Sayyid Abd Al-Azim Al-Hasani

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Dedication

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.

Introduction

Shaykh Ja'far Al-Subhani published this essay in Arabic in the fourth volume of a series of four volumes. The four volumes are titled "Letters And Essays: Researches On The Subjects Of Philosophy, Theology, Law, Jurisprudence and Society". The edition consulted for this translation was the first edition, obtained by the translator whilst studying in the erstwhile precincts of the mausoleum of the Lady Zainab ('a) In the city of Damascus in 2008 A.D.. This paper was presented at a conference organised in honour and in memory of Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani, in the town of Ray, in the month of Rabi' al-Thani 1424 AH/2003 AD.

I used to visit the grave of our master 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani occasionally and whenever good fortune permitted me, for he was one of the descendants of the eldest grandson of the Prophet Muhammad (s), al-Hasan bin 'Ali ('a). He was a scion of that lofty and blessed tree (of Prophethood), whose branches are spread out in Iran , ' Iraq , 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 Sahib bin 'Abbad[1] 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 Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani was one of the defenders of the true beliefs by his speech and conduct' in matters of the (مرجـــع) 'sources of reference and he was one of the faith. This is evidenced by the directive of the tenth Imam to his Shi'ites to turn to him (i.e. Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani) in respect of religious matters, which appeared ambiguous and complex to them. The text of that directive will be presented soon.

His Lineage

The Imami scholar and biographer Shaykh al-Najashi (d 450 AH/1058 AD) has recorded his lineage at the beginning of his biography as: 'Abd al-'Azim bin 'Abdullah bin 'Ali bin al-Hasan bin Zayd bin al-Hasan bin 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) and this is his correct lineage. However, he then writes at the end of the biography: 'He (i.e. 'Abd al-'Azim) 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 Abu al-Qasim 'Abd al-'Azim bin 'Abdillah bin 'Ali bin al-Hasan bin Zayd bin 'Ali[2] bin al-Hasan bin 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a)." But the first rendering of his lineage is correct for Imam al-Hasan's progeny continued through the agency of two sons,[3] who were:

1) Zayd bin al-Hasan, and

2) Al-Hasan al-Muthanna '.[4]

Thus it is apparent that Imam al-Hasan ('a) did not have a son by the name of 'Ali through whom he may have had grandchildren (as the second version of Sayyid 'Abd al- 'Azim's lineage above implies). Therefore on the basis of the above, Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim was separated from Imam al-Hasan ('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 Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim,

ليس ما بيني و بين المجتبى غيرعينين وحاء ثم زاي

(ع) There is not between myself and al-Mujtaba ' (i.e. Imam al-Hasan ('a)) Save two 'ayns[5] and a Ha ' (حاء),[6] and then a zay (ز).[7]

Did he meet Imam Reza ('a)?

The Imami jurist, traditionist and biographer Shaykh al-Tusi (d 460 AH/1067 AD) has considered him in his biographical work (Rijal) to be from the companions of the Imams al-Hadi and al-'Askari ('a), whilst Sayyid al-Tafrishi, Mirza ' al-Astarabadi and al-Quhpa 'i have considered him among the companions of Imam al-Jawad ('a).

There is no doubt that he was from the companions of the Imams al-Jawad and al-Hadi ('a), on the basis of the many traditions which he transmits from them, but as for his being from the companions of Imam al-'Askari ('a) during the period of his Imamate, that is a matter that needs careful scrutiny. This is because Imam al-Hadi died in 254 AH/867 AD and Imam al-'Askari undertook the responsibilities of the Imamate after the death of his father in that year in the month of Rajab, whilst Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim died in the year 252 AH/866 AD. Thus he did

know the person of the Imam al-'Askari during the Imamate of his father but due to the fact that he died well before the tenth Imam, would negate the possibility of him being from the companions of the eleventh Imam.

The question now is: Did he meet Imam al-Ridha' ('a) or not? Now it may be inferred that he did so, on the basis of the tradition, which he transmits from Hisham bin al-Hakam[8] who died in 199 AH/814 AD (and it is said, perhaps even earlier).

This tradition is as follows: Al-Kulayni reports from Ahmad, who reports from 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani, from Hisham bin al-Hakam, from Abu 'Abdillah al-Sadiq ('a) who said:

هذا صراط علي مستقيم

'This is the path of 'Ali, which is straight.'[9]'

Therefore if Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani'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 Imam al-Ridha' ('a) died in 203 AH/818 AD, which may suggest that he did meet the eighth Imam. 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 Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani narrates a lot from those who died in the second and third decades of the third century hijri, while Hisham died before 200 hijri (815 AD) and so this indicates a missing link between the Sayyid and Hisham. Add to the above, the fact that the Sayyid narrates a lot from Imam al-Ridha' ('a) via intermediaries.[10] All of this would combine to suggest that he did not meet the eighth Imam after all.

Perhaps it may be inferred that he met Imam al-Ridha' ('a) on the basis of a tradition which Shaykh al-Mufid (d 413 AH/1022 AD) records in his Kitab al-Ikhtisas where he writes: 'it is narrated from Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani, from Abu al-Hasan al-Ridha' ('a) that he said: "O 'Abd al-'Azim, 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 Allah to punish him in this world with a severe punishment and he will be from the losers in the hereafter.

And inform them that Allah has forgiven and pardoned the evil deeds of the good-doers from among them except one who associates another with Allah or hurts a friend from my friends or

harbours ill-will towards him, for Allah 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 Allah from that!"[11]

But there seems to have occurred a mistake in the chain of this tradition, for the Imam identified by the epithet 'Abu al-Hasan' is Abu al-Hasan the third (i.e. the tenth Imam al-Hadi) rather than Abu al-Hasan the second (i.e. the eighth Imam al-Ridha') while al-Mufid erroneously wrote 'al-Ridha'' in place of 'al-Hadi' ('a).[12] The evidence for this claim is that Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim would have been a young teenager throughout the life of al-Ridha' ('a) and it would have hardly been fitting for him to have been the carrier of the Imam'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 Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani tells us firstly of his close associations with the two Imams Muhammad bin 'Ali al-Jawad and 'Ali al-Hadi ('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 thirty-three and the following are their names along with the sources where the recorded traditions transmitted by Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani on their authority occur.

1) 'Ali bin Asbat (al-Kafi volume: 1, pg 118).

2) 'Ali bin Ja'far (Masa 'il 'Ali bin Ja'far, pg 343).

