Imam Jafar b. Muhammad al-Sadiq

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Al-Sadiq Ja'far b. Muhammad b. Ali b. al-Husayn, peace be on them, was out of all his brothers (the one who was) the successor (khailfa) of his father, Muhammad b. Ali, peace be on them, his testamentary trustee (was'i), who was in charge of the Imamate (al- qa'im bi-al-imama) after him. He stood out among their group for his great merit (fadl); he was the most celebrated, the greatest in rank and the most illustrious of them in (the eyes) of both the non-Shia (al-amma) and the Shi'a (al-khassa).

The people transmitted on his authority the religious sciences which travellers carried with them (around many countries) and thus his fame was spread throughout the lands. The learned scholars have transmitted on the authority of no other member of the House (ahl al-bayt) as much as they have transmitted on his authority.

None of them met as many of the reporters of traditions (ahl al-athar wa-naqalat al-akhbar) as he did, nor did the latter transmit on their authority to the same extent as they transmitted on the authority of Ab-u Abd Allah (Ja'far b. Muhammad), peace be on him. The specialists in tradition (ashab al- hadith) have gathered together the names of those who narrated on his authority, who were reliable despite differences in views and doctrines and they were four thousand men. The clear evidence for his Imamate, peace be on him, was such that it overcame (men's) hearts and silenced (the attempts of) an opponent to denigrate it with doubts.

He was born in Medina in the year 83 A.H. (702) and he, peace be on him, died in (the month of) Shawwal in the year 148 A.H. (765) at the age of sixty-five. He was buried in (the cemetery of) al-Baqi' alongside his father, his grandfather and his (great-great) uncle, al- Hasan, peace be on them. His mother was Umm Farwa, the daughter of al-Qasim b. Muhammad b. Abi Bakr. His Imamate, peace be on him, lasted for thirty-four years. His father, Abu Jafar (Muhammad b. Ali), peace be on him, clearly gave him the trusteeship (of the Imamate) and gave him an explicit designation (nass jali) for the Imamate.

[Muhammad b. Abi Umayr reported on the authority of Hisham b. Salim on the authority of Abu Abd Allah, Jafar' b. Muhammad, peace be on them, who said:]'

When my father was near to death he said: "Jafar I give testamentary enjoinment to you (to treat) my followers well." "May I be your ransom," I replied, "by God, I will make them (know their religion so well) that any man among them in the country will not (have to) ask anyone

(for advice)."

[Aban b. 'Uthman reported on the authority of Abu-al-Sabbah al- Kinam, who said:] Abu Jafar Muhammad, peace be on him, looked towards his son, Abu Abd Allah Ja'far, peace be on him, and said (to us): "Do you see that man? He is one of those of whom God, the Mighty and High, said: We wish to grant a favour to those who have been humiliated in the land and we will make them Imams and inheritors [XXVIII 5].

[Hisham b. Salim reported on the authority of Jabir b. Yazid al Jufi:] Abu Jafar Muhammad, peace be on him, was asked about the one who would take charge (al-qa'im) (of the Imamate) after him. He tapped Abu Abd Allah Jafar, peace be on him, with his hand and said: "By God, this is the man among the family of Muhammad, peace be on them, who will take charge (al-qa'im) (of the Imamate)."

[Ali b. al-Hakam reported on the authority of Tahir, a follower of Abu Jafar Muhammad, peace be on him, who said:] I was with (Abu Jafar Muhammad), peace be on him, when Jafars peace be on him approached, Abu Ja'far, peace be on him, said, " Here is the best of creatures."

[Yunus b. Abd al-Rahman reported on the authority of Abd al-Ala, a retainer of the family of Sam, on the authority of Abu Abd Allah Jafar, peace be on him, who said:] My father, peace be on him, entrusted to me (everything) which was there. When he was near to death, he said: "Call witnesses for me." I summoned four men from Quraysh, among them Nafi', retainer of Abd Allah b. Umar. (My father said:) "Write this testimony which I bequeath (like) Jacob did to his sons: My sons, God has chosen the religion foryou. So do not die except as Muslims. [II 132] Muhammad b. Ali; makes this last testimony to Ja'far b. Muhammad. He orders him to shroud him in the cloak in which he used to perform the Friday prayer, to put on him his turban, to make his grave a square, to raise it the height of four fingers above the ground and to take his shabby clothes away from him at his burial. Then he said to the witnesses: "Depart, may God have mercy on you.

"Father" I said to him (after they had gone), "what was in this that there had to be witnesses for it?" "My son," he answered, "I was unwilling for you to be overcome and for it to be said that no testimony had been made for him. I wanted you to have proof."

