al-Naqi* rather than the title *al-‘Askari* by which he has been described in this tradition. Popular Shi‘ism knows his son and the eleventh Shi‘ite Imām with this title. The title *al-‘Askari* here serves the purpose of an associative adjective. An associative adjective (or a *nisba* adjective) is a noun that is appended to a person’s name to indicate that person’s significant relationship or link with a particular place, family, thing, etc. Thus the eleventh Imām is popularly known as *al-‘Askari* because he lived, died and was buried in the city of al-‘Askar.

Yet the narrator has not erred in referring to the tenth Imām as *al-‘Askari*. This is because the tenth Imām also lived, died and is buried in this same city. This city is better known by the name of Sāmarrā’. Sāmarrā’ was a city that served as the capital of the Abbāsīd caliphs from 221 AH/836 AD till 279 AH/892 AD, when Baghdād once again became the capital of this dynasty. It lies at present, some 125 km north of Baghdād. During its heyday it was one of the largest cities of ancient times.

In about 220 AH /834-5 AD the caliph al-Mu‘taṣim left Baghdād and chose the site of the city of Sāmarrā’ as his new capital. The reason for his departure from Baghdād is said to have been due to the conflict between the residents of Baghdād and his army and thus he wanted to establish a base for his army outside Baghdād. As a result, he chose the site where the city of Sāmarrā’ stands today and therefore Sāmarrā’ was also known at that time by the name of *‘Askar Mu‘taṣim*, meaning ‘the army campsite of Mu‘taṣim’. This name later became shortened to Al-‘Askar.

It is said that the original name of Sāmarrā’ was *‘Surra man Ra’ā’* meaning ‘he who sees it is delighted’, which was later shortened to Sāmarrā’.

Thus this city had two names; Sāmarrā’, short for *Surra man Ra’ā’* and Al-‘Askar, short for *‘Askar Mu‘taṣim*.

The tenth Imām was summoned there from Medīna during the reign of al-Mutawakkil. Thus it would be historically valid to call both these two Imāms as *‘al-‘Askari* and indeed, they are both referred to in Shi‘a literature at times as *al-‘Askariyyayn*; meaning the two *‘Askaris*. However popular Shi‘ism refers to the tenth Imām with the title *al-Naqi* and the eleventh Imām as *al-‘Askari*. For more details refer to the article by A. Northedge on the city of Sāmarrā’ in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, second edition, volume 8, pg 1039.

near you, then your status would have been similar to the one who visited al-Ḥusayn (‘a).”²⁷

Perhaps (the authenticity of) this tradition may be disputed because of the unknown identity of the narrator transmitting the report from the Imām. But a response in its defence may be made by maintaining that Muḥammad bin Yaḥya al-Aṭṭār who was the authority of Shaykh al-Kulayni (d 329 AH/940 AD) would not rely in such an important matter on the statement of a person whom he did not know or had any confidence in. Moreover, being a native of Qum himself, he would know the Shi‘ites of Ray.

Perhaps another question may be posed here, which is: How can a pilgrimage to the grave of Seyyid ‘Abd al-‘Azīm be of equal stature to the pilgrimage to al-Ḥusayn bin ‘Ali (‘a)? A possible response to this may be that the Imām uttered this statement in harsh circumstances and intended to bring to light the nature of the reign of Mutawakkil and his cohorts who used to tyrannise and murder the Shi‘ites on the basis of any pretext. Mutawakkil reigned from 234 AH/848 AD till the year 247 AH/861 AD when he was murdered by his son. The reign of his son did not last long either as the Caliphate was taken over by one claimant after another such as al-Musta‘in (r. 248 AH/862 AD – 252 AH/866 AD) then al-Mu‘tazz Billah famously known for his enmity to the ahlulbayt (deposed in 255 AH/869 AD), then al-Muhtadi (r. 255 AH/869 AD – 256 AH /870 AD) and then al-Mu‘tamad (r. 256 AH/870 AD – 279 AH/892 AD). The prevailing policy in the ruling court was that of deception, enmity and oppression against the ‘Alids and the Shi‘ites. Thus in such circumstances, the Imām may have advised the Shi‘ites to content themselves by visiting the grave of Seyyid ‘Abd al-‘Azīm in order to protect their lives and belongings from destruction and loss. Nevertheless, this does not mean that there is a reduction in the status of al-Ḥusayn (‘a) or an exaggeration in the status of Seyyid ‘Abd al-‘Azīm.

Further, it is clear from what Ṣāḥib bin ‘Abbād narrates, that Seyyid ‘Abd al-‘Azīm was a ‘source of reference’ in matters of the faith and an interpreter of Islamic law for the Shi‘ites in regard to issues which seemed ambiguous and unclear to them. Thus Abū Turāb al-Rūyāni says:

‘I visited ‘Ali bin Muḥammad (‘a) in Sāmarrā’ and I asked him some questions relating to the permissible and impermissible. He answered all of them. When I was bidding him farewell, he said: “O Ḥammād, if something regarding religion confuses or confounds you then refer it to ‘Abd al-‘Azīm, and convey to him my regards.”²⁸

This report expresses his position as a person who possessed the capability of *ijtihād* similar to Zurāra bin A‘yan²⁹, Muḥammad bin Muslim³⁰, Yūnus bin ‘Abd al-

²⁷ *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*, pg 537, chapter 107, hadith number 1.

²⁸ *Mustadrak al-Waṣā‘il* volume 3, pg 614.

²⁹ Translator’s note: The Imāmi biographer al-Najāshi writes that Zurāra bin A‘yan bin Sansan was a leading personality of the Shi‘ite of his times and of the past. He was a known reciter of the Qur’ān, a jurist, a theologian, a poet and a litterateur. He was truthful in what he transmitted and was known to have had a book on the subject of human capacity and predestination. He died in 150 AH/767 AD.

Shaykh al-Ṭūṣi writes that Zurāra’s name was ‘Abd Rabbih while his epithet was Abū al-Ḥasan and Zurāra was his title. His father A‘yan bin Sansan was a Roman slave and belonged to a man from the tribe of Banū Shaybān, who taught him the Qur’ān and then freed him. He was a monk, hailing from Byzantium.

Shaykh al-Ṭūsī believed Zurāra to be from the companions of the Imāms al-Bāqir, al-Ṣādiq and al-Kāzīm (‘a) and wrote that he had many compositions to his credit. Al-Barqī also counted him among the companions of these three Imāms.

Kaṣhī writes the following in the context of mentioning the names of the jurists from the companions of the fifth and sixth Imāms that: 'the Shi‘ite scholars were unanimous regarding the veracity of these foremost, from the companions of Abū Ja‘far and Abū ‘Abdillāh (‘a). They submitted to them in matters of the law and held the following six to be the most knowledgeable from these foremost ones, and they were; Zurāra, Ma‘rūf bin Kharrabūdh, Burayd, Abū Baṣīr al-Asādī, Fudhayl bin Yasār and Muḥammad bin Muslim al-Ṭā‘ifi, while they held Zurāra to be the most knowledgeable and erudite of these six.