3) Al-Husayn bin Miyah (al-Kafi volume: 1. pg 424).

4) Bakkar (al-Kafi volume: 1, pg 424).

5) Ibn Udhayna (al-Kafi volume: 1, pg 424).

6) Muhammad bin al-Fudhayl (al-Kafi volume: 1, pg 423).

7) Ibrahim bin Abi Mahmud ('Uyun akhbar al-Ridha' volume: 2, pg 113).

8) Yahya bin Salim (al-Kafi volume: 1, pg 423).

9) Musa bin Muhammad (al-Kafi volume: 1, pg 220).

10) Muhammad bin Abi 'Umayr (al-Kafi volume: 1, pg 218).

11) Musa bin Muhammad al-'Ijli (al-Kafi volume: 1, pg 207).

12) Hisham bin al-Hakam (al-Kafi volume: 1, pg 424). His mention has been made previously.

13) His father, 'Abdullah bin 'Ali (al-'Amali of Shaykh Tusi, pg 652).

14) Al-Hasan bin Mahbub (Ma'ani al-akhbar, pg 339).
15) His grandfather, 'Ali bin al-Hasan (Kamal al-Din, pg 312, chapter 28, hadith number 3).
16) Malik bin 'Amir (al-Kafı volume: 1, pg 377).
17) Mahmud bin Abi al-Bilad ('Uyun akhbar al-Ridha' volume: 1, pg 27).
18) Al-Hasan bin al-Husayn ('Ilal al-Shara'i volume: 2, pg 599).
19) Sulayman bin Ja'far al-Ja'fari (al-'Amali of Shaykh al-Saduq, pg 85).
20) Muhammad bin 'Amr bin Yazid ('Ilal al-Shara'i volume: 2, pg 598).
21) Harb ('Ilal al-Shara'i volume: 2, pg 599).
22) Sulayman bin Sha'ban ('Ilal al-Shara'i volume: 2, pg 598).
23) Al-Hasan bin al-Husayn al-'Irni (al-Kafı volume: 2, pg 369, Kamil al-Ziyarat, pg 163 where his name occurs as al-'Umariy, which seems to be an apparent case of corruption).
24) Al-Husayn bin 'Ali (al-Kafı volume: 3, pg 563).
25) Ibrahim bin Hashim ('Uyun akhbar al-Ridha' volume: 1, pg 286).
26) Al-Hasan bin al-Hakam al-Nakha'i (Kamil al-Ziyarat, pg 256).
27) Al-Hasan bin 'Abdallah bin Yunus bin Dhibyan ('Ilal al-Shara'i volume: 1, pg 178).
28) Sulayman bin Hafs al-Marwazi ('Uyun akhbar al-Ridha' volume: 2, pg 22).
29) Safwan bin Yahya (Kamal al-Din wa Tamam al-Ni'ma, pg 319).
30) Muhammad bin 'Ali bin Muhammad bin Kathir (al-TaHsin of Ibn O~awus, pg 576).
31) 'Abd al-Salam bin Salih al-Harawi ('Uyun akhbar al-Ridha' volume: 1, pg 188).
32) Ishaq al-Nasih, the client of Ja'far (Bihar al-Anwar volume: 57, pg 214).
33) Ahmad bin 'Isa al-'Alawi (Bihar al-Anwar 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-Barqi, Ibrahim bin Hisham, Sahl bin Ziyad al-Adami 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 Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim's authority occur.

1) Sahl bin Ziyad al-Adami who died in 255 AH/869 AD (al-Faqih volume: 3, hadith number 343).
2) Ahmad bin Mihran (al-Kafı volume: 1, pg 118).
3) Ahmad bin Abi 'Abdillah al-Barqi, the compiler of al-Mahasin, who died in 274 AH/887 AD (Masa 'il 'Ali bin Ja'far, pg 343).

4) ‘Abdullah bin Musa al-Ruyani, Abu Turab (al-’Amali of Shaykh Tusi, pg 589).

5) Ibrahim bin ‘Ali (Ma’ani al-akhbar, pg 339).

6) Muhammad bin Faydh al-’Ijli, Abu Salih (al-’Amali of Shaykh al- Tusi, pg 136).

7) Al-Husayn bin Ibrahim al-’Alawi al-Nasibi (Misbahul Mutahajjid, volume: 2 and al-’Amali of Shaykh Tusi, pg 602).

8) Sahl bin Sa’d (Fadha ‘il al-Ash-hur al-Thalatha of Shaykh al-Saduq, pg 63).

9) Al-Nawfali (al-Kafı volume: 2, pg 661).

10) Sahl bin Jamhur (al-Kafı volume: 3, pg 669).

11) Ahmad bin al-Hasan (al-Ikhtisas, pg 96).

12) ‘Abdullah bin Muhammad al-’Ijli (al-’Amali of Shaykh al-Saduq, pg 388).

13) Bakr bin Salih al-Dhabbi (Mukhtasar Basa ‘ir al-Darajat, pg 94).

14) Hamza bin Qasim al-’Alawi (al-’Amali of Shaykh al-Mufıd, pg 319).

15) Muhammad al-’Alawi al-’Aridhi (Bihar al-Anwar, volume: 75, pg 453).

.(16) ‘Abdullah bin al-Husayn al-’Alawi (Bihar al-Anwar, 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-Sakkuni reports from Abu ‘Abdillah al-Sadiq (‘a) who said: ‘Amir al-Mu ‘minin (‘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 favour, and if it was false, then it will be (counted) against him”.[13]

The term ‘musnad’ is also in contrast to the term ‘musannaf’. 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 ‘Abbass’ is an expression meaning; a compilation of traditions on different topics and subjects, all the chains of which are connected to him and terminate at him.

Fu ‘ad 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 Usul works[14] were all in the style of the ‘musnad’.

Thus the 'Musnad of Zurara' is an expression denoting a hadith compilation of all that Zurara reported in different fields, and the Shi'ites began to compile traditions in this style beginning in the era of Imam al-Baqir ('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 imamate). However, unfortunately time took its toll on the 'musnad' literature of the Shi'ites, especially after the first and second phases of the 'Jami'' compilations[15] 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 Isma'il al-Kazari (d 1136 AH/1723 AD) has transmitted sixty traditions on his authority in his book 'Jannat al-Na'im', while Shaykh Muhammad Baqir al-Kajuri (d 1313 AH/1895 AD) has transmitted seventy-five traditions on his authority in his book 'Rawhun wa Rayhan'. Muhammad bin Ibrahim al-Kalbasiy (d 1262 AH/1842 AD) has narrated forty traditions on his authority in his book 'Al-Tadhkira al-'Azima' and al-Muhaqqiq al-Shaykh 'Azizullah al-'Ataradi has transmitted seventy eight traditions from him in his book 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani, Hayatuhu wa Musnaduhu'.