Reports with the same meaning as this account are numerous. The narration of the report of the tablet (lawh) with the designation of him, peace be upon him, for the Imamate has already been mentioned. The rational proofs which have been mentioned earlier that the Imam can only be the most outstanding person in merit (al- afdal) also indicate his Imamate, peace be on him, because of the clear demonstration of his outstanding merit in religious knowledge (ilm), in asceticism, and in practice above all his brothers,

the members of his uncle's family and the rest of the people of his time. The evidence for the invalidity of the Imamate of those who were not protected (from error) like the prophets (were protected) and the clear demonstration of the lack of protection of those others who claimed the Imamate during his lifetime,

together with their deficiency in (attaining) complete knowledge of religion, clearly indicates his Imamate. For there must be an Imam who is protected (from error) at all times as we have mentioned before. The people tell of the clear signs from God which were performed by him, peace be on him, which indicate his Imamate, his true right and the invalidity of the statements of those who claimed the Imamate on behalf of others.

Among those is the report about him which the reporters of history (naqalat al-athar) recount about him with al-Mansur. Al-Mansur ordered Rabi to bring Abu Abd Allah Ja'far, peace be on him, to him. He brought him. When al-Mansar saw him, he said: "May God kill me, if I don't kill you. You are attempting to harm my authority and you are seeking treachery against me."

"By God, I am not," retorted Abu Abd Allah (Jafar), peace be on him, "Nor do I want to. If you have been told so, then it is by a liar. However, even if I had done so, then Joseph was treated badly and he forgave, Job suffered tribulation and he was patient, and Solomon received gifts and he gave thanks. These men were prophets and your lineage goes back to them."

"Indeed," replied al-Mansur, "Come up here." He went up and then (al-Mansar) continued: "So-and-so has informed me about what you have been saying." "Bring him, Commander of the faithful," he replied,."so that he may confront me with that."

He had the man whom he had mentioned brought and asked him:

"Did you (really) hear what you reported about Jaefar, peace be on him?" "Yes," he replied. "Make him swear to that," said Abu Abd Allah (Jafar), peace be on him. "Do you swear to that?" demanded al-Mansur. "I do," he replied.

"Say: May I be outside God's power and strength and may I seek refuge in my own power and strength (if I lie that) Jafars peace be on him, did such and such and said such and such," said Abu Abd Allah (Jafar), peace be on him. (The man) paused for a moment and then made the oath. It was only a moment later that his leg was struck. "Drag him by his leg and take him out, may God curse him," ordered Abu Jafar (al-Mansur).

Al-Rabi reported: When Jafar b. Muhammad, peace be on them, went in to see al-Mansur, I saw his lips moving. As he moved them, al- Mansur's anger (gradually) became quietened, so that when he approached him, he was pleased with him. When Abu Abd Allah (Jafar) peace be on him, came out from Abu Jafar (al-Mansur) I followed him and said to him: "This man was the angriest of men towards you. When you went in, you were moving your lips as you went in

and when you moved them his anger quietened. With what (words) were you moving them?" "The prayer of my (great) grandfather, al-Husayn b. Ali peace be on them," he replied. "May I be your ransom," I said, "what is this prayer?"

He told him: O my Provision in time of hardship, O my Help in the face of disaster, guard me with Your Eye Which never sleeps, surround me with Your impenetrable fortress. Al-Rabi reported: I learned that prayer and I never fell into hard times without saying it and it relieving me. (At that time) I said to Jafar b. Muhammad, peace be on them:

"Why did you stop the slanderer from (merely) swearing by God?"

"I was reluctant that God should see him praising His unity and glorifying Him," he answered, "for then He would show forebearance towards Him and delay his punishment. Therefore I made him swear in the way you heard and God struck him fiercely." It is reported that Dawud b. Ali b. Abd Allah b. Abbas killed al- Mualla b. Khunays, a retainer of Jafar b. Muhammad, peace be on them, and took his property. Ja'far, peace be on him, went to him while he was pulling at his cloak.

"You have killed my retainer and taken his property," (Jafar) said to him. "Do you know that a man may sleep when he has suffered the loss of a child but he may not sleep when he is at war? I will pray to God against you."

"Do you threaten us with your prayer?" he retorted as if he was ridiculing his words. Abu Abd Allah (Jafar), peace be on him, went back to his house and spent the whole night standing and sitting. Then, at dawn he was heard saying in his private prayer: O Possessor of mighty strength, O Possessor of fierce enmity, O Possessor of power before which all Your creatures are humble, give me satisfaction against this tyrant and take vengeance on him for me. It was not an hour before voices were raised in screeching (lamentation) and it was announced that Dawud b. Ali had just died. '

Abu Basir reported: I visited Medina and I had a young slave-girl with me. I had intercourse with her and then I went to the baths. But I met some of our colleagues of the Shia who were heading towards Jaefar b. Sadiq, peace be on them. I was afraid that they would get there before me and I would miss visiting him so I went with them to the house. When I stood before Abu Abd Allah (Jafar), peace be on him, he looked at me and said: "Abu Basir, don't you know that the houses of prophets and the children of prophets are not suitable places to enter for those who are ritually impure?" I was ashamed and said: "Son of the Apostle of God, I met out companions and I was afraid that I would miss visiting you with them. I will never do the same thing again," and I left.