Several reports of praise and commendation by the Imāms have been transmitted in favour of Zurāra, some of which shall be reproduced below;

The sixth Imām said 'Indeed the companions of my father were a source of pride and an embellishment whether alive or dead; and by these companions, I mean Zurāra, Muḥammad bin Muslim, Layth al-Murādi and Burayd al-‘Ijli. These were the custodians and executors of justice; those who spoke the truth excessively; these are the foremost and those brought close'.

Zurāra narrates from the sixth Imām that he told him, 'O Zurāra, your name is registered among the people of heaven...'

Abū Baṣīr narrates that he said to Imām Ṣādiq (‘a) as follows: 'Indeed your father mentioned to me that "Abū Dharr, Miqdād and Salmān the Persian shaved their heads in their readiness to fight Abū Bakr!" So he said "Had it not been for Zurāra, I would have thought my father's teachings to have been lost!"

Ibn Abī ‘Umayr reports that he asked Jamīl bin Darrāj 'what was your best and most delightful meeting and gathering?' He replied; 'yes indeed, we used to be in the presence of Zurāra bin A‘yan as youths studying books around a teacher!'

Mufaddhal bin ‘Umar reports 'One day Faydh bin al-Mukhtār was visiting Imām Ṣādiq (‘a) and mentioned a verse from the Qur‘ān which the Imām interpreted. Then Faydh asked the Imām "what are these differences that I see among your adherents?" The Imām asked in surprise "and what are these differences?" He said "I was once seated among your adherents, in their circle in Kūfā' and was on the verge of doubting them due to the differences in their speech, but then I resorted to Mufaddhal bin ‘Umar who assisted and guided me in that regards such that I felt comfortable and my heart felt at ease". So the Imām said: "Indeed, the situation is as you have said, O Faydh. The people are very fond of attributing lies and falsehoods to us as if that was the only thing that God had enjoined on them. I narrate a teaching to one of them, but he hardly leaves my presence before misinterpreting it, and that is because they do not desire our teachings or our love near God, rather they desire to gain the comforts of this world by it. And all of them desire to be known as leaders. Certainly, no servant (of Allah) extols his self save that God humbles and degrades him and there is no servant who humbles himself except that God raises his status and dignity. Hence, if you wish to acquire (our) teachings then you need to resort to this man seated here" and he pointed to a man from his companions. Later I asked our colleagues about his identity and they identified him as Zurāra bin A‘yan. For further details and biographical consideration, please refer to *Mu‘jam Rijāl al-Hadīth*, volume 8, pg 225-268 of Syed al-Khū‘i.

³⁰ Translator's note: The Imāmi biographer al-Najāshī writes that Muḥammad bin Muslim bin Riyāh had the epithet of Abū Ja‘far and was the client of the tribe of Thaḳīf al-A‘war; thus he is variously known as al-Thaḳāfi and also as al-Ṭā‘ifi. He was a prominent member of the Shi‘ite in Kūfā', and a pious jurist. He had the opportunity to associate and keep company with the Imāms al-Bāqir and al-Ṣādiq (‘a), from whom he narrated much. He had a book titled 'Four Hundred Problems regarding the Permissible and the Impermissible'. He died in 150 AH/767 AD.

Shaykh al-Ṭūsī writes that he was approximately 70 years old when he died and that he was one eyed and a miller by profession. The Imāmi biographer Kaṣhī writes that Muḥammad bin Muslim was considered from among those companions of the Shi‘ite Imāms whose quality of reliability and trustworthiness enjoyed universal unanimity among the Shi‘ite scholars, and that the Shi‘ite scholars yielded to him in matters of the law. Kaṣhī also reports from ‘Abdullāh bin Abī Ya‘fūr that when he complained to the 6th Imām of not having regular opportunities to visit him and acquire solutions from him for his problems, the Imām replied 'then what stops you from referring to Muḥammad bin Muslim al-Thaḳāfi, for he has heard many traditions from my father who considered him eminent and reliable'. Kaṣhī even reports this statement of Muḥammad bin Muslim himself as having said 'no problem vexed me save that I asked about it to Imām al-Bāqir (‘a) till I had asked him the answers to 30,000 problems. I also asked Imām al-Ṣādiq (‘a) the answers to 16000 problems'. The 6th Imām is also reported to have praised Muḥammad bin Muslim and some others as follows: 'I have not come across any who enlivens our memory and the teachings of my father save Zurāra, Abū Baṣīr Layth bin al-Murādi, Muḥammad bin Muslim and Burayd bin Mu‘āwiya al-‘Ijli... These are the protectors of the faith, the reliable and trustworthy companions of my father regarding his teachings on the permissible and impermissible. They are close to us in this world and in the hereafter'. The sixth Imām is also reported to have said: 'Announce the good news of heaven to the humble ones; Burayd bin Mu‘āwiya al-‘Ijli, Abū Baṣīr Layth al-Bakhtari al-Murādi, Muḥammad bin Muslim and Zurāra; four illustrious and excellent ones, faithful and reliable custodians of the teachings of God regarding the permissible and impermissible. Had it not been for these, then the vestiges of Prophethood would have been severed and been obliterated'. For further details and biographical considerations, please refer to *Mu‘jam Rijāl al-Hadīth* of Syed al-Khū‘i, volume 18, pg 246-259.

Raḥmān³¹ and Zakariyya bin Ādam³² whom Imām al-Ridhā' (‘a) praised in response to one who asked him (something) by saying:

‘Refer to Zakariyya bin Ādam, (who is) trustworthy in worldly and religious affairs.’³³

HIS POSITION NEAR THE SCHOLARS

Many biographers have mentioned sterling statements in his favour. We have mentioned some of them and there is no need to repeat them again.