Recently, a work by the title of 'Musnad HaA~rat 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani (as)' was published. This work was prepared by Shaykh al-'Ataradi and 'Ali Ridha' al-Hazari 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 Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani in the suburb of Ray of the city of Tehran in 2003 AD. 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 Sayyid, who met two Imams, 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 Muhammad bin Abi 'Umayr,[16]

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-Najashi 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.'[17]

2) That Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani 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.

Thus we have al-Najashi relating the following from Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani's student Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Khalid al-Barqi[18] who said: 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani 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 Muwali'.[19] 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 Imam Musa 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 Muwali' and buried near an apple tree in the garden of (a certain) 'Abd al-Jabbar bin 'Abd al-Wahhab, 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 Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani and the Shi'ites began to bury their dead there too. Later, Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani 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 Abu al-Qasim 'Abd al-Azim bin 'Abdillah bin 'Ali bin al-Hasan bin Zayd (bin 'Ali) bin al-Hasan bin 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a)."[20]

.Some biographers then mention his books after this narration

His Scholarly Heritage

The biographers of Sayyid ‘Abd al-’Azim mention two books, which are attributed to him. 1) Khutab Amir al-Mu ‘minin (‘a). Al-Najashi mentions this work in his biographical entry for Sayyid ‘Abd al-’Azim, number 651. 2) Al-Yawm wa al-Layla. Sahib bin ‘Abbad has mentioned this work in a special treatise in which he documents Sayyid ‘Abd al-’Azim’s biography. Excerpts from this treatise are presented below. The author[21] of al-Dhari’ah attributes this book to him citing from the Rijal of al-Najashi. However we[22] did not find this attribution there!

His Position near the Imams of the Ahlul Bayt (‘a)

His station near the Imams of the Ahlul Bayt (‘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-Saduq (d 381 AH/991 AD) reports from Sayyid ‘Abd al-’Azim that he said: ‘I visited my master ‘Ali[23] bin Muhammad bin ‘Ali bin Musa bin Ja’far bin Muhammad bin ‘Ali bin Husayn bin ‘Ali bin Abi Talib (‘a). When he caught sight of me, he exclaimed: “Welcome O Abu al-Qasim, 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 Imam said: “Then present them O Abu al-Qasim”.

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 Muhammad 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 Imam, the Caliph and the Guardian of the affair (of guidance) after him was Amir al-Mu ‘minin ‘Ali bin Abi Talib, and then al-Hasan, then al-Husayn, then ‘Ali bin al-Husayn, then Muhammad bin ‘Ali, then Ja’far bin Muhammad, then Musa bin Ja’far, then ‘Ali bin Musa, then Muhammad bin ‘Ali and thereafter, you my master”.

So the Imam said: “And after me will be my son al-Hasan. 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 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-Wilaya (i.e. love and adherence to the Ahlul Bayt) are: Prayers, the zakat levy, fasting, pilgrimage to Mecca , striving (in the path of Allah), commanding good and discouraging evil."

On hearing this, 'Ali bin Muhammad ('a) said: "O Abu al-Qasim, 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."[24]

Ibn Qawlawayhi narrates from 'Ali bin al-Husayn bin Musa bin Babwayhi, who narrates from Muhammad bin Yahya al-Attar, who narrates from some of the natives of Ray, (one of whom said): 'I visited Abu al-Hasan al-'Askari[25] ('a). He asked me: "Where were you?" I replied: "I was visiting the grave of al-Husayn bin 'Ali ('a)." He said: "However, if you had visited the grave of 'Abd al-'Azim which is situated near you, then your status would have been similar to the one who visited al-Husayn ('a)."[26]

Perhaps (the authenticity of) this tradition may be disputed because of the unknown identity of the narrator transmitting the report from the Imam. But a response in its defence may be made by maintaining that Muhammad bin Yahya al-Attar 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 Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim be of equal stature to the pilgrimage to al-Husayn bin 'Ali ('a)? A possible response to this may be that the Imam 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 Ahlul Bayt (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 Imam may have advised the Shi’ites to content themselves by visiting the grave of Sayyid ‘Abd al-’Azim 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-Husayn (‘a) or an exaggeration in the status of Sayyid ‘Abd al- ‘Azim.

Further, it is clear from what Sahib bin ‘Abbad narrates, that Sayyid ‘Abd al-’Azim 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 Abu Turab al-Ruyani says: ‘I visited ‘Ali bin Muhammad (‘a) in Samarra ‘ 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 Hammad, if something regarding religion confuses or confounds you then refer it to ‘Abd al-’Azim, and convey to him my regards.”[27]

This report expresses his position as a person who possessed the capability of ijtihad similar to Zurara bin A’yan[28], Muhammad bin Muslim[29], Yunus bin ‘Abd al-Rahman[30] and Zakariyya bin Adam[31] whom Imam al-Ridha’ (‘a) praised in response to one who asked him (something) by saying: ‘Refer to Zakariyya bin Adam, (who is) trustworthy in worldly and [religious affairs.’[32

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, Muhammad bin ‘Ali bin Babwayhi al-Saduq compiled a special book containing reports of Sayyid ‘Abd al-’Azim. He mentions this in his list of books where he registers that he has a comprehensive book of reports of Sayyid ‘Abd al-’Azim bin ‘Abdullah al-Hasani.[33]

Perhaps this book discussed his life and various events pertaining to it, however it is unfortunate that this book has not reached us. Indeed, Sahib bin ‘Abbad has written a biographical treatise about our master Sayyid ‘Abd al-’Azim. This treatise was discovered by al-Muhaddith al-Nuri (d 1320 AH/ 1902 AD) who has quoted it in its entirety in the index of his work (Mustadrak Wasa ‘il al-Shi’ite), in the context of the biography of Sayyid ‘Abd al-’Azim.

There he writes as follows: ‘As for ‘Abd al-’Azim, 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 Sahib bin ‘Abbad. This treatise has come down to us in the writing of one of the members of the family of Babwayhi.