There are innumerable reports about him concerning signs and revealing the unknown similar

to those which we have mentioned, which would take too long to recount. He, peace be on him, used to say: "Our knowledge is of what will be (ghabir), of what is past (mazbur), of what is marked in hearts (nakt fi al-qulub), and of what is tapped into ears (naqr fi al-asma). We have the red case (jafr), the white case, and the scroll of Fatima, peace be on her, and we have (the document called) al-jami'a in which is everything the people need. " He was asked to explain these words and he said: "Ghabir is knowledge of what will be; mazbur is knowledge of what was; what is marked in the hearts (nakt fi al-qulub) is inspiration; and what is tapped into the ears (naqr fi al- asma) are words of angels; we hear their speech but we do not see their forms. The red case (jafr) is a vessel in which are the weapons of the Apostle of God, may God bless him and his family. It will never leave us until the one (destined) among us members of the House, to arise (qa'im), arises. The white case (jafr) is a vessel in which are the Torah of Moses, the Gospels of Jesus, the Psalms of David and the (other) Books of God. The scroll of Fatima, peace be on her, has in it every event which will take place and the names of all the rulers until the (last) hour comes. (The document called) al-jami'a is a scroll seventy yards long which the Apostle of God, may God bless him and his family, dictated from his own mouth and Ali b. Abi Talib, peace be on him, wrote in his own handwriting. By God, in it is everything which people need until the end of time, including even the blood-wit for wounding, and whether a (full) flogging or half a flogging (is due).

He, peace be on him, used to say: "My traditions are my father's traditions; my father's traditions are my grandfather's traditions; my grandfather's traditions are the traditions of Ali b. Abi Talib, the Commander of the faithful; the traditions of Ali the Commander of the faithful are the traditions of the Apostle of God, may God bless him and his family; and the traditions of the Apostle of God, may God bless him and his family, are the word of God, the Mighty and High.

[Abu Hamza al-Thumal; has reported on the authority of Abu 'Abd Allah (Jafar), peace be on him:] I heard Abu Abd Allah Jafar say: "We have the tablets of Moses, peace be on him, and we have the rod of Moses, peace be on him. We are the heirs of prophets."

[Mu'awiya b. Wahb. reported on the authority of Said al- Simman:] I was with Abu 'Abd Allah Ja'far b. Muhammad, peace be on them, when two of the Zaydis visited him. They asked him: "Is there among you an Imam whom it is a duty to obey?" "No," he replied. "Reliable men have told us on your authority that you claim to be him," they retorted. They named some people and said: "These are men of piety and distinction. They are among those who do not lie." Abu 'Abd Allah, peace be on him. became angry and said: "I have not told them that." When the two men saw the anger on his face, they left. "Do you know those two?" he

asked me.

"Yes," I replied, "they are from the people of our market. They are Zaydis and they claim that Abd Allah b. al-Hasan has the sword of Apostle of God, may God bless him and his family."

"They are liars, may God curse them," he said. "By God, Abd Allah b. al-Hasan has never seen it either with both his eyes or even with one of them. O God, not even his father has seen it unless he saw it with Ali b. al-Husayn, peace be on him. If they are truthful, (ask them) what is the sign in the hilt and what is the mark on its blade. I have the sword of the Apostle of God, may God bless him and his family. I have the standard of the Apostle of God, may God bless him and his family, and his breast-plate, his armour and his helmet. If they are truthful (ask them) what is the mark on the breast-plate of the Apostle of God, may God bless him and grant him peace.

Indeed the victorious standard of the Apostle of God is with me, as are the tablets and rod of Moses. I have the ring of Solomon, the son of David, and the tray on which Moses used to offer sacrifice and I have (knowledge) of the (greatest) name (of God) which when the Apostle of God, may God bless him and his family, used to put it between the Muslims and the polytheists no arrow from the polytheists could reach the Muslims. I have the same as what the angels brought.

We have the weapons in the same way that the Banu Isra'll had the ark of the covenant. Prophecy was brought to any house in which the ark of the covenant was present; the Imamate will be brought to which ever of us receives the weapons. My father dressed in the armour of the Apostle of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, and it made marks on the ground. I put it on and it was (like) it was (for my father). The one (destined to) rise up (qa'im) from among us, will fill it (so that it fits him exactly) when he puts it on, if God wishes.

['Abd Al-Ala b. Ayan reported:]

I heard Abu Abd Allah (Jafar) peace be on him, say: "I have the weapons of the Apostle of God, may God bless him and his family, but I will never fight with them." Then he said: "These weapons are protected, for if they were entrusted to the wickedest of God's creatures, he would become the best of them." Then he said, "This matter (i.e. the carrying of the Prophet's arms in war) belongs to the man, for whom (horses') reins will be twisted (as men ride in support of him). When God wills it, he will be brought out (into the open). Then people will say: 'Who is this who has appeared?' God will give him support (to have power) over his subjects."

[Umar b. Aban reported:]

I asked Abu Abd Allah (Jafar) peace be on him, about what the people were saying that Umm Salama, the mercy of God be on her, had been handed a sealed scroll. He said: "When the

Apostle of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, died, tAh, peace be on him, inherited his knowledge, his weapons and what there was. Then that went to al-Hasan, peace be on him, then to al-Husayn, peace be on him." "Did it go to Ali b. al-Husayn, peace be on them, after that, then to his son and now has it come to you?" I asked. "Yes," he replied.