And from the various evidences proving his greatness is that the foremost expert in the discipline of the Hadith, Muḥammad bin ‘Ali bin Bābwayhi al-Ṣadūq compiled a special book containing reports of Seyyid ‘Abd al-‘Azīm. He mentions this in his

³¹ Translator’s note: The Imāmi biographer al-Najāshi writes that Yūnus bin ‘Abd al-Raḥmān had the epithet Abū Ahmad and was the client of ‘Ali bin Yaḥyā who was himself the client of the clan of Banū Asad. He was an important Shi‘ite personality, possessing integrity and a great status. He was born during the reign of the Umayyad ruler Hishām bin ‘Abd al-Malik (r 724 AD - 743 AD) and though he got the opportunity to see Imam al-Ṣādiq (‘a) between the hillocks of Ṣafā and Marwā (in Mecca, probably during the pilgrimage season) however, he is not known to have transmitted traditions from him. On the other hand, he did transmit traditions from Imām al-Kāzīm and Imām Ridhā' (‘a) and Imām Ridhā' (‘a) used to direct the lay Shi‘ite to him in matters relating to religious knowledge and juridical verdicts. He was also one of those who were greatly coveted by the *Wāqifa*, a splinter group which seceded from the Shi‘ite fold after the murder of Imām al-Kāzīm (‘a) in Hārūn al-Rashid's prison. They held various ideas regarding the seventh Imām, the core ones being that he was the promised Mahdi and that he was in occultation, that he would reappear sometime in the future and that he had not designated any one as his heir; the line of *Imāmate* having had terminated at him. The principle leaders of this group, some of whom were the seventh Imām's agents in some of the provinces and had at their disposal a significant amount of the wealth of *khums*, refused to acknowledge the *imāmate* of Imām al-Ridhā' (‘a) so that they would not have to hand over this significant wealth to him. They were met with resistance from some of the eighth Imām's disciples, Yūnus being one of them, whom they tempted with a considerable amount of wealth in order to win him over, but to no avail as Yūnus remained steadfast in his allegiance to Imām al-Ridhā' (‘a). The Imāmi biographer Kashi reports from ‘Abd al-Azīz bin Muhtadi, one of the most virtuous people of Qum and an agent of Imām Ridhā' (‘a) as well as one of his close associates, who said: 'I said to the Imām "I am unable to visit you all the time, hence from whom shall I seek the teachings of my faith?" He replied "seek them from Yūnus bin ‘Abd al-Raḥmān". Shaykh al-Mufid reports the following in his book *Maṣābiḥ al-Nūr*, from Abu Hāshim Dāwūd bin al-Qāsim al-Ja‘fari, who said that: 'I presented the book "*Al-Yawm wa al-Layla*" of Yūnus to the eleventh Imām (‘a). He asked me of the identity of the author of the book and I replied that it was the composition of Yūnus, the client of the clan of Yaḥyā. He said 'May Allah grant him, for every letter, a light on the Day of Judgment'. He had many books to his credit, the bulk of which were on jurisprudential topics though there were a couple on theological issues too, while Shaykh al-Tūṣī writes that he had over thirty books to his credit. He considered him to be from the companions of Imām al-Kāzīm (‘a) and Imām al-Ridhā' (‘a) and also considered him reliable, even though he reports that the traditionists of Qum had impugned his integrity. Aḥmad bin Muḥammad al-Barqī also considered him to be from the companions of the Imāms al-Kāzīm and al-Ridhā' (‘a). It is also reported that Imam Ridhā' (‘a) guaranteed the attainment of heaven for him three times. Faḍl bin Shādhān is reported to have said: 'There has not arisen any person in Islam who was more erudite than Salmān and neither has there arisen any person after him as erudite as Yūnus bin ‘Abd al-Raḥmān'. He also said that Yūnus had performed the major pilgrimage 45 / 51 times while he had performed the lesser pilgrimage 45 times and that he had composed a thousand books in rebutting the opponents. He also reported by means of a reliable intermediary from Imām al-Ridhā' (‘a) who said that: 'Yūnus bin ‘Abd al-Raḥmān is similar to Salmān in his time'. And when the ninth Imām Muḥammad bin ‘Ali (‘a) was asked about him, said: 'May God bless him, he was a virtuous servant (of God)'. For further biographical details and considerations, please refer to *Mu‘jam Rijāl al-Hadīth* of Syed al-Khū‘i, volume 21, pg 209-234.

³²Translator’s note: The Imāmi biographer al-Najāshi writes that his full name was Zakariyya bin Ādam, ‘Abdullah bin Sa‘d al-Ash‘ari al-Qummi. He was veracious and an august personality. He had a special status near Imām al-Ridhā' (‘a). He was also the author of a book which contained the answers to questions he had asked Imām al-Ridhā' (‘a). Shaykh al-Tūṣī considered him to be from the companions of the Imāms al-Ridhā' and al-Jawād (as well as from those of Imām al-Ṣādiq (‘a)) Kashi reports from ‘Ali bin Musayyib who reported that he said to Imām al-Ridhā' (‘a) 'my house is far and I am unable to come to you all the time, thus from whom shall I seek the answers to my religious questions?' The Imām replied 'seek them from Zakariyya bin Ādam, trustworthy in matters of the world and the faith'. ‘Ali bin Musayyib says that thereafter he approached Zakariyya bin Ādam for his needs'. For further biographical details and considerations, please refer to *Mu‘jam Rijāl al-Hadīth* of Syed al-Khū‘i, volume 8, pg 281-285.

³³ *Rijāl al-Kashi*, pg 496, biographical entry number 478.

list of books where he registers that he has a comprehensive book of reports of Seyyid ‘Abd al-‘Azīm bin ‘Abdullah al-Ḥasani.³⁴ Perhaps this book discussed his life and various events pertaining to it, however it is unfortunate that this book has not reached us.

Indeed, Ṣāḥib bin ‘Abbād has written a biographical treatise about our master Seyyid ‘Abd al-‘Azīm. This treatise was discovered by al-Muḥaddith al-Nūri (d 1320 AH/ 1902 AD) who has quoted it in its entirety in the index of his work (*Mustadrak Waṣā’il al-Shi’ite*), in the context of the biography of Seyyid ‘Abd al-‘Azīm. There he writes as follows: ‘As for ‘Abd al-‘Azīm, he was one of the great personalities from the progeny of the Prophet. We shall restrict ourselves to mentioning about his life by quoting the treatise of Ṣāḥib bin ‘Abbād. This treatise has come down to us in the writing of one of the members of the family of Bābwayhi. The date of the treatise is 516 *hijri* (1122 AD) and it says:

Ṣāḥib bin ‘Abbād said: “I was asked about the genealogy of ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Ḥasani who is buried near the tree and who is the owner of that place too (may Allah sanctify his soul) and about his state and beliefs and the level of his knowledge and piety. Hence, here I mention all that in brief and with Allah lies success.

He is Abū al-Qāsim, ‘Abd al-Azīm bin ‘Abdillah bin ‘Ali bin al-Ḥasan bin Zayd bin al-Ḥasan bin ‘Ali bin Abī Ṭālib (may the blessings of Allah be upon him and his forefathers). He was a pious and religious man, a devout worshipper; reliable, trustworthy and truthful. He was learned in matters of the faith and a proponent of the belief in the transcendence of God and His Justice as well as prolific in hadith transmission. He narrated from Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad bin ‘Ali bin Mūsa³⁵ and from his son Abū al-Ḥasan,³⁶ the one who resided in al-‘Askar. There are letters from them both addressed to him. He also narrates from a group of the companions of Mūsa bin Ja‘far³⁷ and ‘Ali bin Mūsa³⁸ (‘a). He had a book by the title “*Kitāb Yaḥwam wa al-Layla*.”