The date of the treatise is 516 hijri (1122 AD) and it says: Sahib bin ‘Abbad said: “I was asked about the genealogy of ‘Abd al-’Azim al-Hasani 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 Abu al-Qasim, ‘Abd al-Azim bin ‘Abdillah bin ‘Ali bin al-Hasan bin Zayd bin al-Hasan bin ‘Ali bin Abi Talib (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 Abu Ja’far Muhammad bin ‘Ali bin Musa[34] and from his son Abu al-Hasan,[35] 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 Musa bin Ja’far[36] and ‘Ali bin Musa[37] (‘a). He had a book by the title “Kitab Yawm wa al-Layla.”

As for those who narrated from him are such as; Ahmad bin Abi Abdillah al-Barqi and Abu Turab al-Ruyani. 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 Muwali’. 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 Imam Musa 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 Muwali’ and be buried near an apple tree in the garden of (a certain) ‘Abd al-Jabbar bin ‘Abd al-Wahhab”. 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 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-Azim 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 Musa al-Ruyani narrates from Sayyid ‘Abd al-’Azim from Ibrahim bin Abi Mahmud who said: ‘I asked al-Ridha’ (‘a), “What is your opinion about the tradition which people narrate that:

إن الله ينزل إلى السماء الدنيا

Allah descends to the lower heaven?”[38]‘

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

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

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 Imam corrected and explained this prophetic tradition.[39] And it is narrated through the same chain that Imam al-Ridha’ (‘a) said regarding the (Qur ‘anic) verse:

وجوه يومئذ ناضرة ، الى ربها ناظرة

On that day (i.e. the Day of Judgement) faces will be radiant, looking towards their Lord.[40] (The Imam said: (It means

مشرقة ، منتظرة ثواب ربها عز و جل

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-Husayn al-Baghdadi narrates from Ahmad bin Abi ‘Abdillah al-Barqi from ‘Abd al-Azim al-Hasani from ‘Ali bin Muhammad al-Naqi (‘a) from his father Muhammad bin ‘Ali al-Hadi (‘a), from his father ‘Ali bin Musa al-Ridha’ (‘a), who said: ‘One day as Abu Hanifa (d 150 AH/767 AD) was leaving from a meeting with Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) (d 148 AH/765 AD), he met Musa bin Ja’far (‘a) and asked him: “O young man, who is responsible for evil acts?”

He (Musa) 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.”[41]

‘Abdullah bin Musa narrates from ‘Abd al-Azim al-Hasani, from Ibrahim bin Abi Mahmud who said that Imam al-Ridha’ (‘a) said: ‘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 Muhammad and his progeny, and may the blessings of Allah be upon our Master and His (i.e. [Allah’s) Prophet, Muhammad and his progeny all together.’[42

What is Narrated from him Regarding The Great Sins

Sayyid ‘Abd al-Azim al-Hasani narrates from the ninth Imam Abu Ja’far (‘a), who narrates from his father al-Ridha’ (‘a) that he said: ‘I heard my father Musa bin Ja’far (‘a) say that: ‘Amr bin ‘Ubayd al-Basri[43] visited Abu ‘Abdillah al-Sadiq (‘a). After he had greeted him, he sat down and recited the following verse of the Qur’an “And those who shun the great sins and indecencies…”[44] He then remained silent. So Abu ‘Abdillah al-Sadiq (‘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-Sadiq (‘a) replied ‘yes indeed’.

The Imam 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…”[45] 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.”[46] 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.”[47]

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”.[48]

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'an: "And He has made me dutiful to my mother, and He has not made me insolent, unblessed."[49]

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…"[50] 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.'[51]

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.'[52] 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.'[53]

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.'[54] 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.'[55]

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.'[56] 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 will remain in torment, disgraced, except those who repent, believe, and do good deeds ...'[57]

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.'[58] 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.'[59]

Then is the sin of prohibiting the payment of the obligatory zakat. 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!"[60]

Thereafter is the crime of false testimony[61] 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.'[62]

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.'[63]

(Here it seems the meeting came to an end for it is reported that): The Imam (Musa 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)[64] in (divine) favours and knowledge".[65

The Harsh Circumstances of his Time

Ma 'mun ascended the throne after having defeated and killed his brother Amin. The prevailing atmosphere in the royal court during his reign was that of relative freedom for the Shi'ites and the Mu 'tazilites,[66] who were those who championed the ideas of divine transcendent monotheism and divine justice (اهل التوحيد والعدل).

When Ma 'mun died in the year 218 AH/833 AD, al-Mu 'tasim 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 Wathiq 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 (اهـل العـدل) shone luminously and polemical gatherings between adherents of different faiths and sects took place.

However, when Wathiq 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 Hashawiyya.[67] He encouraged the dissemination of ideas favouring divine anthropomorphism and the doctrine of

the physical manifestation of God as well as hatred and enmity towards the Ahlul Bayt 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 Baghdad.

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

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) father[68] came forward with a similar treatment; this, by my life, is his (Husayn's) grave desecrated, (It seems) as if they (i.e. the 'Abbasids) were sorry that they had not been able to participate in his (Husayn'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 Ahlul Bayt. He had charged Ya'qub bin al-Sikkit,[69] 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-Sikkit: 'who is more beloved to you, my (two) sons or al-Hasan and al-Husayn?' Ibn al-Sikkit replied: 'Qambar, the client of 'Ali is better than them both!' Outraged he ordered Ibn al-Sikkit's tongue to be pulled out!

Historical records do not identify the year in which Sayyid 'Abd al-Azim al-Hasani migrated to Ray and sought refuge there, nor do they inform us of the year in which he migrated from the Hijaz or ' Iraq to Ray. However, some have imagined that he may have migrated to Fars with the purpose of visiting Imam 'Ali bin Musa al-Ridha' ('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 Imam al-Ridha' arrived in Tus in the year 199 AH/814 AD due to the persistence of Ma 'mun [and passed away in 203 AH/818 AD], thus to suppose that Sayyid 'Abd al-Azim stayed in Fars 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 Sayyid 'Abd al-Azim fled the Hijaz or ' Iraq during the reign of Mutawakkil when the circumstances had changed and become particularly difficult for the Ahlul Bayt.

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

1) Spreading hatred, rancour and enmity of the Ahlul Bayt and the destruction of the grave of Imam al-Husayn [and related infrastructure] as well as stopping pilgrims from visiting his

grave.