The reports with the same meaning are numerous. However, those of them which we have given will be sufficient to indicate what we are trying to show, God willing.

An Extract from the Accounts of Abu Abd Allah Ja'far b. Muhammad al-Sadiq, Peace be on them, and from his Words. I found (this written) in the handwriting of Abu al-Faraj 'Ali b. al-Husayn b. Muhammad al-Isfahani, in the text of his book known as Maqatil al-Talibiyin (the Martyrdoms of (the family of Abu) Talib):

Umar b. Abd Allah al-Atki informed me Umar b. Shabba told us: Al-Fadl b. 'Abd al-Rahman al-Hashim and Ibn Daja told us:

Abu Zayd (Umar b. Shabba) (also) told me: Abd al-Rahman b. b. Amr b. Jabala told me: Al-Hasan b. Ayyub, retainer (mawla) of the Banu Numayr told me, on the authority of Abd al-Ala b. Ayan:

Ibrahlm b. Muhammad b. Abl al-Kiram al-Jafari told me, on the authority of his father:

Muhammad b. Yahya told me on the authority of Abd Allah b. Yahya:

Isa b. Abd Allah b. Muhammad b. Umar b. Ali told me on the authority of his father:

The account of some of them has been introduced into the account of the rest (as follows):

A group of the Banu Hashim met at al-Abwa'. Among them were Ibrahim b. Muhammad b. Ali b. Abd Allah b. Abbas and Abu Jafar al-Mansur, Salih. b. Ali, Abd Allah b. al-Hasan, with his two sons Muhammad and Ibrahim, and Muhammad b. Abd Allah b. 'Amr b. 'Uthman. Salih. b. Ali addressed (them): "You know that you are the ones towards whom the people turn their eyes and that God has brought you together in this place. Therefore give a pledge of allegiance to one from among you, which you should give to him with (genuine dedication) of yourselves. Bind yourselves so that God may bring victory, for He is the best bringer of victory."

'Abd Allah b. al-Hasan praised and glorified God. Then he said: "You know that this son of mine is the Mahdi Therefore come, let us pledge allegiance to him."

"Why are you deceiving yourselves?" demanded Abu- Ja'far. "By God you know that there is no one else to whom the people would take greater strides nor greater speed to answer than they would to this man," meaning Muhammad b. Abd Allah. "True," they said, "this is he whom we acknowledge." So they all pledged allegiance to Muhammad and took him by the hand. [Isa reported:]

Abd Allah b. al-Hasan's messenger came to my father, saying:

"Come to us. We are gathered for an (important) affair." He sent (information) about that to Jafar b. Muhammad, peace be on them. [Others, not including Isa, reported:]

Abd Allah b. al-Hasan said to those present: "You don't want Jafar (here), for we fear that he would cause dissension among you in your affair." [Isa b. Abd Allah b. Muhammad reported:]

My father sent me to see what they had gathered for. So I went to them. (Ja'far b. Muhammad, peace be on them, sent Muhammad b. Abd Allah al-Arqat b. Ali b. al-Husayn. We went to them). Muhammad b. Abd Allah (b. al-Hasan) was praying on a folded carpet from a saddle. "My father has sent me to you," I told them, "to ask you why you have gathered together." "We have gathered (here), " Abd Allah b. al-Hasan said, "to pledge allegiance to the Mahdi, Muhammad b. Abd Allah." [They (i.e. the other authorities) reported:]

Jafar b. Muhammad, peace be on them, arrived and 'Abd Allah b. al-Hasan made room for him beside him. He repeated what he had said before. However, Ja'far said: "Don't do it. The time (for the Mahdi) has not yet arrived. If you - meaning Abd Allah - consider that this son of yours is the Mahdi, he is not, nor is this the time for him (i.e. the Mahdi). Because you are one of our most revered elders we will not forsake you in favour of pledging allegiance to your son, even if you only intend him to rise in anger in God's cause, to command the good and prohibit the evil." Abd Allah became angry and said: "I know that (the facts are) the opposite of what you are saying. By God, God has not acquainted you with (knowledge of) His unseen world. Rather it is envy for my son which prompts you to this (attitude)."

"By God, it is not that which prompts me," replied (Jafar) "but this man, his brothers and his sons." Then he tapped with his hand on the back of Abu al-Abbas and he tapped with his hand on the shoulder of Abd Allah b. al-Hasan. "By God, it (i.e. the caliphate) is not for you nor for your two sons," (Jafar) told him, "but it is for them (i.e. the Abbasids). Your two sons will be killed." He got up and leaning on the arm of Abd al-Aziz b. Imran al-Zuhri, he continued, "Do you see the owner of the yellow cloak?" - meaning Abu Ja'far (al-Mansar).

"Yes," he replied.

"By God," he said, "we have a foreboding that he (Abu Jafar) will kill him (Muhammad b. Abd Allah)." "Will he kill Muhammad?" Abd al-Aziz asked him. "Yes," he replied.