As for those who narrated from him are such as; Aḥmad bin Abī Abdillah al-Barqī and Abū Turāb al-Rūyāni. Fearing for his life, he wandered about in the cities and towns till he arrived at Ray. There he stayed in a cellar in the house of a Shi‘ite man in a lane known as the ‘lane of the *Murwāli*’. He used to worship Allah in that cellar, fasting during the days and spending the nights standing in prayer. He would come out at night in secret and visit the grave that is now opposite his grave and between the two graves runs a road. He used to say that the grave was of a man from the sons of Imām Mūsa bin Ja‘far (‘a). News of his identity soon spread among the Shi‘ites till many knew of him. Subsequently a man from the Shi‘ites saw the Prophet (s) in his dream who informed him that: “a man from my progeny will be carried away tomorrow from the ‘lane of the *Murwāli*’ and be buried near an apple tree in the garden of (a certain) ‘Abd al-Jabbār bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb”. Thus this man went to the owner of the garden in order to purchase the tree. The owner of the garden had also seen the dream and so he endowed the place

³⁴ *Rijāl al-Najāshī* volume 2, pg 316, biographical entry number 105.

³⁵ Translator’s note: This is a reference to the ninth Imām.

³⁶ Translator’s note: This is a reference to the tenth Imām.

³⁷ Translator’s note: This is a reference to the seventh Imām

³⁸ Translator’s note: This is a reference to the eighth Imām.

where the tree was located along with the entire garden to the noble people and the Shi‘ites began burying their dead there. Sometime later, ‘Abd al-Aẓīm fell sick and passed away. He was then carried to and buried where his grave now lies.

WHAT IS NARRATED FROM HIM REGARDING MONOTHEISM

‘Abdullah bin Mūsa al-Rūyāni narrates from Seyyid ‘Abd al-‘Aẓīm from Ibrāhim bin Abī Maḥmūd who said:

‘I asked al-Ridhā’ (‘a), “What is your opinion about the tradition which people narrate that:

إن الله ينزل إلى السماء الدنيا

‘Allah descends to the lower heaven?’”³⁹

He replied,

“May Allah curse those who displace statements from their correct positions. By Allah! The Prophet (ﷺ) never said that. Rather what he said was:

إن الله عز وجل ينزل ملكا إلى السماء الدنيا ليلة الجمعة فينادي هل من سائل فأعطيته ؟

‘Allah, Glorified and Exalted, sends an angel to the lower heaven on Thursday night who calls out, “is there anyone who seeks so that I may grant him?” In this manner, the Imām corrected and explained this prophetic tradition.⁴⁰

And it is narrated through the same chain that Imām al-Ridhā’ (‘a) said regarding the (Qur’ānic) verse:

³⁹ Translator’s note: This ḥadīth, falsely attributed to the Prophet, actually reflects a belief which was current among the Ḥashwiyya and the Ḥanbalites of the medieval and classical period of Islam, while the belief that God will make Himself manifest on the Day of Judgment is an important belief of the majority of the present day Sunni Muslims who adhere to the Ash‘ari dogma as well as that of the Wahhābis who are a modern day representation of the Ḥashwiyya and follow the legal and doctrinal school of the Ḥanbalites.

⁴⁰ Translator’s note: In order to understand the Imām’s statement, ‘May Allah curse those who displace statements from their correct positions’, it is necessary to understand the grammatical structure of both the corrupt and authentic versions of this traditions, respectively. The grammatical structure of the corrupt tradition is:

إن الله ينزل إلى السماء الدنيا

The word for ‘descent’ here, which is ينزل , is the present tense of the third person singular of the first form of the root نزل which is pronounced with a *fatḥa* on the ‘ya’ and a *kisra* on the ‘za’. This would render the meaning of the tradition to mean that Allah *himself* descends to the lower heaven. In contrast, the second tradition, which is authentic, has two major differences from the first one. Firstly, the present tense verb used is the third person singular of the fourth form of the trilateral root, which is pronounced with a *dhamma* on the ‘ya’. This renders the meaning of the verb as causative, which means that Allah causes someone/thing to descend rather than descending himself. Secondly, the first tradition has the word ملكا, meaning ‘an angel’ omitted which is correctly situated in the second tradition as the grammatical object of the verb ينزل (with the *dhamma* on the ‘ya’). Hence the second tradition would mean that ‘Allah sends an angel to the lower heaven’. Observe the Arabic of the second tradition and compare with the first one.

إن الله ينزل ملكا إلى السماء الدنيا

وجوه يومئذ ناضرة ، الى ربها ناظرة

On that day (i.e. the Day of Judgement) faces will be radiant, looking towards their Lord.⁴¹

The Imām said: (It means)

مشرقة ، منتظرة ثواب ربها عز وجل

“Faces (on that day) will be radiant, *expectantly looking forward to the rewards of the Lord Mighty and Glorified.*”

WHAT IS NARRATED FROM HIM REGARDING THE JUSTICE OF GOD

‘Ali bin al-Ḥusayn al-Baghdādi narrates from Āḥmad bin Abī ‘Abdillah al-Barqī from ‘Abd al-Azīm al-Ḥasani from ‘Ali bin Muḥammad al-Naqī (‘a) from his father Muḥammad bin ‘Ali al-Hādī (‘a), from his father ‘Ali bin Mūsa al-Ridhā (‘a), who said:

‘One day as Abū Ḥanīfa (d 150 AH/767 AD) was leaving from a meeting with Imām al-Ṣādiq (‘a) (d 148 AH/765 AD), he met Mūsa bin Ja‘far (‘a) and asked him:

“O young man, who is responsible for evil acts?”

He (Mūsa) replied:

“There are only three possibilities regarding this issue.

Either the evil acts ensue from Allah and not from the human being, in which case it would not behove the Munificent (i.e. Allah) to punish His servant for what he was not responsible.

Or that both God and the human being are equally responsible for the evil acts, however then it would not behove a stronger partner to punish the weaker partner.

The third possibility would be that the evil acts ensue solely from the human being and he alone is responsible for it, in which case if Allah was to punish him then that would be due to the human being’s fault and if Allah were to forgive him then that would be due to His (Allah’s) magnanimity and generosity.”⁴²

‘Abdullah bin Mūsa narrates from ‘Abd al-Azīm al-Ḥasani, from Ibrāhīm bin Abī Maḥmūd who said that Imām al-Ridhā (‘a) said:

⁴¹ Sūra al-Qiyāma, verse 22 – 23.