2) Spreading the idea of divine anthropomorphism and exploiting the traditionsits 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, Sayyid 'Abd al-Azim 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 Jahmiyya[70] and to narrate to them traditions which supported the idea of the physical manifestation of God. Among these jurists and traditionists were Mus'ab Zubayri, Ishaq bin Abi Isra 'il, Ibrahim bin 'Abdullah al-Harawi, 'Abdullah and 'Uthman the two sons of Muhammad bin Abi Shayba.

He would distribute rewards and positions among them and bestow them with luxuries and gifts. Thus 'Uthman bin Muhammad bin Abi Shayba would sit in Baghdad , a pulpit would be placed for him and thirty thousand people would gather around to listen to him. And Abu Bakr bin Abi Shayba would sit in the mosque of Rasafa and he used to be even more extreme than his brother 'Uthman. Thirty thousand men would gather to listen to him.[71]

Thus it becomes clear now why Sayyid 'Abd al-Azim 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."[72]

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 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-Subhani

Qum – Mu 'assasatu al-Imam al-Sadiq (as).

3rd Rabi' al-Thani 1424 AH/2003 AD.

References

1. Translator's note: His name was Abu al-Qasim Isma'il bin 'Abbad bin al-'Abbas bin 'Abbad bin Ahmad bin Idris. A man of letters of the Buyid period, he was also known with the honorific title of Kafi al-Kufat. 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 Isfahan and its dependencies. Sahib bin 'Abbad had written many official correspondences (al-Rasa '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-Dwala, 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. Sahib bin 'Abbad 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,.

Sahib bin 'Abbad 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 Katib 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 Baghdad 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 Faris, at Ray.

Thus these favourable circumstances allowed him to acquire an extensive knowledge in all fields of Arabic culture such as exegesis, hadith, 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 Babwayhi claim him to be theirs and the Mu'tazili Qadi 'Abd al-Jabbar even accused him of being a Rafidhi, while others mention him to belong to the Zaydis, the Hanafis, the Shafi'is and even to the Hashwiyya, but he is supposed to have considered himself to be a Mu 'tazili. However, like many Mu 'tazilites of the Baghdad School, his position regarding the Imamate was in favour of Imam 'Ali ('a) and in later life he also came to believe that the Caliphate was conferred by virtue of nass, 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 Sahib bin 'Abbad in the Encyclopaedia of Islam, second edition, volume 3, pg 671.

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

3. Translator's note: Shaykh al-Mufid writes in his book Kitab al-Irshad that Imam al-Hasan ('a) had eight sons, namely; Zayd bin al-Hasan, al-Hasan bin al-Hasan, 'Umar bin al-Hasan and his two brothers Qasim and 'Abdullah, 'Abd al-Rahman bin al-Hasan, al-Husayn bin al-Hasan known as al-athram (meaning: 'the one with the broken tooth') and his brother Talha bin al-Hasan.

Nothing is known about the last two sons of Imam al-Hasan save that they were noble men. 'Abd al-Rahman bin al-Hasan died at al-Abwa ' whilst a pilgrim, during the life time of his uncle al-Husayn with whom he had gone on pilgrimage. 'Umar bin al-Hasan and his two brothers Qasim and 'Abdullah were martyred in Karbala ' with their uncle al-Husayn ('a). Zayd bin al-Hasan who was the eldest of Imam al-Hasan ('a)'s children was in charge of the Prophet's sadaqat 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 Imamate after his father. Shaykh al-Mufid has recorded a number of poems eulogising him in al-Irshad. Al-Hasan bin al- Hasan was a noble and pious man and in charge of the sadaqat of Amir al-Mu 'minin. He was present in Karbala ' with his uncle al-Husayn ('a).

He was captured wounded and later recovered from his wounds. He was married to a daughter of Imam al-Husayn ('a) by the name of Fatima and died at the age of thirty five. He did not claim the Imamate either, after his father. For details see Kitab al-Irshad of Shaykh al-Mufid, pg 289 – 295.

4. Translator's Note: This would be al-Hasan bin al-Hasan bin 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a).

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

6. Translator's Note: This refers to his great grandfather al-Hasan.

7. Translator's Note: This refers to his great great grandfather Zayd, the son of Imam al-Hasan ('a).

8. Translator's note: This is Hisham bin al-Hakam, regarding whom the Imami biographer al-Najashi writes that he was known by the epithet of Abu Muhammad. He is reported variously to have been a client of the tribe of Banu Kinda or Banu Shayban.

As for his place of birth, it was Kufa ', while he grew up in Wasit and carried out trade in Baghdad 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 Imams and was reliable in hadith transmission as well as proficient in hadith verification. Shaykh al-Tusi writes that he was among the close associates of Imam al-Kadhim (‘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 Imamate and was very adept in the art of polemics; ever ready with apt rejoinders. Ibn Shahr Ashub writes that Imam al-Sadiq (‘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 Rijal al-Hadith of Sayyid al-Khu ‘i, volume 20, pg 297-323.

9. Al-Kafı volume 1, pg 224.

10. Such as Ibrahim bin Abi Mahmud, in ‘Uyun Akhbar al-Ridha’ volume 2, pg 113, and volume 1 pg 27. Mustadrak al-Wasa ‘il volume 3, pg 614, al-Tawhid pg 176. Also Sahl bin Sa’d, as in the book Fadha ‘il al-Ash-hur al-Thalatha of al-Saduq, pg 63.

11. Al-Ikhtisas of Shaykh al-Mufid pg 247.

12. Translator’s Note: Four of the Twelve Imams are known to have had the epithet ‘Abu al-Hasan’. They are Imam ‘Ali (‘a), the seventh Imam al-KaÛim (‘a), the eighth Imam al-Ridha’ (‘a) and lastly the tenth Imam al-Hadi (‘a).

13. 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 Imams in light of the author’s known erudition and care in scholarship.

14. Translator’s Note: The “Usul” 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 Imams, during their times. The companions would jot down the narrated traditions of the Imams as well as their teachings on various aspects of the faith.

And if there was an intermediary between the compiler and the Imams, 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-Usul al-Arba’u Mi’a’ by E. Kohlberg, published in Jerusalem

Studies in Arabic and Islam (JSAI), 10, 1987.