[Abd al-Aziz reported:]

I said to myself, "By the Lord of the Kaba, he is envious of him." But then, by God, I had not left this world before I saw him (Abu Jafar) kill both of them. When Jafar said that, the people arose and separated. Abd al- Samad and Abu Jafar followed him and asked him, "Abu- Abd Allah, do you really say this?"

"Yes," he replied, "by God I say it and I know it." [Abu al-Faraj reported: Ali b. al-Abbas al-

Maqani told me: Bakkar b. Ahmad informed us: al-Hasan b. al-Husayn, on the authority of Anbasa b. Bijad' al-Abid told us:]

Whenever Jafar b. Muhammad, peace be on them, saw Muhammad b. Abd Allah b. al-Hasan, his eyes would flow with tears and then he would say: "(I would sacrifice) my life for him. The people say that (he is the Mahdl while) he is to be killed. He is not in the Book of Ali, peace be on him, as one of the caliphs of this community."

This (second report) is a famous report just like the one before it. The historians do not differ on the accuracy of both of them. They both (clearly) give evidence for the Imamate of Abu 'Abd Allah al- Sadiq, peace be on him. Indeed miracles were performed by him in order that he might make known things which were unknown and show the existence of things before they came to be, just as prophets, peace be on them, used to make (such things) known. That was one of their signs and indications of their prophethood, and their truthfulness (in speaking) about their Lord, the Mighty and Exalted.

[Abu al-Qasim Ja'far b. Muhammad b. Qulawayh told me on the authority of Muhammad b. Ya'qub al-Kulayni, on the authority of 'Ali b. Ibrahim b. Hashim, on the authority of his father, on the authority of a group of his men (i.e. teachers), on the authority of Yunus b. Yaqub, who said:] I was with Abu Abd Allah (Ja'far), peace be on him, when a Syrian came to him. He said: "I am a scholar (sahib) of theology, jurisprudence, and the laws of inheritance. I have come to dispute with your followers."

"Is your theology from the Apostle of God, may god bless him and his family, or from yourself?" Abu 'Abd Allah (Ja'far), peace be on him, asked.

"Partly from the Apostle of God, may God bless him and his family, and partly from myself," replied (the other man).

"Then are you a partner of the Apostle of God, may God bless him and his family?" enquired Abu 'Abd Allah (Ja'far).

"No," he answered.

"Have you heard inspiration (wahy) (direct) from God?" "No," he replied.

"Is obedience to you required as is obedience to the Apostle of God, may God bless him and his family?" "No," was the answer.

Abu 'Abd Allah, peace be on him, turned to me and said: "Yunus b. Ya'qub, this man has contradicted himself before he has begun (the real business) of discussing." Then he said: "Yunus. if you were good at theology, you should speak to him." [Yunus remarked:]

How sad it was, for I said to him: "May I be your ransom, I have heard you forbid (taking part in) theology and say: Woe to the theologians who say that this follows and that this does not

follow; that this is entailed and that this is not entailed; that this we accept as rational and this we do not accept as rational."

"I only said," Abu 'Abd Allah, peace be on him remarked, "woe to them, if they abandon what I say and adopt their own wishes." Then he told me: "Go out to the door and look for any of the theologians you can see, and bring them in."

I went out and found Humran b. A'yan who was good at theology, and Muhammad b. al-Numan al-Ahwal, who was a theologian, and Hisham b. Salim and Qays b. al-Masir, both theologians. I brought them (all) in to him. After he had settled us in the assembly - we were in the tent of Abu Abd Allah at the top of a mountain on the edge of the sanctuary (of Mecca) (haram) and that was (a few) days before the days of the pilgrimage, Abu Abd Allah, peace be on him, put his head out of the tent.

There appeared at that moment a camel dashing along. He cried out: "Hisham, by the Lord of the Kaba!" We thought that it was Hisham, one of the sons of Aqil, who loved him greatly. But behold, it was Hisham b. al-Hakam who came. He still only had the first traces of his beard on his face. All of us there were older than him. Abu Abd Allah, peace be on him, made room for him and said: "(Here is) one who helps us with his heart, his tongue and his hand."

He told Humran: "Debate with the man" - meaning the Syrian. Humran debated with him and overcame him. Then (Abu Abd Allah) said: "O my Taq, debate with him." So Muhammad b. al-Numan debated with him and overcame him. Next he said: "Hisham b. Salim, debate with him." So they both argued together. He then told Qays b. Masir to debate with him and he did so. Abu Abd Allah, peace be on him, began to smile at their discussion as the Syrian sought to escape in front of him. He told the Syrian:

"Debate with this lad" - meaning Hisham b. al-Hakam.

"Yes," replied the Syrian and said, "lad, ask me about the Imamate of this man" - meaning Abu Abd Allah, peace be on him. Hisham was so angry that he trembled but then he said: "Fellow, does your Lord look after His creatures or do they look after themselves?" "Indeed," replied the Syrian, "my Lord looks atter His creatures."