⁴² Translator’s note: Once again the esteemed author has failed to provide a relevant reference for this anecdote. Nevertheless I have been able to identify two sources where this anecdote has been recorded though I have not been able to verify if the chain of transmission is the same as the one cited here. These two sources are: Al-Ṭabarī’s *Iḥtijāj*, volume 2, pg 387-388 and al-Majlisī’s *Biḥār al-Anwār* volume 5, pg 4 and 27.

‘Eight things never occur save by means of the destiny and decree of Allah. They are: sleep and wakefulness, strength and weakness, health and sickness, life and death. May Allah confirm us with steadfastness and place us among the friends of Muḥammad and his progeny, and may the blessings of Allah be upon our Master and His (i.e. Allah’s) Prophet, Muḥammad and his progeny all together.’⁴³

WHAT IS NARRATED FROM HIM REGARDING THE GREAT SINS

Seyyid ‘Abd al-Aẓīm al-Ḥasani narrates from the ninth Imam Abū Ja‘far (‘a), who narrates from his father al-Ridhā’ (‘a) that he said:

‘I heard my father Mūsa bin Ja‘far (‘a) say that: ‘Amr bin ‘Ubayd al-Baṣri⁴⁴ visited Abū ‘Abdillah al-Ṣādiq (‘a). After he had greeted him, he sat down and recited the following verse of the Qur’ān “And those who shun the great sins and indecencies...”⁴⁵ He then remained silent. So Abū ‘Abdillah al-Ṣādiq (‘a) said ‘Why did you become quiet?’ He replied ‘I would like to know the great sins from the Book of God, the Exalted’. Al-Ṣādiq (‘a) replied ‘yes indeed’.

The Imām began to speak: ‘the greatest sin is to associate something with Allah. Allah, Glorified and Exalted says “Surely Allah does not forgive that anything should be associated with Him...”⁴⁶ And He also says “Surely whoever associates (others) with Allah, then Allah has forbidden to him the garden, and his abode is the fire; and there shall be no helpers for the unjust.”⁴⁷

After that is the sin of hopelessness and despair from the mercy of Allah, for Allah says, “Surely none despairs of Allah's mercy except the unbelieving people.”⁴⁸

⁴³ *Al-Mustadrak* volume 3, pg 614 – 615 lithograph edition, and in the index of *al-Mustadrak* volume 4, pg 404, the modern edition.

⁴⁴ Translator’s note: Abū ‘Uthmān Amr bin ‘Ubayd bin Bāb (fl: 80-144 AH/699-761 AD) was a traditionist and a theologian who went on to become one of the founders of the Mu’tazilite school of theology. The origins of his family lay in what is present day Afghanistan. Amr bin ‘Ubayd joined his father’s profession of being a weaver and also joined al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri’s (d 728/737 AD) teaching circle, becoming one of his closest disciples. After al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri’s death, Amr split from that circle, probably due to theological and leadership differences. He was known for his great piety. He was also known to have been an expert in Hadith and jurisprudence and is said to have written a commentary of the Qur’ān which he derived in the main from the teachings of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri. This commentary is now lost and only a few references to it can be found in later tafsīr literature. He joined with Wāṣil bin ‘Aṭā’ (d 131 AH/749 AD) to create the Mu’tazilite movement. He was also related to him through two means; both were weavers by profession and Wāṣil was married to Amr’s sister. The two of them are considered to have established the basic Mu’tazilite doctrines regarding God’s justice, human free-will and the doctrine of *al-manẓilatu bayna al-manẓilatayn* (translated as: the inter-mediate state), which teaches that a Muslim sinner is neither a believer nor an unbeliever in this world. Amr is said to have been close to Manṣūr al-Dawāniqī, the Abbāsīd Caliph (d 185 AH/704 AD).

Apart from a work on tafsīr he is also credited with a work on dogmatics titled *Kitāb al-‘adl wa al-tawḥīd* and *Kitāb al-radd ‘alā al-Qadariyya*, both of which are no longer extant. Amr died in 144 AH /761 AD in the town of Marran which falls on the road from Mecca to Baṣrā’, on his return from a pilgrimage. For further details refer to the article by Suleiman A.Mourad on Amr bin ‘Ubayd in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, third edition.

⁴⁵ Sūra al-Shūra verse 37.

⁴⁶ Sūra al-Nisā’ verse 47 and 115.

⁴⁷ Sūra al-Mā’ida verse 72.

⁴⁸ Sūra al-Yūsuf verse 87.

Next in evil consequence is the sin of feeling secure from the punishment and stratagem of Allah, for Allah says “But none feels secure from Allah’s plan except the people who shall perish”.⁴⁹

Thereafter is the sin of being ungrateful and disobedient to the parents. This is because Allah has described the one who is disobedient to his parents as insolent, oppressive and wretched. Allah reports the following words of Jesus in the Qur’ān: “And He has made me dutiful to my mother, and He has not made me insolent, unblessed.”⁵⁰

Then comes the sin of murdering a believer, which Allah has prohibited, except that it be in the cause of justice, for Allah says “And whoever kills a believer intentionally, his punishment is hell; he shall abide in it for eternity...”⁵¹

Thereafter is the sin of slandering chaste, believing women for Allah, Glorified and Exalted says: ‘Those who slander honourable but unwary believing women are rejected by God, in this life and in the next.’⁵²

Then is the sin of usurping the property of orphans, for Allah the Glorified says: ‘Those who consume the property of orphans unjustly are actually swallowing fire into their own bellies: they will burn in the blazing fire.’⁵³

Deserting the battlefield is also a great sin, for Allah, the Glorified, says: ‘Believers, when you meet the disbelievers in battle, never turn your backs on them: if anyone does so on such a day – unless manoeuvring to fight or to join a fighting group – he incurs the wrath of God and Hell will be his home, a wretched destination.’⁵⁴

Then is the sin of consuming interest. This is because Allah, the Most High says: ‘But those who take usury will rise up on the Day of Judgment like someone tormented by Satan’s touch.’⁵⁵ And Allah says: ‘You who believe, beware of God: give up any outstanding dues from usury, if you are true believers. If you do not, then be warned of war from God and His Messenger.’⁵⁶

Then comes the sin of indulging in magic as Allah, the Mighty the Majestic says: ‘They (the disbelievers) taught people witchcraft ... they learned what harmed them, not what benefited them, knowing full well that whoever gained this knowledge would lose any share in the hereafter.’⁵⁷

Thereafter there is the sin of committing adultery, for Allah, the Mighty the Majestic says: ‘... nor commit adultery, for whoever does this will face the penalties; their torment will be doubled on the Day of Judgment and they

⁴⁹ Sūra al-A‘rāf verse 97.

⁵⁰ Sūra al-Maryam verse 32.

⁵¹ Sūra al-Nisā’ verse 93.

⁵² Sūra al-Nūr verse 23.