15. Translator's Note: The first phase of the 'Jami'' compilations, meaning 'the comprehensive compilations' was in the fourth century hijri/tenth century AD, when the hadith works Usul al-Kafi of al-Kulayni, Man la Yahdhuruhu al-Faqih of al-Saduq, al-Tahdhib and al-Istibsar of al-Tusi 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-Wafi of Muhsin Fayd al-Kashani, Wasa 'il al-Shi'a of al-Hurr al-'Amili and Bihar al-Anwar 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.

16. Translator's note: The Imami biographer al-Najashi writes about him as follows: Muhammad bin Abi 'Umayr Ziyad bin 'Isa, known by the epithet of Abu Ahmed al-Azdi, was a client of the tribe of Muhlib bin Abi Safra. A resident of Baghdad from whence his origins lay, he met the seventh Imam Abu al-Hasan Musa ('a) and heard and narrated traditions from him in some of which the Imam refers to him with the epithet of Abu Ahmed. (However Shaykh Tusi writes that he did not narrate any traditions from the seventh Imam).

He also narrated traditions from the eighth Imam al-Ridha' ('a). (Shaykh Tusi writes that he also met the ninth Imam al-Jawad ('a)) He possessed an exalted position and a great rank, both among the Shi'a and the Sunna. Al-Jahiz confirms him in his work Al-Bayan wa al-Tabyin to be an important personality of the Rafidhites. He was imprisoned during the reign of Harun al-Rashid, 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 Imam Musa 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 Muhammad bin Yunus bin 'Abd al-Rahman (who seems to have been incarcerated in the same prison, perhaps) admonishing and exhorting him thus 'Fear God O Muhammad bin Abi 'Umayr'. So he bore this tribulation patiently and God granted him relief.

It is also reported that Ma 'mun had him arrested till he agreed to undertake judicial responsibilities of some provinces. Al-Najashi writes that Muhammad bin Abi 'Umayr composed 94 books and died in 217 AH/832 AD. A certain Ahmed bin Muhammad bin 'Isa transmitted the books of a hundred companions of the sixth Imam al-Sadiq ('a) from him. His books were on various theological and legal subjects as well as at least one work on the Maghazi. For further details of his life and works, please refer to Mu 'jam Rijal al-Hadith of

Sayyid al-Khu ‘i, volume 15, pg 297.

17. Rijal al-Najashi, volume 2, pg 206, entry number 888.

18. Translator’s note: This is Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Khalid bin ‘Abd al-Rahman bin Muhammad bin ‘Ali al-Barqi. His family hailed from Kufa but later settled in a small village near Qum called Barq Rud from which the family got the title Barqi.

The reason for this migration is said to have been the participation of Ahmad’s great grandfather Muhammad in the failed revolt of Zayd bin ‘Ali bin al-Husayn (‘a) in 122 AH/740 AD due to which he was subsequently killed. His father was a disciple of the eighth and ninth Imams and transmitted traditions from them. Ahmad himself was a disciple of the ninth and tenth Imams and was known as a compiler and transmitter of traditions. Both al-Najashi and al-Tusi considered Ahmad 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 ‘Kitab al-Mahasin’ 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 Barqi’s Kitab al-Mahasin’ by Roy Vilozny and published in Arabica, tome 54, issue 3, 2007.

19. 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 fatha on the م can mean a lord, a master, a protector, etc. If it is read with a dhamma on the م 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’.

20. Rijal al-Najashi, volume 2, pg 65, entry number 651.

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

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

23. Translator’s note: This is the tenth Imam (‘a).

24. Kitab al-Tawhid, the chapter on unity and anthropomorphism pg 81, hadith number 37.

25. Translator’s note: This is the tenth Shi’ite Imam Abu al-Hasan ‘Ali bin Muhammad, 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 Imam 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 Imam 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 Imam as al-'Askari. This is because the tenth Imam also lived, died and is buried in this same city. This city is better known by the name of Samarra '. Samarra ' was a city that served as the capital of the Abbasid caliphs from 221 AH/836 AD till 279 AH/892 AD, when Baghdad once again became the capital of this dynasty. It lies at present, some 125 km north of Baghdad. During its heyday it was one of the largest cities of ancient times.

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

It is said that the original name of Samarra ' was 'Surra man Ra 'a '' meaning 'he who sees it is delighted', which was later shortened to Samarra '.

Thus this city had two names; Samarra ', short for Surra man Ra 'a ' and Al-'Askar, short for 'Askar Mu'tasim.

The tenth Imam was summoned there from Medina during the reign of al-Mutawakkil. Thus it would be historically valid to call both these two Imams 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 Imam with the title al-Naqi and the eleventh Imam as al-'Askari. For more details refer to the article by A. Northedge on the city of Samarra ' in the Encyclopaedia of Islam, second edition, volume 8, pg 1039.

26. Kamil al-Ziyarat, pg 537, chapter 107, hadith number 1.

27. Mustadrak al-Wasa 'il volume 3, pg 614.

28. Translator's note: The Imami biographer al-Najashi writes that Zurara 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'an, 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-Tusi writes that Zurara's name was 'Abd Rabbih while his epithet was Abu al-Hasan and Zurara was his title. His father A'yan bin Sansan was a Roman slave and belonged to a man from the tribe of Banu Shayban, who taught him the Qur'an and then freed him. H e was a monk, hailing from Byzantium.

Shaykh al-Tusi believed Zurara to be from the companions of the Imams al-Baqir, al-Sadiq and al-Kadhim ('a) and wrote that he had many compositions to his credit. Al-Barqi also counted him among the companions of these three Imams.

Kashi writes the following in the context of mentioning the names of the jurists from the companions of the fifth and sixth Imams that: 'the Shi'ite scholars were unanimous regarding the veracity of these foremost, from the companions of Abu Ja'far and Abu 'Abdillah ('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; Zurara, Ma'ruf bin Kharrabudh, Burayd, Abu Basir al-Asadi, Fudhayl bin Yasar and Muhammad bin Muslim al-Ta 'ifi, while they held Zurara to be the most knowledgeable and erudite of these six.

Several reports of praise and commendation by the Imams have been transmitted in favour of Zurara, some of which shall be reproduced below.

The sixth Imam 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 Zurara, Muhammad bin Muslim, Layth al-Muradi 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'.

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

Abu Basir narrates that he said to Imam Sadiq ('a) as follows: 'Indeed your father mentioned to me that "Abu Dharr, Miqdad and Salman the Persian shaved their heads in their readiness to fight Abu Bakr!" So he said "Had it not been for Zurara, I would have thought my father's teachings to have been lost!"