"What does He do to look after their religion for them?"

"He gives them duties and provides them with proof (hujja) and evidence for the things which He has required of them. He removes any weaknesses they might have about that."

"What is the evidence which He has established for them?" Hisham asked him.

"It is the Apostle of God, may God bless him and his family," the Syrian answered.

"What after the Apostle of God?" enquired Hisham.

"The Book and the sunna."

"Do the Book and the sunna benefit us today in our differences so that the differences are removed from us and we are able to agree?" asked Hisham. "Yes," replied the Syrian.

"Then do we differ from you," retorted Hisham, "so that you have come to us from Syria to dispute with us? You claim that personal judgement (ra'y) is the method (of establishing the practices) of religion while you acknowledge that personal judgement does not bring people who differ together in one doctrine."

The Syrian was silent as if he was thinking. So Abu Abd Allah, peace be on him, asked him: "Why aren't you debating?" "If I say: We do not differ," he answered, "I would be (merely) being obstinate. If I say: the Book and the sunna remove our differences, I would be wrong because the two bear (different) interpretations. However, I could use the same argument against him."

"Ask him, then," Abu Abd Allah, peace be on him, told him.

"You will find him competent."

So the Syrian asked Hisham: "Who looks after His creatures, their Lord or themselves?"

"Indeed their Lord looks after them," replied Hisham.

"Does He establish for them someone who will harmonise their doctrine, remove their differences and explain the true from the false to them?" demanded the Syrian.

"Yes," replied Hisham.

"Who is that?" asked the Syrian. "At the beginning of the sharia, it was the Apostle of God but after the Prophet, blessings and peace be on him, it was someone else." "Who is it other than the Prophet, may God bless him and his family, who takes his place (al-qa'im maqamahu) in being His (i.e. God's) proof?" the Syrian asked.

"Now or before?" Hisham responded.

"At the present time," answered the Syrian.

"This man who is sitting here," said Hisham - meaning Abu 'Abd Allah. "He is the one to whom you travelled; he is the one who tells us about heaven and is the inheritor from father and grandfather."

"How would I have knowledge of (the truth of) that?" asked the Syrian. "Ask him about anything which occurs to you," Hisham told him.

"You have stopped (any) excuse of mine but I do have a question," the Syrian declared. "I will dispense with your questioning," Abu Abd Allah, peace be on him, told him. "I will tell you about your travel and your journey. You left on such and such a day. Your road was such and such. You passed so and so and such and such (a man) passed you." Every time he told him anything about his affair, the Syrian would say: "True, by God." Then the Syrian said to him: "At this moment I have submitted (aslamtu) to God."

"Rather at this moment you have faith famanta) in God," said Abu Abd Allah, peace be on him. "Islam (submission to God) is before lman (faith in God). On the basis of the former (Islam) they arrange inheritance and marriage: on the basis of faith (iman) men are rewarded." "True," replied the Syrian, "at this moment I testify that there is no god but God, that Muhammad is the Apostle of God, may God bless him and his family, and that you are the (present) trustee (wasz) (of God) among the trustees (appointed by God)."

Abu Abd Allah approached Humran and said: "Humran, conduct theology on the basis of traditional knowledge (athar) and you will be correct." He turned to Hisham b. Salim and said: "You want to use traditional knowledge but you don't know it" Then he turned to al-Ahwal and said: "You are a man who uses qiyas and is evasive, a man who refutes falsehood with falsehood, even though your false argument is stronger." Then he turned to Qays b. Masir and said: "When you debate, the nearer you are to truth and traditions (khabar) on the authority of the Prophet, the further you are from it: you mix up the truth with what is false. A little truth suffices for much which is false. You and al-Ahwal are skilful (verbal) gymnasts." Abu Abd Allah approached Humran and said: "Humran, conduct theology on the basis of traditional knowledge (athar) and you will be correct.

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[Yunus b. Ya'qub remarked:] By God, I thought he would say to Hisham something close to what he had said to them.

Then he said: "Hisham, you are hardly likely to fall, for you tuck in your legs (like a bird): when you are about to fall to the earth, you fly. Therefore a person like you should debate with the people. Guard against slipping and intercession will be behind you."

This report, together with what it contains of rational proof and evidence for the Imamate, also includes the content of the two previous reports' evidence of the miraculous ability of Abu Abd Allah, peace be on him. It agrees with them in the (full) significance of proof. [Abu al-Qasim Jafar b. Muhammad al-Qummi informed me on the authority of Muhammad b. Yaqub al-Kulayni, on the authority of Ali b. Ibrahim b. Hashim, on the authority of his father on the authority of 'Abbas Amr al-Faqimi:]

Ibn Abi al-Awja', Ibn Talut, Ibn al-Ama and Ibn al-Muqaffa with a group of Zindiqs were gathered in the Sacred Mosque during the season of the pilgrimage. Abu Abd Allah Jacfar b. Muhammad, peace be on them, was there giving legal decisions to the people, explaining the Qur'an to them and answering their questions with arguments and proofs. The group said to Ibn Ab, al-Awja': "Can you induce this man sitting here to make a mistake and question him about what would disgrace him in front of those who are gathered around him? For you can see the fascination of the people for him; he is (supposed to be) the great scholar of his time." "Yes," replied Ibn Abi al-Awja'. He went forward and the people moved aside. He said: "Abu Abd Allah, gatherings for discussion are things to be taken care of. Everyone who has a cough must cough, so will you permit me to ask a question?" "Ask, if you want to," Abu Abd Allah, peace be on him, answered him.