⁵³ Sūra al-Nisā’ verse 10.

⁵⁴ Sūra al-Anfāl verse 15-16.

⁵⁵ Sūra al-Baqara verse 275.

⁵⁶ Sūra al-Baqara verse 278-279.

⁵⁷ Sūra al-Baqara verse 102.

will remain in torment, disgraced, except those who repent, believe, and do good deeds ...⁵⁸

Perjury or swearing falsely is also a great sin, for Allah, the Mighty the Majestic says: ‘But those who sell out God’s covenant and their own oaths for a small price will have no share in the life to come.’⁵⁹

Next is the sin of fraud and untrustworthiness. Allah, the Most High says: ‘Anyone who fraudulently takes something will carry it with him on the day of Judgment.’⁶⁰

Then is the sin of prohibiting the payment of the obligatory *zakāt*. Allah, the Mighty the Majestic says: ‘On the day when it (their wealth) is heated up in hell’s fire and used to brand their foreheads, sides and backs, they will be told, “this is what you hoarded up for yourselves! Now feel the pain of what you hoarded!”⁶¹

Thereafter is the crime of false testimony⁶² and withholding evidence. This is because Allah, the Mighty the Majestic, says: ‘Do not conceal evidence: anyone who does so has a sinful heart, and God is fully aware of everything you do.’⁶³

Then is the sin of drinking intoxicants, because Allah, the Mighty the Majestic has equated it to the worshipping of idols.

Abandoning the ritual prayers purposely or anything that has been made obligatory by Allah is also a great sin, for the Prophet of God (saw) said: ‘Whoever purposely abandons the ritual prayer has been released from the protection and security of Allah, the Mighty, the Majestic and that of the Messenger of Allah (saw)’.

Violating promises and cutting off ties of kinship are also great sins, for Allah the Mighty the Majestic says: ‘But there will be rejection for those who break their confirmed agreements made in God’s name, who break apart what God has commanded to be joined ...theirs is the dreadful home.’⁶⁴

(Here it seems the meeting came to an end for it is reported that): The Imām (Mūsa bin Ja‘far) said:

‘Amr bin ‘Ubayd left whilst he was shrieking and crying and saying “Indeed anyone who says anything on the basis of his conjecture is destroyed as also one who contends with you (all)⁶⁵ in (divine) favours and knowledge”.⁶⁶

⁵⁸ Sūra al-Furqān verses 68 – 70.

⁵⁹ Sūra Āli ‘Imrān verse 77.

⁶⁰ Sūra Āli ‘Imrān verse 161.

⁶¹ Sūra al-Tawba verse 32.

⁶² The Imām did not mention the penalty or evil consequence of this crime, either because it is also considered similar to withholding evidence or because it is considered to be a crime greater or more manifest than the crime of withholding evidence. However, there are many traditions mentioned in respect of its evil consequences.

⁶³ Sūra al-Baqara verse 283.

⁶⁴ Sūra al-Ra‘d verse 25

⁶⁵ Translator’s note: The ahlulbayt.

⁶⁶ Translator’s note: Once again the author has not supplied a reference for this tradition and neither have I been able to identify it due to limited access to relevant resources. Nevertheless, there is no reason to doubt the genuineness of the tradition in light of the author’s known erudition and care in scholarship.

THE HARSH CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS TIME

Ma'mūn ascended the throne after having defeated and killed his brother Amīn. The prevailing atmosphere in the royal court during his reign was that of relative freedom for the Shi'ites and the Mu'tazilites,⁶⁷ who were those who championed the ideas of divine transcendent monotheism and divine justice (اهل التوحيد والعدل). When Ma'mūn died in the year 218 AH/833 AD, al-Mu'taṣim gained the pledge of allegiance for the caliphate and the royal court became a centre for intellectuals and theologians who would engage in polemical debates with each other. When he died in 227 AH/841 AD, it was Wāthiq who took over the reins of the caliphate and he continued with the tradition of intellectual and religious freedom that he had inherited from his predecessors.

Thus it was due to and during the reign of these caliphs that the fortunes of the proponents of divine justice (اهل العدل) shone luminously and polemical gatherings between adherents of different faiths and sects took place.

However, when Wāthiq billah died and Mutawakkil assumed the throne from the year 232 AH/846 AD to 247 AH/861 AD, he promulgated a particularly harsh policy against the Shi'ites and the Mu'tazilites but a very favourable one with respect to the Ḥashawiyya.⁶⁸ He encouraged the dissemination of ideas favouring divine

⁶⁷ Translator's note: The Mu'tazilites were a religious movement in early Islam and became a dominant theological school in the ninth and tenth centuries AD. Its founders are said to be Wāṣil bin 'Aṭā' (d 748 AD) and Amr bin 'Ubayd (d 760 AD). The original meaning of the term 'Mu'tazila', within the early Islamic theological-historical context in which it developed is obscure but it has the sense of 'those who dissociate themselves and keep themselves apart'. Scholars demarcate two specific periods of importance for this school; the early phase from approximately 815 AD to 850 AD when this school was at the height of its political influence and prestige and the second period known as the scholastic phase, which was dominated by the systematization of Mu'tazili thought. This school later divided into the Baṣran and Baghdād schools of the Mu'tazila' in the ninth century AD and was subsequently eclipsed by the Ash'ari school of theology which is the prevalent theological school today among the Sunni Muslims. It is said that aspects of Mu'tazili thought have been appropriated by the Zaydiyya and Twelver Shi'ite schools due no doubt to the many similarities between their teachings.

The five principal bases (*uṣūl*) or theses upon which Mu'tazili theology was based are as follows:

(1) The divine Unity (*al-tawḥīd*) which meant that the divine attributes are meaningful only when taken in a strict *via remotionis* (*tanẓīh*), which their opponents readily identified with the *ta'īl* of the Jahmiyya. God the Creator, an absolutely spiritual being, is inaccessible and can be seen neither in this world nor in the next.

(2) Justice (*al-'adl*): This meant that God acts with a purpose. Further, things, by their nature, contain both good and evil and God can will only the good, and is obliged to accomplish that which is better (*al-aṣlah*). Thus He neither wills nor commands that which is evil. Man, who is the "creator of his own acts" by a contingent power (*qudra*) which God has created in him, is responsible for what he does, and God is obliged to reward or punish him accordingly.

(3) The promise and the warning (*al-wa'd wa al-wa'id*): This principle taught that to possess faith is to perform the acts prescribed by the Qur'ān. Whoever commits a "great sin" and does not repent is destined for hell.

(4) The intermediate state between faith and lack of faith (*al-manẓila bayn al-manẓilatayn*). This principle was with regards to the position of the 'believer who sins' (*fāsiq*). Such a sinner is neither a true believer (*mu'min*) nor a true infidel (*kāfir*). He has failed to perform the 'witness of the limbs', but his faith in God keeps him within the Community.