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

Mufaddhal bin ‘Umar reports ‘One day Faydh bin al-Mukhtar was visiting Imam Sadiq (‘a) and mentioned a verse from the Qur ‘an which the Imam interpreted. Then Faydh asked the Imam “what are these differences that I see among your adherents?” The Imam asked in surprise “and what are these differences?” He said “I was once seated among your adherents, in their circle in Kufa ‘ 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 Imam 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 Zurara bin A’yan. For further details and biographical consideration, please refer to Mu ‘jam Rijal al-Hadith, volume 8, pg 225-268 of Sayyid al-Khu ‘i.

29. Translator’s note: The Imami biographer al-Najashi writes that Muhammad bin Muslim bin Riyah had the epithet of Abu Ja’far and was the client of the tribe of Thaqif al-A’war; thus he is variously known as al-Thaqafi and also as al-Ta‘ifi. He was a prominent member of the Shi’ite in Kufa ‘, and a pious jurist. He had the opportunity to associate and keep company with the Imams al-Baqir and al-Sadiq (‘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-Tusi writes that he was approximately 70 years old when he died and that he was one eyed and a miller by profession. The Imami biographer Kashi writes that Muhammad bin Muslim was considered from among those companions of the Shi’ite Imams 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.

Kashi also reports from ‘Abdullah bin Abi Ya’fur that when he complained to the 6th Imam of not having regular opportunities to visit him and acquire solutions from him for his problems, the Imam replied ‘then what stops you from referring to Muhammad bin Muslim al-Thaqafi, for

he has heard many traditions from my father who considered him eminent and reliable'. Kashi even reports this statement of Muhammad bin Muslim himself as having said 'no problem vexed me save that I asked about it to Imam al-Baqir ('a) till I had asked him the answers to 30,000 problems. I also asked Imam al-Sadiq ('a) the answers to 16000 problems'.

The 6th Imam is also reported to have praised Muhammad bin Muslim and some others as follows: 'I have not come across any who enlivens our memory and the teachings of my father save Zurara, Abu Basir Layth bin al-Muradi, Muhammad bin Muslim and Burayd bin Mu'awiya al-£jli... 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 Imam is also reported to have said: 'Announce the good news of heaven to the humble ones; Burayd bin Mu'awiya al-jli, Abu Basir Layth al-Bakhtari al-Muradi, Muhammad bin Muslim and Zurara; 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 Rijal al-Hadith of Sayyid al-Khu'i, volume 18, pg 246-259.

30. Translator's note: The Imami biographer al-Najashi writes that Yunus bin 'Abd al-Rahman had the epithet Abu Ahmad and was the client of 'Ali bin Yaqtin who was himself the client of the clan of Banu Asad. He was an important Shi'ite personality, possessing integrity and a great status. He was born during the reign of the Umayyad ruler Hisham bin 'Abd al-Malik (r 724 AD - 743 AD) and though he got the opportunity to see Imam al-Sadiq ('a) between the hillocks of Safa and Marwa (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 Imam al-KaÛim and Imam Ridha' ('a) and Imam Ridha' ('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 Waqifa, a splinter group which seceded from the Shi'ite fold after the murder of Imam al-KaÛim ('a) in Harun al-Rashid's prison.

They held various ideas regarding the seventh Imam, 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 Imamate having had terminated at him. The principle leaders of this group, some of whom were the seventh Imam's agents in some of the provinces and had at their disposal a significant amount of the wealth of khums,

refused to acknowledge the imamate of Imam al-Ridha' ('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 Imam's disciples, Yunus being one of them, whom they tempted with a considerable amount of wealth in order to win him over, but to no avail as Yunus remained steadfast in his allegiance to Imam al-Ridha' ('a). The Imami biographer Kashi reports from 'Abd al-Aziz bin Muhtadi, one of the most virtuous people of Qum and an agent of Imam Ridha' ('a) as well as one of his close associates, who said: 'I said to the Imam "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 Yunus bin 'Abd al-Rahman".

Shaykh al-Mufid reports the following in his book Masabih al-Nur, from Abu Hashim Dawud bin al-Qasim al-Ja'fari, who said that: 'I presented the book "Al-Yawm wa al-Layla" of Yunus to the eleventh Imam ('a). He asked me of the identity of the author of the book and I replied that it was the composition of Yunus, the client of the clan of Yaqtin.

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-Tusi writes that he had over thirty books to his credit. He considered him to be from the companions of Imam al-KaÛim ('a) and Imam al-Ridha' ('a) and also considered him reliable, even though he reports that the traditionists of Qum had impugned his integrity. Ahmad bin Muhammad al-Barqi also considered him to be from the companions of the Imams al-Kadhim and al-Ridha' ('a).

It is also reported that Imam Ridha' ('a) guaranteed the attainment of heaven for him three times. Fadhl bin Shadhan is reported to have said: ' There has not arisen any person in Islam who was more erudite than Salman and neither has there arisen any person after him as erudite as Yunus bin 'Abd al-Rahman'. He also said that Yunus 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 Imam al-Ridha' ('a) who said that: 'Yunus bin 'Abd al-Rahman is similar to Salman in his time'. And when the ninth Imam Muhammad 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 Rijal al-Hadith of Sayyid al-Khu 'i, volume 21, pg 209-234.

31. Translator's note: The Imami biographer al-Najashi writes that his full name was Zakariyya bin Adam, 'Abdullah bin Sa'd al-Ash'ari al-Qummi. He was veracious and an august personality. He had a special status near Imam al-Ridha' ('a). He was also the author of a book

which contained the answers to questions he had asked Imam al-Ridha' ('a). Shaykh al-Tusi considered him to be from the companions of the Imams al-Ridha' and al-Jawad (as well as from those of Imam al-Sadiq ('a)) Kashi reports from 'Ali bin Musayyib who reported that he said to Imam al-Ridha' ('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 Imam replied 'seek them from Zakariyya bin Adam, trustworthy in matters of the world and the faith'. 'Ali bin Musayyib says that thereafter he approached Zakariyya bin Adam for his needs'. For further biographical details and considerations, please refer to Mu 'jam Rijal al-Hadith of Sayyid al-Khu 'i, volume 8, pg 281-285.