The Ibn Abi al-Awja' asked him: "For how long will you tread on this threshing-floor and go round this stone? For how long will you worship this house made of bricks and mud and amble around it like a camel when it is scared? Whoever thinks about this and considers it, realises that it is the action of an unintelligent and unthinking man, so explain (it) as you are the principal exponent (lit. head and hump) of this affair, and your father was its founder and suppport."

"Those whom God leads astray and whose hearts He blinds find the truth unwholesome and will never taste its sweetness," retorted al-Sadiq, peace be on him. "The devil is the friend and lord of such a man. He will lead him to the watering places of destruction and never let him come from them. This is a house where God's creatures seek to worship Him in order that their obedience in coming to it may be well known. Therefore He has urged them to magnify it and to visit it and He has made it the place of His prophets and the direcw prayer for those who pray to Him. It is a part of Paradise and a path which leads to His forgiveness.

It is set up at the seat of perfection and at the meeting point of majesty and glory. God created it over two thousand years before the earth was laid out. The most worthy to be obeyed in what He orders and to have His prohibitions refrained from is God the Creator of souls and forms." "You have only spoken and referred (me) to someone who is not present, Abu Abd Allah," retorted Ibn Abi al-Awja". "Shame on you," retorted al-Sadiq, peace be on him. "How could One Who is present with His creatures and closer to them than a vein in the neck, Who hears their words and knows their secrets, be someone who is not present." "Is He in every place or isn't He?" asked Ibn Abl al-CAwja'. "If He is in Heaven, how can He be on earth? And if He is on earth, how can He be in Heaven?"

"You described something which is created," retorted Abu Abd Allah, peace be on him, "which

when it moves from one place, and when another place is occupied by it, and when (the former) place is without it, then, in the place which it has come to, it does not know what happens in the place in which it was. As for God, the Mighty, the Dignified, the Ruler, the Judge,) there is no place without Him and no place occupied by Him. He is not nearer to one place than He is to another. In that way the traces of Himself (which He gives) bear witness to Him and His actions give evidence for Him. He whom He has sent with precise signs and clear proofs, Muhammad, may God bless him and his family, has brought us this (form of) worship. If you have any doubts about any of His commandments, ask about it and I will explain it to you."

Ibn Abi al-Awja' became stupified and did not know what to say. He left his presence and said to his companions: "I asked you to find me some wine (to enjoy myself with) and you threw me on to a burning coal."

"Shut up," they told him. "You have disgraced us by your bewilderment. We saw no one today more humiliated than you in his discussion." "Are you saying this to me?" he replied. "He is (only) the son of a man who shaved the heads of those whom you see." He indicated with his hand towards the people gathered for the pilgrimage.

[It is reported:]

One day Abu Shakir al-Daysam stood in a discussion group of Abu Abd Allah, peace be on him, and said: "You are one of the shining stars, your fathers were wonderful full moons and your mothers were graceful discreet women. Your lineage is the most noble of lineages. When learned men are mentioned, it is for you that the little finger is bent (i.e. he is the first to be counted). So tell me, O bountiful sea, what is the evidence for the creation of the world?"

"The easiest evidence for that is what I will show you (now)," answered Abu- Abd Allah, peace be on him. Then he called for an egg and put it in the palm of his hand. "This is a compact protective container; inside it is the thin (substance of an) egg which is surrounded by what could be compared with fluid silver and melted gold. Do you doubt that?"

"There can be no doubt about that," replied Abu Shakir. "Then it splits open showing a form like (for example) a peacock," continued Abu 'Abd Allah, peace be on him. "Has anything entered into it other than what you knew (to be there already)?" "No," he replied.

"This is the evidence for the creation of the world." "You have explained, Abu Abd Allah," he said, "and you have made it clear. You have spoken and brought improvement. You have described it and spoken concisely. You knew that we would not accept anything which we could not realise with our eyes, or hear with our ears, or taste with our mouths, or smell with our noses, or touch with our skin."

"You have mentioned the five senses," said Abu Abd Allah, peace be on him, "but they will not

bring any benefit in rational deduction except as evidence, just as darkness cannot be removed without light."

He, peace be on him, means by that that the senses without reason will never lead to the understanding of things which are not present, and that what he had shown with regard to the creation of the form was a concept whose recognition (ilm) was based on sense- perception.

(The following is an example) of what has been recorded on his authority, peace be on him, concerning the necessity of knowing God the Most High and His religion: He said: "I have found the knowledge of all the people (encompassed) by four t*:

1. You should know your Lord;
2. You should know what He has done for you;
3. You should know what He wants from you;
4. You should know what would make you abandon your religion.