(5) The enjoining of what is good and the forbidding of what is evil (*al-amr bi al-ma'rūf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar*) For more details the reader may refer to the article on 'Ilm al-Kalām' by L.Gardet in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, second edition, volume 3, page 1141. Also refer to the article 'Mu'tazila' by Sabine Schmidtke in the *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, volume 3, page 466.

⁶⁸ Translator's note: The Ḥashawiyya seem to be an enigmatic entity of early Islam whose existence seems well attested in literature of various genres of medieval and classical Islam but whose true character and meaning remains obscure. However, there does seem to be a universal condemnation of this group in the Muslim sources with a marked attempt at disassociation from them. It has been suggested that the term Ḥashawiyya refers, not to a well-defined school but rather to a widespread *orientation* found among the early Muslim masses, which had its core doctrinal basis rooted in Sunni traditionalist ḥadīth circles; whose theology and legal theory was centred on a narrow reductionist literalism embracing anthropomorphic and determinist views. Their theology was a

anthropomorphism and the doctrine of the physical manifestation of God as well as hatred and enmity towards the ahlulbait to such an extent that the people of Baghdad cursed him, the poets satirised him and the following poem was found written on a wall of the city of Baghdād.

بالله إن كانت أمية قد اتت قتل ابن بنت نبيها مظلوما
فلقد أتاه بنو أبيه بمثله هذا لعمرى قبره مهدوما
أسفوا على أن لا يكونوا شاركوا في قتله فقتبعوه رميما

narrative theology and similar was their jurisprudence; focused on a literal interpretation of the revealed scripture and the vast body of transmitted traditions.

Al-Ḥasan bin Mūsa al-Nawbakhti (d 307 AH/ 920 AD) writes in his work *Firaq al-Shi'a* that a vast majority of those that had previously supported Imām 'Alī ('a) but then joined the opposing groups after his assassination, i.e. the group of Ṭalḥa, Zubayr and 'Āisha and the pro-Mu'āwiya party, were called the *ahl al-pashw*, the followers of the kings and the victorious. Thus in this source the Ḥashwiyya are identified with the majority of the proto-Sunni public which comprised of virtually the entire community apart from the Khārjites and the Shi'ite.

They were also characterised by a favourable propensity towards the Umayyad dynasty and reacted negatively to the calumination of Mu'āwiya. They considered unacceptable the criticism or repudiation of unjust ruling authorities even when such a ruler carried out injustices, maintaining that it was God Himself who had decreed the abuse and oppression experienced by Muslims from tyrannical authorities; a teaching that coincided with their deterministic attitudes, which they rigidly upheld. They believed in the election of the Imām by the community or a part of it, as against the assertion of those who maintained that the *Imāmate* was bestowed by the Prophet (ﷺ) and by his successors after him. This is because according to them the Prophet had not designated anyone as his successor before departing from this life.

The term Ḥashwiyya was later also applied as a pejorative term for the strict Sunni traditionalists among the *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth* who interpreted Qur'ānic verses and the transmitted traditions literally and consequently ended up interpreting verses and traditions on divinity in an anthropomorphic manner. Thus this term was a rude term for anthropomorphist traditionalists. They were also nicknamed *ghutha* (scum), *Mujabbira* (determinists) and *Nābiṭa* (rogue upstarts). They had an extreme distrust and aversion to the employment of reason and in engaging in intellectual discourses and rational disciplines. They insisted on the *bila kayfa* doctrine, first enunciated by Mālik bin Anas (d 179 AH/795 AD), in theological matters which forbade asking 'how' and 'why' with regards to various difficult issues of a theological nature. They also insisted on the beatific vision of God on the Day of Judgment.

They fiercely insisted on the increate nature of not only the revealed Qur'ān but also of the sounds pronounced by its reciters as well as the letters and words with which it was recorded and inscribed on pages.

This group was definitely the opponent of the Mu'tazilites and the precursor of the Ash'aris. Nawbakhti writes that they were also called the Murji'a because they equally accepted the opposing parties that had been active during the early controversies that bedevilled the nascent Muslim community in the decades immediately following the Prophet's death, as they believed that all the *ahl-al-Qibla* were believers by pronouncing the confession of faith, and hoped for forgiveness for all. This description of the Ḥashwiyya has to be understood in the context of the dispute between Imām 'Alī and his opponents in the battle of Jamal and Siffin, which proved to be a real quagmire for later orthodoxy to solve and therefore many Muslims inclined to a refusal to discuss the past and adopting a non-committal attitude towards the past events involving important companions, preferring to brush aside and refusing to address the thorny issue rather than take sides and critique the *Ṣalaf*. The Ḥashwiyya were later specifically identified with Ḥanbalite traditionalists and Ḥanbalites fanatics, especially in 10th-12th century AD Baghdād.

The word Ḥashwiyya literally means 'to stuff' or 'to pad' as in a cushion or pillow with cotton or even a lamb or a fowl with rice. By extension this word means 'empty verbiage, a redundant excess of speech of no profit or utility' and more frequently the ignorant rabble and the most base sort of people given to repeating empty nonsense. Thus the Ḥashwiyya may be rendered 'ignoramus spouting empty nonsense' and also having the secondary meaning of 'unruly rabble' and 'ignorant throng'. Thus the word seems to be more in the nature of a popular term used to refer to an orientation among Muslims that was literalist and non-rational in the interpretation of the Qur'ān and the ḥadīth texts, including a belief in the increate nature of the Qur'ān in its extreme form, an aversion to a critical study and analysis of the Islamic past, an anthropomorphic and deterministic belief with regards to divinity and the problem of human choice, respectively and when criticised that such an attitude would necessitate belief in the multiplicity of Godhead or resulting in notions of injustice attributed to God, would respond by invoking the *bila kayfa* dictum. For a detailed historical and theological overview of this orientation, refer to the article 'The Ḥashwiyya' by A.S. Halkin, published in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, volume 54, no. 1, 1934. For the remnants of this orientation among modern Muslims, refer to the working paper series of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, titled 'Roots of Radical Sunni Traditionalism: Fear of Reason and the Hashwiyya' by Karim Douglas Crow (May., 2008): www.rsis.edu.sg/publications/WorkingPapers/WP158.pdf

By Allah! When the Umayyads came to power, the son of the daughter of their Prophet was murdered treacherously,

Then the sons of his (i.e. Mutawakkil's) father⁶⁹ came forward with a similar treatment; this, by my life, is his (Ḥusayn's) grave desecrated,

(It seems) as if they (i.e. the 'Abbāsids) were sorry that they had not been able to participate in his (Ḥusayn's) murder, so they decided to imitate them (the Umayyads) by desecrating his remains.