32. Rijal al-Kashi, pg 496, biographical entry number 478.

33. Rijal al-Najashi volume 2, pg 316, biographical entry number 105.

34. Translator's note: This is a reference to the ninth Imam.

35. Translator's note: This is a reference to the tenth Imam.

36. Translator's note: This is a reference to the seventh Imam

37. Translator's note: This is a reference to the eighth Imam.

38. Translator's note: This hadith, falsely attributed to the Prophet, actually reflects a belief which was current among the Hashwiyya and the Hanbalites 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 Wahhabis who are a modern day representation of the Hashwiyya and follow the legal and doctrinal school of the Hanbalites.

39. Translator's note: In order to understand the Imam'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

أن الله ينزل إلى السماء الدنيا

is the present tense of the third person singular of , ينـــزل The word for 'descent' here, which is which is pronounced with a fatha on the 'ya' and a kisra on the ن ز ل the first form of the root '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 triliteral 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 meaning 'an ,ملكـــــا rather than descending himself. Secondly, the first tradition has the word

angel' omitted which is correctly situated in the second tradition as the grammatical object of with the dhamma on the 'ya'). Hence the second tradition would mean that 'Allah) ينـزل the verb 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

Sura al-Qiyama, verse 22 – 23. .40

41. 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-Tabarsi's Ihtijaj , volume 2, pg 387-388 and al-Majlisi's Bihar al-Anwar volume 5, pg 4 and 27.

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

43. Translator's note: Abu 'Uthman Amr bin 'Ubayd bin Bab (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-Hasan al-Basri's (d 728/737 AD) teaching circle, becoming one of his closest disciples. After al-Hasan al-Basri'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'an which he derived in the main from the teachings of al-Hasan al-Basri. This commentary is now lost and only a few references to it can be found in later tafsir literature.

He joined with Wasil bin 'Ata ' (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 Wasil 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-manzilatu bayna al-manzilatayn (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 Mansur al-Dawaniqi, the Abbasid Caliph (d 185 AH/704 AD).

Apart from a work on tafsir he is also credited with a work on dogmatics titled Kitab al-'adl wa al-tawhid and Kitab al-radd 'ala 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 Basra ', 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.

44. Sura al-Shura verse 37.

45. Sura al-Nisa ‘ verse 47 and 115.

46. Sura al-Ma ‘ida verse 72.

47. Sura al-Yusuf verse 87.

48. Sura al-A’raf verse 97.

49. Sura al-Maryam verse 32.

50. Sura al-Nisa ‘ verse 93.

51. Sura al-Nur verse 23.

52. Sura al-Nisa ‘ verse 10.

53. Sura al-Anfal verse 15-16.

54. Sura al-Baqara verse 275.

55. Sura al-Baqara verse 278-279.

56. Sura al-Baqara verse 102.

57. Sura al-Furqan verses 68 – 70.

58. Sura Ali ‘Imran verse 77.

59. Sura Ali ‘Imran verse 161.

60. Sura al-Tawba verse 32.

61. The Imam 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.

62. Sura al-Baqara verse 283.

63. Sura al-Ra’d verse 25

64. Translator’s note: The Ahlul Bayt.

65. 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.

66. 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 Wasil bin ‘Ata ‘ (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 Basran and Baghdad 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 (u ūl) or theses upon which Mu ‘tazili theology was based are as follows:

(1) The divine Unity (al-taw īd) which meant that the divine attributes are meaningful only when taken in a strict via remotionis (tanzīh), 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-a la). 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’īd): This principle taught that to possess faith is to perform the acts prescribed by the Qur ‘an. Whoever commits a “great sin” and does not repent is destined for hell.

(4) The intermediate state between faith and lack of faith (al-manzila bayn al-manzilatayn). This principle was with regards to the position of the ‘believer who sins’ (fasiq). Such a sinner is neither a true believer (mu ‘min) nor a true infidel (kafir). 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-Kalam’ 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.

67. Translator’s note: The Hashwiyya 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 Hashwiyya 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 hadith circles; whose theology and legal theory was centred on a narrow reductionist literalism embracing anthropomorphic and determinist views. Their theology was a narrative theology and similar was their jurisprudence; focused on a literal interpretation of the revealed scripture and the vast body of transmitted traditions.

Al-Hasan bin Musa 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 Imam 'Ali ('a) but then joined the opposing groups after his assassination, i.e. the group of Talha, Zubayr and 'Aisha and the pro-Mu'awiya party, were called the ahl al-hashw, the followers of the kings and the victorious. Thus in this source the Hashwiyya are identified with the majority of the proto-Sunni public which comprised of virtually the entire community apart from the Kharjites and the Shi'ite. They were also characterised by a favourable propensity towards the Umayyad dynasty and reacted negatively to the calumniation of Mu'awiya. 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 Imam by the community or a part of it, as against the assertion of those who maintained that the Imamate was bestowed by the Prophet (s) 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 Hashwiyya was later also applied as a pejorative term for the strict Sunni traditionalists among the ashab al hadith who interpreted Qur 'anic 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 Nabita (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 Malik 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 ‘an 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 Hashwiyya has to be understood in the context of the dispute between Imam ‘Ali 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 Salaf. The Hashwiyya were later specifically identified with Hanbalite traditionalists and Hanbalites fanatics, especially in 10th-12th century AD Baghdad.

The word Hashwiyya 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 Hashwiyya may be rendered ‘ignoramuses 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’an and the hadith texts, including a belief in the increate nature of the Qur ‘an 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 Hashwiyya’ 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

68. 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 'Abbasids; al-'Abbas bin 'Abd al-Muttalib.

69. Translator's note: His name was Abu Yusuf Ya'qub bin Ishaq. 'Al-Sikkit', meaning exceedingly silent, was his father's nickname and thus his epithet 'Ibn Sikkit'. He was born in Baghdad in the year 186 AH/802 AD in a family who were natives of Khuzistan. His father was reputed to have been an expert in poetry and lexicography and he was his son's first tutor. Ibn Sikkit grew up to be a celebrated philologian 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 Baghdad and there dictated the most important of his works to his pupils. He was entrusted by the Abbasid 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 Sikkit 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.

70. 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 Sufyan 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 'an 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'til (making God a bare entity). They rationally interpreted the verses of the Qur'an 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.

71. Tarikh al-Islam, in the context of the reports of the deaths that took place between the years 230 AH – 240 AH. Tarikh Baghdad volume 10, pg 22.

.72. ‘Amali of al-Saduq, pg 419 and the biographical treatise of Sahib bin ‘Abbad