These four divisions include (all) the requirement of things which should be known because the first thing that a man should do is to know his Lord, may His Majesty be exalted. When he knows that he has a Lord, it is necessary that he must know what He has done for him. When he knows what He has done for him, he knows of His blessings. When he knows of His blessings,it is necessary that he should thank Him. When he wants to carry out his thanks, he must know what He wants so that he may obey Him in his actions. Since obedience to Him is necessary, it will be necessary for him to know what would cause him to abandon his religion so that he might avoid it, and in that way keep pure his obedience to his Lord and his thanks for His blessings.

(This is an example) of what was recorded on his authority peace be on him, concerning the unity of God and the denial of anthropomorphism. He said to Hisham b. al-Hakam: "God, the Exalted, should not be compared to anything, nor should anything be compared to Him. Whatever comes to the imagination is other than God."

(The following is an example) of what was recorded on his authority, peace be on him, concerning his words on justice: He said to Zurara b. Ayan: "Zurara, shall I give you a summary of (the doctrine of) decree (qada) and destiny (qadar)?" "Yes, may I be your ransom," replied Zurara.

"When it is the Day of Resurrection and God has gathered His creatures together, He will ask them about what He enjoined upon them but He will not ask them about what He had decreed for them."

(This is an example) of what was recorded on his authority concerning wisdom and exhortation. He said: "Not everyone who intends something is able to do it. Not everyone who

is able to do something will be granted success in it. Not everyone who is granted success in something will do it in the right place. When intention, ability, success and correctness come together, there happiness is perfected."

(This is an example) of what has been recorded of him, peace be upon him, urging consideration of God's religion and the acquisition of knowledge about the friends (awliya) of God.

He said: "Give close consideration to things which you cannot afford to ignore, be true to yourselves and fight against your (inclinations) so that you may find out those things which it is inexcusable not to know. These are the basic elements of God's religion. If a man ignores them, he will gain no benefit (no matter) how intense is his striving in pursuit of the outward form of worship. On the other hand, no harm will come to a man who knows them and abides by them with moderation (in his behaviour). There is no way for anyone except through the help of God, the Mighty and High." (The following is an example) of what has been recorded on his authority, peace be on him, urging repentance:

He said: "To delay repentance is to be heedless; to lengthen the time of putting off (religious duties) is (to create) confusion (in one's mind); to attempt to justify oneself before God is (to bring about one's own) destruction; persisting in sin makes (a person) feel secure from God's devising. Only people who are lost feel secure from God's devising. [VII 99]"

The reports about what has been recorded on his authority, peace be on him, concerning knowledge, wisdom, asceticism, exhortation and all the branches of learning are too numerous to be enumerated in one speech or to be included in one book. What we have set out is enough for the purpose of what we intended. God is the bringer of success for what is right.

(The poet) al-Sayyid Ismail b. Muhammad al-Himyari, may God have mercy on him, withdrew from the doctrine of the Kaysaniyya which he had professed, when he was informed of Abu CAbd Allah's peace be on him, denial of this doctrine and of his prayers for him and he (returned) to the system of the Imamate. He said of him, peace be on him:

O (you) who ride a tall, strong camel to Medina, on which (you) cross every broad land, If God guides you, you will look to Jaefar. So speak to the friend (wali) of God, the son of the man who was well-educated (in the learning of God): Friend of God and son of the friend of God, I repent before the Merciful and then I return To you from the wrong which I used to hold while I was constantly striving against all who obviously expressed (the truth).

Yet my words concerning the son of Khawla were not meant to be rebellious against the offspring of the celebrated one.

Rather they were spoken on the authority of the trustee (wasi) of Muhammad - and he was not

a liar when wsaid That the master of the affair (wali al-amr) would disappear without being seen for years like a man afraid.

The possessions of the missing man will be distributed as if his concealment were in the high heaven.

Say, "No," and the truth is what you say, and what you say is final without me adding any fanaticism. I testify to my Lord that your words are a proof (hujja) to all creatures, whether obedient or sinful,

That the master of the affair (wali al-amr) and the one who will arise (al-qa'im) whom my soul (now) looks towards and who excites it to joy, That He will have concealment (Ghayba) where it is inevitable that he will conceal himself. May God bless him as one who will be concealed. He will delay for a time then his authority will come to dominate and he will fill all (the lands) from East to West with Justice.

In this poetry there is clear evidence for the withdrawal of al-Sayyid, may God have mercy on him, from the beliefs of the Kaysaniyya, and for his holding the doctrine of the Imamate of al-Sadiq, peace be on him. (There is also evidence) for the existence of a clear call on the part of the Shia during the time of Abu 'Abd Allah to (accept) his Imamate and to hold the doctrine of the concealment of the leader (for the rest) of time (saihib al-zaman), the blessings and peace of God be on him. This (poem) is a clear indication of (al-Sayyid's belief) and it is a clear statement of (the doctrine of) the Twelver-Imamites (Imamiyya Ithna Ashariyya).