It is sufficient to cite the following anecdote as an example of his hatred and enmity towards the ahlulbayt. He had charged Ya'qūb bin al-Sikkīt,⁷⁰ an authority in the Arabic language, with the responsibility of tutoring his two sons al-Mu'taz and al-Mu'ayyad. One day he was looking at his two sons and suddenly asked Ibn al-Sikkīt: 'who is more beloved to you, my (two) sons or al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn?' Ibn al-Sikkīt replied: 'Qambar, the client of 'Alī is better than them both!' Outraged he ordered Ibn al-Sikkīt's tongue to be pulled out!

Historical records do not identify the year in which Seyyid 'Abd al-Aẓīm al-Ḥasani migrated to Ray and sought refuge there, nor do they inform us of the year in which he migrated from the Ḥijāz or 'Irāq to Ray. However, some have imagined that he may have migrated to Fārs with the purpose of visiting Imām 'Alī bin Mūsā al-Ridhā' (a) and thereafter remained there throughout his remaining life till his death in approximately 252 AH/866 AD. But this supposition is difficult to accept. This is because Imām al-Ridhā' arrived in Ṭūs in the year 199 AH/814 AD due to the persistence of Ma'mūn [and passed away in 203 AH/818 AD], thus to suppose that Seyyid 'Abd al-Aẓīm stayed in Fārs from approximately that time till the year 252 AH/866 AD is difficult to accept especially when it is known that the prevailing circumstances during the reigns of the three caliphs mentioned above were favourable and positive for the Shi'ites. Therefore I think that Seyyid 'Abd al-Aẓīm fled the Ḥijāz or 'Irāq during the reign of Mutawakkil when the circumstances had changed and become particularly difficult for the ahlulbayt.

This is because Mutawakkil had embarked upon promoting two corrupt ideas.

⁶⁹ Translator's note: The word 'father' in the phrase 'sons of his father' does not refer, in my estimation, to the immediate father of Mutawakkil, but rather refers to the progenitor of the 'Abbāsids; al-'Abbās bin 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib.

⁷⁰ Translator's note: His name was Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb bin Ishāq. 'Al-Sikkīt', meaning exceedingly silent, was his father's nickname and thus his epithet 'Ibn Sikkīt'. He was born in Baghdād in the year 186 AH/802 AD in a family who were natives of Khuzistān. His father was reputed to have been an expert in poetry and lexicography and he was his son's first tutor. Ibn Sikkīt grew up to be a celebrated philologist and lexicographer. Like many of his contemporaries who wished to excel in the Arabic language, he spent some time among the Bedouins in order to perfect his knowledge of Arabic. He later taught in Baghdād and there dictated the most important of his works to his pupils. He was entrusted by the Abbāsīd caliph Mutawakkil with the education of his two son al-Mu'taz and al-Mu'ayyad, yet it was his attachment to the Alids which brought about his downfall. Due to the incident narrated in the text of this article he was said to have been trampled underfoot by the Turkish soldiers of the guard who constituted the military of the Abbasids at that time and is even said to have had his tongue torn out. He thus died at the age of 58 in 244 AH/858 AD. A specialist in lexicography and Arabic poetry, he is said to have left behind about twenty works in this genre. For more on him, refer to the article on Ibn Sikkīt by P Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. Van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs in the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, volume 3, pg 940.

- 1) Spreading hatred, rancour and enmity of the ahlulbayt and the destruction of the grave of Imām al-Ḥusayn [and related infrastructure] as well as stopping pilgrims from visiting his grave.
- 2) Spreading the idea of divine anthropomorphism and exploiting the traditionsists in fabricating and transmitting traditions which gave credence to that idea.

Thus in those difficult and harsh circumstances against the Shi‘ites and their scholars, Seyyid ‘Abd al-Aẓīm fled to Ray and remained there far from the eyes of the people.

Al-Dhahabi writes:

‘Mutawakkil despatched jurists and traditionists, commanding them to sit with the people and to narrate to them traditions which refuted the teachings of the Mu’tazilites and the Jahmiyya⁷¹ and to narrate to them traditions which supported the idea of the physical manifestation of God. Among these jurists and traditionists were Muṣ‘ab Zubayri, Iṣḥāq bin Abī Isrā’īl, Ibrāhīm bin ‘Abdullah al-Harawi, ‘Abdullah and ‘Uthmān the two sons of Muḥammad bin Abī Shayba. He would distribute rewards and positions among them and bestow them with luxuries and gifts.

Thus ‘Uthmān bin Muḥammad bin Abī Shayba would sit in Baghdād, a pulpit would be placed for him and thirty thousand people would gather around to listen to him. And Abū Bakr bin Abī Shayba would sit in the mosque of Raṣāfa and he used to be even more extreme than his brother ‘Uthmān. Thirty thousand men would gather to listen to him.⁷²

Thus it becomes clear now why Seyyid ‘Abd al-Aẓīm emphasised the transcendent attributes of God by his statement;

“I maintain that Allah, Blessed and Exalted is one. There is nothing like Him. He is beyond the two limits, the limit of negation and annulment (of attributes) and the limit of anthropomorphism. And that He has neither a body nor a form, nor dimension nor a material core. Rather He is the One who creates bodies and gives forms, the Creator of dimensions and matter.”⁷³

He did this because some of the traditionists of his time were spreading ideas of anthropomorphism! It is due to this very same reason that he corrected the

⁷¹ Translator’s note: The Jahmiyya is considered to be an early sect, which is frequently mentioned, but very little is known about its members apart from the name of its alleged founder Jahm bin Sufyān and some of its alleged doctrines. They are said to have held to an extreme form of the doctrine of human predestination according to which man is considered to act only in a metaphorical sense similar to the sun’s act of setting which is not by its own volition but according to a predetermined natural system. They also held that the Qur’ān was created and denied the distinct existence of God’s attributes, thus denuding God’s essence of any attribute and as a result of which they were accused of *ta’tīl* (making God a bare entity). They rationally interpreted the verses of the Qur’ān which describe God in an anthropomorphic manner while their view regarding faith and its relation to works were similar to that of the Murji‘a. For more details, refer to the article ‘Djahmiyya’ by W.M. Watt in the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, volume 2, pg 388.

⁷² *Tārikh al-Islām*, in the context of the reports of the deaths that took place between the years 230 AH – 240 AH. *Tārikh Baghdād* volume 10, pg 22.

⁷³ *‘Amāli* of al-Ṣadūq, pg 419 and the biographical treatise of Ṣāhib bin ‘Abbād.

Prophetic tradition that was being misquoted and explained its meaning to be the descent of an angel and not the Being of God.

Ja'far al-Subḥāni

Qum – Mu'assasatu al-Imām al-Ṣādiq (as).

3rd Rabi' al-Thāni 1424 AH/2003 AD.